Left Wing Extremism (LWE), popularly known as Naxalism/Maoism took its root in India in the late 1960s and 1970s in several States including West Bengal, Kerala, undivided Andhra Pradesh, etc. On September 21, 2004, with the formal merger of the Peoples’ War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) of India, a new political denomination was born, which came to be known as Communist Party of India (Maoist). The People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) of earlier Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) and the CPI-ML (PW)'s People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) also consequently merged. However, both the armies agreed to work as the PLGA. The Times of India on 14 October 2004 reported: “The new party decided that revolution in the country would be carried out and completed through armed revolutionary war which is protracted people's war with the seizure of power by armed force remaining as its central and principal task, encircling the cities from the countryside and thereby finally capturing them.” This gave a pan-Indian orientation to LWE.

Unfortunately, LWE activities loom large in tribal dominated regions of the country. As per the report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 106 districts in the States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh are affected by LWE activities, although in varying degrees. Paradoxically, these regions are rich in coal reserves, huge deposits of iron ore, and bauxite, making them potentially resourceful for industrialisation. With the establishment of a large number of major hydroelectric projects, small dams for irrigation, mines and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), tribal people hitherto living in their natural habitat, faced large-scale displacement, without a satisfactory rehabilitation. As per a most moderate estimate, about 50 million people were displaced by mega-projects between 1951 and 2005, 40 percent of whom are tribals. This led to further marginalisation of the tribal people and caused huge discontent among them. This discontent was a kind of sympathy towards LWE, particularly among the tribal youth, that ideologically fought against a capitalistic dispensation.
Apart from this, the Indian Union repeatedly failed to deliver its services, such as maintaining law and order, social infrastructure, relief during epidemics or disasters in the remote areas. These made people indifferent to the democratic principles and some of them even got averse to the state when they were indoctrinated. These places were breeding grounds of Naxalism/Maoism where they established the red bases. In India today, private corporate-led industrialisation is being equated with "development" and those who oppose such development are considered "unlawful", even when the government and the corporations acquire land through "force and fraud". Those who organise the resistance, that is "Left Wing Extremists" in official parlance, either face elimination through military operations or the total denial of their democratic rights. It is, therefore, necessary to demystify, rather de-obfuscate, official policy vis-a-vis Left Wing Extremism (Navlakha, 2008). It is a fact that tribes have been driven into debt with the gradual erosion of their traditional rights on forests and the large-scale intrusion of the usury culture. Therefore, many opine that it is not the short-term poverty alleviation programmes or crisis management endeavours that are directly needed, but broader structural interventions that would involve tribes themselves as participants in the development process (Pathy, 2003).

For these and other reasons, besides other States mentioned above, Odisha became the epicenter of the LWE activities or the so-called Lal (Red) corridor, which started from Pashupatinath (Nepal) to Tirupati (India) through tribal Odisha. The typical socio-economic structure of the State, characterised as one of the poorest states in India (where 39.80% of the total population is below the poverty line) also created a good opportunity for the Naxalites to organise such a movement (Planning Commission, 2004-05).

Many theoretical and policy discourses notwithstanding about LWE activities in India, there are very few empirical studies on this contemporary issue. Largely, anthropologists, who are supposed to undertake such studies, are preoccupied with issues like health, nutrition, development of the tribes, not paying much attention to an ongoing struggle, which is large-scale and violent. Therefore, this researcher decided to attempt an emic perspective of LWE activities and tribal response to them to project an insider’s view of the problem. In a patriarchal society, women have many social impediments to work
alone in remote tribal regions for a long time, particularly those areas having a track record of violence.

There is no doubt that the Maoist phenomenon is a complex problem and really there is not one single solution to it. When the problem is looked at through different lenses, one finds that conflicting interests exist at all levels. Land, for instance, is a sacred space for the tribals, but the very same mineral rich area is a goldmine for the industry. Who arbitrates between the two? If you put the politician-bureaucrat nexus in the middle, the situation turns murkier. What is also interesting to note here is that the whole phenomenon in many ways has become self-sustaining with each player feeding on the other.

So, once the tribal land is forcibly grabbed by Sahukars and cleared for the industry, the ground becomes fertile for Maoists to increase their influence among the displaced tribal community. This then facilitates the Maoist extortion economy which plays on corporate fears of losing lucrative mining business. What we see as a result is the indirect sustenance that corporate money is providing to the Maoist movement and aiding the organisational growth of the CPI (Maoist) both militarily and financially. The political-bureaucratic nexus too takes its share of the huge profits involved in the business and it is in their interest that the problem persists because, in the absence of any hurdles from the Maoists, the corporates would hardly require any political or Government patronage. The tragedy of the whole phenomenon has been the complete marginalisation of poor tribals, who find themselves sandwiched between these conflicting interests, with no one upholding their cause with genuine determination. As a result, if the tribals in this region have any allegiance either to the State or to the LWE and their ideologies, it is only for the sake of fear rather than any unfeigned obedience to any one of them. Disillusion writs large on the faces of their confused youth and unsecured women.

While analysing the reasons behind the emergence and consolidation of LWE activities in Koraput, it might be said that there is no single reason responsible for these violent activities. It is rather due to many intricately related reasons. As stated earlier, there was a
dreadful combination of a undeniable history of social and economic exclusion of the tribes, extremely inhuman exploitation by the traders or Sahukars and moneylenders, abject poverty with low HDI, iniquitous benefits of many Government-sponsored welfare programmes among the tribes, and a strong leadership influenced by the political ideology of CPI (M), which triggered violent struggle by the tribes in Koraput.

The Left extremist influence is more pronounced in tribal areas. There are notable causative factors for this. The Planning Commission report has rightly observed that the contradiction between the tribal community and the State itself has become sharper, translating into an open conflict in many areas. Socio-economic infrastructure among the tribal people is inadequate, thereby contributing to their disempowerment and deprivation. Apart from poverty and deprivation in general, the causes of the tribal unrest are many: which includes the absence of proper self-governance, forest policy, excise policy, land-related issues, and multifaceted forms of exploitation, cultural humiliation, and political marginalisation. Land alienation, forced evictions from land and displacement also added to unrest.

Physical remoteness emerges as the most important factor explaining the level of poverty in the study areas, which is significantly higher in comparison with forest based districts in Northern Odisha. Remoteness has a negative impact on literacy and access to health services and exacerbates expenditure poverty.

Failure to implement protective regulations in Scheduled Areas, the absence of credit mechanism leading to dependence on money lenders, the consequent loss of land and often even violence by the State functionaries add to the problem. Tribal people are traditionally aware of the ecological interest of preserving forest cover, and the protection of biodiversity including wildlife conservation for their community life.

But, now tribals are evicted from their traditional homes and habitations in the name of conservation or development without providing them a hospitable environment and alternative livelihoods to lead a better life. Thus, tribals are deprived of unhindered
access to land, water, and forests which they enjoyed for centuries. Precisely, this is providing a breeding ground for the spread of Maoist activities on the issues of *Jal* (water), *jungal* (forests) and *Jameen* (land).

Development is inevitable to meet the needs of growing population and modern civilisation. But, the tribals who have to sacrifice their lands, homes, and livelihoods find the new development paradigm incompatible for them. The skills possessed by tribals are largely irrelevant to the emerging industrial or infrastructural economy. Thus, development is proving to be violence in tribal life. The tribal culture is disrupted, Tribal hamlets are disintegrated, and Tribal habitat is dismantled.

It is now the responsibility of the government to look into these matters and instill a sense of confidence among the tribals to dissuade them from getting entangled with extremism of any kind.

**Suggestions**

- One of the most important steps towards the resolution of Maoist conflict has to be a change of perception towards the conflict. The state has always looked the conflict from “law and order” point of view. It must be understood that there lies a number of genuine issues such as issues relating to land, forest rights, poverty, displacement, illiteracy, and lack of genuine development in these areas. The state always sees the violent part of the conflict which overshadows the genuine issues of the local people in these areas. The perception that all people (mostly the tribal) in the Maoists affected areas support the violent activities needs to be corrected. The state must come to secure the lives and livelihood of the local people through the effective implementation of planning.

- Negotiation with the Maoists holds the key to the successful resolution of the conflict. But unfortunately, no government in Odisha has given serious attempts to bring the Maoists to the negotiation table. Government’s initiative towards inviting the Maoists for negotiation has been confined to “first shun violence, and then the state will engage in a talk”. It is the responsibility of the state to create an atmosphere for negotiation.
• The state must take positive steps such as releasing the suspected Maoists (who have been arrested and jailed on the basis of suspicion), engaging them in civil society and declaring cease fires.

• There is an urgent need to modernise the local security forces in these areas. Deployment of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) sends a wrong message to the local people. The CAPFs are often seen as the outsiders and their camps terrorise people. The state must recruit an adequate number of security forces locally and modernise them not just to fight the Maoists but to provide security to the common individuals against the Maoists.

• The police forces must be used only for the limited task of prevention and investigation of the crime by lawful methods and not for the suppression of the social aspirations of the people involved.

• Keeping politics out of the Maoist conflict will resolve most of the problems. Political consensus and political will to deal effectively with the Maoists will help in resolving the conflict. More often it has been seen that political parties engage with the Maoists for their political interests.

• Role of civil society organisation can be explored for dealing with the Maoist conflict. Well-meaning civil society organisations could be engaged to bring the Maoists to the negotiation table.

• Public perception management is one important area which most of the states have failed to achieve. While the Maoists have succeeded in spreading propaganda against the state, the state has failed miserably to change that perception. The state machinery must be made available and reachable to the local population to win their hearts and minds.

• Years of absence of the state in these areas need to be compensated with an adequate number of government officials’ positive approach towards addressing local issues.
• Communication facility is one of the important indicators of development; the government should provide the locals to access to road in the hilly and forested areas.

• There is a need for effective implementation of surrender and rehabilitation scheme. Successful rehabilitation of the surrendered Maoists should be highlighted to attract more Maoists to abjure violent path.