Chapter 4
Analysis

Dimensions of Conflict

4.1 Historical overview

Left Wing Extremism in its present manifestation has its genesis in the Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh. Even prior to independence, the Andhra Communists were non-conformists as they challenged the established structure of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the international authority. The movement in the State has maintained a regional character even while maintaining a tenuous affiliation with the national and international organisations.

The CPI and the Andhra Communists

The regional movement in Andhra was not deeply involved in national party affairs in the 1920s. The Communist movement in the country in the early years gained a foothold only in cities and working class centres, but not in rural areas like Andhra.

It was in the 1930s the movement gained momentum in the agricultural Telugu areas. The disruptive nature of the Communist movement in Andhra can only be understood in terms of the unusual socio-economic patterns obtaining in the Telugu areas which differ considerably from other parts of India. The Andhras were located in three distinct natural regions— the Circars (perenially irrigated and
fertile coastal districts), Rayalseema (chronically famine stricken) and Telangana (backward districts which were a part of the Hyderabad State ruled by the Nizam of Hyderabad under the tutelage of British).

The three differ from one another with regard to the levels of socio-economic development, spread of education, living standards and cultural and political awareness. These differences are also reflected in the variegated and uneven growth of the Communist movement in the State.

The Circars were politically and culturally active since the turn of the century. They provided the leadership for the so called non-Brahmin movement, which was a reaction to Brahmin hegemony in the political and cultural life of the Telugus, the language renaissance movement, the movement for a greater Andhra or Visalandhra, the successive waves of freedom struggle in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s; the social democratic movement in Andhra and later the Communist movement.

The dominance of the people from the Circars can be explained in terms of socio-economic factors and class relations determined by them. The circars, except for a few Zamindari pockets, have had the benefit of the ryotwari system of land tenure, making for the emergence of a class of sturdy, independent middle and rich peasant proprietors. In addition, the well developed irrigation facilities under major river projects and high land fertility has contributed to a measure of capitalist land relations. Even before post-independence, land reforms and massive state aid created a new kulak class in the rest of India, the Circars had a significant middle and rich peasant class.
The freedom movement also received a tremendous response in the Circars and the non-cooperation movement call given by Gandhi took the form of a no-tax campaign and it assumed militant overtones despite Gandhi's directives to call it off. The hike in the land revenue by the British evoked strong resistance from the peasants in the Circars and these can be considered as the earliest precedents for the peasant movement in the Circars which was to later was to provide a powerful base for the Communists.

Peasant discontent heightened in 1929 owing to depression which hit the farm incomes. The depression synchronised with the new phase in the freedom movement in the early 1930s. But lack of militancy on the part of Gandhi led to disillusionment among a number of young nationalists in the Congress party who were attracted to Communism under the influence of a widely read class analysis of Gandhism written by 'Mascarenhas,' believed to be the pseudonym of M N Roy.

As quoted in New Age, in a article titled 'Communist Party is a new reality in Andhra....' hundreds of middle class intellectuals and educated children of aristocratic landlords joined the CPI in the 1930s and fanned out to work among agricultural labourers and sparse industrial working class in Andhra.

The first major struggle of the Andhra Communists came in 1931, when they organised a 1,500 mile march to Madras city to rouse the peasants against the land system. Rao (1953 106) argues that the march was devised to create a new consciousness among the peasants in the backward Rayalseema tracts while Prof. N G Ranga (1968 231), a nationalist leader from Andhra who pioneered the Congress party's work among the peasantry, has spoken of the 1931 movement
as a 'Communist plan to drive a wedge between the landholding peasants and landless agricultural labour'.

It is clear that the Andhra Communists were the first Indian party organisers to seek the support of agricultural labourers by organising them into rural unions. The Communist movement came to Telangana rather slowly though it began to function as early as 1933-34. It could not even set up an illegal nucleus until 1941. The first Telangana Communists who were recruited from among petit bourgeois intellectuals and radical young men of landlord origins, therefore functioned through the State people's movement led by the Andhra Maha Sabha, a literary-cultural organisation that demanded a separate Telugu homeland. The Mahasabha and the Telangana Communists were important for the Andhra movement because it was the only mass platform in a system that denied civil liberties and also because the latter radicalised the Mahasabha by gaining acceptance for Communist agrarian demands in the Mahasabha programme. According to People's Age, by 1944 the Communists managed to elect Ravi Narayan Reddy as member president of the Mahasabha.

The war years (1939-45) witnessed a phenomenal growth in the Communist movement in the State. The CPI denounced the war as 'imperialist' in 1939, but effected a neat volte face when the Soviet Union joined the allies. In Andhra also the Communists increased their strength and influence during this period despite their isolation from the freedom struggle. During World War II, the Andhra Communists articulated the grievances of the people effectively and helped secure justice from the British Government. Harrison (1960. 213) notes that people looked to the Communists for the satisfaction of their demands and Communists
continued to direct their principal appeal to the poor peasantry and the landless agricultural labourers in the countryside. Rao (1954-56) notes that when the Government sought to realise the Grow More Food campaign, it became the central task of the Communists on the peasant front and this was linked with the campaign to bring waste land under the plough and to allot fallow land to the landless and poor peasants (the waste land issue has become the major plank in the post war years).

By 1946, the Communists had succeeded in providing an alternative to the Congress movement in the Andhra area with the leadership being elitist—belonging to the middle and rich landlord upper castes but the main support was increasingly being obtained from the poor peasantry and lower caste agricultural labourers. A vital factor in attempting to understand the CPI’s growth in Andhra is the party’s identification with the regional nationalism of the Telugu people, which took the form of a demand for a linguistic State. This gave the CPI the character of a regional nationalist movement and a broad independent mass base as well. ‘Vishalandhra’ was the slogan adopted by the Andhra CPI during the 1946 elections to the provincial legislatures. By making the Vishalandhra demand an election issue, the Andhra Communists took the 1946 elections out of the drawing rooms of the elite nationalist leadership and from the debating chambers of legislatures, thrusting it into the streets. By 1946, the Andhra Communists had outlived the stigma of being an anti-national force with extra-territorial loyalties as they effectively allied themselves with Telugu regional aspirations, fought against untouchability and organised untouchable agricultural labourers into unions, campaigned for equal rights for women and a number of other social reforms.
However, the strength of the Communist movement in Andhra in the 1946 elections though a pale reflection, was in the range of 11.5 per cent to 31.9 per cent in Circars. Most observers saw the Communists as the only alternative to the Congress in the Andhra region as it not only represented a broad interest aggregation that was intertwined with major caste interests—like the Kamma and Reddy upper caste and middle and rich peasants—it also had the hard core support from among poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

**The Telangana Movement**

One major factor which influenced the course of the Andhra movement since Independence is the Telangana movement (1946-1951) which must be analysed in detail.

The contradiction between the mass of the peasantry and the feudal nature of British India was most advanced in 1945-46 in the Telangana where the Communists were swept by the upsurge in the peasant discontent. The movement began with simple demands against eviction and oppressive feudal extortions but it quickly escalated when it met with the combined repression of the landlords and the Nizam's Government machinery. Peasant resistance to the attacks of organised hoodlums, police and the Nizam's military took the form of armed clashes, which eventually swelled into a movement to overthrow the Nizam. By mid-1946, the Telangana movement had acquired the characteristics of a national liberation struggle to free the people from the rule of Nizam and the feudal order. The factors responsible for this are as follows.
The Telangana region had been under a medieval feudal monarchy during the British rule, even though it was formally under the ryotwari system. This meant that the contradictions between the peasantry and the landlords had become very sharp in Telangana. Secondly, the nationalist movement in British India had been led by the national bourgeoisie, whereas, in Telangana the Communists were in effective control of the small nationalist movement that had developed under the Nizam's autocracy. Finally, the decision of the Nizam of Hyderabad to refuse accession to India after independence placed him in direct contradiction to a new Indian Government.

Initially, the Telangana struggle was confined to 150 villages, but soon it spread to hundreds and thousands of villages. Throughout the Telangana region, the Communist guerrillas were locked in combat with the Nizam's police and the army, and with a small private army known as the Razakars. In early 1948, the CPI began to establish liberated zones with people's governments, people's courts, and people's militia, and by 1950, the whole of Nalgonda and Warangal districts were claimed as contiguous liberated zones.

As the movement progressed, the Andhra CPI began to link the war of liberation with the thought of Mao Tse Tung. Telangana was considered as the Yenan of India. Agrarian programmes were undertaken in the liberated zones through CPI peasant committees. Over a million acres of land were distributed in 3,000 villages under Communist control, according to CPI sources, and approximately 4,000 Communists and supporters died in encounters or in prison camps. Sundarayya (1952-5) estimates that over 5,000 women were raped by the police.
and military during the conflagration, while 1,000 villages were burned to the ground and 15,000 villages throughout Andhra were raided by the police.

CPI figures also indicate that approximately 10,000 people died of starvation and epidemic disease in concentration camps. The entire Telangana operation was operated from the Munagala jungle on the Madras-Hyderabad border comprising 450 villages. Communist guerrilla squads spread themselves throughout Telangana area from this jungle base. When the Indian army marched into Hyderabad in March 1948 and forced the Nizam to accede to India, the situation changed as the Nizam's autocracy was at an end and the Communists were now confronted with the Indian army. Nevertheless, the CPI decided to fight a protracted war with the Indian army and the struggle was not called off until late 1951.

The Communist Party in Andhra has been very much influenced by the Telangana movement from the time of the movement. At the Second Congress in early 1948, the CPI called for a 'united front from below,' a new class alliance of the working class, peasantry and the revolutionary intelligentsia, to be welded together in a one stage people's democratic revolution through violent means. For the Andhra Communists who were leading the Telangana Peasant Struggle the ideological debates of 1947 and 1948 were disheartening as they were at that time invoking Mao Tse Tung's 'New Democracy' as an alternative to the Second Congress thesis. New democracy called for a two stage revolution with a four class alliance to realise the party's programme. This Andhra thesis identified feudalism and imperialism as the main enemies and it identified a 'new democratic stage' as the stage of imminent revolution.
The Andhra Communists sought to unite the entire peasantry including the rich peasantry under working class relationship. The unpublished CPI Document "Andhra Letter" stated that the alliance was also to include the middle bourgeoisie, and the form of struggle was to be guerrilla warfare. While the Andhra Communists were for guerrilla warfare, relying on the peasantry, the Second thesis emphasised urban insurrection and the general strike as weapons for a proletarian revolution. By applying the Chinese experience to Indian reality, the Andhra Communists were challenging the tactical line of the national CPI.

The Andhra Letter quoted Andhra Thesis stating that Mao Tse Tung's 'New Democracy' was a 'new form of revolutionary struggle to advance towards socialism in colonies and semi colonies' and that New Democracy was 'distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat.' In reaction to this, the CPI General Secretary, Ranadive (1949:77) denounced both Mao and his 'New Democracy.'

First we must state emphatically that the Communist Party of India has accepted Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as authoritative sources of Marxism. It has not discovered new sources of Marxism beyond these. Nor for that matter is there any Communist party which declares adherence to the so-called theory of New Democracy alleged to be propounded by Mao and declares it a new addition to Marxism.

It must be admitted that some of Mao's formulations are such that no Communist Party can accept them, they are in contradiction to the world understanding of the Communist parties. For the first time in the history of the international communist movement the bonafides of Mao's theories as part of Marxism-Leninism were being debated in public.

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In early 1950, the *Cominform Journal* in its article "Mighty Advance of National Liberation Movement" first endorsed Liu Shao-chi's speech at the Peking conference of Asian and Australasian trade unions prescribing the 'road of Mao Tse Tung' as the path for other colonial countries 'wherever and whenever possible.'

The stand of the journal was an endorsement of the four-class alliance and two-stage revolution advocated by the Andhra Communists and a rejection of Ranadive's 'one stage theory of revolution', even though it played down the role of armed struggle in the Indian revolution. Shortly afterwards the Andhra Communists, considered as interlopers and agrarian reformers by the CPI's central committee, held several prominent posts and found leading the CPI Andhra leader C Rajeswara Rao replaced Ranadive as the General Secretary.

During the brief Maoist interlude in 1950-51, the Telangana line of peasant partisan warfare prevailed over Ranadive's line of urban insurrection. But Moscow, which had been waging a cold war against Nehru had to intervene when the Andhra leadership of the CPI persisted with its armed struggle in Telangana. Palme Dutt (1951-3), British party's ideologue carried a letter from Moscow laid down a series of directives with greater clarity. In Dutt's words, 'a broad democratic front from above on the basis of a common action programme for peace and independence.' According to Dutt's analysis, armed struggle was not the correct path for India for the present. In 1951, the CPI was therefore directed to launch a peace offensive, to pressurise Nehru to supporting the Soviet bloc, and to relegate class struggle to a lower order of priority.
Rightist elements in the CPI opposed to the Andhra line launched a campaign against C Rajeswara Rao and the Telangana armed struggle and international intervention helped these elements in their efforts to oust the Andhras from their positions. In late 1951, C Rajeswara Rao was replaced by Ajoy Ghosh and a new programme and tactical line was evolved. The CPI declared the Telangana armed struggle an end. The 1951 programme did not represent a fundamental departure from the Andhra thesis of 1948 since it accepted a four-class alliance and a two-stage revolution. But the new tactical line rationalised the rejection of the armed struggle as the immediate tactic of the Indian revolution. During the next 13 years the major controversies in the CPI were related to the programme and tactics of the party but the party split into two in 1964 before it could devise a new programme. Throughout these years the CPI participated in India's parliamentary system based on adult franchise.

**Back to Maoism**

There were serious differences in the CPI regarding the support to Nehru in the mid 1950s. While the Rightist elements preferred an United Front to support Nehru, the Left faction continued to insist on the 1951 programme. A compromise was effected at the Fourth Congress of the CPI in 1956 when the party rejected the idea of a united front with the Congress for the time being. When the CPI won the 1957 Kerala elections, the national leadership saw the possibility for the party to adopt a thesis of peaceful transition to socialism at the Fifth Congress in 1958.

The fifth Congress thesis heightened the factionalism between the Right and the Left and an open split was averted at the Sixth Congress in 1961. Meanwhile the Sino-Soviet ideological differences reached a flashpoint and created more
problems for the Indian Communists, particularly after the Sino-Indian conflict. The combination of Sino-Soviet rift and a Sino-Indian border dispute was too difficult to be contained by India's faction ridden CPI, with the result that the party split in 1964. The dominant right faction committed itself to the Soviet ideological position while the breakaway faction which became the CPM did not declare its support for either the Soviet or Chinese positions.

By 1967, the CPM became a part of the coalition ministries in Kerala and West Bengal which coincided with the Peking's vigorous assertion that the Maoist model of people's war was applicable to the entire Third World. A peasant revolt in the Naxalbari area of West Bengal, led by extremists within the CPM in West Bengal, provided Peking with an occasion for spelling out the strategy for the Indian revolution, and this in turn had an enormous impact on a number of CPI members throughout the country. On June 10, 1967, a Peking radio commentary (credited Red Guard) stated that the externists within the CPM in West Bengal were leading a movement that 'represented the general orientation of the Indian revolution at the present time'. At the same time, as reported in *Times of India*, Peking Radio called for 'relentless armed struggle to overthrow the Indian Government to seize power.'

The peasant revolt that had prompted the Peking broadcast was centred in the sub-division of Naxalbari, which is located at a point where India's narrowest corridor joins the main body of India in its North-East territories.

In reaction to the Naxalbari agitation and to Peking's support of the 'Naxahtes'-the CPM leadership in West Bengal clarified its anti-Soviet stance on ideological issues without identifying the party with the Chinese
While all other plenums of the CPM approved of this draft the Andhra Plenum rejected it by a wide margin (158 to 52, with eight neutral votes) and demanded the Central committee of the CPM to prepare a new draft on the basis of the general line proposed by the Communist party of China in its letter 14, June 1963 and its nine comments on the CPSU's open letter of 14, July 1963. The Andhra plenum forwarded to the Central Committee two resolutions that had been placed before it by three Andhra Maoists (T Nagi Reddy, C Pulla Reddy and Kolla Venkiah). The two resolutions severely criticised the original draft document of the Central Committee (1967) and endorsed the Chinese assessment of the situation.

The resolutions argued that the post-1967 election document (New Situation and Party's tasks) was a 'revisionist compromise with bourgeoise parliamentarism,' and they attacked the participation of CPM leaders in the United Front ministries in West Bengal and Kerala.

The conclusion of those who moved the resolutions was that the people's war was essential in India:

We categorically say that in all backward countries, winning the majority of the people, building mass organisation and party building is closely linked with armed struggle. (1968. 58)

After failing to force the CPM out of the bourgeoise parliamentary system into the path of armed struggle, Peking called upon the CPM members to repudiate their leadership and form a Maoist party which was appealing to the Bengali Naxalites.
However, Maoist leadership in Andhra assessed the situation in India differently and argued that India was not ready for immediate armed struggle. In the words of Andhra plenum, of course, ‘we do not mean to say that such a struggle could be started tomorrow. The whole point is, the party has no perspective on this and no conscious preparation toward this direction-political, organisational, or ideological—which is being undertaken.’

Later, at the All-India plenum of the CPM in Burdwan in April 1968, the Andhra unit pressed its resolutions to vote losing on almost every issue. The Andhra leadership of the CPM was expelled from the party which took with it a majority of the CPM membership in the State. Thus the Andhra Maoists galvanised the second split in the Indian Communist movement and proved that the first split had little to do with ideology.

After the Burdwan plenum, the dissidents in the CPM held meetings under the banner of All-India Coordination Committee of the Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) which had been formed immediately after the Naxalbari uprising. These meetings called for building a true Communist party through Naxalbari type struggles as it came to symbolise a turning point in the Indian revolution. The AICCCR also called for boycott of all elections in India to be followed by positive action to draw people into revolutionary class struggles ‘under the banner of Chairman Mao’s thought.

At the next meeting of the AICCCR (in October 1968) the Committee found that the Naxalbari type struggles had moved into their second stage—‘the stage of guerrilla warfare’ in various parts of India. The committee called on the
revolutionary forces in India to plunge into work in the countryside in order to set up revolutionary bases.

But the Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (APCCCR) had serious reservations about joining the AICCCR because of the differences within the All India committee over the question of immediate armed struggle and the reticence of the AICCCR on the question of forming a new party and its refusal to take a stand on the question of establishing mass organisations.

It is to be noted that during this time the Andhra group was involved in the massive tribal movement in Srikakulam district - a movement which had started well before the agitation in Naxalbari as early as 1959. It made serious attempts to build a broad based organisation- Girijana Sangham among the tribals to carry on struggles against feudal exploitation of the Girijans. By 1967, the movement reached a new stage with the implementation of the new agrarian programme of the CPM among the tribals which resulted in a number of clashes and police raids of Sangham households. To the dismay of Andhra Maoists, the CPM was unprepared to face the police onslaught and differences cropped up between the CPM state committee and the Srikakulam district Committee (SDC) on the specifics of armed struggle to be adopted in tribal areas. It was at this juncture, Andhra Unit of the CPM was against the CPM central committee with the result that the Srikakulam struggle became one of the first questions to be dealt with by the Andhra Coordination Committee. Some members of the Srikakulam struggle were establishing links with the AICCCR and carrying out a campaign against the APCCCR on the issue of armed struggle.
In September 1968, the SDC passed a resolution seeking permission of the APCCCR to both initiate armed struggle and to join the AICCCR. The APCCCR informed the SDC in June that a regular guerrilla struggle could be initiated in Srikakulam if there were signs of mass upsurge. By the time armed struggle in Srikakulam was about to begin, the AICCCR met in February 1969 to decide that it had basic differences with the APCCCR on questions of loyalty to the Communist Party of China, divergent attitudes toward the Srikakulam struggle and attitudes towards participation in the India’s parliamentary system. (Liberation 1969. 8) The AICCCR converted itself into the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) on 22 April 1969. India now had its first Maoist party formed excluding the Andhra Maoists. This was the largest Maoist formation in the country. Though several other state coordination committees chose to remain outside the new party, Peking conferred recognition to the CPML by publishing its political resolution in the People’s Daily (1969).

The tactical line of the AICCCR, and later the CPML, has undergone several twists since its uncertain beginning in 1968 and had little Maoist content later. Immediately after the Naxalbari failure, Charu Majumdar, the then chairman and the principal ideologue of the Peking backed Maoists, argued that the CPML cadre working in peasant areas while propagating the politics of seizure of power through armed struggle should pay attention to economic struggles in order to attract backward peasants to the movement. (Quoted by Sen 1970. 21) Without mass struggles Majumdar argued, peasants could not be drawn into armed struggle. However, this line did not gel with the CPML tactic of secret mobilisation by underground and armed party units. In mid-1969, Majumdar resolved the dilemma when he said ‘the revolutionary initiative of the wide sections of the
peasant masses can be released through annihilation of class enemies by guerrilla methods, and neither mass organisation nor mass movement is indispensable for starting guerrilla war' (Sen 1970)

According to Majumdar, mass struggle for economic gains is to follow guerrilla action but not precede or accompany it. In Majumdar's theoretical formulations, CPML party units, after some propaganda for seizure of power, were instructed to form small guerrilla bands in a conspiratorial manner to annihilate some of the most hated class enemies in the countryside. Later, they were to start a series of whisper campaigns, speaking of the advantages that would accrue if other class enemies were annihilated or forced to flee the countryside. After a few offensive actions and after the annihilation line had been established in an area, the political cadres were to publicise their general economic slogans, calling for seizure of crops of class enemies. The CPML applied this line since 1969 in Srikakulam district and in the Gopiballavpur Debra area in West Bengal which turned out to be murder of landlords through squad actions. By mid-1970 all the frontline leaders of the CPML were killed in clashes or arrested in both these places while the remaining guerrilla cadre members fled the 'liberated zones' where red power was supposed to have been established.

The Srikakulam movement and the Gopiballavpur -Debra movements petered out by May 1970. The CPML now returned to cities and the annihilation line was extended to cities and the party's main activities were limited to its campaigns of 'red terror' taking the form of hit and run raids, murder of policemen and assassination of political rivals.
In contrast, the Andhra movement (then functioning under the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Committee or RCC) represented a different shade of Maoism and the differences between the CPML and RCC relate both to the tactical line and the methodology of struggle.

For the RCC, armed struggle is defined as a form of resistance and not as a form of offensive. The people's army can only be built through resistance related to people's demands and people's struggle. But the CPML did not believe in any form of struggle other than armed struggle, irrespective of the strength and mass following.

According to the RCC theoreticians, the CPML's form of struggle cannot lead to protracted armed struggle, for two reasons: 1) if the people are not organised on the basis of their demands, mere squad action will only divert attention from the issues they have to eventually fight, 2) the people will be their own liberators which means that they should be a part of the squads. The strategy of the RCC is based on the link between the party, armed struggle and united front. Also it is assumed by the RCC that the beginning, development, consolidation and extension of all peasant movements will be based on an agrarian programme. Peasant struggles to implement an agrarian programme will develop into armed struggles only if the masses are trained and tempered to resist that attacks that struggles invite. The programme of the agrarian revolution must therefore be coordinated with intensive propaganda for people's war, so that masses understand the relationship between agrarian revolution and seizure of power.
The CPML line, which called for the creation of base areas through annihilation of landlords or by forcing the landlords to flee the countryside is at variance with Mao's concept of liberated areas as understood by the RCC

Mao laid down three conditions for developing an area into a liberated area: building the armed forces, defeat of the enemy, and mobilisation of the broad masses of the people.

According to the unpublished document "Problems of People's War" (1970), as the RCC understood Mao, building the armed forces means building of the people's enemies; but rather the defeat of the class enemy along with its armed forces; and mobilising and arming them against the class enemy and its armed forces, in complete coordination with the people's armed forces.

The CPML had been a West Bengal centered party led by petit bourgeois intellectuals while the Andhra RCC was led by peasants who were neither mass leaders nor intellectuals. The CPML cadre in West Bengal was drawn from the urban middle classes, to be sent out to the countryside and withdrawn to cities as the situation demands. In contrast, the cadre of the CPML in Andhra Pradesh (particularly Srikakulam) came largely from peasant families and intellectuals of peasant origin. This meant that the CPML in Andhra Pradesh had more in common with the RCC than with the West Bengal CPML.

The Andhra Maoists, organised under the RCC, had the benefit of both positive and negative experiences of India's Maoist movements in Telangana and in Srikakulam. Moreover, the RCC applied Maoism creatively to the situation in
Andhra Pradesh while the CPML applied Maoism to India in a mechanical fashion

**Maoist Movement in the 70s and After**

After the internal emergency (1975-77), the State was dominated by two major groups - the Central Committee, CPI (ML), Chandra Pulla Reddy [CP] group and the CPI (ML) - PWG led by Kondapalli Seetharamaiah. There was a revival of the movement after the setback due to the imposition of emergency. There were differences of opinion on the situation then though most groups felt that unity was desirable. The CP group, which earlier opposed elections, decided to participate in electoral politics with its manifesto listing among other slogans land to the tiller, widespread irrigation system, remunerative price to peasants for agricultural produce, withdrawal of the Industrial Bill, deletion of Preventive Detention and the release of all political prisoners.

The November 1982 resolution of the CP group stated that the 'People's war based on agrarian revolution is the only national alternative to the path of Parliamentarianism.

Another development was the increase in the activities of the Civil Liberties organisations. As early as in 1970, a united civil liberties association had been set up by all the Maoist groups comprising the UCCRI (ML), CPI (ML), COC and the APRCP. The UCCRI (ML) separated and formed the Organisation for Protection of Democratic Rights (OPDR). Later, the CPI (ML)/COC formed the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee. These civil liberties associations were active when the Bhargava Commission enquired into the 'encounter deaths' collected material to
substantiate the Maoists' claims and also provided the legal protection and
served a much bigger political function by treating issues to be of much greater
significance affecting the society

Towards the end of the 70s there was a split in the Chandra Pulla Reddy group
over the manner in which the pitch of the movement was to be raised and on the
issue of strengthening the mass organisations instead of relying on armed
squad.

**People's War Group**

The CPI-ML led PWG led by Kondapalli, formed in January 1980 adopted an
independent line regarding the annihilation theory and the rise of mass
movements but his views were more radical than those of Chandra Pulla Reddy
The PWG viewed that all struggles served the cause of protracted armed struggle,
there should be no waiting and that the country was fully prepared for the armed
struggle. The PWG made a distinction between an armed struggle and the armed
form of struggle

The CPI-ML PWG Document "Summing Up the Past" stated

> The path of armed struggle is the only correct path of people's democratic
> revolution as opposed to parliamentary path, the armed form of struggle
> is not the only form of struggle.'

On annihilation, the PWG felt that 'every form of struggle including annihilation
would ultimately transform into a higher form as the struggle intensified.
such time as this actually happens, annihilation would continue as one of the forms of struggle.

In view of the fact that 'war was to be the form of struggle' armed squads were incorporated into the organisation of PWG. Village committees were to be set up to be converted into revolutionary councils while trade union and students organisations were to be infiltrated. In consonance with these principles, the party developed several front organisations which include the Rythu Coolie Sangham - organisation of militant farmers, Radical Students' Union - the students wing; Radical Youth League - a youth organisation of CPI-ML COC (PWG); Revolutionary Writers Association also known as VIRASAM, the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee with advocates strongly representing the PWG, Jana Natya Mandal - the cultural wing of the PWG with folk artists, singers and dramatists. Besides these the other front organisations of other Left wing groups include the Progressive Democratic Students Union affiliated to the United CPI-ML which advocated revolution but eschewed the path of armed struggle, Organisation for the Protection of Democratic Rights - association of advocates to represent the UCCRI-ML and other groups, Arunodhya Cultural Association - association representing the United CPI-ML, the Navodaya Cultural Association - association of folk artists representing the UCCRI-ML and the Progressive Organisation of Women - the womens wing of United CPI-ML.

The task of these organisations was to link the respective struggles at each level to the Party's overall basic task of mobilisation and organisation of workers and peasants for the people's democratic revolution.
While history itself can unravel so many causes which led to Naxalism, it would be worth examining the causes which have led to the emergence and sustenance of the movement in Andhra Pradesh.

**4.1.2 Causes**

History sheds light on several causes for the rise of and continuance of the Naxalite movement in Telangana. The Naxalite movement has a militant history. The failure of land reforms to improve the lot of the rural poor, the oppressive nature of the rural power structure, have all led to the increase in rural unrest, and rise of 'extremist' movements. The failure to give 'land to the tiller' and liberate him from the oppressive money lender, landlord-industrialist and officialdom peasant struggles for land became the only way out. This is the larger canvas against which the Naxalite movement has to be discussed along with some other developments in the post-colonial India which have accentuated the conflict.

Tracing the roots of Naxalism, G. Parthasarathy (1992 110) succinctly describes thus:

> It is wrong to ignore the roots of Naxalism and its links with the land question, that is, the issue of control over land by a few resulting in virtual control over the socio-economic and political life of the many within the rural communities. It is not only wrong but unhelpful to regard Naxalism as a pure law and order problem. There is a broad relationship between the severity of the incidence of the land question
and the incidence of Naxalism in the country. Intense Naxal conflicts in the north Telangana and tribal area stretched across Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra is the fall out of accelerated alienation of land to non-tribals coupled with deprivation of access to forests and to minor forest produce. Also, the ecology of the terrain or the tribal areas, forests and its inaccessibility, have provided shelter to the guerrilla squads. There are some objective conditions rooted in the land question, in the changing polity and in growing atrocities on Dalits for the emergence and growth of extreme movements in rural areas.

Drawing a distinction between the terrorist movements in Punjab and Kashmir and the Naxalite movement, Parthasarthy [1992:112] says:

The former are separatist movements which undermine the unity and integrity of the country while the Naxalite movement seeks to liberate the peasantry from economic and social oppression. Also, it differs from the other two movements with respect to the class composition of its participants, objectives and strategies as the members mostly comprise people from the most deprived and oppressed sections of the rural society. The objective is socio-economic transformation through uncompromising struggles for land and liberty for the oppressed.
Thus we see that Left Wing Extremism is a symptom of a society which is anxious to usher in social change—from feudalism to modernity. The cause therefore is socio-economic.

As discussed earlier, a conflict may emerge due to multiple causes. Most of the time while some factors trigger off, others intervene contributing to the intensity or complexity of the problem. However, perceptions differ among different actors about grouping causes as contributory and causal. Also, ground realities defy such categorisation but such grouping helps to explain the phenomenon analytically.

Presented below is a synopsis of the causes that have led to the emergence and spread of Naxalism as identified by Rao and Karumanchi (1995)

**Socio-cultural**

The demographic fabric of the Telangana region was distorted due to the influx of outsiders and the atrocities perpetrated on the tribal women by government personnel and the outsiders. The influx led to an identity crisis among the tribals which was also due to their educational backwardness and inadequate facilities.

**Political**

The mainstream political parties remained indifferent to the problems of the tribal-rural poor. These parties are in collusion with vested interests such as contractors, businessmen and landlords operating in the tribal areas which have no strong power structures. The non-governmental organizations lacked an
agenda of promoting awareness, conscientization and empowering the local communities.

**Economic**

1] Exploitation of tribals by non-tribals through unfair transactions

Widespread land alienation due to imposition of alien systems of land tenure and revenue collection from tribals who had no concepts of “Patta” and practiced shifting cultivation, widespread indebtedness and conditions of bonded labour (vetti) extending over several generations.

Alienation from forests as a result of a) designation of the traditional habitat of tribals as reserved forests, disrupting the symbiotic relationship between them. Thus the traditional rights and privileges of tribals, have eventually ended up as concessions granted by the state (Dheber Commission Report on the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes, 1961) b) Commercial exploitation of forests by the industries thus denying the traditional benefits of forest produce to the tribals, and c) the low Forest Schedule of Rates (FSR) or not adhered to.

ii) Inequitable relations between the tribals on the one hand the money-lenders, traders and contractors, often operating as the middlemen, on the other

iii) Non-payment of minimum wages

iv) Distortions of development as a result of the traumatic disruption of the life of the tribal rural poor without adequate and appropriate physical and occupational rehabilitation.
v) The immigration of non-tribals who had come to work for developmental projects thereby demonstrating to the tribals as to how ‘outsiders’ flourished at their expense

**Administrative**

i) There is virtual absence of development activity in many remote areas with poor infrastructural facilities such as roads, drinking water, electricity, health care and education.

ii) Dearth of motivated personnel, ‘punishment posting’ and transfer of dedicated officers at the instance of affected vested interests, leading to indifferent and corrupt development administration, characterised by the prevalence of obnoxious practices, as ‘patti’ and ‘mamool’

iii) The grievances of the public went unheard due to the high-handedness of law and order personnel in collusion of the administration with vested interests.

iv) As the traditional institutions like tribal panchayats faded, the tribals had no access to securing administrative and judicial justice and

v) tardy implementation of protective legislation.

**Contributory Factors**

i) The prevalent discontent among the poverty-stricken people in the backward areas was articulated in the ideological terms by the Naxalites;

ii) Naxalite cadres living with the tribal communities empathised with their grievances and built cadres from within, thus “organising” the tribals
iii) The absence of administration in the interior forest areas and poor channels of communication and policing were exploited by the extremists who constantly educated their cadres

iv) Industrialisation resulting in displacement due to loss of land

While these findings are comprehensive any discussion about Naxalism would be incomplete without the mention of the feudal agrarian structure and Vetti system which created a conducive atmosphere for the Naxalites to operate and sustain their movement.

Feudal Agrarian Structure

The socio-economic life of people in Telangana was the unbridled feudal exploitation which persisted till the beginning of the Telangana armed peasant struggle. The plight of the peasants was different from those of their counterparts because of the peculiar conditions and politico-economic laws that governed them under the Nizam's rule.

'The agrarian structure in Hyderabad' according to Dhanagare (1974, 109) 'was like a page out of the feudal history.' Out of the 53 million acres of land in the whole of Hyderabad State, about 30 million acres were under government land system (called Diwani or Khalsa area) about 15 million acres were under the Jagirdar system and about 10 per cent as the Nizam's own direct estate i.e Sarf-e-Khas. The Sarf-e-khas and Jagirdar system were abolished after the police action and these lands were merged in Diwani i.e., brought under the government land revenue system.
Of the two main types of land tenure, the Khalsa or Diwani was similar to the Ryotwari-peasant proprietary system. The landholders were not called owners per se but were treated as pattadars (registered occupants). The actual occupants within each patta were called shikmidars, who had full rights of occupancy but were not registered. As the pressure on land grew, the shikmidars, previously the cultivators, began to lease out lands to sub tenants (asami shikmi) for actual cultivation. The latter were tenants at will having neither legal rights in land nor any protection against eviction.

The Jagirdar system was the other major type of land tenure system. The Sarf-e-khas, Nizam's own direct estate or 'crown lands' was most important under this system. The income from the Sarf-e-khas areas, amounting to Rs 20 million annually was entirely used to meet the expenditure of the Nizam's family and his retinue. Also, seven million per annum was given from the State treasury to the Nizam. The peasants in these areas were born-slaves as whatever few rights that existed in the Diwani area were denied to them.

In addition to the above, there were the Paigas - estates granted to Muslim feudals, especially the Nizam's relatives for recruiting and maintaining the Nizam's army. The Jagirs and Samasthanams were those given as rewards to officers for distinguished service. Matkas, banjars, agraharams and inams were given for various services and their owners were entitled to exploit the peasantry. Illegal exactions and forced labour were the normal features in these areas. Some of these jagirs, paigas and samasthanams had their own separate police, revenue, civil and criminal systems. The land taxes on irrigated lands were more than 10 times than those in Diwani areas. The Deshmukhs and deshpandes - earlier tax...
collectors for the Government dominated in the Khalsa and Diwani areas. The

deshmuks and deshpandes because of their access to land records fraudulently

grabbed thousands of acres of best cultivated fertile land and made them their

own. The peasants were reduced to the positions of tenants at will or landless

labourers.

During the first survey settlement, vast portions of the lands cultivated by the

peasants came to be occupied by the landlords who got them registered on their

names without the knowledge of the peasants. During the period of economic

hardship, 1920-22 and 1930-33, lands in possession of the peasants were

occupied by the landlords due to bad harvests or unfair prices for the crops

making it impossible for the peasants to pay taxes. The feudal lords used to lend

agricultural produce to peasants at usurious rates and later under the pretext or

recovery of these loans, they used to confiscate their lands. The landlords were

not only deshmusks but also village officers- Patel, Patwari, Mali Patel with

hereditary rights. Each used to get five to 10 villages under him as vatan.

**Vetti System**

The vetti system was all pervasive in Telangana affecting people from all classes

and castes of people in varying degrees in return for cash and kind. Under this

system the powerful jagirdars and deshmusks or landlords enjoyed special

privileges like services of occupational castes in return for payment in cash or

kind. Each Harijan family had to send one man from the family to do 'vetti'. Their

daily routine included doing household work in the house of the Patel, Patwari,

Mali Patel or deshmusks, to carry reports to police station and taluk office, and

keep a vigil on the village chavadi and the poundage. Also, Harijans engaged in
work of cobblers, tanning of leather and stitching of shoes, or preparing leather accessories for agricultural implements for drawing water from the wells were forced to supply these to the landlords free of cost, while the rest of the peasantry paid fixed annuities to grain and other agriculture produce. Certain backward communities like boyalu, bestalu and washermen were forced to carry men and women of the landlords families in palanquins. Weavers had to supply clothes to the landlords and their servants. Carpenters and blacksmiths had to supply all agricultural implements to landlords free of cost. Even Brahmins were not exempted from this practice. They had to stitch their platters made of leaves for the landlords.

The various forms of forced labour and exaction were extracted not only by the landlords but also by the officials, petty or high. The 'vetti' system made the life of the Telangana people one of utter degradation and of abject serfdom. When the feudal lords tried to intensify their illegal exactons, to evict the cultivating peasants from their lands and lease them out to others, the peasants resisted.

Also, the bagela serfdom drawn mostly from aboriginal tribes were customary retainers tied to their masters by debt. Working as domestic or menial labourers, they could never repay their debts and hence had to work for their masters, generation after generation for a pittance.

As Sundaram (1987) said:

The tribals owning small pieces of land are expropriated and share croppers impoverished. They are all kept under perpetual bondage towards payment of a small debt.
supposedly taken generations ago. The forest wealth is freely smuggled out by contractors with the connivance of the forest staff. The tribals get neither a remunerative price for their forest produce nor a fair wage for their labour. The social dimensions of exploitation were far more revolting. The landlords of the region, belonging to Reddy and Velama communities were usually addressed as Dora that meant a master or lord.

After a lapse of over two decades, some writers argue that there has been a drastic change in the social conditions which ignited the movement. For instance, Aravinda Rao (1996) says that ‘socio-economic agenda is only a pretext. It is not their main agenda, their main aim is power and money. There are no conditions in the State today to warrant a revolution. Does the State resemble China of the 1930s?’ he questions.

4.1.3 Organisation

One of the significant factors contributing to the sustenance and continuance of Left Wing extremism in Andhra Pradesh is its organisation. Despite the collapse of Communism elsewhere in the world and the severe stress the ideology is undergoing in recent times, manifested in divergent thoughts in the leadership, the strength of Left Wing extremism today does not lie in the realm of thought but in its organisational power.
Sivaramakrishna's review of the *Cabinet-Sub-Committee report* (1991. 222) quoted that the strength of Left Wing Extremism is not so much its ideology but the well-knit secret organisational structure, heavy arsenal and guerilla tactics.

According to the PWG in the long protracted struggle people have to be organised in different ways according to the differential levels of political consciousness. The overall view was that since ultimately 'armed revolution' or 'war' was to be the form of struggle, armed squads or army would have to be the form of organisation. Likewise, for all forms of struggle, auxiliary to armed struggle, corresponding forms of organisations have to be formed.

Discussions with police and ideologues revealed that the PWG has at its apex the Central Organising Committee with seven members. Two committees monitor the PWG's activities in the State while the Provincial Committee reviews the work in the plains, the Forest Committee is in charge of the forest areas in Adilabad, East Godavari, Vishakapatnam and Khammam districts in Andhra Pradesh as well as Koraput in Orissa.

In the forest areas, armed squads or dalams operate under the control of the Forest Committee. Mobilisation of the tribal and rural masses is done by the Agitation and Propaganda Committee.

Action against police informers is planned by Squad Area Committees while the Regional Committee decides on acts like ambushing or killing of police personnel termed as State actions in consultation with the District Committee.

The exclusively spread out underground network adopts ways and means to outwit and escape from the police and minimise their losses in the event of being...
A strong, dedicated courier system constitutes the lifeline of the dalam. Couriers do not have access to the entire dalam, but are in contact with one member. While visiting a village, the dalam does not go in a group but is spread out. A 'pilot' goes ahead to give the 'all clear signal'.

Dalam members are well-versed in Telugu and almost all the local tribal dialects which enables them to establish and maintain close rapport. Significantly the leaders in the neighbouring States are mainly Telugu speaking. The concept of armed squad or dalam with mobile warfare has been so far the most successful strategy of the PWG. Such dalams are a source of fear among the people and the Government officials.

The movement is at present controlled by Muppala Lakshmana Rao (Ganapathi), a second generation leader. Many of the leaders from the 1970s have paled into insignificance having surrendered (Mukku Subba Reddy, Nimmeluri Bhaskar Rao) joined mainstream politics (K G Satyamurthy), or died in encounters (Puli Anjaiah). Kondapalli Seetharamiah was 'expelled' from the People's War Group in 1992 following differences with the Central Organising Committee. However he continues to maintain that his organisation is the 'real' PWG.

Recruitment of cadre is mainly done by appealing to the idealistic fervour and exploiting the discontent of the youth. Unemployed youth in the 15-25 age bracket are attracted by the new idiom articulated by the Left Wing extremists. At present, backward class dalits and minorities constitute an estimated 70 per cent of the cadres as compared to about 25 per cent in the initial stages of the movement. There is a reported decline in the average education of the new cadres.
The motivation to join the movement today appears to be more socio economic than ideological.

Indoctrination is attempted through pamphlets, songs and plays highlighting the oppression and exploitation of the tribals and rural poor in the existing system. People are exhorted to agitate for better rates for their produce, not to vote etc. They are told that while the extremists are championing the peoples' cause against the exploitative class, the police is in league with the vested interests. Naxals have succeeded in acquiring a Robinhood image after redressing the problems of the tribals to a certain extent. They spread the message through popular songs and plays, posters and pamphlets which go down well with the masses. An extensive underground network and the high command are in touch using folk forms of intelligence gathering.

Cadre members are trained in terrain analysis and field craft, guerrilla warfare techniques such as ambush and landmining, and rigorous physical conditioning to ensure combat fitness. In addition to the vanguard dalams, several other leanguard sanghams or associations and front organizations involving peasants, students, women, industrial labour, intellectuals, and artists have been operating in Andhra Pradesh to mobilise support.

The main source of funding is through exortion from rich landlords and industrialists. It has been estimated that the PWG has collected funds to the tune of five crore rupees per annum during 1990-1995. 'Donations' are sought from trade and business associations in towns and cities. The PWG is believed to have invested huge amounts in at least half a dozen finance companies in Karimnagar and Nizamabad districts.
Sophisticated arms such as 30 carbines 8 mm rifles, pistols, SLRS, revolvers, grenades gelatine sticks detonators, AK-47, AK 56 rocket launchers and sten guns are in use. Also available are 30 carbines, 8mm rifles, pistols, SLRs, revolvers, grenades, gelatine sticks and detonators. Over 500 members operate in the forest dalams. Nearly 120 of them use automatic and semi-automatic weapons while about 75 members are trained in handling explosives.

The All-India People's Resistance Forum is an umbrella grouping of 22 mass organisations at the national level including the PWG, Revolutionary Writers Association and Jana Natya Mandal. Some radical groups have established links with similar outfits in other States.

4.1.4 Ideology

The ideological framework and tactics of Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse Tung which formed the bulwark of the revolutions in the Soviet Union and China as also the LWE in the State.

Marx and Engels

The classic works of Marx and Engels, Selected Works (1975 472) pointed out the necessity of joint actions of the working class and the peasantry in the struggle against the bourgeoisie system. They stressed that the peasantry would join the proletariat. Marx and Engels emphasised the combining of the proletariat revolution with the peasant revolutionary movement and to win the peasnats over to the side of the proletariat. They believed that if the party of the proletariat wants to win political power, it should win over the peasant masses and lead the
proletariat together with the peasantry to the conquest of political power, not waiting for the time when capitalist production will reach its peak in all the fields.

Engels wrote "It is true that a time will come when the fleeced and impoverished section of the peasantry will unite with the proletariat, which by then will be further developed and will declare war on the bourgeoisie".

Lenin (1947) expanded Marx and Engels' idea of an alliance of the working class and the peasantry. Proceeding from the social and economic analysis of the development of capitalism in Russia, Lenin demonstrated the class nature of the peasantry and indicated that this nature predetermined its revolutionary potential which the proletariat and its party were to employ in the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Leninism regards the peasant question as a component of the general question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin proved that the peasantry can and that the dictatorship of the proletariat is, a specific form of class alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry for the eradication of all forms of exploitation and for the victory of socialism. Lenin regarded the peasant question as a component of the general thrust of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The revolution led by Lenin and Mao was qualitatively different which culminated in the overthrow of the old exploiting classes who were in power (landlords and capitalists) and put the toiling millions led by the working class in the seats of power. Between Lenin and Mao too, there is a vast difference. Lenin was the theoretical and practical trail blazer for the new class, the proletariat, who, armed with the mighty power of Marxist theory, not only overthrew the old exploiting classes but set up the first state of proletarian power.
Elaborating and further enriching the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution originally discovered by Marx and Engels he explained how the capitalism of the early years of the twentieth century was a further development of capitalism, its development into the very opposite of the competitive capitalism analysed by Marx and Engels. Characterising capitalism of this phase as monopoly capitalism or imperialism, he established with an abundance of factual material and a truly Marxist theoretical generalisation that this was the last phase of capitalism. The epoch of monopoly capitalism or imperialism, he went on, is the epoch of civil wars, inter-imperialism, national revolutionary and civil wars, all of which will inevitably lead to the replacement of capitalism by socialism.

Fortified by this theory, Lenin evolved the tactics of the democratic revolution led by the working class and based on worker peasant alliance which would grow into the socialist revolution. He applied this theoretical concept to the specific conditions of Russia as well as of the world proletariat movement. The victorious socialist revolution in Russia, the successes of this revolution over its enemies at home and abroad, the consolidation of proletariat revolutionary forces in the world into the Communist International are his contributions.

**Mao Tse Tung**

Mao (1954: 119) did not have to work out (as Lenin had to) the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution in the world as a whole and in a new epoch of human history. He applied the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution worked out by the Communist International to the specific conditions in China. Mao refused to apply mechanically whatever came from the Soviet Union unless it conformed to the experience of the people's own movement in China. He developed the notion
in the context of China's semi feudal and semi-colonial conditions and propounded the theory of people's democratic revolution. This theory which is an essential part of the Maoist outlook, hinges on the central point of determining the principal contradiction in an environment at a particular point of time, i.e. Mao says "If in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position" (1973 311+) (All subsequent references to Mao are to this edition)

A united front was conceived as the broadest combination of the classes opposed to the main enemy. The Chinese Communist party always relied on what they called the 'main force' of the revolution. Since the people's democratic revolution was to take place in a feudal environment, according to Mohanty (1973 9)) peasantry was to be the main force of the revolution. The agrarian character of the people's democratic revolution was stressed.

He states

The Chinese revolution cannot be other than protracted.

The revolutionary forces cannot hold their positions, let alone capture those of the enemy, unless they steel themselves and display their tenacity to the full. It is therefore wrong to think that the forces of the Chinese revolution can be built up in the twinkling of an eye, or that China's revolutionary struggle can triumph over night.

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Negating the left adventurist tactics of seeing the revolution round the corner, Mao fought those who thought that the struggle in China need not be an armed struggle but can be peaceful. The Maoist principle that emerged through the Chinese practice consisted of a united front against the principal enemy, with the leadership of the working class and the peasantry as the main force. Approvingly quoting the generalisation made by Stalin that 'in China the armed revolution is fighting the armed counter revolution. That is one of the specific features and one of the advantages of the Chinese revolution', Mao says, 'It is wrong to belittle armed struggle, the revolutionary war, guerrilla war and army work.'

Drawing again from the Chinese experience which began with the general strike and armed uprising of the working class in the main cities but which were ruthlessly suppressed by the ruling classes, Mao drew another important conclusion. Since China's cities have long been occupied by the powerful imperialists and their reactionary allies, it is imperative for the revolutionary ranks to turn to the backward villages into advanced, consolidated base areas, into great military, political, economic and cultural bastions of the revolution from which to fight their vicious enemies who are using the cities for attacks on the rural districts, and in this way gradually to achieve the complete victory of the revolution through protracted fighting.

An equally important lesson drawn by Mao is that 'stressing armed struggle does not mean abandoning other forms of struggle, on the contrary, armed struggle cannot succeed unless coordinated with other forms of struggle.' And stressing the working in the rural base areas does not mean abandoning our work in the cities and in other vast rural areas which are still under the enemy's rule, on the
contrary, without work in the cities and in the other rural areas, our own rural
base areas would be isolated and the revolution would be further defeated.
Moreover, the final objective of the revolution is to capture all the cities, the
enemy's main bases, and this objective cannot be achieved without work in the
cities.

The importance of destroying the enemy's army, his chief weapon against the
people, is also given equal importance in Mao's strategy and tactics. Besides
annihilating the enemy's troops in battle, there is the important task of
disintegrating them. The Mao theory and tactics of armed struggle is thus an
adaptation to Chinese conditions of the Leninist teaching on the need for
'disintegrating' the organised army of the ruling class "Not a single great
revolution".

According to Namboodripad (1976.63) the essence of Mao's teaching as the
essence of the teachings of all Marxists-Leninists, is that the concrete conditions
in every country should be studied concretely and in an all sided manner,
without abandoning the universal principles of Marxism-class struggle leading to
revolutionary seizure of power, the necessity of adopting all forms of struggle
including the lowest and most elementary forms which are required by concrete
conditions while keeping in view the inevitability of armed struggle; the leading
role of the proletariat over all other sections of the toiling millions, the importance
of concentrating the fire on and forging unity against the most reactionary
sections of the ruling classes, the interdependence of the national struggle in
every country on the one hand and the international struggle of the world
proletariat against world capitalism on the other. It would be contrary to the
spirit of Marxism to fail to take account of the concrete conditions in a particular country at a particular moment as it would be to abandon the above mentioned universal truths which are applicable to every country without exception.

The signal contribution which Mao and the Chinese Communist Party led by him made to the theory of Marxism-Leninism is the interdependence of three major factors of the revolution: the united front, the armed struggle and the Communist Party for successfully carrying out the democratic revolution to its end and developing it into the socialist revolution. In doing this, Mao was not breaking any new ground but treading along the path mapped out by Lenin in his works 'Two Tactics of Social Democracy, State and Revolution, and Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky'.

Das Gupta (1974. 116), identifying the main components of the Naxalite ideology summarises the class character of the Indian State power as follows:

The core of the CPI-ML analysis of the class character of the Indian State power is the view that India is nominally independent but is actually semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. The Congress administration represents the interests of the Indian feudal princes, big landlords and bureaucratic compradore capitalists. The semi-feudal nature of the economy is evidenced by excessive dependence on agriculture for livelihood, evasion of land reform laws, concentration of land ownership in a small number of hands, high rent, eviction of tenants and agricultural labourers, high rate of interest by money lenders, and social
oppression of the scheduled castes which is "reminiscent of
the middle ages" The four elements, imperialism, Soviet
revisionism, feudalism and bureaucratic compradore
capitalism, weigh like big mountains on the back of the
Indian people, first of all on the toiling masses of workers
and the peasantry Lastly, he states that the contradiction
between feudalism and the broad masses of the Indian people
is the principal contradiction

In a critical review, Biplab Das Gupta (1974 117) identifies weaknesses in the
class analysis of the Naxalites, their boycotting the elections and views about the
armed struggle

First, the failure to recognise the elements of contradiction in the relations
between Indian and foreign economic interests, overlooking of certain factors
affecting the rural economy and silence on how the relations between the
compradore bourgeoisie and the landlords work, what are the contradictions and
complementarities between the two classes, and how these would influence the
strategy of the Indian revolution.

Naxalites quote Lenin to justify their non-participation in the parliamentary
elections, who said- ‘parliament is a pigsty’ but by refusing to participate in the
parliamentary activities the Naxalites ‘have failed to use the legal facilities made
available in elections, and also use the machinery of parliament to propagate
their views and mobilise public opinion’ (Biplab Das Gupta 1974 118)
On the optimism regarding armed struggle, Naxalites erred in assuming that conditions under which the Chinese revolution were prevailing were prevalent in India and that Indians were subjectively prepared for an armed uprising. Also, Naxalites overlooked the historical background to the struggles and the technological developments in weaponry and military warfare.

4.1.5 Tactics & Strategy

The three Communist parties in India have their tactical lines drawn in organising peasant struggles on revolutions in the Soviet Union and China.

The CPI is predominantly influenced by the classical Marxian concept of the peasantry's role in line with Marx's thinking. The CPI emphasises the importance of mobilising the owners of small holding and poor peasantry but firmly stands by the classical concept of working class leading the class struggle for a proletarian society.

The CPI-M on the other hand has developed a Leninist approach to the role of peasantry. Lenin brought about a tactical alliance between the urban proletariat and the poor peasantry and sought to neutralise the middle level peasantry and made the rich peasant an enemy of the revolution. The CPI-M has evolved a strategy of revolution in which the rural proletariat is still emerging to a status of equal importance with urban proletariat.

Left Wing extremism advocated by the CPML has adopted the concept of Maoist revolution in which the armed rural proletariat is in the vanguard. The CPI-M would not accept the CPI-ML thesis that the main content of the Indian revolution is agrarian in which only the peasantry can play a determining role.
Also, the CPI-M and the CPI-ML differ with regard to the strategy of seizure of power. According to the CPI-ML 'Power is to be seized first in the countryside, with the building of rural guerrilla bases, and with liberated rural areas, finally encircling and taking over the cities'. The rural proletariat inevitably occupies the vanguard position in the revolution. The CPI-M regards this policy as adventurist and inapplicable to the Indian situation. The nature of the struggles organised by the three factions of the Communist movement reflects their respective tactical lines. The CPI has organised massive and impressive marches, petitions and a symbolic 'land grab' movement. The CPI-M sought to organise militant struggle for the poor peasants and share croppers and landless workers. The struggle has taken the characteristic of 'armed resistance'. The CPI-ML follows the peasant guerrilla warfare as against 'armed resistance'. The CPI-M follows the defensive approach of resisting the organised attempts of the landlords to protect their land interests while the CPI-ML has adopted the offensive approach of attacking the landlord class to annihilate them finally.

The old strategy of revolutionary warfare is very much in use by the People's War Group - the dominant among the ML groups.

As Mao said, if a poorly equipped and trained revolutionary force wishes to fight a relatively modern and well equipped police force, 'the only way to win ultimate victory lies in a strategically protracted war'. Also, they go by what Mao said 'struggle, fall, struggle again fall again and struggle again till victory'. To win such a war the PWG is making efforts to reverse the power relationship by mobilising support of the people and strengthening itself by conducting Praja Courts and settling civil disputes, gaining outside political and, if possible, military support,
attacking police stations, blasting police vehicles, singling out and eliminating local influential people and police officials.

The last factor is a part of the annihilation campaign aimed at 'smashing feudal authority, creating red bases, encouraging the masses to join the revolutionary forces and of establishing the leadership of the poorer sections of the rural masses in the peasant movement.' (Biplab Das Gupta, 1974)

This policy also implied the rejection of the 'mass line and mass organisations' and the adoption of a secret organisation for party activities which Mazumdar stated in an article that 'open mass movements and mass organisations are obstacles in the way of development and expansion of guerilla warfare.'

The PWG embarked on a comprehensive course of action, the salient features of which were: redistribution of land, enforcing payment of minimum wages to the farm labour; imposing taxes and penalties, holding people's courts, destroying government property, kidnapping government functionaries, attacking policemen, and enforcing a social code.

The PWG is believed to have redistributed nearly half a million acres across the State. The modus operandi was to occupy forcibly the excess land of big land owners and give them away to the landless or to the labourers working for the landlord. As per the State Government's own admission (counter affidavit 68/82 filed by the state against the Naxalites), the Radicals had forcibly occupied and re-distributed 80,000 acres of agricultural land and 1,20,000 acres of forest land. This forced agrarian justice brought about a sea change in the feudal system in the Telangana districts. The party activists also insisted on a hike in the daily
Venkateswara Rao (1989), the Editor of Andhra Prabha commented as follows on PWG's grip over Telangana districts:

... the PWG practically runs a 'parallel government' in Karimnagar, Warangal and Adilabad districts. It collects 'taxes and penalties' from forest and excise contractors, rich landlords and businessmen. It receives complaints from the public, conducts enquiries and investigations, holds people's courts, pronounces judgements and awards and administers punishments.

The PWG is operating more effectively where certain terrain provides a shield to them. The forests of Telangana, Nalamalla and Godavari district are fertile breeding places. The PWG almost invariably finds it easier to establish itself in the isolated countryside with difficult terrain where the presence of the Government authorities, particularly the police are weakest. In such areas, the PWG still manages to get enough recruits to form dalams and sub-dalams. Also they try to influence isolated small villages and Tandas to form their temporary bases with the two-pronged strategy of persuasion and intimidation the local people find it expedient to cooperate and remain silent.

After the new recruits are imparted training and provided with weapons, the guerrilla operations such as ambush of police party, planting of land mines and attacks on police stations follow. The administration reacts by despatching police...
parties after such actions. If the police party moves carelessly they find themselves ambushed or landmined. If they advance carefully they are met with silence. The common local people have realised that they are at the mercy of the PWG dalams as the police cannot provide them protection round the year and in each and every village. The District authorities are faced with a dilemma of counter-revolutionary warfare. They use intimidation, sanction, and dislocation to separate the PWG militant from the common populace. In the process, the administration sometimes antagonises and loses the vital support of the people. If they do not use these pressures they find that the villagers react to the diktats of the PWG. Though the administration makes efforts, it is one step behind the PWG—reacting rather than initiating.

Presently the armed squads or the dalams find that they can operate successfully away from their own home areas, even as several open cadre militants operate in their local areas and operate as recruiters.

Such strategy of PWG to have a network to join some villagers is proving to be effective. With various aliases and fake names, the PWG cadres have been successfully evading police action.

The PWG strives hard to mobilise popular support to their ideology and also enlist their grievances. The PWG tries to win a real measure of popular support by satisfying their complaints and demands, sometimes even violating their own overall objectives. They never hesitate to kill the more obnoxious landlords, police officials—considered as class enemies and informers who are a threat to achieving their overall objective.
By isolating people from outside influences and government machinery and working on a person-to-person basis, the PWG slowly makes its headway.

A major strategy of the PWG is to deceive the Government into making feeble and delayed anti-naxal operation. Often the Government and the police are lured into actions that spell disaster to them.

Handicapped by lack of means, the Government and the police are generally deceived by the strategy of the PWG. Since the police and the security forces lack the means to dominate the entire Telangana, they concentrate on the so-called more disturbed areas. These ‘disturbed areas’ are often economically and socially sensitive. Police concentration in the cities and Mandal headquarters give the PWG better freedom to operate in the countryside where most of the people reside. By ambushing a police patrol, blasting police jeeps and attack on remote police stations, snatching police weapons, the PWG boosts the confidence of the cadre and instils fear in the minds of the common people. The police somehow seems to have failed in curbing the supply of arms to the PWG. In such a situation the police has the only option of depending on para military forces, like the Border Security Forces etc. In such cases also, there are complaints that there is lack of coordination between the police forces.

After an intense operation in a particular area, when the police and security forces leave, the PWG dalams and militants infiltrate back into the areas, taking vengeance on those who are alleged to have collaborated with the police. Implicit in the discussion so far is the use of force and violence by the naxalites to achieve their goals. Aravinda Rao (1996) provides statistics on violence which reads as follows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PWG</td>
<td>2(194)</td>
<td>512(132)</td>
<td>464(101)</td>
<td>428(72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPML-JS</td>
<td>27(4)</td>
<td>28(7)</td>
<td>22(5)</td>
<td>37(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPML-PB</td>
<td>11(6)</td>
<td>12(4)</td>
<td>14(12)</td>
<td>16(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPML-YK</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>11(6)</td>
<td>11(1)</td>
<td>15(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>38(8)</td>
<td>26(10)</td>
<td>14(4)</td>
<td>31(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>675(212)</td>
<td>589(159)</td>
<td>525(123)</td>
<td>527(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.6 State Policy and Naxalism

Naxalism is not confined to Andhra Pradesh but has also spread to other parts of the country. This section takes a critical look at the policies adopted by successive State Governments in Andhra Pradesh towards Naxalism.

Successive Governments have inherited the PWG violence and their attitude towards the underground movement has been 'inconsistent', 'fragmented' and 'incoherent'.
The Naxalite movement flourishes in Andhra Pradesh though it failed in West Bengal where it was born in the 1960s. The Naxalites tried to organise it in Kerala but failed. In Bengal, the CPM Government engaged the Marxist-Leninist groups in an 'ideological warfare' and confronted them in the villages. In 1969, it took roots in Andhra Pradesh in Srikakulam district but Jalagam Vengal Rao, as the Chief Minister treated it as a law and order problem. In the process, the police had a field day.

As Bhargava (1989'71) points out.

The phenomenon of fake encounters saw birth, especially in the wake of imposition of internal emergency by Indira Gandhi in June 1975, scores of young men were put to death as Naxalites. Many of the victims were, no doubt radicals but they were arrested in connection with the agrarian disputes and killed in cold blood. Officially, however, they were supposed to be armed desperadoes killed by the police in self defence. The Bhargava Commission set up by the Janata Government to inquire into the police excesses brought out in chilling detail cases of brutality by the guardians of law. The State Government, embarrassed by the accounts of bestiality by the police, called off the inquiry. Later, an unofficial commission constituted by Jaya Prakash Narayan with Justice Tarkunde as Chairman had established that at least 200 persons were liquidated as Naxalites in those days.
While campaigning for the 1983 elections, MRNT Rama Rao, President of the Telugu Desam Party described Naxalites as ‘real patriots’ and pledged his support to the movement. After assuming office as the Chief Minister, he extolled the Naxalites as ‘brothers’ who deserved ‘red salutes’ However, after the kidnap and killing of Telugu Desam Mandal President, Malhar Rao in Karimnagar district, Mr. Rama Rao talked of matching Naxalite violence with police violence, and proposed to bomb remote forest and hilly tracts using helicopters and flush out Naxalites from their hideouts. The State also sought the permission of the Union Government to set up an ammunition factory to supply arms at reasonable rates to the people to protect themselves from Naxalites. Issuing of licences for firearms was liberalised and village self defence squads and district coordination committees were set up to monitor the implementation of the welfare schemes.

Following the kidnap of six IAS officers in East Godavari district in 1987, the Government strengthened the police department with the institution of ‘Greyhounds’ and nearly 1,000 personnel were drawn on deputation from the Special armed police and the Andhra Pradesh Reserve Police who were specially trained for the purpose.

Reacting to this move, the PWG State Committee in its unpublished report (1988) issued a statement:

The Andhra Pradesh Government has mounted repression on a large scale for the past few years in order to destroy the peasant movement launched by revolutionaries. The Rama Rao Government has waged an undeclared war on these revolutionaries and is encouraging police officers to kill the
revolutionaries in the so called encounters. So, the situation has arisen when the revolutionaries have to protect themselves and to mount counter action. The north Telangana districts and adjoining forest areas had become a vast police camp where a 'fascist rule' was prevailing.

Pointing to this trend, Haragopal (1983: 650) states:

From the mid 80s the police and the Home Ministry became much more aggressive and started not only believing but preaching that movements like the Naxalite one cannot and should not be handled in accordance with the rule of law. This view received prominence during Vengal Rao's Chief Ministership in the 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s. The fake encounters, custodial deaths, cases of disappearance of party activists and sympathisers, attacks and raids on villagers, killings of civil liberties activists - all are part of this phenomenon. It is the lawlessness of the State that qualitatively changed the political context and character of the Naxalite movement.... The lawlessness of the State coupled with an absence of socio-economic measures has had a multiplier effect on the deteriorating conditions in society which started witnessing practices like illegal detentions and kidnaps.

In a 49-page report, titled 'Police killings and Rural violence in Andhra Pradesh,' Asia Watch (1991), the US based international human rights organisation,
recorded cases of murder, rape and torture of peasants and tribal villagers by security forces in the state and accused the police of killing and intimidating journalists and human rights activists on the pretext of fighting Naxalites. The organisation indicted the State police and charged it of often operating as private armies of powerful upper caste landlords against rural poor. The report notes that most of the police victims have been poor peasants and labourers, particularly those who are members and organisers of peasant unions and therefore, labelled Naxalite.

The group investigated the cases of 'encounter killings', in which rural activists, militants and countless ordinary villagers were taken into custody and murdered by the State police and federal para-military forces and then reported as 'armed encounters'.

According to the report, the number of such killings has shown an alarming increase during 1991-92 with as many as 221 persons reported killed between August 1991-1992 August

In 1989, the Congress returned to power and Dr M Channa Reddy became the Chief Minister of the State. In view of the reports of police excesses and human rights violations and the kidnap of two legislators, Mr. Mandava Venkateswara Rao of Telugu Desam and Mr. Krishna Reddy of Congress in two separate incidents, Dr Reddy, adopted a conciliatory policy in the hope of that the PWG would stop abductions and to attract the Naxalites to join the mainstream. Undertrial Naxalite prisoners numbering 150 were released and the Disturbed Areas Act in force in select divisions of Karimnagar, Warangal, Nizamabad and Khammam districts since 1978 were withdrawn. Likewise, the Terrorist and
Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) was discontinued, the Greyhounds concept was disbanded and a Special Security Force was created to counter the problem.

During this period when the State adopted a 'soft', 'liberal' policy, Naxalites held a series of meetings in which leaders of their front organisations like Gaddar, folk singer against whom non-bailable warrants were pending, took part. Concurs Subrahmanyam (1994: 388) the PWG conducted a number of mammoth rallies, public meetings and achieved higher 'political consciousness' and mobilised 'organised political opinion.'

The Naxalites also organised Praja Courts to dispense instant justice. As recorded by Reddy (1990), 'people's court became the main instrument not only for solving the economic problems of the exploited classes, but also to deal with legal matters, family disputes, corruption in administration and dowry harassment cases.'

According to Omkar of the MCPI, the Naxalites found a strange ally in the Chenna Reddy Government as one Minister in his cabinet coordinated the activities of the Seetharamaiah group, Congress musclemen and the police with a view to eliminate the CPM and BJP elements in villages, particularly in Warangal and Karimnagar.

The 'red terror' served its purpose of laying open the villages for penetration by the Naxalites. Rytu Coolie Sanghams, or trade unions of peasants and landless labourers, set up in villages, became conduits for rake offs from monied interests. The main source of funds is protection money collected from paper mill

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owners, timber merchants, excise contractors, tendu leaf traders and land owners

Singh (1995:110) says that 'Naxalites resorted to large scale extortions and collected funds through quotas fixed on rice millers, traders, cinema hall owners and lawyers and other professionals'.

In early 1991, under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Minister, a joint coordination committee with representatives of four States-Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa was formed to deal with the problem, coordinate police activities and ensure that the local people did not support the Naxalites. In August 1991, the Chief Ministers of the four States favoured the setting up of an apex body for intelligence gathering and coordination of all anti-extremist operations at Hyderabad. A joint action plan was also drawn up in October 1991. However, the Union Home Minister in 1992 February denied the setting up of an apex intelligence body.

Subsequently, the N Janardhana Reddy Government adopted a hardline strategy and declared the People's War Group and eight of its front organisations as unlawful and banned it for three years on June 5, 1991. The other organisations which were banned included the Radical Youth League, Radical Students Union, Rythu Coolie Sangham, the Singareni Karmika Samakhya, (Dandakaranya), the Girijan Rythu Coolie Sangham, All India Revolutionary Students Federation, Revolutionary Women's league and the Organisation for Protection of Girijan Rights.
In a report submitted during the tenure of N Janardhana Reddy as the Chief Minister, a Cabinet Sub-Committee, felt that 'there has been no instance in the world where extremism/terrorism, which may be regarded as ideologically oriented movements has degenerated and has ever been successfully dealt with by a response of the government other than sustained law and order measures. Hence, vigorous police operations were recommended.' This report has been reviewed by Sivaramakrishna (1991: 222).

The review elaborates on police excesses and arbitrary conduct of functionaries of the government, unbridled state repression against those who were fighting against socio-economic inequities while dealing with the problem at the socio-economic and political levels.

As Subrahmanyam (1994: 388) remarks:

The State was assuming more and more the form of a monster. This ogre has been strengthened by deploying the Central Reserve Police Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police and Border Security Force in Telangana districts in addition to the Andhra Pradesh Special Police, Anti-Naxalite Squad, Special Task Force and Special Striking Force. Helicopters are being purchased to tackle the Naxalites in view of landmine blasting. Slowly, the militarisation process is taking place in Andhra Pradesh stretching from Telangana to Rayalseema and Coastal Andhra.
The State Government declared a ban on PWG and its front organisations under the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908) applicable to the Andhra area and under the Andhra Pradesh (Telangana area) Public Security Act (1348 Fasli) for "indulging in mindless violence, taking life, destruction of public property and for disturbing general peace by their violent activities."

The Government defended its decision to ban on the grounds that the functioning in villages was impaired and as demanded by the people.

However, there was a difference of opinion as Section 15 (2) (b) of the Criminal Amendment Act, says: Unlawful Association means 'an association which has been declared by the State Government, by notification in the official gazette, to be unlawful, on the ground (to be specified in the notification) that such an association 1) constitutes a danger to public peace, or 2) has interfered or interferes with the maintenance of public order, or has such interference for its object 3) has interfered or interferes with the administration of the law or has such interference for its object.'

From a legal perspective, K.G. Kannabiran, the then President of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee stated: 'Section 15 in the Madras Act was struck down by the Supreme Court as far back as in 1952 in a case when the ban on a certain organisation was challenged on the ground that it imposed unreasonable restrictions. Another ground for striking down that section was that there was no provision for adequate communication of the Government's notification under Section 15 (2) to the association and its members and office bearers. The only provision was for publication in the official gazette ‘whose publicity value is by no means great and does not reach members of the
The Government embarked on a different approach to cut arms supply to the hard core groups and wean away people from the movement through socio-economic measures.

In December 1994, after N.T. Rama Rao took over as the Chief minister, the Government declared that it proposed to handle the extremist activity as a socio-economic issue and not merely as a law and order issue. The Government embarked on a different approach to cut arms supply to the hard core groups and wean away people from the movement through socio-economic measures. Naxalites were invited for unconditional talks in the hope of abjuring violence and joining the mainstream. They were asked to identify excess lands with the landlords for distribution. The Government directed the police to stop all ‘encounters’ and released Kondapalli Seetharamaiah from jail on humanitarian grounds after withdrawing cases against him. When it was time to review the ban on PWG and its front organisations in June 1995, Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao decided ‘to allow it to lapse’. Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu who succeeded Rama Rao decided to maintain status quo. However, the ban was reclamped on June 23, 1996 on the grounds that ‘development in the Telangana districts was being impeded because of Naxalite activities.’

As mentioned earlier, the Naxal issue is viewed differently by various sections of the society including the various wings of the State apparatus.
What holds our attention especially in the context of Naxalism is what has been and should be the role of the Press in such multi-dimensional conflict situations which involve collective mobilisation of a certain class of people, who, based on an international ideology wage a 'struggle' against the State. What is the nature of coverage? What is the perception of the State agencies on the working of the Press. How do ideologues view the coverage and how do they interface with the Press and lastly what are the individual and operational constraints on the Pressmen reporting Naxal related issues.

4.2 Qualitative review

This section presents data obtained through qualitative content analysis of the coverage of Naxalite related news stories and editorials in select newspapers.

Presented below is an analysis of the news reports against the framework of the rhetorical traditions—information, sensationalist, feature story and didactic. All the newspapers had most of their news stories in the information tradition relating to Naxalites and the Government.

Information Tradition

News stories on Naxalites in the information tradition included call for bandhs/boycott of polls, PWG warning police informers, their relative strengths—parallel government in guerrilla zones, inner party activities and the like. Such news stories were displayed prominently. Deccan Chronicle published such calls for State/City bandh or poll boycott prominently while it underplayed them when it was to be in the districts. Eenadu coverage was not very different except that it had no reports on Naxalites' 'warnings'.
Similarly, news put out by the Ministers, politicians and senior police officials in the information tradition were generally on imposition/revoking of ban on the Naxalite outfits, appeals to Naxalites to join the mainstream, claims of police officials on curbing the movement, warning Naxalites, assurances to people to distance themselves from the Naxalites and reactions of various political parties/individuals to Naxal violence. Another attribute in the news stories was the 'voluntary kidnapping' of public representatives by the Naxals who later appealed to the Government to stop 'fake encounters'. Such news stories received prominent display on front pages above the fold in the newspapers, if not, top slots in the inside pages.

The positioning of the news stories mentioned above was different in The Hindu, which was either at the bottom of the front page or page three or the page which had news from the region. Also, in addition to the news stories on the aforementioned aspects, The Hindu news stories on different spheres of Naxal activity in the rural areas, other than violence like. Naxals banned from entering six villages, 'Govt's loss and tribals' suffering (on the Naxalite organisations asking labourers not to go for work until their wages are enhanced); Village leaders under pressure from PWG (to keep the rural areas under constant unrest for one reason or the other), PWG funds for encounter victims- strategy of the PWG to help the kin of encounter victims.

However, not all incidents are reported as found by Laxminarayana S (1981) The researcher studied the coverage of major events in The Hindu for the period 1970 to 1980 as recorded in Index India, Naxalite journals and The Asian Recorder. He
found that several incidents did not receive any coverage in *The Hindu*. He concluded that such stories ‘might have been killed in the newspaper office’.

The non-coverage of incidents could be because of the editorial policy, lack of access of the journalist to such news and the extent of news flow on those particular days. *Eenadu*, known for its pro-establishment stance, blacked out news on certain occasions. For instance, though *Deccan Chronicle* had stories on the ongoing agitation for a separate Telangana State, the same was not covered in *Eenadu*. As a sequel to this blackout, a few activists of the Telangana movement burnt copies of *Eenadu* in Karimnagar district.

**Sensationalist tradition:**

Significantly, the news stories on Naxalite violence were in the sensationalist tradition. Violence, defined as the exertion of physical force to injure, damage or destroy was the primary subject of the news stories covered in both the newspapers. The coverage, however, followed a different pattern with regard to Naxalite violence and the actions of the State (discussed in the subsequent pages). The news leads and the headlines were sensational. Such reportage appeared to be an eye-catching means to capture the market, informing the reader besides bringing discredit and eroding the credibility of the Naxalites. For instance, reports in *Deccan Chronicle* and *The Hindu* on Naxalite violence read as follows:

January 17, 1995

**Headline:** PWG breaks TDP leader’s arm, politicians flee villages
Lead In a gory incident in Parkal Mandal, Telugu Desam SC Cell President Lingaiah, who is also the village sarpanch, was beaten very badly by the Naxalites of the People's War Group in Rayaparthi village Lingaiah, whose arm was broken was rushed to the MGM hospital where he is said to be progressing.

February 13, 1993

Headline Naxalites kill two 'informers'

Story: A 12-member Naxalite gang of the People's War Group raided Nallavelli village under Darpally police limits of Nizamabad district and murdered Baddam Malkaiah (32) branding him a police informer. The villagers claimed that the extremists led by Sirnapalli Dalam leader Ganganna woke up the victim and dragged him to the centre of the village and shot him dead while they watched the brutal attack helplessly.

April 5, 1993

Headline: Naxals burn down railway station

Lead: The People's war Group of Naxalites burnt down the Sirnapally Railway station after tying up the Assistant station master outside the railway station. They cut off communication lines and set fire to the station building.

For more stories see Appendices II

The phraseology, words and some expressions used in one news story in Deccan Chronicle reads as follows

January 27, 1993
Headline: DIG Vyas shot dead

The DIG of Police, Mr K S Vyas was shot dead by the PWG lay in wait to kill him. Stadium was struck with terror created by the Naxalites. Assailants hurled a bomb. What is shocking was that the assailants made the bold attack.

The follow up stories said. The meticulously planned daredevilry act of the Naxals has not only sent shock waves, but has demoralised the rank and file of the State police. The police top brass has described it as an act of 'cowardice' by the PWG. The IAS and IPS officers have been under constant threat from Naxalites for many years. The PWG has been creating terror in the city frequently, especially when the police intensified their combing operations and killed their colleagues.

The following day the newspaper had the former Chief Minister, N Janardhana Reddy, condemning the 'brutal killing' of Vyas. The Andhra Pradesh Police Gazetted Officers Association and the Andhra Pradesh Police Officers' Association condemned the killing in unequivocal terms stating it as a dastardly and a cowardly act. (See Appendices-II)

The motives of Naxalites in indulging in some killings were occasionally mentioned. The victims of Naxalite violence included police personnel those from the rank of DIG, Superintendent of Police down to the constable, village heads, suspected police informers, activists of other splinter groups and cadres of other Communist parties. Naxalites in the news stories defended the killing of police officials stating that it was a strategy of 'annihilation of class enemies' or for being responsible for the killing of one of their comrades in encounters. Other news.
stories on bomb blasts, physical maiming, threats etc had some motive mentioned.

(See Appendices - II)

Some headlines in Deccan Chronicle and The Hindu read as follows: War like situation in agency area, Naxals behead political activist in Kamnagar, Naxals go on rampage, RYL leader shot, PWG blasts forest office, rest house, Naxals blast Cong leader’s house, bandh total.

On such playing up of news, historian Walter Laqueur (1977 109) asserts, ‘The media, with their in-built tendency toward sensationalism, have always magnified terrorist exploits quite irrespective of their intrinsic importance’. Schmid and de Graaf (1982 78) suggest that there have been many examples ‘where the media squeezed the most out of a relatively minor terrorist incident’ Rabe (1979: 67), Assistant Chief of Police, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington DC, says, ‘it is not the presentation of such news that gives rise to concern, but the manner in which it is presented’

Schmid and de Graaf (1982 14) criticise the amount of space dedicated to terrorism coverage. Wilkinson (1986 60) specifically cites the problem of big headlines and identifies a kind of Gresham’s Law of terror ‘those who spill the most blood win the biggest headlines’

**Feature Story Tradition**

Occasionally, Deccan Chronicle and The Hindu carried reports in the feature story tradition when a top PWG leader was arrested, released or surrendered Stories
were on historic incidents in the movement, interviews of top Naxal leaders, experiences of kidnapped personnel and the journalists who had gone to cover Press conferences. Such reports provided background information. But, reports in the feature story tradition were hardly found in Eenadu. For instance, a few stories in this tradition in Deccan Chronicle during the said period were on the 'Decline and fall of Naxalism,' 'APCLC - A PWG front,' Who’s afraid of Naxals,' experiences of journalists who had attended the Press conferences of PWG leaders, and those relating to the officials released after being taken hostage and interviews with top Naxal leaders and police officials.

**Didactic Tradition:**

The newspapers had news reports in the didactic tradition on the Naxals and the Government. News reports on the tactics of the authorities included the agreements reached between the various State Governments to have a joint command, setting up of the Greyhounds—a police outfit to combat Naxalites, helicopters pressed into service, on combing operations, police propaganda to wean people away from the Naxalites, offer of conditional talks with the Naxalites etc. Reports in the didactic tradition on Naxalites were mainly about the use of sophisticated equipment in their attacks/raids on police stations, politicians and police personnel, the strategies employed by Naxalites to dissuade people from participating in the elections, formation of village level committees to implement the Government programmes and the overall party stance on crucial state, national and international issues.

News reports in the three newspapers followed the four traditions with the sensationalist tradition dominating. Perhaps one cannot infer that the
newspapers were supportive of the Government's actions as described by the ideologues because even Government news is published in their columns. On the other hand it may be argued that it becomes imperative for the newspapers to publish such news as it is a major source of information being a party to the conflict as also it represents the people. But, publication of Government news and blacking out or suppression of Naxalite related news can be deemed to be acting in support of the State. Except in isolated cases, especially in Eenadu, the coverage lacked in such bias. News reports in the feature tradition, particularly in the Deccan Chronicle were anti-Naxals.

While news reports explained the tactics of the authorities and the Naxals, they appeared to be working at cross purposes with each party ‘gearing up’ to take on the other. News stories explain only the violent tactics of the Naxals which force readers to infer that the movement flourishes in Telangana only because of the violence.

**Encounters:**

Regarding actions of the State especially killing of Naxalites in encounters, news reports did not follow the sensationalist tradition and were generally pushed into inconspicuous positions in the inside pages. These were reported as single or double column news stories, sometimes along with photographs with label headlines like 'Three Naxals killed in encounter'.

On an average Eenadu and Deccan Chronicle newspapers reported at least one encounter killing on every second day. There were just a couple of instances were news appeared on the front page when over six Naxalites were gunned down. The
news reports on encounters followed a stereotyped format (See Appendices II). A majority of the reports on encounters fit this format. A few stories in Eenadu, furnished the versions of the kith and kin of the encounter victims. Also, Eenadu's news stories on encounters did not cite police as sources.

One notable aspect was that when a Naxalite was killed in an encounter, the news reports invariably traced the antecedents of the Naxalite—his involvement in kidnappings, extortions and killings. Such reports conveyed an impression that the police was justified in killing that particular Naxalite or Naxalites. Such reports project police as a retaliatory force than as a law enforcement agency. On the other hand, news reports on policemen killed by the Naxalites, there was hardly any mention of the 'excesses' perpetrated by the police official concerned. This only indicates the handicaps of the reporters to cover encounters as they heavily rely on police for information. There were hardly any follow up investigative stories on encounter killings whereas reporters as a general practice file follow up stories on such sensational killings and murders.

Information collected by a team on one such encounter published in Economic and Political Weekly, revealed that the news stories published on encounters are at variance with actual facts and happenings.

Details: On January 2 evening, the police unleashed indiscriminate terror in Palakurthy village in the Prime Minister's district, Karimnagar resulting in the brutal killing of nine people (five villagers and four militants). The Palakurthy encounter was conducted more brazenly than any other. The Dalam which got killed in the encounter is known as the 'Naganna Dalam' (Nagaraju) comprising
11 members, including one female militant, all of them belong to SC and OBC castes

The 11 militants came to the village under the leadership of Naganna to take action against the police informers and called the village people for a praja court on January 2 at the village ‘chourasta’ the praja court started around 10 p.m. The dalam members were interrogated. Nobody knows when and how the police reached the village, when the incident occurred. Obviously on a tip off. They reached the village in plain clothes and surrounded the place where the praja court was being held and began to shoot on the mass of people-300-400 villagers without giving any warning. When the people became panic, they ran pell mell. From among the four, two dalam members died on the spot. The third militant received bullet injuries but was not dead. However, in the early hours he was again shot dead by the police. The lady militant from Kanapur mandal received bullet injuries fell into the drainage culvert, but the police identified her and shot her dead in the early hours. The police firing also injured 21 people.

The police version on this incident was that five villagers died when the PWG militants opened fire but not because of the police firing. (See Appendices II)

**Sources:**

As mentioned, for news stories on violent incidents, there are three major types of sources a) Naxalites or their statements b) authority sources-police, government officials and c) eye witnesses

Most of the news reports quoted authority sources- as authorities (Director General of Police, Superintendent of police, District Collector, Circle or Sub
Inspector concerned) routinely hold Press conferences or pass on information to provide the media with prepared statements on anything potentially newsworthy. For the rural journalists, it is convenient to include only the authority sources and ignore the Naxalites Eyewitnesses, especially villagers and survivors in the blasts - police personnel were quoted in reports where there were over five to six casualties, including senior police officials.

**Labelling:**

The newspapers had stories which described the Naxalites as ‘extremists’ ‘terrorists’ ‘militants, ‘radicals’, ‘misguided, frustrated youth,’ ‘criminals’, ‘assailants’, ‘desperadoes’ and words to the effect describing them as ‘anti-social elements’ Similarly their acts of violence were described as ‘hijacking’, ‘kidnapping’ and ‘abduction’ Such labelling of Naxalites is perhaps due to the reliance of journalists on authority sources, especially the police, who tend to look at Naxalites irrespective of the social moorings of their movement. As mentioned, one person’s ‘freedom fighter’ can be another man’s terrorist. Though the study has shown that there is an inherent difficulty in describing such groups, a few characterisations match with those identified by Picard and Adams (1987) in their study on ‘Characterisations of Acts and Perpetrators of Political Violence in Three Elite US daily Newspapers.’

They dichotomised characterisations into nominal and descriptive depending on their meaning. Nominal characterisations of acts of political violence included words such as hijacking, bombing, shooting and attack. Nominal characterisations of perpetrators of such acts included words such as hijacker(s), gunman (men) and attacker(s). Descriptive characterisations of acts of political
violence included words such as murder, despicable, brutal, criminal and terrorism. Descriptive characterisations of perpetrators of political violence included words such as murderer(s), criminal(s), coward(s), freedom fighter(s) and terrorist(s).

The study concluded that there was a significant difference in the way media personnel, Government officials and witnesses characterise acts of political violence. Media personnel and witnesses to the violence had a tendency to use nominal characteristics while Government officials used descriptive characterisations.

Media personnel and witnesses had tend to use terms that were more neutral than those used by government officials. Government officials had a tendency to use words that were more judgemental, inflammatory and sensationalistic.

Another finding of the study was that witness characterisations were completely nominal.

**Surrender of Naxalites:**

News stories on surrender of Naxalites in the presence of the Chief Minister, Home Minister, Director General of Police, Superintendent of Police and few top police officials along with laying down of arms received prominent display along with photographs on the front pages in both the newspapers to signal the desertions by the cadres. These news stories carried extensive details of the compensation and rehabilitation package. The tone of the confessions, were generally against the movement, to demoralise the cadres. These confessions at times had 'damaging details' of the 'goings on' within the movement which would
bring disrepute to the Naxalite movement. For instance, reports cited reasons for surrendering such as 'disillusioned with the party' that the democratic path is the only path for development, 'how casteism was rampant' in the PWG, differences over the tactics employed.

These news stories sourced their information either to the police officials or the version put out by the surrendered Naxalites in the presence of the police officials or Ministers. There were scarcely any news reports where the reporter filed stories after an interface with the surrendered Naxalite(s). While surrenders are highlighted by both the newspapers, at times the reliance on the police version of surrender 'raises doubts' as it happened in the case of Kondapalli Seetharamaiah.

Details: A report in Deccan Chronicle on March 21, 1994 said, In the early hours of March 20, D.T. Naik, Deputy Inspector General of Police led a posse to Anumanapudi village near Gudvada in Krishna district, entered the house of P. Siva Redy and arrested K Seetharamaiah. The 73 year old founder of the PWG was alone sleeping, without any protection. K.S. as he is widely known, was brought to the Press at the office of the Director General of Police, T.S. Rao. The same day, Chief Minister, K. Vidyabhaskara Reddy. Speaking at a function, made a reference to the 'surrender' by Naxalite leaders and said, 'probably you are aware that today an important leader has surrendered. This raised doubts if Seetharamaiah was arrested or he had surrendered. But, Seetharamaiah himself, speaking to Press persons later, explained that it was 'completely unfair to cast doubts'. He had been arrested. The Chief Minister's office later issued a 'clarification' saying that Vidyabhaskara Reddy 'did not' call it a surrender. Seetharamaiah said he was alone at the time of arrest, he had sent his 'den
keeper' and guard to Gudivada to fetch a taxi to go to Rayalseema. (See Appendices - II)

Follow up stories

The nature of follow up news stories published can be grouped under two categories: 1) Follow up to the movement as a whole and 2) Follow up to violent incidents. Such categories segregating violent incidents which form a part of the movement, becomes necessary as the coverage reveals some marked differences. As contended by the ideologues that the Press had failed to understand the social significance of the movement,' the newspaper coverage also indicates that the coverage failed to turn its attention to the 'social effects' of the movement. In other words, the coverage had failed to take cognisance of the 'processes' triggered by the conflict. For instance, stories on the victims-police or civilians of Naxalite violence, the fleeing of landlords from the countryside, encounter victims, the fear psychosis owing to the 'gun culture' created by the police and the Naxalites alike, the life led by surrendered Naxalites rarely found a place in the newspapers. The reported efforts of the Naxalites championing the cause of the tribals and the rural poor, for which they have acquired a Robin Hood image were stray stories in the newspapers.

Follow up to violent incidents:

Violence is perpetrated by both the Naxals and the law enforcement officials, newspaper coverage reveals certain differences in the nature of follow up stories. As mentioned, there was seldom any follow up report on encounter killings except
when it involved a top Naxalite leader or killing of over five to six Naxalites. Such coverage followed widespread condemnation from different quarters.

However, the killing of police officials were covered mostly on the front pages above the fold, along with a series of follow up reports on the personality, his positive side laced with element of pathos. Such news stories were accompanied by photographs of the wailing family members of the victim along with the announcement of the compensation.

Persistent coverage of the violence of Naxals with little or no attention to their reported efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the poor and the deprived classes, only reinforces the notion that it is a disruptive and violent movement ranged against the Government. The coverage fails to suggest that the Naxalite movement has a transformative or revolutionary character.

**Editorials:**

Editorials in *The Hindu, Deccan Chronicle* and *Eenadu* were mainly reactions to Naxalite violence and the decisions/approach of the State on specific occasions. The editorials were equally critical of the Government's policy and also of Naxal violence. The editorials dilated on the causes for Naxal conflict and suggested measures to the warring groups and the people to meet the Naxalite challenge.

Editorials appeared in the *Deccan Chronicle, The Hindu* when the State Government imposed or revoked the ban on the PWG and its outfits. Also, editorials were written when politicians were killed/kidnapped, senior police officials in Naxal violence or when the number of police casualties were high, the
reported moves by the State Government to bring the Naxal infested under the Disurbed Areas Act

On Government policy:

When the N T Rama Rao Government lifted the ban on the PWG and its outfits, *Deccan Chronicle* in its editorial on May 15, 1995 headlined 'No Consistency towards PWG' said

The policy towards the Naxalites of successive governments of Andhra Pradesh or Telugu Desam, has been whimsical to say the least. They have neither the perception nor strategy to deal with these extremists who have been systematically annihilating those they consider as anti-people, apart from indulging in large scale violence ruining public property. The NTR Government during its earlier stunt had embarked on strengthening the police with the institution of Grey Hounds and issue better equipment. Dr M Channa Reddy adopted a somewhat conciliatory policy. Janardhan Reddy declared the PWG unlawful and banned it for three years. The present NTR Government has extended an open invitation to them for unconditional talks. The Chief Minister wants the Naxalites to open their hearts and express their feelings. Has the Government any crash plan to curb the type of exploitation that the PWG harps on? Ministers speak in different tones. (See Appendices - II)
The Hindu reiterated in its editorial.

The Government's policy towards the Naxalites has not been consistent. On occasions, it pursued a hardline approach and when it found that it became counter-productive, the Government extended the olive branch in the belief that a conciliatory attitude would bring about a change in their tactics.

Headlines

The headlines of the editorials indicate that the editorials were written in reaction to some major offensive by the Naxalites. The language used in the headlines reverberate the anti-Naxal tone.

Some examples of headlines: Meeting the Naxalite Challenge, Dealing with the Naxalites, Looking beyond Police measures, Udhyamam Kkadhu Unmadham (Madness not movement), Hathyakandaye Sayudha Viplamava (Is violence a revolution), Viplavakarulu! (Revolutionaries !), Kidnapulu Kattipettandi (Stop Kidnaps), Prajala Meedha Yuddham (Is it war on People), Kidnapping Viplavayudhama (Is kidnapping a tool for revolution), Yendhukee Vidhvansam, Yekkadiki Prasthanam (Why this destruction, whereto this journey), Guriki yentha Dhooram (How far it is from the goal).
Phraseology/Words:

Phraseology/words and expressions used in the editorials and edit page articles also reiterate the anti-Naxal stance. For instance, the phrases culled out from *The Hindu* and the *Deccan Chronicle* read as follows:

The PWG is known to be extorting money from the so-called affluent sections and those who are practicing the professions such as law and medicine in different parts of the state. The PWG is no doubt notorious for its murderous activities and the way it had done to death several persons including mandal chiefs in some districts speaks volumes of the traversity of an ideological warfare it has been indulging in. For long, the police and public property were the primary targets even though there were incidents of selective killings. The Naxalites seem to have lost their ideological perspective, they do not have a worthwhile cause to pursue and the unemployed youth who join the Naxalite ranks are more lured by the gun which they could wield at their pleasure. The PWG itself was a divided house till some time ago. Today, the PWG is nothing more than a militant organisation with all its baneful features. An element of terrorism had entered the movement with indiscriminate killings of alleged 'stooges of Government' and informers. It is no wonder that many young men and women who have entered the ranks of the naxalites have missed the woods for the trees. The targets of attack might remain the same even while the movement has lost its shine and purpose. The individual killings on a selective basis by the PWG have no rationale and this is what brings a bad name to a revolutionary movement which has high ideals as the basis for its functioning. In other words, the PWG has developed itself into a killer movement and naturally the Government is
worried over the violence used by the Naxalites to achieve their objectives. The point to be noted is that the PWG had no qualms about killing any one who had left the organisation, for in its view such persons were dangerous in as much as they might disclose information about the hideouts. The PWG itself is a divided organisation and the once monolithic structure received a big blow when Kondapalli Seetaramaiah, its undisputed supremo had to leave it in sheer disgust.

Writing in a similar vein, editorials in *Eenadu* said

Naxalites' excesses are increasing, people are turning away from the government programmes because of the PWG, anti-Naxal sentiment is on the rise among the people. Believing in violence is foolishness, new society through bombs is a daydream/fantasy. PWG lost hold on its cadre. No difference between terrorists and Naxalites. Naxalites misusing constitutional rights after lifting the ban, forcibly collecting gifts and occupying lands, killing opponents... Naxalites have forgotten to mobilise people to solve problems. Kidnap as a strategy of revolution is working at cross-purposes. How can Naxalite atrocities (Dhurmargalavalla) strengthen their movement? It is meaningless to cling to the old ideology of violence to usher in a revolution. Creating a fear psychosis through killings is not revolution nor is it a solution to encounters.

**On Causes for Conflict**

The editorials/edit articles and analytical reports made passing references identifying the causes for the continuance of the Naxalite movement. For instance, editorials in *The Hindu* and the *Deccan Chronicle* mentioned
The PWG believes that the people are looking to them to provide a lead by direct action programmes and even established guerrilla zones. It is a well-known fact that the criminalisation of politics and the corrupt methods employed by responsible political leaders lead to utter cynicism on the part of not only the intelligentsia but also the common people who seem to believe that the Government will never be in a position to uplift the downtrodden with all its measures to promote social justice. It is this disillusionment that is sought to be exploited by the Naxalites.

*The Hindu* (May 16, 1991) following the abduction of P Sudhir Kumar, Congress MLA and son of a former Union Minister, headlined, 'Use the gun or not, is the question' identified the 'inconsistent policy' of successive governments towards the Naxalites as one of the causes. It further clarified the position of the Naxalites on boycott of elections by quoting K Seetharamaiah which sums up the causes for the struggle.

Indian ruling classes, the big bourgeoisie, big landlord classes represented by all the parties, seek to protect the existing semi-colonial, semi-feudal society which is the root cause of all the basic problems of the people, such as hunger, poverty, unemployment, high prices and corruption. Economic interests of all these ruling classes are inseparably bound with the preservation of this exploitative system. If hunger and poverty have to go, if unemployment should end the country should prosper, then revolutionary agrarian reforms have to be enforced on the basis of land to the tiller
under the hegemony of the proletariat. That means, all the lands should be confiscated without paying compensation and freely distributed to agricultural labour and landless poor. The huge capital and properties of industrialists should be confiscated without compensation. We call upon the people to boycott the elections being held in this exploitative society, because it will end up only in handing over power to the ruling classes and their henchmen.

Other causes listed include:

- Striking a bargain with the Naxalites to free oneself kidnapped or to protect one's own business interest has encouraged the Naxalites. Unbridled corruption, unequal development and lack of basic facilities continue to cause heartburn among the poor and the rural masses. The Government by succumbing to the demands of the Naxalites has become lenient and such actions indicate the timid approach of the police. The knee-jerk reaction of the Government speaks of its impotence. The behaviour of the police in the villages is robbing the sympathy of the people. People do not trust the police. Political interference and inadequate police forces are rendering the police ineffective in their drive against Naxalites.

While editorials, edit page articles and analytical reports did make a passing reference to the causes for the conflict, news stories, in all the three newspapers
failed to provide more than cursory attention to the reasons for the continuance of the Naxal conflict. Instead the coverage focussed on actions and events and presented the LWE as an unfolding drama to be chronicled, rather than as a manifestation of a severe societal maladjustment that required explanation.

The perfunctory attention of the newspapers to the causes in the news reports lends support to the view that the media tend to act as preservers of status quo by providing unsympathetic to coverage to those whose behaviour threatens it. It is indeed possible for the journalists to dig below the surface to uncover the causes of LWE or even simply to seek out dissidents' and allow them to explain their grievances in their own words. Such coverage could make a significant contribution to the health of the society by clarifying the issues involved in social upheaval and possibly outlining possible solution.

The result of this kind of coverage is two fold. As various critics have noted, by covering 'protests' simply as events, without explaining the underlying causes, reporters fail to provide readers with the information they need to understand the dissidents' grievances. The various segments of society remain sealed off from each other, and opportunities for increased understanding and remedial action are lost.

**Edits on Naxal violence:**

Edits on Naxal violence were written when there were instances of kidnaps involving politicians and top bureaucrats, landmine blasts, killing of civilians, police officials, and politicians. The editorials while generally decrying violence perpetrated by the Naxals, urged it to shun the path of violence.
Eenadu, August 6, 1991 After the killing of eight policemen in a landmine blast in Nizamabad

Headline ‘Pathetic plight of police’

The editorial pointed out that a few policemen fled the scene of the blast and attributed it to their low morale. Drawing allusions to Karna’s death, the editorial identified several reasons for such a sorry ‘state of affairs’ It calls for initiating steps to boost the image and morale of the police

**Argumentative editorials:**

The editorials in the three newspapers were argumentative and demanded some action to be initiated by the Government including the police machinery, the path to be followed by the Naxalites and reminding the people about their role in the conflict Occasionally, when there was a resurgence in Naxal activity and they indulged in killings or kidnaps, the editorials adopted a single track approach containing some suggestions

Examples Eenadu’s editorial when T Hayagriva Chary, a former Congress Minister was shot dead by Naxalites in Warangal commented with the headline ‘Udhyamamu Kaadu Unmadam’ (Lunacy not movement) It advised the PWG that it would be distancing itself from the common people by indulging in such violent deeds It further served a note of caution to the top leadership of the PWG that they should realise that violence will fetch nothing and the days are not far off when the people themselves will retaliate

Following the killing of the Congress MP The Hindu in its editorial said
no more 'wait and see' policy in dealing with the Naxalites. Nor is there any point in forcing the police to use restraint in dealing with the rebellious elements in the hope that they could be persuaded to undergo change of heart.

The editorials advocated conflicting measures to deal with the Naxalite problem. On one hand they mentioned that it is imperative to get to the root of the problem, on the other hand they also favoured that the Government should deal with it as a law and order problem.

**Edit articles and Analytical reports:**

The edit articles and analytical reports that appeared in the Open page of *The Hindu* had background material to provide a context to the comments and the analysis. They were informative and educate the readers of the implications of the Government’s stance and that of the Naxalites. The edit articles were balanced and were critical of the Government for its inconsistent policy and downright harsh against the Naxalites for their violent ways. Also, a few articles which highlighted the goings on in the PWG were in a negative tone.

The authors’ constraints in covering the gamut of causes came to the fore in the edit articles and analytical reports as several other causes fail to find a place in their analyses. Perhaps this could be because the journalists/freelancers are based in Hyderabad, their sources, political leanings, affinity towards and understanding of the issues involved and the overall policy of the newspaper. Some suggestions in editorials, edit articles and analytical reports of *The Hindu* and *Deccan Chronicle* were as follows.
* There should be a consensus among political parties and the Government in power should not be made a scapegoat, but allowed to act from a position of strength and not of weakness

* Efforts should be made to deny any scope to the Naxalites to exploit the inadequacies and weaknesses in the functioning of the Government agencies.

* 'Mingling' of the bureaucracy and government servants with the masses

* Literacy drive by 'well-trained agencies and not by the police' to educate people of the advantages of the present democratic set up

* To launch a propaganda to make rural folk understand that there are peaceful legal methods to achieve the very things the Naxalites try to achieve through violence

* Proper discrimination of hardcore elements, 'so-called sympathisers', 'active abettors' by the police and according differential treatment to them

* Honest attempt to establish clean politics in rural areas is vital.

Suggestions in Eenadu editorials.

(Katha Sukhantham, Samasya Apanskrutam-Happy ending, problem remains) after the unconditional release of tribal legislator, P Balaraju and another official after 21 days in captivity The editorial recalled the release of Nimmaluri Bhaskar Rao, a top PWG leader (who surrendered later) from the Vizag jail in exchange of freeing of kidnapped Congress legislator, P Sudhir Kumar, the paper questioned the wisdom of the Government in arresting persons at the first instance and
releasing them under pressure from the PWG. The editorial called for a policy on releasing arrested Naxalites in exchange of ‘hostages’.

Other suggestions include

- Without the support and endorsement of the people, no revolution can succeed. Terrorism is not a law and order problem, one should understand this as a socio-economic and political problem and think of solutions or else using force will be counter productive. Naxalites should join the mainstream after explaining their principles to the society. One should introspect about the chaos in civil life resulting from violence. Violence is not the solution to the problems. To usher in a social and economic revolution there should be a scientific principled programme within the purview of law. The terrorist should work hard and earn the respect of the people. People should play a role in curbing terrorism/Naxalism instead of relying exclusively on the government. Without people’s endorsement no revolution can succeed. People should understand this as a socio-economic problem and think of solutions or else using force will be counter productive. They should try to overcome some of their weaknesses. (See Appendices - II)

**News as Drama:**

The story selected was the kidnap of a legislator in Vishakapatnam district which had all the elements of the Pentad.

**Actors:** The ‘actor’ involved represented larger entities. The legislator, P Balaraju, eight officials including an IAS officer. The other actors included the Naxalites. The kidnapping had drawn other actors into its fold - the State machinery.
including the Chief Minister, Superintendent of police and the District collector, the contingent of policemen, besides the Civil liberties activists. Also involved in the action was Kranti Ranadive—a jailed Naxalite.

Act: Dramatism pays attention to the portrayal of action. The action in the kidnap case took place when the legislator along with 30 people had gone to Koyyuru to attend a meeting. After the meeting, they went to Budarala where a check dam was proposed to be constructed to irrigate over 3,000 acres of land. Two of them were released and were 'instructed' to convey their demand to make arrangements for the release of the three Naxalites.

Scenes: The setting of the news story is on different lines. The Legislator had gone to attend a meeting without apprehending any danger to his self. Later, he visited the check dam. The scene is enlarged with the State Government failing to resolve the deadlock and initiates steps to arrange for mediation.

Purposes: The purposes or the motives of the Naxalites were clearly conveyed through the two officials who were released. The purpose(s) portrayed in the news report appear neutral.

Agencies: The Government machinery initiated steps to end the kidnap episode while the Naxalites stuck to their demands. The Government, on its behalf, after failing in its efforts to secure the release of the legislator, requisitioned the services of the APCLC, represented by its President, K.G Kannabiran and the Vice President, Prof Haragopal to mediate. While the main actors, the kidnappers and the kidnapped recede into the background, the kidnap episode is the fallout of
the prevailing political culture and is enacted on the larger political canvas of the State

Haragopal (1993 650) attributes the kidnaps and illegal detentions to 'the lawlessness of the State coupled with an absence of socio-economic measures which have had a multiplier effect on the deteriorating conditions in the society which led to such happenings.' He further argues that 'the political system has come to depend mainly on the police in tackling certain political situations and came to occupy political space. As a result there has been counter violence by the police in the face of violence by private groups like the Naxalites. This provides the context for the kidnap episode.

News reports present the escalating tension in the area as two members of Parliament and four MLAs of the district stepped up pressure on the Chief Minister, Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy. The kidnap episode had the potential of far reaching ramifications as the kidnapped MLA was a tribal and the loss of his life or any other official would have had an adverse impact on the electoral outcome.

The State Government, brought in Arun Rao, an IAS officer to defuse the crisis which failed. Later, Arjun Rao was directed by the State Government to request the APCLC, another agency, to mediate and open channels of communication with the Naxalites. Meanwhile, a dalam left a message in a village threatening the lives of the hostages. The APCLC sent a message to the squads to have a discussion which was agreed to by the Naxalites on condition that the police was withdrawn from the forest. The Inspector General of police agreed to withdraw the police but not up to the point the Naxalites had demanded.
Meanwhile, one comrade was beaten up by the police. Later, the APCLC representatives met the PWG dalam on a hill in the forest who demanded the unconditional release of Kranti Ranadiv, their comrade in jail. Enter Kaloji Narayan Rao, a freedom fighter and Gandhian who was requested to verify the truth from Kranti Ranadev whether he refused to join the party as broadcast over the radio. The statement broadcast over the radio was denied by Ranadev which only speaks of the Government's machinations. Then the legal tangle to get bails for Kranti Ranadiv from various courts in Warangal, Khammam and Nagpur. It was then that APCLC representatives appealed to the Naxalites through radio that they release the hostages in response to the steps that the Government had already initiated. Letters were written to the Government emphasising that the governments are to safeguard and protect life. After all this saga, the police had no option but to release Ranadev.

The headlines also reverberated the dramatistic elements of drama when they said 'Legal hitch to kidnap drama', 'Kidnap drama ends', 'Balaraju freed', 'Ranadev released'. (See Appendices - II)

**Suggestion of Myth: Victim as Hero:**

The story selected was the killing of DIG Vyas in the centre of the City as reported in *Deccan Chronicle*. (See Appendices - II)

The story Headlined: 'DIG Vyas shot dead with a kicker in reverse 'Killers come jogging' appeared on the front page as the lead story on 28 January 1993. The news story was accompanied by the photograph of body kept at a local hospital and had the Chief Minister and the Police Commissioner. The story was 'jumped'.
on to page seven with a continuation headline 'He was an upright officer' The continuation story had photographs of the site in the killing along with pictures of the mother and the wife of Vyas.

After giving a few details of the killing of the police official, the story launched into the portrayal of a heroic and upright victim. The story depicted him as good innocent and heroic. Elements of myth might be seen in the defined pattern of expressive symbols within the news stories in the biographical details mentioned in the news story which went on to say that ‘during his career, he earned the image of a ‘tough cop’ His name was in the hit-list ever since he was entrusted the job to contain Naxal activities in the State in 1989 as DIG (Greyhounds- an anti-Naxal squad)

Mr Vyas was known for his uprightness and was instrumental in the implementation of traffic regulations including the ‘helmet rule’. Mr. Vyas proved himself a ‘tough cop’ dared to go for regular walking.

On the following day, the paper had four news stories. One was with a headline ‘Vyas cremated with State honours’ along with a photograph of the grieving relatives and the body of Vyas being taken in a procession to the Punjagutta crematorium

The story continued to explore the dramatic, heroic portrayal of the ‘slain officer’. The atmosphere was emotionally surcharged as frenzied supporters of the slain officer vowed to avenge the killing. Slogans such as ‘Hum badla lekhar rahenge, Ek ka Jawab sau se dhenge (we will kill 100 for every one police officer)’, ‘Jab tak suraj chand rahega, Vyas thumara Naam rahega’ rented the air.
The other stories furnished more testimonies regarding the character and humanity of the victim. Reactions of various political parties, organisations and individuals denounced the killing and criticised the Government for its failure to protect an 'able, upright, courageous officer with an unflinching dedication in rendering justice to the poor and needy... However, the bullet of the terrorists once again cut short a highly promising career of a public servant, whose record of service remains unparalled. The untimely death of Vyas has caused irreparable loss to the police which lost one of the most outstanding officers and a rare professional gem. Mr Vyas was known for his unwavering commitment to duties.

The Chief Minister's reaction was headlined 'Vyas' death great loss CM.' The news story described the 'slain DIG of Police, KS Vyas an able dedicated and brave officer who did a commendable job in curbing extremist violence in the State to a great extent.'

It further reported. 'Paying glowing tributes to him Vijayabhaskara Reddy said Vyas' death was a loss not only to the police department but also to the entire State. He also conveyed his heart felt condolences to Mrs Aruna Vyas and other members of the bereaved family.

Another significant dimension was added to the coverage when the Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao stated that 'Vyas had served with distinction some of the most challenging assignments in Andhra Pradesh,' confirming the portrayal of Vyas as a heroic police officer.
The editorial on the next day continued in the same tone Mr. Vyas was known for his dash and drive. he has been on the hit list.

The coverage spanning for over four days with focus on the slain police official provided a complex, detailed and highly dramatic portrayal of the grief. The appearance of dignitaries including the Chief Minister, Home Minister, City Police Commissioner, the portrayal was acknowledged as a public phenomenon with the victim transformed in the news stories as a symbol of virtue and heroism. The reactions of several leaders describing Vyas as an ‘upright’ officer, ‘committed to his duties’ developed the same themes of goodness and heroism. Dramatistic analysis of the Deccan Chronicle stories suggests that the news accounts can be perceived as symbolic narratives that attempt to explain and give meaning to the events they portray. In this sense the news stories may be compared to myth.

According to Carl Jung[1959 37], the myth of the hero sacrificed is of central importance to the individuals. Jung said that the compelling aspect of the myth is that the image 'is a symbol of self'. Neumann (1970 380) states that the hero is 'the exemplar of individuality.' So, Vyas, projected within the myth of the sacrificed hero- became a self in the pages of Deccan Chronicle. The background, the devices used, the real person in a specific time and place serve to portray him as an individual and 'exemplar of self.' Through the myth of the hero, the news stories invoked the symbol of self, inviting intense identification of the individual reader with the victim. In the process, the news stories provide terror of the Naxalites.

The news stories that drew from the myth of the hero helped establish the link between the victim and the self. The symbolism of the Naxalite violence aided by
the reactions of the State officials portrayed in the media confirm the mythic elements. The stories affirm the myth of the hero honoured and mourned by the officials. Also, the acceptance of myth allowed politicians access to the media. Other political implications of the news portrayals of the myth of the hero and the mourning of the victim as symbol of the entire police fraternity are hinted. Policy makers can appeal to the power of myth, to arouse support for measures of prevention and reprisal. It may also provide public officials create a powerful climate for revenge.

The mythic approach to analysis of a single news story prevents any attempt at the linking news coverage to aspects of social life and also, generalising to other newspapers or other terrorist incidents.

In summary, the news coverage of Naxalite activities and those of the Government fall into the four Rhetorical traditions and some news stories, especially the ones related to violence by Naxals, have elements of the Pentad of drama. Also, the coverage of select news stories on Naxalite victims, especially if they are from the upper rungs of the police administration create a halo around the individual.

Be that as it may, it is a matter of great import to consider the kind of ambience and working conditions in which the journalists are placed while discharging their professional responsibilities.

4.3 Reporting Naxalism--Individual and Organisational constraints
This unit delineates the constraints -individual and organisational on the reporters filing news stories on Naxal related activities. Also, included is the role of professional media organisations.

Political parties on a regular and continuous basis interact with the Press to communicate to the masses. Thus politics and Press interaction is a notable phenomenon in the political process. Since the groups have the masses in view in order to reach them, they need the Press. The Press becomes much more relevant to the Extremist groups as they operate secretly in the underground which precludes or prevents normal means of reaching people through public meetings/ rallies (external show). It is difficult for them to keep their identity well guarded and at the same time be in touch with the Press. The only way they can do it without prejudice to their own secret functioning is to go in for or make themselves accessible at times selectively, to the Press. This is where the Press becomes relevant to the Naxalites. The interaction with the Press becomes much more important for the parties working in the underground as they do not have legal platforms to get across their viewpoint to the masses. Therefore it becomes imperative for the Naxalite parties to devise various ways and means to interact with the Press. In the process, the newspapers face many professional problems. These problems in the Press-Naxalite interface as part of the political process becomes an aspect for academic interest and study.

**Press-Naxalite interface: Cooperation & Conflict**

The conflict between the Naxalites and the Press emanates due to a host of reasons. The Naxalite groups are in constant interface with the Press to get themselves projected in favourable light. They manipulate, cajole and even
intimidate the Press to win favourable publicity. Firstly, the Naxalites infiltrate
their cadres/supporters and sympathisers into newspaper organisations. Former
Naxalites today occupy higher positions in the newspaper offices.

Nageshwar (1996) states that newspaper managements also willingly or
unwillingly either approve or encourage people associated with various Naxalite
groups while recruiting journalists. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, the Left
Wing sympathisers/activists have a general flair for literary skills which can be
exploited by newspapers. Secondly, the scribes’ contacts with Naxalites can fetch
juicy and sensational stories which could otherwise be difficult to obtain. For
instance, a Telugu daily like Andhra Jyothi, not a largest circulated daily could
publish a detailed interview with the underground chief of the PWG. The
journalist who filed the story is known for his association with legal platforms
that favour Naxalites like the Revolutionary Writers Association.

The second method of dealing with the Press is to infiltrate into the vast rural
network or have cordial relationship with the grass roots newsmen who obviously
cannot take the risk of offending Naxalites. These stringers today are the major
contributors of Naxal news in the columns of newspapers. It may be noted here
that during the kidnapping of Koyyuru legislator, P Balaraju, local newsmen
alongwith the Civil Liberties leaders mediated his release.

The party is in contact with the Press—makes use of the Press and also ensures
that its safety or identity is not in jeopardy. There are a few instances when the
party reaches the Press by addressing Press conferences in deep forest regions
after inviting a group of cautiously selected journalists to explain their point of
view. During such meets enough care is taken so as not to alert the police and
expose their hideouts. Only recently, a group of four journalists were called for a Press conference when a top leader of the PWG, Nalla Adi Reddy explained the stance of the PWG on the issue of separate Telangana. Directives were issued to have *The Hindu* correspondent as one of the members of the Press team. The team followed the 'couriers' for nearly eight hours in the night. Such special interviews are usually played up by newspapers. As a result, Naxalites get the much-needed publicity. Journalists get professionally complimented stories and the newspaper managements are happy for avid readership to such stories.

A typical way of keeping in touch with the Press is by mailing Press releases to the newspaper offices or sending the publication material through 'unlettered' people, sympathisers, those who are closer to the party either physically/relations, anonymous phone calls or by dropping Press releases in the boxes of newspapers in bus stands. Even when police keep a vigil on the newspaper offices, there have been instances of newspapers receiving signed Press notes from senior Naxalite leaders. Journalists also collect information from the PWG posters and file them as news stories.

The Naxalite cadres and supporters operate through legal platforms like the civil liberties groups, writers' associations and cultural wings. They communicate the overall Left Wing position on various socio-political issues to the people through open and mass activity. The Press invariably reports them and quite often gives wide publicity due to readers' curiosity involved in such stories.

Alongside this, there have been instances of Naxalites threatening and even killing journalists who do not listen to their diktats at the grass roots level, especially in the Naxal infested areas. Due to the prevailing gun culture...
journalists live in a fear psychosis and do not wish to voluntarily incur the wrath of the trigger happy Naxalites. (This is further illustrated with suitable cases in the subsequent part of the same chapter)

Notwithstanding such fear, the element of adventurism has attracted many a journalist to work on a story on Naxalites. It could be an interview with a leader underground or about the goings on in the party, the structure and the manner of their functioning. A journalist on his own may come to know of some incidents. He does his own investigation about the real motive behind any violence, finds out whether it was carried out in accordance with the claimed principles of the party, were there any lapses, public reactions to it etc. In the process, the journalist cannot shut his eyes to certain aspects which are obviously adverse to the party which would put the party in bad light.

At times this digging for details may cause damage to the party. The PWG may not like to be projected in that light to the people. There could be an error of perception on the part of both journalists and Naxalites. This becomes a debating point for the anti-Naxalites and the non-Naxalite groups and the people regarding publication of these details. Moreover, the journalist may lay his hands on documents meant for private circulation. The contents could be about inner party differences, accusations against each other which do not stop at the party level. The rift between the PWG's popular singer poet Gaddar and his party was widely covered by the newspapers.

Such contents may cause damage to the party's image in the public. In addition, a deliberate attempt is made by the police to partly make these documents accessible to the Press. They may in fact leak them to the Press. This is where the
conflict between the Press and the Naxalites originates. The normal reaction of the Naxalites in such situations is to indirectly hint, threaten which is done in a discrete manner. Even here they are cautious not to damage their interests. This is the dilemma the PWG faces as it needs the Press and doesn’t want to harm its interest.

Local newsmen are sources of information for the police and the Naxals. Police attempts to utilise journalists and their daily coverage of events to know about the developments in the organisation and movements of the Naxalites. Similarly, Naxalites utilise journalists to know about the movements of the police. This situation is responsible for journalists to be caught in the police-Naxal crossfire.

While this in brief is an account of the Naxalite-Press and Press-Naxalite interface and the reasons thereof, journalists, especially, the stringers, contributors and the bureau chiefs of the local editions in the districts listed several constraints-individual and organisational while discharging their professional responsibilities.

Listed below is a summary of the interviews with journalists working in the Naxal infested districts with illustrations to concretise certain statements.

**Access and Newsgathering**

Violent incidents have become almost daily occurrences and journalists no less than other citizens have become almost inured to them. Besides, the Naxals who continue to be one of the main creators of news no longer operate openly. They have split into highly mobile, guerrilla squads which strike at a time and place of their choice posing a series of problems to journalists. More often the reporters reach the scene of landmine blast/killing only after the event. The Naxal method
of action also imposes a serious handicap to the journalists. The hit and run tactics they have successfully employed precludes first hand reporting.

Naxal leaders and cadre members remain inaccessible to journalists seeking to cover activities/events. Journalists explained that to get an appointment of senior Naxal leaders at times it takes even five to six months. On the other hand, if the Naxals themselves wish to reach out to the Press things happen swiftly and the journalists are called to their hideouts. Some journalists said that they had to walk difficult terrain for hours and sometimes days guided by couriers who take turns and guide them in the forests risking their lives as combing operations are invariably carried out in these naxal strongholds. Reaching venues where Press conferences are held is difficult because of the unfamiliarity with the topography of the area and inaccessibility.

Often journalists planning stories on the party and its activities fall back on those who have severed links with the party but still maintain some kind of tenuous liaison with a few of their erstwhile colleagues. It is not often that the reporters are able to glean more than a few stale crumbs of information. Even these crumbs may often have to accept with more than a pinch of salt. Journalists said that it is occasionally possible to get in touch with some party cadres but they are also imbued with prejudice, if not hostility against the representatives of the ‘mainstream Press’ that they refuse to discuss party affairs. Trying to cultivate relations with Naxals is like trying to walk on the razor’s edge, nevertheless, some journalists have some contacts.
Even if these cadres supply information, it may be but a pale reflection of reality. The party's functioning is so thoroughly decentralised that ideological discussions or dissensions in the top echelons hardly ever percolate to the cadre level.

This lack of authentic information of what goes on inside the party robs the journalist of a proper perspective which is indispensable for any accurate presentation of Naxal activities, especially sudden change of tactics.

The journalists come to know of their raids and other forms of action long after they are over. Getting eyewitness accounts is also difficult as people do not readily come forward to divulge information about Naxalites and their activities due to fear of violent reprisals from Naxals. If they manage to reach that spot, they nearly find the whole area cordoned off and the police officials busy with investigations. The inability to witness the events to be reported has immensely increased the journalist's dependence on the police who do the 'gatekeeping' function. Most often journalists are left to their own sources to collect details about the clashes for officials are hesitant to help, lest they should unwittingly tread on the path of this party or that.

**Case:** In Chimanpalli village of Sirikonda mandal in Nizamabad district, the Naxals blasted the house of Baji Reddy Goverdhan twice. The reporters who gathered information citing some 'eyewitnesses' filed their reports only to be told by the local dalam leader that it was the handiwork of the people and questioned whether the reporters had 'personally' witnessed the blast.
Misreporting

Owing to the complex and strenuous nature of Press operations while reporting this kind of phenomenon, there is ample scope for distortion, misinformation and disinformation. Misreporting is due to lack of any adequate mechanism where information can be verified. For instance, a stringer of Vaartha, Telugu daily was tipped off about the movement of a top Naxalite leader in Nizamabad district. The daily reported it the following day. Later, the District Secretary of the PWG issued a clarification denying the same. While reporters ought to verify and check the authenticity of the sources, who can be slippery at times, such cross checking turns out to be a constraint especially while working for a daily newspaper. In such circumstances, journalists admitted that they are accused of indulging in sensationalism or writing exaggerated reports.

It is interesting to note that there are some stringers who specialise in filing baseless reports and create news out of nothing. They indulge in sensational stuff by writing items like 'PWG acquires rocket launchers,' 'Red army on the move' etc, at variance with facts.

Threat to reveal names of sources

Of late journalists are under pressure to reveal their sources of information, especially from the police personnel and there has been a case involving the court.

Following the Jakharam blast in Warangal district in 1996 when several policemen were killed, the police went on rampage in the town beating up people and damaging vehicles on the roads. This was in retaliation to the killing of their
colleagues. The local media including some television channels covered this incidents and the clippings were produced as evidence by the Civil Rights groups before the Court. The journalists were summoned and asked to disclose their sources of information. In another case, the reporter of Vaartha serialised a news story on the illegal arms deal involving the local politicians at Kamarpally. After reading newspapers the police recovered some ammunition from the gun runners and the confessions were not revealed to the Press by the police. But, the journalist using his contacts published the confessions which was resented to by the police who pressurised the journalist to disclose the source of news. This is in contravention of one of the basic tenets of journalism which mandates that the journalist has to protect the confidentiality of the sources. At a macro level, the journalists’ responsibility of disseminating news of public interest is under grave threat once he is subjected to such threats and coercion to disclose the names of sources. This in effect could lead to drying up his sources of news which is hard to come by.

Caught in a bind

Some journalists said they were sandwiched between the police and the Naxals while discharging their duties. Sometimes police objected and prevented journalists from reporting especially when the reports were adverse towards them.

The professional journalists’ links with the PWG is rather complicated because PWG is a banned organisation openly advocating the overthrow of the Government and so any contacts with it have been construed as abetment of extremists and disruptive activities and have attracted the penal provisions of
TADA An even more grey area of such links is that in order to cultivate and gain the confidence of one's news source, journalists have crossed the indistinct dividing line between professionally (even if not legally) legitimate links and active abetment in and involvement with the activities of such an organisation. A judgement constantly expressed by reporters engaged in covering day to day developing situation in Naxal infested areas is that, at times they had to cross that line with the expectation that such admittedly risky initiatives will enable him to gain valuable and exclusive insights into the working of the organisation. These ambiguous and grey aspects of every kind of relation or ‘confrontation’ of the Press with every kind of power centre: constitutional or extra constitutional, invests such links with a perennial tension with which any professional reporter has to learn to live. Journalists, especially, the stringers and contributors in the rural hinterland of Telangana districts, have contacts with the Naxalites as they are sources of news as much as and indeed on occasions even more than the State Government.

**To report or not to report**

Journalists, especially the stringers working in the Naxal infested areas are in a piquant situation while discharging their professional responsibilities. For instance, reporters this researcher interviewed admitted that that not reporting any police activity, be it repression or police excesses etc, would mean earning the wrath of the Naxals. They confided that, Naxals openly write letters to reporters castigating their ‘silent spectator’ role and reminding them of their professional obligations to the society during severe repression. On the other hand, reporting
conclaves, praja courts or any Naxal related activity would also land them in trouble both from the police and the Naxalites.

Journalists said that, Naxals threaten them to desist from writing about any such activity on the ground that such reportage would and has in the past increased police repression and combing in the area. The Naxals' complaint against the reporters is that reportage would 'inform the police' about their movements and activities of the Naxals in specific areas. Also, due to the fact it leaves very little time for them to abandon the area and flee to safer places once police swings into action. In a triple murder case in Sangem, in Nizamabad, in 1994, quoting police sources, the stringer filed a story stating that the Naxals collected Rs 40,000 from the accused. The villagers briefed the stringer with different versions. When this incident was reported, the Naxals accused the stringer that a case had been booked against them because the incident came to light in the Press.

The Gandivetu incident is another on the same lines. One stringer said that following a family feud the wife approached the Dalam members to settle the dispute. On her return after three days, the husband refused to take her in stating that she should go back to the dalam with whom she had spent three days. Unable to bear this the wife committed suicide. On knowing this, the Naxals later burnt her body. When this was reported after many people were contacted, the journalist concerned was grilled. Journalists face a peculiar problem in such circumstances where people who are witness to such instances or are in the know of such happenings first pass on crucial information and crack under pressure and deny having said so.
In yet another case, another journalist hailing from a remote village in Kanmnagar made enquiries about his classmates and friends. On being told that they had either fled to towns or cities fearing that they would be pressurised to join the Naxals or being branded by the police as a Naxal sympathiser, the reporter concerned filed stones in the Deccan Chronicle listing the problems faced by the youth in the Naxal strongholds and the excesses of the police in rural areas, especially against the youth. The stories contained facts revealed by the villagers which went on to state that the police maintained a dossier on all the youth in the rural side. Whenever, there were casualties in the police camp inflicted by the Naxalites the police rounded off the youth and put them in custody. Later, such youth were tortured in front of the villagers and later killed in the forest areas. Then it was described that the youth had been killed in an ‘encounter’. The reporter admitted that he had a tough time convincing the police about the demands of his job which made him file such stories. The mistake he committed was his probe into the whereabouts of his classmates and friends who had reportedly fled and the exposure of the police misdeeds in the local editions.

Two or three stories in succession either on the police or the Naxals would lead to reporters being branded as ‘Naxal sympathisers’ or as ‘police informers’ by the Naxals. From then on their movements are monitored. It is learnt that the police maintains a dossier on the reporters and the nature of reports filed. However, this problem seems to be less serious for reporters based in the city and are known for their ‘contacts’ with senior police officials.
Journalists 'exploited'

Journalists are exploited by the police and the Naxals when need arises and later they are suspected to be either close to the police or to the Naxals. For instance in Ram Laxmanpalli, the wife and daughter of a Naxalite were taken into custody to force a Naxalite to surrender. Realising that a particular reporter would be of some help, the Naxals approached him to negotiate the release of the two ladies. The dalam laid down certain conditions for the surrender of the Naxalite; that he would not be interrogated nor that he be booked under some stringent sections of law. The reporter, using his rapport with the Inspector concerned, ensured that the two ladies were lodged in a house, on which both the warring parties agreed upon. After the release of the two women and the surrender of the Naxalite in question, the reporter said, he was threatened at gun point accusing him of having 'healthy relations' with the police, implying that he was a 'police informer'. For negotiating the release, the police suspected the reporter to be having good links with the Naxalites and further probed his ties with the Naxalites which proved to be wrong.

Another similar case. A District forest officer (DFO) was restrained to discharge his duties during tendu leaf collection. This was because his subordinate colluded with the middlemen and delivered some letters claiming to be written by the Naxals threatening the DFO. The DFO sought the help of the Circle inspector, the District Superintendent of Police who sought the help of a reporter to recognise and decipher whether the letter, in fact has been authored by Naxals. The reporter, based on his knowledge of handwriting in the earlier Press releases
and statements, described the letters as fake. Later, his expertise in deciphering handwriting put him in the wrong books of the police.

Such instances have led to a situation wherein reporters live in a fear psychosis and just write a few developments. To circumvent this problem they wait for other colleagues to report 'first' so that they can justify their writings stating that 'I had to report Naxal activity as other newspapers have already done, and I cannot afford to miss it.'

Earlier, it was the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act but now it is oral threats from the police, which has forced many a journalist to write only the violent side of naxalites.

Even after seeking the help of journalists in the release of kidnapped local officials or police personnel, the police is not concerned about the lives of the reporter-turned-mediator. Illustratively, in Badsi mandal in Nizamabad district, two police constables were kidnapped. The Additional Superintendent of Police and the Superintendent of Police sought the help of three journalists of Vaartha, Andhra Prabha and The Hindu to mediate their release. While the latter agreed to negotiate the release and wanted withdrawal of the police force near the naxal hideouts, the police after assuring them increased the force and the entire village was rounded off. This was resented by the reporters as the Naxals or their emissaries were not coming forth with any information on the release of the constables. After the police force was withdrawn, the release was effected. This incident is a comment on the double-speak of the police with no concern for those involved in the mediating process. However, the attitude of the reporters is
slowly changing with regard to mediating owing to repression in the areas, the changes in the cadre and the entry of new reporters into the field

Police adopts a need-based policy seeking publicity through newspapers. For instance, in Butcha mandal in Nizamabad, Anjauah, a constable was kidnapped by the Naxals in retaliation to an encounter. Immediately, the police sought the help of local newspapers, especially the ones with some credibility like the Vedigali urging the Naxalites to release the cop. But, the cop was killed the same night after dousing him in kerosene at the same spot where the encounter had taken place.

**Friends at times**

Both the warring parties, the police and the Naxals are at times friendly with the reporters. Police provides vehicles to reporters to travel in the interiors and take them in their jeeps. This is also risky as the Naxalites have perfected the technique of landmine blasts. The Press is managed by the police through journalists who write in their favour. They patronise such journalists even as the Naxalites threaten them. Naxalites also tip the journalists with some do's and don'ts in their strongholds so that they may not fall prey to their bullets.

That the Naxalites act as friends is testified through the Vikarabad incident which created a furore in the State. The local legislator, Dr Chandrashekar Reddy's followers beat up the local stringer of Vaartha and paraded him with a garland of chappals in his constituency. Following this, journalists throughout the State staged massive protests, while the victim went on a hunger strike in the Secretariat premises demanding the suspension of the legislator and bringing the
culprits to book The APUWJ which cold shouldered the issue split and its Secretary resigned. The struggle continued for a couple of months and the scribes demanded an apology from the legislator. The legislator, who was adamant, as he had the support of the establishment relented when the PWG issued a stern warning threatening him of dire consequences. The issue was resolved.

Journalists find themselves in a quandary when at times dalam leaders make statements and later retract or even deny. For example, the PWG, in pursuance with its policy of poll boycott made it clear that they would boycott elections. Subsequently, the Dalam leader of Kamareddy division stated that they would allow only people with commitment, dedication to contest the elections and not others. When this was reported, the reporter concerned stated that it was denied to have been made the next day. It is learnt through reporters that the organisation has issued orders to shun publicity, making it more difficult to talk to those overground. Instead, reporters are asked to get in touch with the district secretary for any information or clarification.

**Open threats**

In Kamarpalli, nearly 90 kms from Nizamabad, reporters of *Andhra Bhoomi*, *Andhra Prabha* and *Andhra Jyothi* had reported about movements of a dalam. The Naxalites pasted posters identifying these three along with photographs threatening suitable action for doing so. The District unit of the APUWJ took out a rally and decided to black out reports of the Naxalites. Later, a meeting transpired between representatives of the Union and the Zilla Committee members where it was decided that allegations on journalists should be brought to the notice of the Union instead of openly dealing with them.
In a different incident, the reporter of Andhra Jyothi reported that a militant eloped with some money. The reporter was issued a death sentence as there were allegations of corruption. Specifically, it was alleged that he indulged in extortions along with Shilasagar, a former Naxalite, who had surrendered. While the reporter has quit the paper, the death warrant still exists. In this case also, the District unit took out a rally in protest and on the very same day Shilasagar was attacked and he suffered bullet injuries.

**Killing of Journalists**

There are a few instances where journalists lost their lives doing their duty.

Chada Sridhar Reddy, Reporter of Udayam Telugu daily, Mothkuru in Nalgonda district was shot dead on the intervening night of June 23-24, 1993 by Naxals on the ground that he was a police informer. In yet another case Narender who went to the spot to collect details of a landmine blast in Karimnagar was killed in the exchange of fire between the police and the Naxals. The mistake he committed was that he accompanied the police in their vehicle to the spot of the landmine blast when the Naxals opened fire.

In one instance, Ghulam Rasool, Reporter, Udayam daily was murdered by the police in December 1991. The versions of the police, the report of the TLN Reddy Commission (1994) which probed the murder as directed by the Government, the note of the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists on the TLN Reddy Commission report, the findings of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (1994) and the Editors Guild of India (1994) are summarised below.
This incident touches upon various aspects like the tendency of the State and its police machinery to brand any journalist if his writings were found to be inconvenient, as a 'Naxalite' or to be having Naxalite leanings and eliminating him/her in encounters, excessive reliance of the Pressmen on official sources for information on encounters, the efforts of the State Government, particularly, the law enforcement machinery, to hush up the case and the role of the civil rights activists and professional bodies.

The TLN Reddy commission appointed by the Government to probe into the death of Ghulam Rasool Khan went by the police version and gave a clean chit to the law and order machinery. The police version mentioned that Rasool Khan was associated with the PWG organisation at Aler, Bhongir of Nalgonda district and Hyderabad district, that he was involved in the underground cadre of the PWG and in some offences committed by the Naxals in Hyderabad city and surroundings, that he and other PWG cadre involved in extortion of huge amounts for party funds, that underground cadre disclosed that Ghulam Rasool was in touch with them and he used to execute tasks assigned to him, and also pass on information as a stringer of Press. The police observed that the bandh call given by PWG after his killing established his links with the extremist outfit.

The Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists, in its note on the TLN Reddy Commission report stated the following:

*The 59 page report is 'perhaps the most perfunctorily done inquiry so far and concluded with the version put out by the police on December 28, 1991, the day Ghulam Rasool and his friend Vijay Prasada Rao were killed in an alleged encounter.
*One cannot expect policemen who participated in the encounter to give any other version other than what they had said before the commission. The Union faulted the report for justifying the action of the police in cremating the bodies hastily. The Commission says that there was no identification of the bodies before cremation. This, the Union felt was factually incorrect and further stated that the newspapers routinely carried the story of an encounter on 29 December. Later, on 29, when one of Ghulam Rasool's colleagues identified the deceased, the same was reported the next day. Why was it then that the police cremated the bodies on the evening of December 29 by which time the victim was identified?

* The Commission does not even get an iota of doubt about the manner in which the police acted and on the other hand says the bodies were kept for one full day and nobody came forward to identify.

* On December 30, when reporters of leading newspapers called on the then Home Minister, he assured that the bodies would be handed over to the relatives. The clippings of all these reports were placed before the Commission. But, surprisingly, the judge chose not to delve deep into them.

*The Commission did not provide any opportunity either to the APUWJ or the APCLC to have police officers cross-examined and instead went by what they said.

*In accepting the charge of the police that Ghulam Rasool, was an active member of the PWG and collected donations, the Commission heavily relied on the evidence of surrendered Naxalites. And in doing so, the
Commission 'presumed' that what surrendered Naxalites say is gospel truth because they cannot afford to tell lies for fear of incurring the wrath of Naxalites.

The report of the Committee appointed by the Editors Guild of India indicted the TLN Reddy Commission and the State version on several counts.

A summary of its findings is presented here:

* On the basis of evidence produced before the committee, oral and written, it is of the firm conclusion that the police killed Ghulam Rasool and Vyaya Prasada Rao in a cold blooded manner and that the story of an encounter was fake intended to cover it up. No direct evidence was produced before the committee but the following circumstantial evidence is telling.

* Press photographers were prevented from taking photos of the two bodies even though in the case of encounters such photographs were allowed, and it is legally permissible. Long shots taken by the police and supplied to newspapers do not show marks of violence or torture, if any, which a close-up would have revealed.

* The bodies were cremated even though one was a Muslim and the other was a Christian and the bodies were not handed over to the kith and kin of the deceased. Hospital rules and practice require that the bodies should be kept, if possible for a week to make identification possible.
* That the bodies had been hastily cremated was not known even to the Home Minister on the second day of the killings who assured a delegation of journalists to produce the bodies in an hour. When the Minister came to know of the truth, he made himself unavailable to the journalists.

* The refusal of the police to make available to the Sub-Committee the post-mortem and inquest reports which are public documents, while conveniently handing over the First Information Report which gives the police version of the incident is significant.

* Release of a wholly tendentious Press note accusing Rasool of various crimes including abetment of murder and extortion of money without bothering to explain why, if this were really so, Rasool, had not been prosecuted and why he was allowed to move about and function as a journalist. Then police never officially identified the other person Vijay Prasada Rao. Was it because not much could be said against him?

The Committee found that the police put out three different versions of the incident. First that two unidentified Naxalites had been killed, later that one of the killed was a member of the Satyam Dalam of the PWG. Lastly, irked by public criticism, the Director General of Police issued a Press note accusing Rasool of being an extortionist and that he concealed his criminal activities in the garb of a journalist.

The committee noted that the Press note is an example of the brazen police approach to law and order.
* The abandoned and roofless building with a large compound in which the encounter allegedly took place is such that if there had been an encounter some policemen would have been injured, but even the FIR made no such claim.

* The police claim, that three other participating in the alleged meeting had escaped, does not tally with the fact that the walls are not easily scalable, especially when a person is being chased by the police. Bullet marks in the rooms and compound wall appeared to be manufactured.

* The Sub-Committee could not arrive at any finding concerning the provocation for the cold-blooded murder but the fact of the killing is admitted by the police. No explanation is forthcoming as to why even a Naxalite freely moving and available to the police should not be dealt with according to the law and instead be brutally murdered. Or innocents like Prasada Rao should be killed.

The Committee noted that Rasool's superiors testified before it that Rasool never allowed his personal beliefs to influence his professional performance. There were also no protests by the police and others against his reports. There were no contradictions also from any other source. He may have had contact with Naxalites but the police manual cannot be a guide for journalists whose business is to inform people of what has been happening in society.

The Committee observed that 'at every step there was an attempt to erase evidence and terrorise would-be witnesses.'
The Ghulam Rasool case, as mentioned earlier, is a comment on the judicial inquiries. They are no doubt, important institutions in a democracy aimed at establishing facts and truth. But the verdict delivered by the Commission does not do more damage to the families of the deceased and also to the established canons of democracy. Democracy would have real meaning only when its various wings function efficiently and fairly.

**Management policies**

Journalists admitted that invariably all the newspaper managements had an unwritten policy which is ingrained in the reporters and those working on the desk. This unwritten policy is to highlight the negative aspects, violence and the sensational side and such information which could be of help to the State. For instance, Ramakant, leader of the trade union wing of the Naxalites, SIKASA was killed behind the house of the Indian Express reporter. The reporter missed the story. Later, he received instructions from his office asking him to file a story on the likely successor. The management was not interested in the event but what the State/Police is interested in or anxious about. For such details most newspapers rely on the grass root reporters.

Any news against the State is also not encouraged. For instance, after the bid on Gaddar, the balladeer, a senior journalist working for a prominent Telugu daily, said that the management instructed its staff to publish stories on the identities of the attackers, the health of Gaddar and his future plans. Subsequently, a Struggle Committee against attack on Gaddar was formed. This Committee planned to stage demonstrations before the Secretariat in protest against the bid on Gaddar's life. It further resolved to fight the Government for its attack on the
freedom of the individual and democracy. When the senior journalist filed this story, he was immediately shifted from the reporting bureau to the desk at the senior level. Reason Similarly, another journalist of Vaartha, quoting a hospital source, filed a report which accused Greyhounds- the special anti-naxal outfit of being behind the assassination bid. The journalist was immediately sacked as it was an anti-establishment story. Later, the same paper carried a series of editorials and newsreports speculating that real estate dealers or the PWG might be behind the attack on Gaddar.

Journalists admitted that the managements do not intend crossing swords with the State establishment by publishing negative stories on it. On the other hand they would not mind publishing anti-Naxal stories. The inherent bias in the nature of reportage of developmental activities taken up by the Naxalites is meagre while a blast or a killing by the Naxals get prominent front page coverage. Thus the Press has been acting as the 'arm of the State'.

While the managements would like their staffers to adhere to the unwritten policy, depending on situations, they do not shy away from issuing instructions. For instance, one reporter narrated that a voluntary organisation in Varni in Gandhan Mandal was working for the rehabilitation of jongs and their children was found involved in a fraud. The same was reported in Vaartha based on a Press note issued by the Radical Youth League President of the Banswada dalam. Immediately the Editor issued instructions to that Edition not to do any follow up stories on the voluntary organisation and the reporter was quizzed about the authenticity of the Press note.
One journalist went to the extent of suggesting that after the reporter files his story, it is the editor who has to own responsibility for what has been published. He denounced the practice of the management to make the reporter a scapegoat and sack him after which he becomes more vulnerable both to the police and the Naxals. The decision makers should be held responsible, not subjecting the reporter on the field to harassment or killing him.

**On harassment**

Regarding harassment of journalists in the Telangana region, the Committee appointed by the Editors Guild of India which visited the State after the murder of Rasool said that it had received affidavits filed by seven journalists before the Press Council of India alleging harassment. It has also a written confirmation of harassment of five out of the seven journalists by the Managing Director of News Today of the *Eenadu* group.

The Committee stated that 'it is crystal clear journalists in the Telangana are more or less facing the kind of situation which their counterparts face in Punjab. They are under pressure from both the police and the 'extremists' to do their bidding and report of omit to report according to their diktats.

While giving details about the killing of Ghulam Rasool in an encounter, the police in its document mentioned that 'many number of stringers, district reporters and state level reporters of various newspapers in the State have close association with the PWG. Since Ghulam Rasool Khan was working as a stringer in Udayam Telugu daily Almost the entire Press of Andhra Pradesh had taken up this incident as a public issue and bloated it to abnormal proportions and gave
wide publicity for a week days to deter and demoralise the police. They have started a systematic tirade against the police by publishing false stories.'

In fact, the police version on the killing of Ghulam Rasool Khan and Vijay Prasad stated that the Uppal police received reliable information that a few extremists of the PWG who were wanted and armed with fire arms, were holding a meeting in a deserted house on the outskirts of Maseedgudem. Later, a police party was despatched to the village and was divided into two. When both the parties were advancing to the spot the extremists opened fire. The police contended that they had 'commanded the extremists to surrender and warned them to stop firing.' When firing continued from the other end, the Circle Inspector ordered to open fire and the exchange of fire was followed by a lull. When the police party searched the deserted house with the help of torch lights they found some extremists scaling the wall while a dead body was found in one of the rooms and another body just outside the room. One SBML gun, a revolver, a few empty cartridges, explosive material were found at the scene of offence. The Circle accounted for 15 rounds of 30 fired ammunition and posted a guard at the scene of offence and proceeded to Uppal and filed a report in the police station. The Mandal Revenue Officer of Saroornagar held an inquest over the dead bodies in the presence of mediators. A press note was released giving all the details of the incident and photographs were released to the Press. Since none came to claim the dead bodies, they were cremated.

Emboldened by instances of omission and commission where they are not held accountable, instances of harassment increased elsewhere and in one instance, in Kamnnagar, the reporter of Andhra Prabha was beaten black and blue.
The reporter recalling his meeting with the police official concerned disclosed that he was threatened openly: 'I am the officer responsible for Rasool's killing and you will also meet the same fate.'

When such cases were resented by the journalists' unions and there were protest marches taken out in different headquarters and in the city, these 'respectable protesters' were shifted to makeshift prisons and allowed to leave after some time. Journalists contend that there is little doubt that an element of gratuitous vindictiveness, entirely in character with the successive State Governments, has marked the treatment meted out to the journalists in the State.

The attacks on the Press have come not merely from formally constituted structures like the State Government, which in the final can be held accountable for its actions, but also from less formally constituted and far less accountable structures. During the height of the anti-reservation agitation or the recent demand for a separate Telangana certain organisations mushroomed overnight and they were 'power structures.' This meant that the journalists cover their activities even more comprehensively than those of the State Government. Actual or perceived critical account of the activities of the PWG during such agitations, elections or even with regard to the rumblings for a separate Telangana drew the sharpest attacks from the 'power structures' as the coverage was deemed to be 'anti-propaganda.' While the law enforcement machinery in 'public interest' can arrest and even torment journalists viewed as hostile, less formally constituted structures fortunately lack such powers and of necessity to confine themselves to verbal chastisement.
Sharply critical of the Government's moves, Kannabiran (1992:24) states:

PWG was under a de facto ban for over two decades now. The de jure ban is to muzzle the human rights organisations and news media. Editors are contacted by phone and are asked to cooperate with them and journalists, reporters and stringers in rural areas are threatened saying any reporting of encounters, deaths in custody, etc., will come within the ambit of unlawful activities of PWG and will be looked upon as interference with the administration of law and order. An atmosphere of fear is generated. It is nothing short of flouting the order of the Court by using an Act, which was struck down.

Naxals- turned -Journalists

There are instances where journalists have joined the Naxalites and vice versa, the latter for security and safety reasons. In Godavari khanni, a Staff Reporter of Vishalandhra joined the Jana Rakshana Samithi. Later, he left the movement and started a Telugu weekly. However, he was killed in an encounter with the police. On the other hand, there are a sizeable number of stringers and contributors (no staff reporters) in each district who were earlier with the movement and have surrendered. This only indicated how the Press provides a cover for such activists and the power the Press wields in the society. Such of those whom this researcher spoke to pointed out that, the law enforcement personnel are generally wary to lay their hands on journalists lest they get adverse publicity.
On Police - Press relations

Journalists contend that police have a strong sense of alienation, even of persecution and undue insensitivity. Insensitivity combined with disdain for the Press has led to hostility and handicap to both. Police refuse to meet legitimate demands of the Press for news, avoid Press briefings and then complain of misreportage. Majority of the police officers are secretive and have no idea of the role of the Press in development. They pretend ignorance of the fact that all police work depends on information and all information depends on faith and trust being reposed in the police. Little do they realise that the best way to develop faith is to be frank.

This negative attitude of the police came to the fore when journalists accompanying the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice Ranganath Mishra were assaulted and were branded as Naxalites or were accused of having links with the Naxalites. This incident took place when Justice Mishra visited Nalgonda district in the State to inquire into the human rights violations and was widely reported in the Press.

The immediate provocation was because the Press had objected to a select few deposing before the Commission. Pressmen confided that these were tutored witnesses.

The Police order journalists to hand over Press notes from Naxalites while the Naxalites make it clear that they want the Press releases published, confided a reporter from Medak district who along with some of his colleagues had launched a hunger strike protesting police atrocities. They accuse the Superintendent of
Police of the Medak district of identifying 40-odd scribes as Naxal sympathisers' and singling them out for 'special treatment'

**Foisting cases**

A number of cases have come up before the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists regarding arrests and foisting of false cases on journalists on the grounds that reporters had links with the Naxalites. Presented below are a few cases.

*The reporter of *Udayam* daily from Dubbak in Medak district was arrested under TADA on July 31, 1990. A false case was booked against him on the grounds that the police recovered bombs when his house was raided. The Siddipet Circle Inspector threatened him stating, 'resign your job, it will be difficult for you to live as a journalist. We will 'encounter' you.*

*Eenadu* reporter from Ichchoda, in Adilabad district was arrested on March 27, 1991 and was booked under three sections of TADA for destroying property.

*Andhra Bhoomi* reporter from Korukonda in East Godavari district was arrested on December 13, 1990 for alleged killing, illegal encroachment of land etc. In fact the reporter accompanied a journalists team to Punjab when the incident occurred.

*The District Superintendent of Police, Medak openly instigated the people of Vadi village to kill the *Eenadu* Reporter, Medak district. Later, an FIR was filed against him for threatening and instigating*
*Andhra Prabha*, reporter, Kollapur, Mahabubnagar district was booked under the TADA for two cases for property damage, burning, raiding the police station. He was beaten up severely by the police while in custody. When journalists protested without producing him in the court, he was released.

*Eenadu* reporter, Chiru Chintakunta, Mahabubnagar district was arrested by the Sub Inspector on May 7, 1991 and was tortured for five days.

*Eenadu* reporter of Dachepalli in Guntur district was arrested by the Head Constable on November 1990 for assaulting the Head Constable. He was paraded naked in the streets and was beaten up in the police station.

*Eenadu* reporter, Mahamuttaram, Karimnagar district was arrested on December 28, 1990 under the Arms Act and was tortured while in custody.

*Jeevagadda* reporter, Saidapur, Karimnagar district was arrested in 1992 and was falsely implicated in the murder case of the Sarpanch under TADA.

*Andhra Bhoomi*, reporter, Kataram, Karimnagar district was forcefully confined in a police camp for 18 months in 1992-93 in the native village of the then Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The police argued that he was a former Naxalite and so the camp would not be raided by the Naxals. Thus the Speaker got ensured his security with police protection. The police were shielding themselves from the Naxalites with the presence of the reporter in their custody.
* Udayam reporter, Athmakur, Mahabubnagar district was arrested on March 3, 1994 falsely implicating him in the ongoing fights between the political parties in the district. It was alleged that he was a member of a political party.

* Andhra Bhoomi, reporter, Vidavaluru, Nellore district was arrested on May 16, 1994 under TADA for four days and was charged with having links with the PWG.

* Two reporters of Andhra Jyothi from Pebberu and Ayia mandals in Mahabubnagar district were arrested by the Sub Inspector of Gadwal on June 16, 1994 and a bailable case was booked against them. The Pebberu reporter was the district secretary of the civil rights group while the Ayia reporter was a civil rights activist. They were beaten and threatened to desist from going ahead with the postcard campaign demanding a fresh inquiry into the killing of Ghulam Rasool.

* The photographer of Andhra Prabha was severely roughed up and his equipment was destroyed by the police under the supervision of the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Karimnagar, for taking photographs of the police brutality on a silent procession taken out by the women in Karimnagar.

* Reporting Praja Courts can land the journalists in trouble. In one such instance, the Warangal police foisted a murder case, under sections 302 and 324 of IPC against, correspondent Eenadu Telugu daily for reporting a
Praja court held by the People's War Group (PWG) Naxalites at Komaravalli in the district on September 15

The APUWJ intervened and informed the Chief Minister of the highly provocative actions of the Warangal police against journalists. The APUWJ contended that the Cheriyal police at the instance of the Superintendent of Police forcibly produced some witnesses and made them tender evidence before a Magistrate against the journalists to strengthen their false cases.

The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N.Chandra Babu Naidu ordered the withdrawal of a murder case foisted on M.Sreenuvasa Rao. The State Government has come to the rescue of the journalists in Naxal infested areas especially when they were/ are targetted by the law enforcement agencies. The APUWJ has also constituted an Attacks Sub Committee to go into the assaults on journalists. However, the panel has not been functioning effectively.

There are discordant notes on the role of the APUWJ in protecting the rights of its members. Radhakrishna (1997: 63) says that cases of atrocities on journalists in the districts abound. Some 50 scribes have, over the years, been silenced by brute force for being sympathetic to the Naxal cause. The APUWJ has also been unable to take any concrete step to safeguard the lives and interests of the scribes operating in the Naxal dominated districts.

**On Jail Manuals**

Most of them felt that the rules of the jail manuals were rigid and prevented them from interviewing the under trial Naxals. The enterprising ones do steal a chance to speak to the undertrials on special occasions like the Independence day or the
Republic Day when they can hoodwink the police officials and get some good copy. Otherwise the general refrain among reporters is that the procedure to gain access to interview undertrials was cumbersome with officials not willing to take any responsibility. For instance, the reporter of the largest circulated English daily from Secunderabad wanted to interview, Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, the founder of the PWG just before he was to be released immediately after the N.T Rama Rao Government, in pursuance with its soft policy decided to free him. The reporter was made to run from one police official to the other with each one passing the buck on to the other. The reporter's curiosity to have a story on Seetharamaiah could be at the behest of the Editor or the newspaper management to be one up and provide the reader with something different. The refusal of the police officials to grant permission to journalists to interview undertrials was nothing but interference with the right to information.

In this regard, one may note Rule 549 (4) of the Jail Manual which provides that every prisoner under a sentence of death shall be allowed such interviews with his relatives, friends and legal advisors as the Superintendent considers reasonable. The Supreme Court, in the Prabha Dutt vs State decreed that 'Journalists or newspapermen are not expressly referred to in clause (4) but that does not mean that they can always and without good reasons be denied the opportunity to interview a condemned prisoner.' Journalists, the court added, can be termed as 'friends of the society.' The Manual refers to 'friends of the prisoner.' The Court allowed interviews to 'friends of the society.'

Noorani (1982 144), referring to this verdict comments, the Court realised that what the petitioner sought was the 'right to means of information through the
medium of interview' It proceeded on the basis of the Jail Manual - not the fundamental right to free speech. The very relief which the court granted by stretching the Jail Manual could have been given more correctly by a proper application of the Article 19 (1) (a). The right to free speech implies access to news. What the Press seeks is unimpeded access to prisoners. It will be for them to decline to speak to the Pressmen who visit them.

Journalists in the northern Telangana districts discharge their professional responsibilities under conditions of fear and also risking their lives. There have been instances of violent attacks on journalists, including a few killings and foisting of false cases by the police. They are handicapped on several counts due to lack of proper training, non-availability of Naxal sources for verification which, sometimes leading to distortion and misreporting which is interpreted differently by different groups, including the police. A perspective of the police on the coverage to Naxal activities is discussed in the next chapter.

4.4 Police on Press Coverage of Naxalism

This section analyses the responses of the police personnel on the coverage given to Naxal activities and also focuses on the uneasy relations with the journalists, the causes and the role the Press can play in the Naxal conflict.

Aravinda Rao (1996) states that the 'Press response to terrorism' has been determined by factors such as quest for intellectual objectivity; commercial interest, assertion of the freedom of the Press, connivance with extremists or infiltration of extremists and threats from underground extremists responsible for reporting of atrocities truthfully.
Rao points out that the Press tends to write about terrorists in the language provided by terrorists. **Terrorists** are referred to as peasant revolutionaries. Their atrocities are termed as raitanga poratam (peasants' struggle); extortions are termed as 'money actions' looting is termed as famine raids (karuva dadalu), murder of civilians is termed 'executions' and the process of torture is called as 'praja courts' (peoples' courts); the armed conflicts of security forces with extremists are termed as fake encounters. These are terms provided by the extremists to justify their actions. The tendency of the Press to repeatedly use such words as 'famine raids' etc., builds public opinion in favour of the extremists and that their actions are justified.

On reportage of violence by both the sides, he argues that the reporters 'forget that people are killed on suspicion by the terrorists' Excesses by the State forces are condemned while the terrorists indulge in the same excesses with impunity. The media forget that the security forces act with the permission of law, that is, with the permission of the society whereas the terrorist acts without the sanction of the society and by terrorising the society.

The reporters also lose their perspective and 'fail to distinguish an attack by a violent minority on the institutions of a democratic State, and the right of the State to defend itself against such an attack. We must resist this language.'

Commercial interest also dictates media behaviour. Extensive interviews with underground hardcore elements/ extremist leaders a common phenomenon in the newspapers are partly due to the desire of the extremists to manipulate the media and partly due to the commercial interest. Avoiding publication of the versions put out by the extremists, would snap the link of the leaders with their
cadre and also help in stemming disinformation among the public to justify their own atrocities

For instance, when a Member of Parliament was killed the newspapers published a statement issued by an underground activist full of 'specious arguments' to mislead the public. There is competition among journalists to have such interviews with underground leaders so as to promote the commercial interests of their publication

Naxalite related stories are often spicy and sensational. Negativism has of late become an established news value for newspapers. News stories on Naxalites are full of such slant. Naxalism is also a part of the life of north Telangana and people can easily be attracted towards coverage of Naxal activities. Thus journalists and newspapers prefer to give wide coverage to Naxalite activities on the pretext that it is of interest to the readers.

Iyer (1981) posits that it is not possible to resolve the conflict between the police and the Press. He explains, 'the Press hunts for 'spicy' and sensational news.' It also tries to pander to the public tastes. Public has a weakness for scandals and sensationalism. The Press for considerations of sheer self-interest, has to try to satisfy the public 'hunger' for 'saucy'news. Most of such news and disclosures may cast aspersions on the police and may not be to the liking of policemen.

**Assertion of Freedom**

The Press is normally supposed to report about an event after it occurs but there is no need to publicize the future programmes of underground extremists. In all the bandhs organized by the extremists the role of newspapers is prominent as
an anonymous letter sent to the Press by the underground criminals about the intended bandh is promptly published in all newspapers much to the discomfiture of the public. Normal life comes to a standstill as heads of the institutions, fearing disturbances remain closed. Thus the Press, by publicising the bandh calls, helps extremists. The media are wittingly or unwittingly playing into the hands of the extremists by giving advance publicity to any bandh call given by the extremists. The Press, no doubt has the freedom to publish such statements but it should realise that they are becoming unwitting channels of communication between the terrorists and the public. Public will not panic if the Press takes the decision not to print such messages.

**Infiltration**

There are cases, though not frequent, where there is a deliberate and planned infiltration by terrorist sympathisers in the media. False stories are spread in order to spread terror and terrorists are portrayed as Robinhoods. This is particularly in the vernacular Press where chosen literary expressions are used to describe and extol the extremists. Naxalites facing legal cases also make efforts to join the Press as the profession of journalism shields their lives.

**Training**

Terrorism is mass manipulation and the Indian Press has failed to critically analyse the terrorist outfits in India. Quite often the reports are supportive of the security forces or of extremists. The socio-economic dimension is taken for granted to justify the raison-d'etre of the terrorist groups. Lack of specialisation
and lack of facilities for standardised journalists' training is a major factor. There is a need for a studied response to various social issues including terrorism.

Bassiouni (1982, 128) remarks that media coverage should emphasise that: a) resort to terrorist violence is contrary to social values and has a low probability of success; b) police must operate under the drastic practical handicap of minimising harm to persons and property in relation to terrorist violence; c) police personnel take the same risks as those imposed by terrorists and d) society is not helpless with regard to terrorist violence, but rather acts within a certain legal framework. Access should be provided for the voices of reason among dissident groups so as to minimise the need to resort to violence. Various tertiary institutions should promote responsible media coverage, including continuing professional education of media personnel, professional codes and associations, and periodic conferences between law enforcement officials and media policy makers to facilitate the frank exchange of views and concerns.

On films & television

Film producers are commercial entrepreneurs, having no interest in or knowledge of extremist ideology. But some films portray tyrannical landlords (non-existent), brutalities of police to sell well in the market. Producers in favour of toeing a neutral picture are threatened and persuaded to stop such attempts while others have to obtain a clearance from extremists before getting it cleared by the Censor board. The cable channels are successfully manipulated by the spokesmen for proscribed extremist groups who openly advocate violence. The television managers have so far not considered to air either the official point of view, or at least a balanced and well informed discussion by responsible members among
The media response to terrorism has two important implications: to induce fear through propaganda by the media. Secondly, the official response depends at least to some extent on how the media react to the terrorist violence. The media may not condemn violence due to fear, but how they portray terrorists vis-a-vis the State determines the degree of public acceptance to violence and thus restrains a democratic State in taking effective action.

**Suppressing Information**

The police may at times plan to suppress or curb or suppress such information which may affect the peace and tranquility in the region or impede police in curbing anti-social activity in cases like arms cache, bombs etc. When such information is published it may cause public unrest, be an advantage to the extremists.

Sometimes during combing operations journalists may be denied access to information. But the Press may get wind of it. The police also tries to make use of the Press to arouse an anti-Naxal feeling among people. While the police may be discreet in putting out information the Press should also use its discretion to ensure that it does not Press for such information which is 'confidential'. Police operate within a legal apparatus and are governed by the law of the land. Therefore the police cannot instantaneously provide information to journalists though the latter demands it as a privilege. Police often withhold information as leakage of such information may jeopardise the police operations. Such withholding of information is construed by journalists as a deliberate attempt to suppress truth.
The coverage of police movements by the Press helps Naxalites to position their squads and thwart the combing operations. Some police officers even arrive at the conclusion that such coverage tantamounts to sedition as it is detrimental to the effort of the State to curb insurgency. Most of the newspapers give space to false news about the movement of the Naxal squads deliberately dished out by the Naxalites. Naxalites deliberately indulge in spreading the false information about the movement of their squads to confuse the police operations. The newspapers are an accomplice in spreading such false information that benefit such insurgent activities. Extensive coverage of the killings of police in Naxal attacks have a demoralising effect on the police and on the other hand indirectly encourage the Naxal activities. Such coverage ascribes heroic character to the Naxal operations. More often the newspapers glamorise Naxal leaders making it difficult for the police to nab them. One instance is the coverage given to Ramakant, leader of SIKASA, outlawed front organisation of the PWG who was reportedly killed in an encounter.

Journalists are carried away by rumour mongering, especially in the rural areas. The general tendency of the Press, not to cross-check facts on the pretext of meeting the deadlines is also leading to false/inaccurate coverage.

**Constraints on the Police**

The police-Press relationship varies with an event, time and place to the extent that it does not encourage the extremist outfits. The police has to evolve and grow in such relationships while the Press has to understand the limitations. The Press cannot demand the same treatment with respect to different events. On the ban there may be one course while in a different context it may differ. That the Press
operates under the pressure of time and competition is conceded by Venkat Rao (1981) who suggests that a modus vivendi has to be worked out to make authentic version relating to any incident of public importance available to the Press within a reasonable time so that the next day's edition of newspapers carry the official version

Police charge that the Press is ignorant of the police work. Most reporters have very little knowledge, no homework done regarding police procedure and regulations. For instance, they point out that non registration of a crime is termed as laxity in maintenance of criminal records while criminal offences are reported as registered under inconspicuous sections of the law Improper supervision of offences of senior officers are never mentioned They reveal that journalists confound facts, splinter groups of extremists and the movements and presenting them all as law and order problem. As a result, reports published portray the police is bad taste but exaggerated account of events is published in the newspapers The generally low image of the police in the society is also proving to be a reason for the negative publicity about the police in the Press.

The constraints under which the police functions, especially with regard to the Press and to refurbish the image of the police, has been brought out by the National Police Commission headed by Justice Dharam Veera.

The report recognises the special nature of the police and identifies four definite areas where secrecy is to be maintained They are operations, intelligence; privacy of the individual citizen and judicial requirements These factors constrain the police to communicate the news to the Press which forces them to gather news from other unreliable sources.
The report points out that fall out of such secrecy was the widening of the gap between the police and the Press. The report states 'the police are deprived of an opportunity to develop good relations with the Press and through them the community. The Press, these days, is powerful in building public opinion. The Press should not be enabled to look to an unauthorised source of information. Inaccurate information gathered from unreliable sources may sometime prove adverse to the interest of the police functioning itself. Police by not knowing how to properly tap and use this resource, are deprived of an effective means of building up of a good image. Chakravarthy (1981) argues that there should be absolute free flow of information between the Press and the police for better police community relations.

Officials should endeavour to maximize the media’s access to reliable, accurate information, since generally “it is more and more balanced - coverage rather than less coverage that will best promote both crime prevention and public confidence in law enforcement”.

**Bias**

Police excesses, though condemnable are bound to occur, but the Press instead of projecting them in a proper perspective to see that the human rights are not violated often covers such events in the manner that helps Naxalite onslaught on the police.

The PWG’s violent attacks on unarmed activists of other political parties is often confined to local supplements of newspapers whereas any killing of a Naxalite in an encounter becomes news in the State editions and quite often on the front.
The sordid stories of the innocent policemen killed in Naxal attacks never find any expression. Naxals observe the anniversaries of comrades killed in police action which again get periodic coverage. For instance, Indravelli incident where tribals were shot, is observed every year and the Press gives publicity to such ceremonies. On the other hand, the police does not observe the anniversaries of the policemen killed in Naxal attacks or nobody observes anniversaries of police brutality. Another instance, torching of the Kakatiya passenger in which innocent passengers were killed is never remembered. As a result, police brutality is remembered by the Press periodically whereas Naxalite excesses if forgotten and there are no follow up stories.

**On Press Relations**

The Naxalites have a network of front organisations and committed individuals. They on a constant basis make a deliberate and sustained effort to reach out to the Press. On the other hand the police does not make an organised effort for Press relations. The consistency in Press relations is also affected as senior police officials are periodically transferred. Individual effort to improve the police image is generally missing as policemen are not ideologically surcharged like the Naxalites. Organisationally and professionally the Public Relations Department is very weak.

Realising the general lacuna of the police, the Andhra Pradesh Police Commission headed by Kona Ramchandra Reddy recommended for the establishment of a Bureau of Police Public Information at the State headquarters manned by qualified staff. The bureau was to act as a liaison between the police and the Press and also arrange Press conference for senior police officials. The Commission
observed that a thoughtfully planned professionally oriented and completely handled Bureau can contribute a lot in reducing the present psychological gap that separates the police and the public. Press in a democratic society often assumes an adversarial role and takes an anti-establishment stance. It is also a popular belief in the Press that such a stance is essential to sustain the popularity of the newspaper. This general trend in the Press has had its impact on the journalist covering the police operations. Since a vigorous and independent Press is essential to the functioning of democratic government, it is often desirable that the media occupy an adversarial role vis-a-vis civil authority. But democratic institutions work best when there is provision for flexibility and observance of consistency and forbearance on each side.

The information disseminated by the police is taken with suspicion by the journalists while the information released by the Naxalites is often deemed as truth. The Press also considers itself as performing the role of protector of civil liberties by constantly attacking the police. Civil liberties activists have a considerable clout among the media and also have an intellectual image that appeases the media.

Journalists while discharging their professional responsibilities in the Naxal strongholds often face threat from the Naxals and the police. But journalists have means of meeting the police threat due to their proximity with the political elite and their social status. But, it is difficult for them to wield influence on underground activists. As a result journalists tend to succumb more to the pressure from Naxalites than to the police. Journalists can take recourse to law
to face police oppression. But there is no mechanism to deal with the Naxals. As a result, the tendency among journalists is to buy peace with the Naxalites.

The social trend of considering someone as a hero if he braves police oppression or withstands police pressure is prompting some individual journalists to take oppose/take sides with the police in the police-Naxal cross-fire.

**Encounters**

There is an element of untruth on the part of the police and the Naxals which cannot be put into a strait-jacket format. If the Press has information, it can go ahead and publish but on the other hand if it feels that such a movement should not be given any encouragement, it is better for the Press to take only the police version. By and large, the Press has not dug into details on encounters and they have not made an issue out of the information given by the police on encounters. If the journalists wanted, they could have raised doubts about such information on encounters. But they have not done so.

**Potential of the Press**

The actors in the conflict include the Naxalite, militant, insurgent, terrorist, extremist; the government and the administration including the army if it is called for, and the public. If the Press is taken as a weapon to fire, the firing has to be done on to these four targets and the rate of firing and the intensity have to change as the 'extremist operations' build up. The priority one target for the Press should be the Naxalite or the extremist. The next priorities should be to build confidence in the legally elected government and the State administration,
protecting the image of the law and order machinery and to wean people away from the extremists

The Press can perform two different types of roles. Publicity-objective reporting. While objectivity is the main issue the other aspects to be taken care are to report faithfully, highlight the 'excesses' of the Naxalites and their attacks on the society and the infrastructure. Also the Press can project the sincerity of the legally elected government to redress the grievances of the underprivileged and to buttress the propaganda of the Naxalites through the captive Press.

Another sensitive issue is that the Press, especially the regional Press and those working for it should resist the traps laid for them by vested political interests who are ready to exploit it. Specifically, the Press men should not become vulnerable to the fear psychosis engineered by the extremists.

The Press should avoid indulging in sensationalism and using distorted and incomplete information to boost circulation. Also another crucial factor is to project the police in the proper light instead of projecting it as a 'retaliatory force' and as an unwanted burden on the masses.

The regional media has to be addressed by the police because the vernacular Press is very powerful having the power to change the psyche of the masses.

**Press and Public Policy on Naxalism**

The Press has not been instrumental in shaping the public policy towards Naxalism in the State. Press constitutes one of the determinants, among others in shaping public policies as it can mould opinions.
The Press can play many positive roles as in the case of the anti-liquor movement in the State which was championed by a section of the Telugu Press. It can inform, enlighten, uplift, educate, criticise, help decision makers make better policy and to encourage policy makers to become better planners, strategists and visionaries. Pressmen need to think more seriously about the contributions they can make to the development and implementation of enlightened public policy on Naxalism. Criticism is a useful journalistic tool, but predictions and suggestions may be even more helpful. Criticism often causes top decision makers to become more defensive, while helpful suggestions are sometimes more readily received and acted upon. The Press can play a positive discreet role with regard to the Naxal movement even while being careful that it is not misused by the State agencies. The Press may seek the help of the administration and the police but the latter should not impinge on the functioning on the Press, which has rarely happened. To that extent the Press has a role on many other issues which concern many people.

**Police Propaganda**

To counter the Naxal menace at the grass root level, police embark on anti Naxal propaganda in a big way. Police durbars, performances by Praja Natya Mandalis, audio and video presentations of extremist violence are some methods that have been adopted in Naxal infested areas. Such anti-extremist propaganda is done especially during the time of elections. The political leaders are threatened by Naxalites not to campaign during the elections and people are threatened not to vote. Police, through the methods mentioned above expose the extremists, by countering their arguments and by encouraging people to exercise their right to
vote. The police have developed their own propaganda machinery, though not equal to that of the terrorists

**Specific areas of conflict**

Persistent coverage of Naxalite activities leads to a conflict of interests between the police and the media. Such coverage especially during abductions, provides Naxalites an opportunity to fulfil their objectives of obtaining publicity for their cause and rivetting the attention of the society on their exercise of power in open defiance of the government and the law. The media perform several functions in such instances. Among these is controlling rumours by disseminating accurate information to the public of dangers at the scene of kidnap. While the importance of the Press in this capacity cannot be ignored, police, based on their experience state that timely coverage of a terrorist attack gives rise to three areas of conflict between the police and the media. In such circumstances the public interest by the Press must be balanced with the public interest represented by the police.

The first area of conflict involves publishing material tactically useful to the Naxalites while an attack is underway. When Naxalites barricade themselves and the hostages in their hideouts, they have a limited area under their control. To remedy this situation, Naxalites have equipped themselves with radio/transistors which allow them to listen to news broadcasts.

During any kidnap or even after the execution of any operation, the Naxalites monitor the media/Press closely as they have access to the publications through their effective courier network.
Thus the media, including the Press unwittingly may serve as the intelligence arm of the Naxalites when they disseminate the latest operational activities of the police, the presence of hidden persons who could be taken as hostages, news of escaping hostages, the bargaining strategy of police negotiators, or any deception or tricks planned by the police. Such information helps Naxalites in determining possible escape routes or repelling impending police assaults.

Another area of conflict involves media interference with the police by sensationalising the event and impeding the negotiating response. At times, journalists working in the rural areas are asked to negotiate the release of civilians and government officials kidnapped by the Naxalites. That the journalists act as mediators is also admitted to by the journalists themselves.

Police argue that direct contact by the journalists untrained in the delicate problems involving hostage situations may unnecessarily jeopardise lives. Additionally, Press coverage hinders negotiations by subjecting the police to public pressure and blunts the role of the Press as a valuable negotiating item.

Referring to the kidnap of seven government officials in Godavari in 1987, police argue that the Naxalites, by their own drastic action indicated that they are willing to risk many lives to accomplish their objective. The police on the other hand were under a constraint of minimizing the harm to persons and property under threat. Consequently, police attempted to establish a psychological environment that would induce the Naxalites to surrender. Direct media contact with the Naxalites during similar situations led to isolation of professional trained negotiators from the bargaining process and also altering the psychological environment by upsetting them through persistent questioning.
sometimes inflammatory, interrupted the pattern the police attempted to inculcate or giving them the comfort of company.

A third area of friction is the presence of a large number of journalists both from the electronic media at the scene of abduction. The problem has become more acute after the advent of the satellite channels which send their crew to cover such events. Such crew comprising journalists and members of the production team arrive with their obtrusive equipment and lighting at the site which physically interfere with the free movement of law enforcement personnel and attract crowds that burden police with crowd control problems. Police interrogation at times distracts decision makers at a critical moment. The presence of media personnel and their conduct at the scene may have an important bearing on its outcome. On the contrary, some police officials remark that journalists' absence at the scene will increase their dependency on hearsay and the police.

**Aggravates Conflict?**

Unwittingly the Press is becoming a party to the Naxalite propaganda. Naxalism is given currency by the continuous coverage by the Press. For instance, newspapers have carried interviews of several top Naxalite leaders like Kondapalli Seetharamaiah. Through this, the Naxalites gain publicity, they reach people and espouse their cause. The party makes itself understood in the manner in which it would like the people to understand. The newspaper gains because it had a saleable point while the reader gains an insight into the functioning of the party amidst daily reports of killings, abductions and exchange of fire. The microcosmic section which is closely monitoring or interested in the activities of the party.
gains as the coverage may change their perception after reading the exclusives. The Press only acts as a catalyst to those elements closer to the party.

A section feels that publication of the events does encourage Naxalite activities while a few disagree. Naxalite activities get a boost when newspapers start publishing the party's views and party's stance and create a favourable impression among the people. The degree of encouragement due to such dissemination is minimal. It may help those in touch with the party, to understand the party. Direct encouragement is not possible through the Press. But as an objective being, the journalist is seldom concerned about the consequences and is not promoting the interest of the Naxalite movement.

It would be apt to review the literature associating media with terrorism and implicating media as a contagion of such violence. One finds that there is no credible evidence that media are an important factor in inducing and diffusing terrorist acts. The term contagion as used by Kelly and Thomas Mitchell (1981, 274) implies that terrorism spreads sometimes by other means but most often through the media. Wilkinson (1986, 210) cites non-media examples of terrorist groups holding conferences having a 'bandwagon effect'. Schmid and de Graaf (1982: 148) describe it thus 'Epidemics of non-state terrorism are spread mainly by the modern mass media. They cite the examples of Tupamaro guerrillas, who were 'widely reported' to have offered an example to countless terrorist movements abroad' (24).
Citing historic examples from newspapers, they say:

Fascinated by those anarchists who proudly accepted the responsibility for the political crimes, the late nineteenth century Press gave ample space to terrorist deeds and thereby probably contributed to the spread of this new style of political confrontation (Gerbner et al, 1978. 176-207; Schmid de Graaf, 1982. 14)

Levy R (1985 35), a Defence Department expert on Terrorism conveyed the media as contagion view throughout the military community in the publication Military Intelligence, saying Experts believe that this type of coverage often has adverse effects such as

- Encouraging the formation of new groups. Tactical successes and successful exploitation of the media lead to terrorist taking advantage of the momentum of previous actions and, thus, to an increase in terrorist acts.

- Keeping the terrorist organisations name before the public and the masses on whose behalf the terrorist supposedly act.

- Leading other less successful groups or individuals to commit more daring acts of terrorist violence.

- Tempting terrorists who have received favourable media coverage in the past to attempt to seize control of the media.

Other experts such as Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf (1982: 142) at the Centre for the study of social conflicts in the Netherlands are willing to accept the contagion effect despite the lack of empirical evidence that it exists or that it
could not exist if the media coverage were removed. Although, admitting gaps in knowledge about the contagion effect they still argue that the most serious effect of media reporting on insurgent terrorism however, is the likely increase in the terroristic activities. The media can provide the potential terrorist with all the ingredients that are necessary to engage in this type of violence. They can reduce inhibitions against the use of violence, they can offer models and know-how to potential terrorists and they can motivate them in various ways.

Rabe (1977: 69) Assistant Chief of Police for the Metropolitan police Department in Washington DC, in his address at a terrorism conference questioned: And what of the contagion of such detailed coverage of a terrorist incident? By glorifying terrorist activities with extensive news coverage the event is projected as an attraction for others to emulate. If such is the case, terrorism has truly made the television media a pawn in the great game of propaganda.

But, not all terrorism scholars fully embrace the view. Brian Jenkins, Director of the Rand Corporation's Terrorism Research, has argued that the media cannot be solely blamed for the spread of terrorism. 'The news media responsible for terrorism to about the same extent that commercial aviation is responsible for airline hijackings,' he says. 'The vast communications network that makes up the news media is simply another vulnerability in a technologically advanced and free society (quoted in Schmid and de Graaf, 1982:143).

As one reviews the literature, it becomes clear that there are no studies based on accepted social science research methods which establish a cause-effect relationship between media coverage and the spread of terrorism.
Legislating Press coverage

Police reveal that there is no legislation to regulate media coverage of Naxalism and any such move will raise constitutional issues. The best step for the Press/media would be to voluntarily have self-restraints which would clarify and provide a basis for cooperation instead of confrontation in police-Press relations. Such voluntary restraints will frustrate the publicity objective of the Naxalites even while safeguarding the public function of the Press/media.

On the desirability of placing curbs/censorship on the Press, police personnel were divided. One line of argument is that ‘the movement is actually dead but for the persistent coverage in the media which provides them the much needed motivation and also underlines their lethal potential.’ In view of this there should be some curbs. The contrary viewpoint is that there is no need for curbs as this would lead to rumours. Another viewpoint which emerged is that the Press cannot afford to lose sight of the events related to Naxalites as the duty of the Press is to record the events of the day. In a conflict, violent and other unlawful events are bound to occur. But the Press may ignore any positive attempts by Naxalites for their campaigns or do not accord priority to such events. Those who argue that the media contribute to terrorism almost invariably call for some type of intervention.

The inherent right of the public to be informed is somewhat limited by another public interest—that of denying terrorists the means to communicate their message of propaganda and instil in the public the element of fear so necessary to their operation,’ argues Rabe (1979 68) Schmid and de Graaf (1982 147) argue that newspapers would face legal sanctions. The Press should in our view be
held responsible for media made disasters just as individuals are held responsible for man made disasters' Nicholas Ashford, Washington Bureau Chief for the London Times says that 'any attempt to curb media coverage of terrorist activities must be seen as a form of political censorship ' Midgley and Rice (1984 42-43) put forward several arguments against censorship that it is unenforceable, escalates the violence, causes political instability and erodes the public trust in the media. Ashford asserts, 'Curbs on Press coverage . . Would be almost impossible to enforce'. . Alexander (1979: 170) urges that 'any attempts to impose media blackout are likely to force terrorists to escalate the levels of violence in order to attract more attention He also advocates accurate reporting of terrorist acts lest the public panic and lose trust and confidence in both the Press and the Government' Rabe (1979. 170) says, 'Imposing a partial or total news blackout is both idealistic and counterproductive. It would have the effect of masking from the people the reality of some of the problems this country faces' And Cooper (1977: 151-152) argues that suppression of the event which could hardly be attained in its entirety, might well through partial revelations, halftruths, and frightening speculations, be a greater mischief. Confidence in the media would certainly be lost and authority itself called into question. The terrorist would have succeeded, incidentally in causing that very crisis of creditability (sic) that is an important secondary objective of his war on society .

A few possible media regulatory schemes suggested by police while covering Naxal activities are as follows

1. Government may impose prior restraints upon media reporting of terrorism
2 Content regulation may present itself in criminal or civil sanctions attaching subsequent punishment to media dissemination of information having a harmful effect.

3 Time-manner-place regulations may be enacted which though not designed to control the content of media reporting may incidentally limit its unfettered exercise.

4. Access can be restricted curtailing the journalist’s access to ongoing terrorist attacks, with the effect of limiting their coverage of such incidents.

However, it may be noted that the Federal Republic of Germany, a country that has been the scene of terrorist activity has enacted legislation attaching criminal sanctions to media glorification of terrorist violence. Some in the United Kingdom have expressed the need for additional legislation making it “a criminal offense for broadcasting organisations to transmit material which encourages or is likely to encourage terrorism or violence for political ends.” Any such attempts at regulation in the United States would have to be subject to the freedom of speech guarantees of the First Amendment of the government. In response to public pressure, the Government could implement restrictions on the media, consistent with, or in circumvention of the First Amendment as it is presently construed or for that matter whether that construction may change with new exigencies.
Bassioim (1982 138) argues that any comprehensive solution to the problems presented by the media's vulnerability to terrorist manipulation must take into consideration at least five competing interests:

* the public's basic right to know and be informed by the Press;
* the safety and well-being law enforcement agencies,
* the public's need for effective law enforcement response,
* the deterrence and prevention of future terrorist crime, and
* the need to respect the privacy of victims

Bassioim recommends the following for a comprehensive solution to problems arising out of coverage of terrorist activities:

1. **Timing:** The media should delay reporting details that could inflame or aggravate an incident, particularly information that could provide terrorists with valuable intelligence. Such information need not be forever suppressed, merely delayed until after the danger has passed.

2. **Balance:** The amount of coverage of an incident should be in proportion to its objective new value. Incidents should be placed in context, including factual background reports of terrorism in general and appropriate follow-up coverage of the consequences to the victims and perpetrators. Information about the perpetrators should be balanced with information about the official response to them. Glamorization and excessive publicity
should be avoided, particularly with respect to reporting speculation and unverified casualty figures and rumors

3 Cooperation: Media personnel should attempt to cooperate with police and other news organizations in order to minimize abuses arising from unrestrained competition. Reporters and equipment should be pooled when practicable to minimize obtrusiveness and burdens on law enforcement personnel. In cases of extraordinary violence, a metropolitan committee of editors and news directors should be constituted with authority to promulgate additional restraints as may be required. Media supervisory personnel should make themselves available to law enforcement officials and public information police officers employed in order to facilitate dissemination of accurate information.

4 Non-intervention: Media personnel should avoid becoming a party to the negotiation process and curtail direct contact with perpetrators during on going incidents; provision may be made for media contacts in any case, should be undertaken only by qualified news personnel upon the express authorization of senior news executives and police communications, incite the perpetrator by particular questions or phrasing or vitiate police efforts to minimize harm to persons or property.

The State law enforcement machinery enters into a sharp conflict with the Naxalites as it has to maintain law and order in the interest of the public and its dealings and view of the press functioning has found to be at variance with the views of the Naxalite ideologues about the character and the nature of coverage of their events.
4.5 Ideologues' opinions on the Press and Coverage

The perspective of the Left theoreticians on the Press has been mentioned in the chapter on Survey of Literature. The following discussion summarises the primary data collected from ideologues of Naxalism. Broadly speaking, the views expressed by respondents read like a chargesheet against the existing newspapers in the State; their ownership, their lack of objectivity.

To put it succinctly, the views can be grouped as follows:

1. Black out or censor news and views favourable to the Left Wing groups and critical of the capitalist system.

2. Discrediting the Left wing groups and their leaders.

3. Planting of news items to confuse the readers.

4. Twisting headlines or inserting headlines to evoke an anti-Naxal feeling in the minds of the readers.

5. No proper discussion on the basic reasons for various political, social and economic happenings in the State. Extensive coverage to personalities and issues representing capitalist thought.

6. Spreading misinformation, lies, slanders and distortions about the Left wing movement aimed at social transformation.

7. Exaggeration of events regarding extremism.
Failure to understand the essence of the movement

Respondents said, by and large, the Press, both the English and the Telugu newspapers have failed to understand and highlight the social transformation that has taken place in the northern Telangana districts during the past two decades. It has failed to present the positive achievements of the Naxalite movement.

The movement was instrumental in bringing about a sea change in the rural economy. This is borne by the fact that the movement could demolish the feudal oppression which impeded raising of capital by the landless labour. Also because the Naxalites were able to curb the practice of Vetti- forced labour, indiscriminate levying of taxes and collection of 'Dhandaga'- surplus yield from the landless.

Significantly, the feudal landlord was transformed into a feudal capitalist. In other words, the economy changed from feudalism to feudal capitalism as the rich landlords fled the villages and made forays into capital ventures by setting up shops, real estate business etc in towns and cities. This paradoxical development, the transformation of the economy from feudalism to feudal capitalism has not been noticed by the Press though the movement aimed at radical transformation / revolution.

In the process of transforming the society from feudalism to feudal capitalism, a section of the Naxalites who reneged from the party or were suspended rejoined the movement and turned into capitalists with the help of the money 'received' through voluntary contributions and 'extortions'.
In its efforts to move from New Democratic Revolution to Socialism, the movement, in the process, has helped 'change traditional rural country into a modern society that suits the purpose of the exploiters but the Government failed to impress upon the landlords regarding land reforms Naxalites helped this transformation which had nothing to do with the Communist or Marxist ideology.

On the social plane, people belonging to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and the Backward classes 'unfurled the flag of self respect- a Paleru- servant who was dependent on the landlord had become independent The social and political consciousness of the landlords and those belonging to the lower classes changed owing to the Naxalite movement The changed mindset of the villagers manifest in simple statements like 'we are raising our voices, we are not like before' has been facilitated through the Naxalite movement. But this does not find a place in the Press.

In a curious development, some squads, in their struggle with the landlords, developed contacts with them which has impeded the transformation of the society. In the absence of their main targets-wicked landlords who had either fled after selling their property or hoodwinking the Government through benami transactions or giving it for lease, the Naxalite squads now fight only the police. Also, since there is a 'lack of strong organisation', the movement has become dependent on 'militants' which has led to lumpen elements gaining a stranglehold over the movement. The Press has failed to turn its focus on the lumpenisation of the movement, it can never understand this basic phenomenon.

The newspapers have been and are missing the leadership class struggle in the Naxalite movement between members of the lower caste and the upper caste. The
Dalit Bahujans want to lead the present history not only in the outside world but also in the underground. The Ambedkar movement, in Andhra Pradesh led by those who were discontent with the Naxalite leadership, has rattled the underground movement. Based on the Marx-Ambedkar thought which is a section of revolutionary forces recognize, there is no debate on how to carry on the struggle both against caste and class as there was no deliberation on the strategic significance or tactical necessity of caste in a revolution.

The Press has failed to understand the 'soul', the inner meaning, economic and social significance, the scope and limitations of the Naxalite movement. Newspapers and economists failed to take cognisance of the positive aspects nor the negative trends.

Censoring or Blacking out Left Wing News

Respondents said that the capitalist Press adopts a method to black out or censor news and views favourable to the Left Wing parties.

For example, if there is a price rise or other issues like retrenchment, closures, lock outs or any other political development which affects people, the reactions of various shades of political opinion is available in the Press prominently while the views of the Left wing leaders are not covered prominently. Even if they are covered by force of circumstance, such views are mostly manipulated versions and are not given prominence in terms of content, space and place. This suppression or manipulation by the capitalist Press gives an impression that the Left wing groups and their leaders are apathetic to the problems of the people. Instances where news of massive protests by people organised by the extremist
groups against the anti-people, pro-capitalist and pro-monopolist policies of the successive governments are totally blacked out by the Press.

**Legitimising Government Actions**

Over the years, the Press has been successful in moulding public opinion to make people that 'violence has no place in a democracy'. But in reality, under capitalist economic, social and political conditions the rich are given full freedom to injure any section of the society while the poor is asked to follow the path of non-violence. The murders which take place every day, communal politics leading to riots, group clashes, personal hatred, faction feuds are adequate testimony that violence is a part of our plural society.

For instance, the Telangana Armed Struggle involving peasants. The movement against exploitation by the landlords demanded land to the tiller. The uprising was crushed with the might of the Indian army and over 6,000 peasants were killed for demanding a decent livelihood. The Press in the first instance failed to identify and set an agenda for the government and the politicians.

In similar cases, though of lesser magnitude, when the aggrieved organise themselves and resort to violence, agitations for their economic demands, the violence is crushed and the Press appreciates and supports the system saying that violence has no place in a democracy. When the State, through its law enforcement machinery ruthlessly suppresses the struggles of people who seek social justice, then such State sponsored violence gets the sanction of the Press. Thus the Press is being engineered subtly.
Promoting State Ideology

The Press supports and promotes the ideology of the State. As long as there is no ban on the PWG and its front organisations, the Press gives coverage to its activities. But once, the ban is imposed, there is an unwritten ban on a section of journalists in some newspapers to write about Naxal related news. Ironically, even during such periods of unwritten ban on news related to Naxals, only such news which has the 'selling power' is encouraged. The moment something is written against the State, the journalist earns the wrath of the management. This is best illustrated through the coverage after the bid on the balladeer Gaddar's life. It is learnt that Andhra Jyothi management instructed its editorial and reporting staff that the paper would like to have stories on Gaddar's condition in hospital, on the attackers and Gaddar's future plans after his recovery. A journalist who filed a story on the formation of a Struggle committee on the attack of Gaddar was immediately shifted to the desk. This incident amply testifies that as long as the journalist filed news stories as dictated by the management, it was fine. But the news on the formation of a committee which was to spearhead the fight against the State went against him. Such instances only strengthen the notion that the Press is not independent but is enslaved to the interests of the State while the State is interested in the capitalist and the consumer class, not the commoner's cause. It serves the interests of only certain sections of the society. It is for maintaining the status quo of the establishment, to strengthen and consolidate it. There is no place for tribals, women, oppressed, the underprivileged.
Whither Press

Casteism has crept into the Press which is evident in the coverage when names of activists/victims of extremist violence are clearly mentioned. Also, in the case of surrendered Naxals, there has been no news about harassment of those from underprivileged sections. During the 1980s, till 1988 the mainstream Telugu Press, especially Udayam owned by a Congress Member of Parliament, recruited persons with Left leanings for their perspicacity of issues, political convictions and their professional skills. Of late there is a deliberate attempt by the newspaper managements to avoid recruiting people with a Left background. The job seekers are grilled about their antecedents. Any news clipping opposing the entry of multinationals, expansion of the activities of the monopoly business houses would go against him.

Misleading Headlines

The capitalist Press in pursuance of its anti-Left policy, takes full advantage of the habit of the reader to go through the headlines owing to time constraints, and twists headlines or inserts misleading headlines. The readers are deceived in the process. Interestingly the contents of the report and the headline do not corroborate with each other. There is deliberate distortion by the Press as it sometimes says that the 'Naxalite movement is finished'. In the case of a major offensive by the Naxalites, the Press reacts stating 'Naxalites are regrouping' followed by another news story that 'Naxalites are building a Red Army' or 'running parallel governments' in rural areas.
Propagating Lies/ Distortion/ Misinformation

The Press spreads lies The biggest lie is the Press never speaks of the social and political significance of the movement. Also there are several instances when the Press published reports without checking facts. When Gaddar, heading the cultural troupe of the PWG, Jana Natya Mandal, was issued a show cause why he should not be expelled for collecting donations for his school, Andhra Jyothi published that he was suspended. When Gaddar staged a demonstration before the newspaper office that it was a lie and a clear case of misleading people, the paper issued an erratum the following day.

Another instance Balraju, legislator from Koyyuru in Vishakapatnam was kidnapped by Naxalites who demanded the State Government to release one of their comrades, Kranti Ranadev, from the Warangal jail. When there was a stalemate, the State Government through its representative, Arjun Rao and Dayachary, both IAS senior officers sought the help of the leaders of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) to facilitate the exchange of the kidnapped MLA. Haragopal, a civil liberties leader involved in the mediating exercise, reveals that the 'role of the Press, which is supposed to be free as compared to the government media was no better.' Nearly 30 reporters present in Koyyur were only interested in the sensational part of the event. The negotiators of the APCLC and the government were keen to maintain a close rapport with the Press. They were also aware that the Press could play a crucial role in creating a human climate during the negotiations. But the Press was, by and large, for sensation, and was not equipped for a sensitive social role.
Citing examples, he says that as the talks were in progress and the police had agreed to station its forces at certain points and stop their movement while the negotiations were on, the representatives of the APCLC appealed to the Press that their cooperation would go a long way in improving the situation. Haragopal reveals that the very next day there were some shocking headlines. A leading national newspaper reported that the police forces had moved very close to the hillock (the Naxal hideout) and the latter may be attacked at any moment. It was also reported that the commandos were on their way. A Telugu newspaper reported on its front page, in bold letters, that the police had fixed a 24-hour deadline for the civil liberties leaders to solve the problem, or face consequences. This was done when the police, under tremendous political pressure, was in a restrained mood. Such journalism does not serve any purpose, it only frightens those readers who have concern for human life and human rights. When some new clothes were bought by the APCLC leaders (as they had gone there with one dress), a newspaper reported that the leaders were preparing to go into the forest incognito. Certain weeklies, fortnightlies and monthlies had their own stories to write. Quite a few of these reports were distorted, loaded and prejudiced. They hardly made any effort to interview the persons concerned or make a fair assessment of the situation.

With regard to the All India Radio and Doordarshan, the Civil Liberties leader had to say the following:

As the representatives landed at Rajahmundry on the morning of February 4 and were proceeding to Narsipatnam to meet Arjun Rao, the radio announced that the talks between the Naxalites and the APCLC representatives were making
impressive progress. This was news even to the APCLC representatives as they were yet to reach their destination. This, in fact, led to confusion in communication and quite a bit of misunderstanding. The AIR, literally is the only means of communication to the Naxalites and the Government, particularly in places like Koyyur. That is one of the reasons why Kranti Ranadev's voice could be imitated and broadcast. While such manipulations may help temporarily, in the long run they erode the credibility of the media.

Doordarshan Delhi, gave wide publicity to the whole episode. The APCLC intervention made national headlines. This appeared to be a part of a wider propaganda intended to impress the world public opinion that human rights groups have enough space to operate in India. The Hyderabad Doordarshan Kendra underplayed the whole issue possibly to deprive APCLC of publicity. However, Delhi Doordarshan became lukewarm, after the initial sensational coverage. In fact, the only interview that Doordarshan had recorded with the representatives of the APCLC was not telecast because the latter made unpalatable observations on the role of the media in the Koyyur case. Subsequently, Doordarshan evinced no interest in the event or its implications for the society.

The event where Kranti Ranadev's voice was imitated aired indicates how the Government manages and manipulates the media.

Such reportage of events pose a threat to human rights and may range from violation of the right to reliable information to total failure in creating a healthy public opinion. In such a situation, one needs a healthy debate on the political culture, the legal and constitutional norms, the politics of change and so on. It is
also a situation where the public opinion can be properly mobilised and channelised on democratic lines

**Capitalist Press ?**

Invariably, the ideologues described the Press in Andhra Pradesh as a monopoly capitalist Press with an extensive network and infrastructure to cater to the information needs of the public. Thoroughly knowledgeable about the working in newspaper offices, they pointed out that in a majority of these organisations there is no internal democracy and the capitalist boss is supremely powerful. Appointment and sacking of journalists is at the discretion of these bosses, some of whom are, ignoramuses of basics in journalism

Senior journalists are appointed to suit the political needs and business interests of the capitalist owners. They point out that there is a collusion between the capitalist owner and the capitalist government and cited the case of *Eenadu* – which they consider has been pro-Telugu Desam and *Deccan Chronicle* owned by a Congress industrialist supportive of the Congress Governments at the State and the Centre. The blatant misuse of the papers for personal and political goals by the Press barons with the tacit support of the capitalist politician erodes the credibility of the medium and cuts at the root of the concept of the ‘freedom of the Press’. In practice, the ‘freedom of the Press’ under capitalist conditions works to the advantage of the owners. At times a few journalists oppose any move by the Government to muzzle the Press but this is only to hoodwink the public and is a ploy of the politician-press baron nexus.
also a situation where the public opinion can be properly mobilised and channelised on democratic lines.
No Proper Debate

The first and foremost objective of the capitalist Press is the protection of capitalism and projection of its leadership. In the process of defending capitalism, the Press does not evoke a general debate on the social and political happenings in the state. Instead, it suppresses the evils of capitalism, pushes the corrupt practices of the capitalists under the cover and gives misleading interpretations to various issues to suit the capitalist politics.

The capitalist Press has failed to expose that the pro-rich policies of the Congress Government which has been in power for most of time in the post-independence era has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The so-called incremental developmental policy of growth based on private enterprise has not solved the needs and expectations of the poor people in providing food, clothing, and shelter even after four decades. In fact, capitalism has accentuated corruption, violence, poverty, deprivation, unemployment, and disease, because of the inherent defects of selfishness, profit motive, opportunism, unequal opportunities, and corruption which are bred by capitalism.

The core needs of the people—health, drinking water, education, shelter, and food and nutrition, the claims of the Government of their achievements are never debated, instead stories are invented on violation of human rights. The Press continues to remain silent on the Government's policies to raise additional resources.

There are no questions on several crucial aspects as to why the Government is not taking steps to unearth black money? Why import high-tech when there is a
need for austerity and self reliance. How can such high tech generate employment for the millions of jobless youth and how can the country's resources be put to proper use to ensure higher productivity? Why is it that the Government does not tax the rich landlords or the rehabilitation steps for those displaced because of Government sponsored projects? No questions are asked on the closure of small scale units and laying off manpower after the Government embarked on the economic reforms.

The Press has failed to interpret the problems attributable to capitalist economic crises or violations of human values and rights. Instead, it projects that such values are better protected in capitalist societies where in reality millions of workers and farmers are crushed under the yoke of the feudal capitalists with meagre wages, under employment, unemployment, unhealthy working conditions and perpetual poverty. Fierce competition resulting in deterioration of human values is manifest in the level of violence in the society, indignity to women, prostitution, suicides, corruption and adulteration of food items have not been analysed from the viewpoint of a crisis in the capitalist economy.

The Press has suppressed and does not factually analyse the evils of capitalism. The capitalist media experts and intelligentsia have planned that the evils of the capitalist system should not be fed to the people truthfully. Even if some facts are published, they should not be attributed to evils of capital system. On the other hand, news from socialist countries is distorted or suppressed lest it catch the positive imagination of the oppressed masses. This would place constraints on the thinking processes of the people in arriving at certain facts and conclusions.
as the media becomes an impediment to know realities. The people are
incapacitated to analyse the exact nature of capitalist system correctly.

From this point of view, the Press has been containing the Naxalite movement as
persistent negative coverage about kidnaps, landmine blasts, killings build a
negative opinion on the ideology and the tactics among the masses

Sivaramakrishna (1991 226) reacting to the draft report of the Cabinet Sub-
Committee on Left Wing Extremists, states that the only information the
government or media always compile carefully if on Naxalite encounters and
never the violations the instruments of rule of law such as minimum wages, Fifth
schedule, management of forests, equity in the distribution of welfare benefits,
displacement and fragmentation of socio-economic entities.

He adds that various groups of individuals study the Naxal issue from different
stands; news value, ideological, political and welfare implications. civil liberties
and bureaucratic action without any grassroot level knowledge of the issues
involved, the bottlenecks and the self-interest of local leaders as well as their
parties in the extra-constitutional arbitration

**Poll process and the Press**

Another weakness of the Press, according to ideologues, is that it does an
excellent job of events but fails to evince interest in the processes that led to the
events. For instance, the Press has failed to focus on the unresolved land
question and the continued tribal exploitation that provided a breeding ground
for Naxalites. Nor has it adequately dealt with the inconsistency of political
parties in dealing with the poll boycott call of Naxalites. For example, the founder
of the Telugu Desam party N T Rama Rao described the Naxalites as patriots. Later, in 1991, he said that he would neither seek Naxalites' help nor would he reject it. The Congress claimed that it was implementing land reforms and tribal welfare programmes while Ram Vilas Paswan, one of the top leaders of the Janata Dal, who left the party during the height of the Mandal agitation shared public platform with PWG's singer-poet Gaddar. Laxmi Parvati, wife of N.T Rama Rao, during her election campaign in 1994 of the Naxal infested areas slanted her speech in favour of the Naxalites.

The Press chooses to be a key player in the political process but it failed to document the disinterest and disregard in the democratic process by the voters who turned out in poor numbers on the day of the election. Citing the Nalgonda parliamentary poll which recorded the maximum number of candidates and for which elections were held much later, the long standing grievance for water needs were not highlighted by the Press but the travails of the election officials found mention. There were no follow up stories and the newspapers were silent over the propriety of the Election Commission's decision to postpone the election. Another glaring lacuna was the absence of people and issues in the electoral coverage which centered round petty political squabbles, feuding in parties and switching of loyalties of local politicians.

**Trial by the Press**

Ideologues questioned the propriety of the police taking the initiative in publicising every arrest and surrender and commenting on it in the Press. This, they said takes place much before the person is charged as an accused or produced before a magistrate. Elaborating on the issue further, they said this
raises questions concerning the freedom of the Press, its right to access to the news and the accountability of the police to the public and not the least, the people's right to know. Another significant aspect attached to it, they said is the fairness of a criminal trial. This interest is endangered every time a police officer holds a Press conference or meets Pressmen and brags about the arrest or surrender of a 'leading Naxalite.' The people undoubtedly have a right to know whom the police has arrested/ or taken them in as surrendered members, lest such things happen in secrecy and be denied. The Press, on its part, is not only entitled but is bound as a surrogate of the public to ferret out the fact of the arrests/ surrenders.

Noted Civil Liberties leader, Noorani (1981: 2121), opposes such moves of the police to divulge details to the Press about the arrests of naxalites and subsequent comments on the accused. He cites a specific case which took place in the neighbouring State of Maharashtra. Details of the case are mentioned below as they are relevant to the present study as it involved the Court, a senior police officer and the Naxalite.

Jagdamba Prasad Dixit was arrested along with some others for alleged 'Naxalite activities' under section 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code, produced before the magistrate the same day and remanded to custody for ten days. Two days later a Deputy Commissioner of Police, Greater Bombay, called Pressmen to his office, showed them some documents and made some comments on the persons arrested which were published in the newspapers the next day. The police filed a charge-sheet against the arrested persons in court which ordered their remand to custody after rejecting their bail application. The accused moved the High court.
for bail. While this application was pending, the accused charged, the DCP held
another Press conference which was reported in the Press the following day when
the Court passed orders granting bail and Dixit was released. He was discharged
later from the case on an application made by the police. Dixit moved the High
Court for contempt proceedings against the DCP annexing copies of the Press
reports and interviews.

The DCP in his reply said that he felt that ‘members of the public should be kept
informed about the dangerous character of the activities of the persons who were
alleged to be following ‘Naxalite cult’. He merely gave information to the Press
based on the documents in his possession. The High Court rejected the
petitioner’s contention about the deliberate timing of the interviews but found
‘some substance’ in his contention that by those Press reports he and other
accused “were condemned in the eyes of the public”. The test in law as
propounded in earlier cases was ‘did the reports have a tendency to prejudice the
public mind’ against the accused and prejudice a fair trial? The intention of the
writer is not material. If a report or article assumes the guilt of the accused on a
matter which is sub judice, it would have a tendency to prejudice a fair trial.

The Court held that the DCP was responsible for what he actually said and not
what the Press reported. The petitioner had not joined the editors of the papers as
respondents. In their absence, the Court did not express any opinion on the Press
reports as such.

But the question remained -should the DCP have met the Pressmen and fed them
with the information while the matter was sub judice. The High Court found
considerable substance in his defence that he merely gave the ‘police viewpoint’
This is precisely what he had no right to do to the Press when the matter was before the court of law. What is more, the court held that in the special background of this matter this was an occasion on which it would be proper for the police or other state authorities to give certain information to the Press. The Court held that this may result perhaps in some detriment to the accused persons in the public eye, but this has to be balanced against the duty to the public and requirements of the public interest, and after balancing the same we are of the opinion that no contempt of court would be involved.

Noorani argues that this is fundamentally wrong as ‘the special background’ obligates restraint not laxity. Otherwise in every case of public interest or political complexion policemen will talk freely. Secondly, in the event of a clear conflict between the rights of the Press and the right of a person to fair trial, it is the latter right that should prevail. The English courts have ruled to this effect.

**Glorifying Surrender of Naxals**

Respondents remarked that certain noted Telugu newspapers glorify surrenders and publish them on their front pages. The State apparatus and its representatives generally, specifically senior police officials manage the Press during such surrenders by calling for Press conferences and put out elaborate details of the various offences and ammunition seized by them. They pointed out that no reporter probes into the drama preceding the surrender.

However, according to the report of the Dandakaranya Forest Committee (CPI-ML (People’s War) (1994 18), ‘people in the villages are gathered at a place and issued stern warnings that all the militants and leaders of sanghams should
surrender to police or the consequences will be very severe. Police officers are fixing time limits and dates for surrenders. In the villages, people are beaten en masse, humiliated and harassed in various ways, and an atmosphere of terror is created. Rural areas are terrorized, and the police release Press statements that Naxals are surrendering. Though not in strong villages of the movement, in the course of increasing repression, some sympathisers have begun to surrender. Due to serious repressive conditions, the number of surrenders in certain areas is in hundreds, but not as the enemy has expected.

Pressmen do not have the basic understanding of the inner party functioning and the ideology of the movement. So much so, every secret conclave becomes a plenary meeting. Also, every performance of Gaddar is reported as a cultural event or dealt in the same way as modern day rain dances organized by the five star hotels attended by the elite and the moneyed class to relieve themselves from ennui. The ideology propagated by the songs and the issues taken up are never properly highlighted or debated in the Press so as to sensitize people on the issues and concerns of the masses.

Journalists have become so insensitive to the killings of Naxalites and the police repression is also exemplified by the fact that the headlines both in the English and the Telugu dailies on encounters just give figures. For instance, ‘three encounter’ implying that three Naxals were killed in the encounter. In all such instances and regarding underground activity, the Press carries only the police version in a manner justifying the police action. For example, the encounter reports have become stereotyped.
The newspapers in the State, both English and the Telugu ones alike are market driven. Profit motive is their primary concern. Any news story which has the potential of raking in revenue is worthy enough to be published in their columns. Right from the day of the Srikakulam struggle, when Vempatapati Satyam was killed, newspapers screamed 'Narakasuruni Vadha.' Perhaps it is understandable because a new ideology was still at its nascent stage and was ranged against the State. But in the subsequent years, especially during the 70s, Eenadu run by the chit and pickle baron was just an information source. The emergence of Udayam on the newspaper scene in the State introduced the element of competition. Udayam donned the activist role and anti-state role by publishing gory details of encounter deaths. Eenadu, not to be left behind, and to boost its circulation changed its strategy and the day Gaddar surfaced from the underground and performed at Nizam College during Channa Reddy’s liberal policy regime, Eenadu covered it on the front page with a banner headline along with his photograph. Later, when some miscreants attacked him, the same news was pushed into the inside pages. Again in 1997, when he survived an assassination bid newspapers gave wide coverage not because they were interested in him, but because Gaddar sells.

To sum up, the views expressed by the indoctrinated ideologues castigate the Press for not acting responsibly and judiciously with regard to matters concerning the common man and also about their own activities.