

Maoists in India: A Rejoinder

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The special issue (July 22, 2006) devoted to the Maoists in India reflects recognition of the growing importance that the Maoist-led movement plays in the polity and the economy of the country. However, what was disconcerting was that an issue devoted to the Maoists did not have a single article by the Maoists themselves. The majority of the essays appeared preoccupied with the question of violence and not with the horrifying conditions of the masses and finding a way out for them.

Though the EPW has chosen a wide spectrum of views, it would have been more constructive if the articles were linked more to the question of the alleviation of the horrifying conditions of the masses, particularly in this period of globalisation when the situation has worsened.

The issue of violence should have been seen in this context. In this reply, we will first very briefly present our understanding of the Indian social order, then discuss our own goals as the framework from which to view the points made by the writers, and subsequently take up some of the main issues on which we differ. We shall assign importance to those arguments that are really disturbing the well-wishers of the movement.

Semi-Colonial, Semi-Feudal Order

Our beloved country, so rich in natural wealth, human power and ingenuity, has been reduced to a condition that is, in some respects, worse than most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In these nearly 60 years of so-called independence the situation has not significantly improved compared to what prevailed in the last years of the British Raj – at least for the general masses. In the Nehruvian period, the model of development relied on the “trickle down effect”; now, in the present phase of globalisation, there is no pretence of even that.

The one lakh figure (official) of suicide deaths in rural India in the past 10 years is only the tip of the iceberg of misery that none of the writers refer to. Poverty and deprivation of the masses have continued apace, more so in the present phase of globalisation.

And, if the masses (not just Naxalites) dare to even raise their voice for justice, they face the lathis and guns of the state machinery with increasing intolerance.

This was evident not only in the workers’ struggle in Gurgaon, the tribal people’s struggle of Kalinga Nagar, the slum dwellers’ resistance in Mumbai and Delhi, the struggles of displaced people of the Narmada, peasant struggles in Rajasthan, the electricity employees’ struggles in UP and Punjab, and the struggle of the state government employees in Tamil Nadu, but even in the protests against the recent demolitions in the middle class localities of Delhi. In all these struggles the people were ruthlessly trampled upon, as they did not have the strength to withstand the state onslaught. As a result, their conditions have gone from bad to worse. What answers do the writers (in the EPW special issue on the Maoist movement in India) have to put an end to such endemic state violence on different sections of

struggling people? How should these people organise to improve their lives? How should they fight back?

To negate the Maoist method, which has at least achieved some degree of success, at least in those areas where the Maoists have adopted the path of armed struggle, without providing an alternative, in effect, is to push people into deeper and deeper despair (and poverty), even as the moneybags strut around flaunting their wealth.

The increasing state violence on the masses and the growing impoverishment are not just an accident or some isolated instances, but endemic to the existing system, which we Maoists broadly characterize as semi-colonial and semi-feudal.

Semi-colonial because the Indian ruling classes (big business, top bureaucrats, and leading politicians running the centre and the states) are tied to imperialist interests.

Semi-feudal, as the old feudal relations have not been smashed, only a certain amount of capitalist growth has been superimposed on them. So also, the Parliament is no democratic institution (as in countries that have been through a democratic revolution – a bourgeois democracy) but has been instituted on the existing highly autocratic state and semi-feudal structures as a ruse to dupe the masses.

The contemporary Indian economy is unduly influenced by the activities of carpetbaggers, a ruthless mafia, rapacious mining interests and giant speculators, all linked to the politics of criminality. The degeneration is so deep, the rot so acute that these same moneybags are floating thousands of non-government organizations (NGOs) in order to trivialise the ills of the system so that people are diverted from seeing that these are endemic to the very system itself and not due to just some bad individuals or policies.

The semi-colonial, semi-feudal order reproduces social polarisation – a growing rich and their vast number of hangers-on, and an increasing mass of the impoverished. A small section of the middle class is moving into the first category, partaking of some crumbs from the opulent dining table; the bulk of the people are being pushed into squalor, unemployment, agrarian crisis, business bankruptcy and financial ruin.

Even the local bourgeoisie (small) and small traders are being squeezed out in increasing numbers with the entry of giant companies in all spheres of the economy.

With these extremes of wealth and poverty, in order to protect the enclaves of the rich and powerful, the state will be driven to resort to more and more repression of the people and their organisations.

It is only within this framework that one can understand why the home ministry designates the Maoists as the number one threat to “internal security”. We Maoists seek a just and equitable order. In this endeavour, the key question is how does one confront the repressive Indian state that brutally tramples upon the people, even as it defends and pampers the wealthy. But before that let us get to what we stand for.

Maoist Model of Development

We Maoists stand for a people-oriented, self-reliant model of development. In this model, people play the central role; their initiative is released to the fullest extent possible. We are of the opinion that all wealth generated within the country should stay here and not be allowed to be drained off abroad. India is a very

rich country with tremendous human power and ingenuity, together with a vast natural resource base. The vast wealth, illegally and immorally appropriated by the imperialists, feudal elements and compradors, should be seized and turned to use in developing the economy, first and foremost in agriculture and in rural areas, where the bulk of our people live.

Our model of development is oriented to vastly enhancing the purchasing power of the masses. This will create a huge home market in the country itself, which will act as the main engine for growth. The starting point for this is overhauling the rural economy, where 70 per cent of our people live. This will be initiated through land reforms, by the redistribution of land on the basis of "land-to-the-tiller". In his article, Tilak D Gupta says that this is not viable any longer as there is not enough surplus land. But has he fixed a viable ceiling to determine how much land will be available for redistribution? Has he determined how much land is with the government/panchayats; how much land is with religious institutions and mutts; how much land is with absentee landowners (even most bureaucrats/army officials maintain land, and many, in fact, purchase more); and how much land is with the private corporate sector and with luxury resorts, golf clubs, etc?

The land reforms, coupled with large investments in agriculture (to also regenerate the soil destroyed by the green revolution), forestry and allied activities (poultry, goat farming, fishery, etc), will enormously expand the rural populace's purchasing power. This in turn will create a market for the basic necessities of life and will help generate local industry, resulting in employment generation. With this employment generation the purchasing power will increase further, leading to more industry, and it is this spiral that will result in continuous growth.

In this development model, growth (and extension of the home market) will be linked to people's welfare and will in fact be dependent on it.

In the urban areas too, industrial production will be people-oriented. The opulent expenditure of the super rich will cease (as their surplus and ill-begotten wealth will be confiscated) and the vast slums will be rehabilitated.

Job security will be ensured with a living wage and there will be no necessity to cling to ancestral land as a source of security to fall back upon. This will release a further amount of land for the impoverished rural populace.

Cultural, sports and recreational activities will involve the masses, while education will be made available to all. All forms of caste and patriarchal oppression/discrimination will be fought against and prohibited. Untouchability will be abolished and severely punished. All degenerate and feudal ideas will be fought against long after the revolution through cultural revolutions. Healthcare will be freely available, and more focus will be on preventive care and hygiene.

In a nutshell, this is the model of development that we Maoists stand for. It is stated in the party programme and political resolutions issued from time to time. On this, there is no ambiguity. In Bastar, before the massive state onslaught in the present Salwa Judum campaign, extensive development projects along the above lines were taken up and have been documented in the booklet *New People's Power in Dandakaranya* (2000).

In Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar, it was the just struggles of the peasantry under Maoist leadership that led to the seizure of lands from the big landlords and distribution among the landless and poor peasants. What we propose is a model of new democracy built around the axis of land reforms and a

self-reliant economy. It is also this new democratic model that we seek to implement (on seizing power) in its rudimentary form in the guerrilla bases and later in the base areas.

That is why in Dandakaranya the Maoists not only implemented people-oriented projects (when the military operations were not as intense) but also called for the stopping of our rich iron ore being taken away by Japan at the Bailadilla mines and supported the 400-odd indigenous small-scale rolling mills facing closure due to government policies.

Is this model violent? Is it undemocratic? It is in fact the most humane and peace-loving model of growth. But when we try and implement it, the state comes down heavily on us and on the masses that support us. It is not we who seek violence. In fact, for over a decade we were able to build extensive developmental projects in Dandakaranya and Jharkhand when the government's military actions were at a lower scale.

We seek to implement the model of development just outlined; if this can be done peacefully, so much the better. But history has shown us that the moneybags and their political representatives are unable to accept even the thought of such a transformation.

The Question of Violence

The question of violence is the single most important thread passing through all the articles. No real communist is for violence per se. Communists are for a peaceful social system built around equality and justice. But when they seek to work for such a system they are attacked most brutally. This has been the case ever since the birth of the communist movement. They have been massacred and exterminated right from the days of the Paris Commune.

It would be naïve to think that the Indian ruling classes, who have a lengthy record of violence unleashed on the oppressed masses, are any better. Besides, it is not just state violence that people face; in a class society, as in India, violence is endemic to the very system and the oppressed masses are exposed to it in the course of their daily lives – by the feudal authority and by factory managements, and also as a result of untouchability, patriarchy, etc.

Human society, ever since the origin of private property and classes, has moved forward only through a process of prolonged and tortuous struggles, and by countering the violence of the ruling classes.

To expect that the ruling classes will today accommodate those demanding a new and more advanced social system is to deny the lessons learnt from history. For instance, K Balagopal has speculated regarding an alternative response that could have been pursued by the Maoists even after the encounter killings began in Andhra Pradesh. Would the government, as speculated by Balagopal, have allowed the Maoists to concentrate on exposing the anti-poor bias of the present development model and extend their mass activity to a point that would have given their aspiration for state power a solid mass base?

If that possibility existed, why in the first place did the ruling classes attack the legal movement in Karimnagar and Adilabad? There was then no armed activity when the Disturbed Areas Act was put in place by the Chenna Reddy government in 1978.

And, how does one confront the attacks by the landlords and the police? Balagopal also asserts that a positive response from the state would have de-legitimised the argument for revolutionary violence. Such speculation only displays the illusions of our intellectuals with regard to the nature of the state. What is needed is a realistic appraisal of the situation.

To put so much emphasis on the violence of the Maoists appears to divert the issue, where, in the present system the masses have to face violence everyday of their lives. Hundreds die each day of hunger, starvation and easily curable illnesses. Semi-feudal authority in the villages has only force as its major instrument of control.

Workers in all but the big industries (some time even there) have to regularly face the hoodlums maintained by the management and even the police. The women of our country have to face daily patriarchal violence and there are many so-called dowry deaths each year. Dalits have to face humiliation and abuse on a daily basis.

And, over and above all this is the violence of the state, the Hindutva fascists, the mafia linked to the mainstream political parties, big business, and so on.

The violence of the Maoists, which is preceded and provoked by the violence of the oppressors, is not really the main issue; justice is. If Naxalite violence is to be discussed, it should be in the context of violence pervading every aspect of our system. If not seen in this framework, one falls prey to the abstract bourgeois concept that “violence breeds violence”, without understanding the structural causes of violence.

One important aspect of today’s counterinsurgency operations is the massive use of an informer/espionage network to decimate the movements, not only externally, but also from within. Today, this is one of the major weapons in counter-insurgency strategies in the world, including India. Counter-insurgency operates right from the village level, the mass organization level, to covert operations within the party itself.

Massive funds are being secretly allocated for this purpose. Most of these informers pose as “civilians”, and many can be from the poorer classes. But, their existence has led to the death of thousands of the best of revolutionaries throughout the world. This has been accompanied by brutal torture to extract information. Earlier, accounts of brutal torture became public; now, the ruling classes make sure that this does not happen by killing the tortured victim and by legitimising torture as a necessary component of the “war against terror”.

What the world sees is only the overt violence of the state, not these covert operations. The only long-term method of countering these operations is through deepening the mass base of the party (not mere mass support) and raising its political level.

It is also necessary to deal with the problem in the immediate; otherwise the best of our cadre get killed. If all persons in every village are tightly organised (into mass organisations, militia, and party units) it is very difficult for an informer to survive without getting noticed. But such intensive organisation takes time and is not so easy in the bigger villages and the urban bastis. In between, the informers are recruited. Most of the elements recruited by the state may come from ordinary backgrounds, but they are mostly lumpen or degenerate elements. They are recruits in the covert operations of the police and the army. Any leniency towards them can mean (and has meant) the death of the best of our comrades.

Actions against these elements cannot be construed as violence on civilians, but on recruits to the police/paramilitary forces, and should be seen as such. This is important to understand, in the light of modern-day counter-insurgency in the form of Low Intensity Conflict, originally devised by the MI5 (of Britain) and the CIA (of the US), and used throughout the world.

Major Misconception

There is yet another major misconception – that “innocent” people are being caught in the crossfire between the Naxalites and the police. First, this is not a fact. Secondly, the “people” are not a homogeneous mass; the ruling elite and their hangers-on are with the state, while the masses of the oppressed are with the Naxalites. The former support state terror (as in the Salwa Judum), while the latter act together with the Maoists to resist such terror. The misconception of a homogeneous populace is linked to postmodernist thinking of a so-called “civil society”, which conceals class divisions within society. All the same, in conflicts involving state terror and the people’s resistance to it, there will be some sections not allied to either side, but the majority are polarised into two camps – a minority allied with the state, on the one hand, and the masses backing the Naxalites, on the other.

The above-mentioned fallacy of conceptualising the people as a homogeneous mass runs through all the articles, including that of Sumanta Banerjee when he writes: “... the Maoist guerrillas often betray an immature mindset by intimidating them, instead of patiently politicizing them”.

In our view, at the village level, the masses are divided into three sections: the diehard reactionaries, the intermediary sections who may vacillate between the two contending forces, and the masses won over by the Maoists. Banerjee’s statement would apply to the intermediary sections. The reality however is that the bulk of the actions taken by the Maoists have been against the diehard reactionaries.

There may have been errors, as also different conceptions of who belongs to the first or second category. While these can be discussed, the three sections have to be clearly demarcated, for this is fundamental to understanding the class struggle at the ground level, which is a struggle for power.

The diehard reactionaries have to be suppressed, while the rest have to be patiently politicised. There are, of course, problems of class analysis and consequently, incorrect handling of contradictions among the people due to inexperience of some cadres. Although this is an exception rather than the rule, the state has used these aberrations by magnifying them and many intellectuals who refuse to see the reality have become a prey to such intrigue of the state, often joining the chorus against revolutionary violence.

Further in the same vein Sumanta Banerjee adds: “Of the two (i e, state and communist revolutionaries), the communist revolutionaries who claim to look after the welfare of the poor and the oppressed, are expected to be more humane in their choice of tactics and genuinely democratic in getting popular consent for them – particularly when such tactics affect the vast masses of uninvolved citizens.

If in their drive for retaliation they stoop to the level of the police or security forces and indulge in indiscriminate attacks on soft targets...” Now, real humanity entails unconditionally standing by the oppressed. But there is no all-encompassing humanity.

In a class society, where the ruling classes fiercely crush the oppressed at every step, real humanity entails fierce hatred for their oppressors. There can be no love without hate; there is no all-encompassing love. The Maoists may err in certain actions, from which we will learn certain lessons, but “to be more humane” cannot be associated with the question of civil behaviour vis-à-vis the enemy and their agents in our tactics. Having said this, quite rightly, there should not be any attack on soft targets, but targets have to be assessed within the framework of the politico-military aims of the movement – both immediate and long-term.

For Sumanta Banerjee, a school building housing the paramilitary, or, communication towers, may be soft targets, but for the Maoists it would be part of their longterm aims to counter the enemy forces.

Sumanta Banerjee's clubbing of Maoist violence with that of the Islamic fundamentalists is unfair, as nowhere have the Maoists consciously attacked civilians. The so-called civilians of the Salwa Judum are basically the SPOs and "lumpen" elements mobilised by the state as a vigilante force to kill, burn, loot and destroy tribal life in countering the Maoists. Though unnecessary losses should be avoided, like the two children in the Errabore camp, no people's war can be so clinical, as to have no civilian causality. The point is whether the maximum care has been taken not to affect civilians. The police/paramilitary have been utilising this principled stand of the Maoists in their tactics to counter them.

For instance, they travel in public transport buses along with civilians and use the masses as human shields while entering areas that are Maoist strongholds.

They know well the Maoists will not attack if civilian lives are involved. They also employ unarmed policemen and home guards to collect information about the Maoists from villages in Naxalite strongholds, and even use women as informers as the Maoists do not easily target such people.

Three thousand home guards were recruited recently in AP along with 1,500 SPOs, as admitted by the chief minister at the chief ministers' meeting on terrorism and left extremism on September 5 this year. The home minister and DGP of AP admitted that they had deliberately not given rifles in about 500 or so police stations in the state as they were sure Maoists would not attack unarmed policemen.

So, to sum up, violence is endemic in this brutal system. One cannot appreciate the need for revolutionary violence unless one understands the fascist nature of the state, the cruelty of the state's forces, tortures and fake encounters, bans on peaceful meetings, and state violations of the democratic rights of the people. The fascist nature of the state is exposed when confronted by powerful people's movements, as we witness in all those areas of activity of the Maoist movement.

In fact, Maoist violence is only to put an end to all the violence in this rotten system and to bring peace to our country and people. There is no other recourse in such a brutal and ruthless system. We sincerely ask the writers to please suggest how to end the violence of oppressors and the state that acts on their behalf?

How can the oppressed masses gain justice? Finally, we wish to state that in the course of the revolutionary movement we do make mistakes on this account; but wherever we have done so, we have never sought to hide it, but have issued a public apology. While we will always try and learn from our shortcomings, it must also be realised that no class war can be conducted with clinical precision. It is very tortuous and painful; just as the daily life of the bulk of our population is no less agonising.

We will now take up some other major arguments and leave the rest for a future discussion.

Comparisons with Nepal Maoists

There is a tendency to compare the Maoists movements of Nepal and India, pitting the Nepal Maoists' present tactics as a supposed peaceful alternative to the Indian Maoists' violent methods. One should not forget that the present victories of the anti-monarchy movement are primarily a result of the success of the politico-military battles by the People's Liberation Army and their ability to beat back the attacks of the king's army.

Their victories are built on the backbone of a 30,000 strong PLA and one lakh militia, and the loss of 12,000 lives. This fact is brought out in a recent interview with the Hindi magazine Philal where comrade

Prachanda, the chairman of the CPN (Maoist), said: “When we talk with the leaders of these political parties we say that had we not been armed, there would have been no 12-point understanding. Had we not been armed, Deuba would never have been able to come out of prison. Had we not been armed, many of you would have been killed because of the feudal monarchy, which murdered its blood relations inside the Palace... We also told them that our weapons only made the revival of your parliament possible, you are not credited with it; the credit goes to the PLA...”.

Besides, change of tactics depends on the situation in the respective countries and the strength of the contending forces.

Sitaram Yechury has particularly sought to pit the Nepal Maoists against the Indian Maoists. While the CPI (M) brutally suppresses the Maoists in West Bengal, it is hypocritically speaking in praise of the Nepal Maoists. Instead of pitting one revolution against the other, it would be far more constructive to take the positive experiences of other revolutions and see how best these could concretely be applied to the Indian revolution to take it forward. This brings us to debates about the revolutionary path.

On the Revolutionary Path

Among the writers, the most forthright in questioning the very path of the revolution was Tilak D Gupta who said: “...the case for revising the ideological-political line and the strategy and tactics of the CPI (Maoist) is quite potent by itself because of the changed international situation and above all due to the major worldwide setback to socialism”.

Earlier in the article, he also raised doubts on the change to Maoism. He questions some of the very basics of the CPI (Maoist). Sagar too, after raising questions on a large number of tactical issues – idealizing elections, pitting mass action against armed struggle, opposing democratization of tribal culture, negating its successes and only focusing on its supposed lack of presence everywhere (as though all over the world Marxists are making sweeping gains) – he goes to the extent of clubbing the entire “left”, including the parliamentary CPI and CPI(M) with the CPI (Maoist) in a single category by calling for a “genuine confederation of the various Left organisations”.

Sagar goes so far as to equate the parliamentarians with those leading the armed struggle by saying: “In the broad context of Indian politics it would appear to him/her that the Left in all its diversity is actually part of one ‘parivar’ with one component doing nothing but parliamentary work and the other focusing on armed struggles and the middle consisting of many combinations of these two extremes”.

Mohanty, while even erring on facts (claiming that all the ML groups have equal strength, which not even the enemies of the movement say), equates the CPI (Maoist) with the revisionist Liberation and Kanu Sanyal groups.

Some of the writers have highlighted certain lacunae within the movement to negate the entire path, others negate it in the name of the “changed situation”, and yet others negate it by obfuscating the lines of demarcation between Marxism and revisionism.

Let us take some of these arguments. As Tilak says, it is true that there have been some changes in the international situation, though the basic essence of imperialism has not changed. But the changes, linked with the economic crisis, and the increasing ferocity of imperialism, particularly US imperialism, would warrant more extensive and deeper armed resistance than what we have today.

Witness what happened in Iraq, or the arrogance displayed by Israel in Lebanon and Palestine; or the massacres of communists and even liberal opposition in Latin America; the butchery of hundreds of mass leaders in the Philippines, etc. The much talked of “space” for the revolutionaries and democrats is shrinking, not because of the armed activities of the Maoists, but because of the increasing fascist character that imperialism and its agents throughout the globe are acquiring.

This is evident in India where the governments at the centre and the states are enhancing their armed might on a scale never seen before. They realise that with the aggressive implementation of the policies of LPG, mass revolts will have to be dealt with. So, it is not clear in which direction does Tilak pose the case for revising the ideological-political line and the strategy and tactics of the CPI (Maoist). There is need for much greater depth of analysis before making such far-reaching statements.

Today if the movement is weak in many parts of the country, the need is to strengthen it there, not change the path to some vague “genuine confederation of the various Left organisations”. What is needed is not such an amorphous conglomeration, but a genuine United Front (UF) of the four classes of the workers, peasants, middle classes and the national bourgeoisie. An effective UF is the only way to rally all the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal forces and not a confederation of the various Left organisations, which blurs the basic distinction between the different class forces.

The history of all revolutions, particularly that of Russia and China, has clearly shown that victory was only possible by fighting an uncompromising ideological-political battle with all forms of revisionism. Where the path of compromise was adopted, the socialist goal was lost, though there may have been military victories, as in Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, etc.

Tribal and Caste Questions

There is a tendency to focus on identity politics, as in K Balagopal’s article, and idealise backward tribal societies, as in Sagar’s and Nandini Sunder’s articles, both of whose approach is linked to a postmodernist perspective actively promoted by the NGOs.

K Balagopal not only talks of identity politics but also believes that as a result of the revolutionary struggle the biggest sufferers are the oppressed themselves – what he calls the “decimation of the organic leaders”. It is true that our movement has generated hundreds of intellectuals from the most oppressed; yet Balagopal negates the revolutionary process when he ends his piece by saying that “the daily losses of such persons is a sacrifice the oppressed cannot be called upon to put up with indefinitely”.

This is an ambiguous end and could have many implications – it seems to imply that the oppressed should give up, what to him seems a futile path. If there are excessive losses, the causes have to be found and corrections made, but to expect revolution without sacrifice is illusory. As far as “identity politics” is concerned, it divides the masses; what is required is a class approach that unites the masses, including the oppressed.

A class approach to the caste question demands an end to upper-caste oppression, brahminical ideology and abolition of the pernicious caste system, including ‘untouchability’. But, “identity politics” only emphasizes caste and acts to ossify caste divisions further.

As far as preserving tribal culture NGO-style is concerned, it would be good if Sagar and Nandini Sunder talk to the women of Bastar who would recount what that culture also gave them – forced marriages, witchcraft, superstition, forced drudgery, etc.

Though not as bad as the Hindu patriarchal system, tribal culture is far from idyllic. The Maoists have indeed sought to learn from the adivasi masses and have taken all that is positive in tribal culture, while doing away with the dross. So, we have not only sought to preserve the Gondi, Santhali and other languages, but have also developed them; we have preserved and adopted the folklore of the tribal peoples and their dance forms, infusing them with social content. We have encouraged and further enhanced the elements of community and collective living, which were a natural part of their culture.

We are preserving the forests and taking up reforestation campaigns. In addition, we have taken education to the tribal peoples and modern knowledge, which cannot be expected to continue to be the sole preserve of the established intellectual elite.

Conclusion

India is a vast and highly complex society with uneven and varied development. It has the universal features of any semi-colonial, semi-feudal society under the grip of finance capital; it also has many a specificity, which requires deep study and analysis.

Revolution here is no simple task. While focusing on the axis of the armed agrarian revolution it would additionally entail dealing with and solving the varied and numerous diseases afflicting our sociopolitical system. The new democratic revolution entails the total democratization of the entire system and all aspects of life – political, economic, social, cultural, educational, recreational, etc.

The standard of life has to be enhanced, not only materially but also in the sphere of outlook and values. A new social being has to emerge in the course of the revolutionary process. As communists we are always ready to rectify our mistakes and listen to others, as we have the interests of the people at heart.

But the criticisms would help if they were concrete; those that we agree with we will willingly accept and try and improve our practice; where we disagree we can freely and openly debate the issue.

[The author is the official spokesperson of the CPI (Maoist). This is an edited and abridged version of the original manuscript.]