adjustment for ‘errors and omissions’ is made at the aggregative level, no such adjustment is made at the sectoral level. An alternative which the Working Group recommends is that the ‘errors and omissions’ be treated as ‘statistical discrepancy’ and that no adjustment whatever be made to any of the independent estimates (ibid, p 128).

Subsequently, the Expert Group Report on Saving and Capital Formation (Chairman: V M Dandekar/Raja J Chelliah 1996) had reported that “the recommendation has been implemented and the term ‘errors and omissions’ has been substituted by the term ‘difference’” (p 52). But, curiously, the system of ‘errors and omissions’ remains unchanged even to date.

If the above recommendations had been implemented as suggested above, the level of aggregate investment in the economy in 2003-04 would have been only 23.0 per cent and not 26.3 per cent as in the CSO’s adjusted estimates. And taking the issue a step forward, the actual domestic saving rate should be placed at 24.8 per cent which is the equivalent of unadjusted capital formation plus 1.8 per cent of GDP estimated as a current account surplus on the balance of payments or the size of capital outflow.

Note

[Tabulations for this note, prepared by V P Prasanth and R Krishnaswamy, are gratefully acknowledged; so also the efforts of K Srinivasan in inputting the note.]

1 While revision if any made in the estimates prior to 2002-03 are not known, some corroborative evidence in the form of percentage change in 2002-03 contained in the CSO’s latest release shows no significant revisions in them.

References


Reflections on the Peace Process in Andhra Pradesh

Initiating a peace process with the Naxalites was not an act of benevolence by the Congress government, but the first step towards fulfilling a commitment on the basis of which it was given a mandate by the people. It is now time to address several questions pertaining to the entire process that spanned eight months, including the role of the media, the bearing of arms in public, the issue of land reforms and that of ‘neutrality’ in political matters. The ultimate undoing of a laboriously crafted process of democratisation by a newly elected government is cause for serious concern.

Kalpana Kannabiran, Volga, Vasanth Kannabiran

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

— Martin Luther King Jr

The peace process that began in Andhra Pradesh eight months ago was the result of several factors that relate to the democratisation of the socio-political fabric over the past decade. It was an immediate result of the people’s mandate given to the Congress and its allies, of bringing peace to the state. It must not be forgotten that one of the key commitments made by the Congress during its election campaign was that it would invite the Maoists and other Naxalite groups to the negotiating table, and create the conditions for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law, in a state where the previous Telugu Desam regime had completely abdicated on both these counts. Even prior to the election phase, citizens’ groups, notably the Concerned Citizens’ Committee had over a period of five years painstakingly pieced together a framework within which peace could be negotiated, in case the possibility arose. A new government meant the creation of this possibility.

It was not easy reposing confidence in the Congress, given its own notorious history during the Emergency in the state, yet, the people decided to set the past aside and give it another chance. It is also true, of course, that not giving the Congress a chance, meant risking the catastrophic consequences of the TDP and its allies continuing in power. After the carnage in Gujarat and with the TDP’s deplorable human rights record in Andhra Pradesh, voting the Congress in and forcing it to be accountable seemed a better possibility.

The victory for the Congress was only possible because of the support of different parties (including the Naxalites) and ordinary citizens concerned about the crisis in democracy. Initiating the peace process therefore was not an act of benevolence by the Congress government, but the first step towards fulfilling a commitment on the basis of which it had been given the mandate of the people – one that had ‘conditionalities’. We also know that non-compliance with conditionalities, especially where it concerns the people, inevitably results in being ousted from power.

In a state that has the longest history of radical political movements, especially left movements, Andhra has also had the longest history of the criminalisation of political dissent in post-independence India. Places where political activism is highest, therefore, are in the eyes of the state ‘Naxalite infested’ areas. Arms, extremist propaganda and extortion are equal and coexisting evils. Political literature, specifically communist literature is censored (sedition sections were used well into the 1970s), and the right to free speech curtailed even while C-grade cinema spreads its poison through a flourishing industry. And yet, although this effort at criminalising radical politics through law and in popular perception has been backed by the might of the state, it has failed to achieve its objective. As a result, the ‘rule of law’ has been interpreted by the state to mean ‘law and order’, a euphemism for arbitrary and unlimited police powers.

The popular perception of the Naxalites is far from negative despite the fact that incessant contrary propaganda by successive governments and direct engagements...
of the police with the press are now on
the increase. The people have questions
about and criticisms of the specific actions
by Naxalite groups, such as killing/abduc-
tion of informers, sarpanches and local
officials, extortions, etc; they have doubts
about the larger meaning of bearing arms
since they are the ones who suffer the brunt
of the coercion that results from it. But
despite these questions and doubts, what
was clear at the commencement of the
peace process in October 2004 was that
the people did not see Naxalites as crim-
nals. The tremendous popular support for
the Naxalite leaders, especially the Maoists,
who came out into the open for the first
time then, was there for all to see.

Neither the government nor the police
missed seeing this support, and it is our
contention that the ruling party clearly
recognised its implications. Nevertheless,
the process that had been started had to
go on; on that the government did not have
an option. But, even as the process con-
tinued, the doublespeak began. While the
home minister was closeted with the peace-
makers working out a timebound blue-
print, the chief minister was reported to
have made a series of adverse statements
to the press in his routine public engage-
ments on the very questions that were
being negotiated. On the other side, the
head of the police force aggressively took
issue in the press with the Naxalites' de-
mand for fair wages and working con-
ditions for police constables. These were
not accidental but in fact a sign of things
to come.

A month after the conclusion of the first
round of talks, the encounters resumed.
Naxalites were being hunted down with
unfailing regularity even as discussions
were on for the possible timing of the
second round of talks. The prime minister
reiterated the commitment of his govern-
ment to go ahead with the talks and move
towards a peaceful solution in the state.1

The home minister continued to be in touch
with representatives of different groups,
seeking their advice and reiterating the
commitment of the government to peace.
The encounters continued unabated. All
those concerned about the peace process,
hoped the Naxalites would not pull out,
till it reached a point where that hope
became unreasonable. The Naxalites pulled
out of the peace process in January.

Even as we came to terms with the gravity
of the situation, the state was gripped with
the news in the first week of February that
the Nallamalla forests had been surrounded
by a 5,000 strong force of Greyhounds
who were closing in on the Naxalites and
that all the leaders were on the verge of
being killed in an encounter. It needed
intervention from the highest level to stall
what would have been the worst instance
of arbitrary state action by any standards.
This action and its possible consequences
have stunned the people into a kind of
paralysis. It is time now to address several
questions pertaining to the entire process
that spanned eight months.

The first is the role of the media. If the
media is to fulfil its watchdog role, what
should have been at the forefront of re-
porting on the issue is the concern for
peace. In this process of ethical politics,
neither individualism nor romanticism has
any place. All parties involved in the process
are equal participants and must be repre-
sented as such. And in a peace process,
there are no adversaries because there is
a common and collective interest that
binds all the parties. When the Maoist
leaders were in Hyderabad, the media was
suddenly gripped with the romanticism of
the forests and the revolution, so that there
was an over-exposure of the teams that
came for the talks—the leaders, the women,
what they wore, what they ate, driven by
the very individualism that this persuasion
of politics eschews. Alongside this was the
tendency to play up the adversarial mode
of politics, in a situation that called for the
foregrounding of ethical politics. Instead
of focusing on the different parties as
participants in the peace process, reporting
focused on participants as political oppo-
nents, statements of one party being pitted
against statements of another. This was
clearly a distortion of the process that was
underway, and contributed in no small
measure to undermining it.

The second issue has to do with the
bearing of arms. The critical issue in the
talks with the Naxalites was on whether
they could bear arms in public. There are
as many views on this as there are groups
involved in the process. But what is the
reality? The ruling party has legitimate
access and entitlement to arms, even
military might; in a state where faction
politics has come to stay, a leader is one
who carries arms and has a private army
that is fully equipped with the latest
weapons.2 Criminal gangs carry arms,
cinema actors and members of their fan
clubs carry arms,3 Naxalites carry arms. Of
all these categories it is only the Naxalites
who declare openly that they will carry
arms as part of their political ideology. The
others not only carry arms but use them
at will while pretending to respect the
constitutional framework, a pretence that
is somewhat like the emperor’s new clothes
—something that the general public is aware
of will but not expose. It is only the common
citizen who does not carry arms, because
s/he has the biggest ‘no-cost’ weapon in
democracy, the vote. It is ironical that
those who come in through the vote choose
to stay on solely by the power of the gun.
How in this situation can the demand be
made by the state or the police that the
Naxalites lay down arms?

For the people, all arms are instruments
of coercion, and there is no detracting from
that. They are weapons of assault that even
when used ‘in the interests of the people’
are by definition used arbitrarily, and

First Krishna Raj Memorial Lecture
Prof Jagdish Bhagwati, Columbia University, USA

Speaks on

“Globalization – Why It Has a Human Face”

in the JRD Tata Auditorium
National Institute of Advanced Studies,
IISC Campus, Bangalore
on February 26, 2005 at 6 PM.

Organised by the Friends of late Krishna Raj

Organising Group: Manu N Kulkarni, Gopal Kadkodi, Vinod Vyasulu

Economic and Political Weekly February 12, 2005

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therefore unjustly. That the gun gives a sense of power which ordinary participation in politics does not, is true. It is the power of coercion and disproportionate authority. This is a debate that must go on with radical groups in the interests of democracy. The test of course is in the construction of martyrdom. Martyrs are those that die by the gun. In our times political persuasion is largely irrelevant in this canonisation. For instance, if the attempt on Naidu’s life in Alipiri had been successful, he would have been immobilised as a martyr, his deplorable human rights record notwithstanding. His escape was a stroke of luck for democracy, because it made it possible for the people to consign him to political ignominy and irrelevance through the vote. This, for us, juxtaposes the democratic alternative with the bearing of arms for people’s causes.

The third question has to do with land reforms, another commitment made by the ruling party, and a demand made by the Naxalite groups in the peace process. For the Congress, land reform is a programme that must be effected by giving pattas to those already cultivating the land without in any way changing existing relations, leave alone transforming them, while for the Naxalites, land reforms are specifically related to the redistribution of land and equitable distribution of resources. There is a fundamental contradiction in ideology and a divergence of interests, with the state finding itself in the uneasy position of having to safeguard the interests of the landed dominant classes (of which it is a part) and the people looking to the Naxalites for the fulfilment of their aspirations. The volume of petitions presented to the Naxalite leaders during their stay in Hyderabad are evidence of this. There is no doubt that, on this count, the initiative must be in the hands of the Naxalites, with the state playing a largely supportive role and other civil society/liberties groups monitoring the process to ensure that intent is realised with absolute transparency and efficacy.

The fourth question has to do with neutrality in political matters. The reluctance to take sides and be seen as partisan can insidiously eat into the core of otherwise vibrant processes. Most often postures of neutrality serve to shield the status quo and keep it in place, which is why debates on political processes, including peace processes, must present extreme positions and evaluate them against the yardstick of human rights and democratic governance. When political dissenters are under siege by the state, there can be no ‘neutral’ assessment of state action in relation to them. All parties involved in the peace process must be willing and able to take a firm and unequivocal position against state action and in defence of dissenters. There is, in this context, no question of whether the state is ‘justified’ in its action, especially if that action violates the core terms of the peace process, viz, ceasefire. There can also be no neutrality or equivocation (‘was there provocation?’) with respect to uncontrolled and autonomous policing that refuses to subserve political processes and persists in treating politics as crime. For instance, when the Greyhounds surrounded the Naxalites and were closing in on them, there was no possibility of a ‘balanced’ view. For the police it was only ‘the biggest catch’ they would ever find; the peace process for them only had nuisance value. For the people of the state and their representatives in the peace process on the other hand, it was an unpardonable error and a breach of faith.

This leads us to the final point. The callous and irresponsible undoing of a laboriously crafted process of democratisation by a newly elected government is cause for serious concern. In less than a year, there has been a negation of the people’s mandate in the state. With four more years to go, we need to think seriously about how we will force accountability, transparency and the rule of law on this government, a task that can only be accomplished if the resistance to arbitrariness in governance brings together diverse sections and groups, and if the audible voices of resistance are representative of this diversity. [16]}

Notes
1 He had a half hour, one-to-one meeting with K G Kannabiran in November and followed it up with a letter to him, to the same effect, in the second week of December.
2 Witness the Paritala Ravi phenomenon. Paritala Ravi, a TDP leader was shot on January 24 in broad daylight in Anantapur, even though he was under protection by armed guards who were part of his private army. A faction leader in Rayalaseema, Paritala was known for his ruthless participation in a cult of violence in the name of politics.
3 Witness the absurdity of the Balakrishna case. Balakrishna, the youngest son of the founder of Telugu Desam and former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, N T Rama Rao, is a film actor. About a year ago, he was involved in
History’s Mysteries
Finding the ‘Truth’

The ‘truth’ about Godhra appears more clouded with the partial findings of the interim Banerjee Report. Several actors, including the Election Commission, continue to debate the propriety or otherwise of the report’s release, and whether citizens will be well served by the dissemination of its findings. In all this, it is ‘truth’, the search for it, that ultimately makes up an individual’s response as to how life should be lived, becomes a casualty.

BADRI RAINA

There has always been a class of thinking people who have been wearied and disappointed by the cussed obtuseness of history to yield up transcendent truths. Nor have all of them been poseurs or charlatans, masking self-interest under an attitude of affected profundity. Through the ages, a good number — writers, artists, other caring people — have suffered (as they continue to suffer) genuine despair at the absence of final answers. Some, embracing contingent contributions to causes dear to them, have opted for often frustrating involvements to the bitter end (a Yeats, a Lukacs, a Sartre). Others have been helped by their angst to produce memorable works of literature and philosophy (a Joyce, a Hiedegger). Some others have concluded their own histories in self-slaughter (a Mayakovsky, a Camus, a Rimbaud, a Virginia Woolf). Many, jettisoning their seemingly fruitless intellectualities, have made submission to the authority of dogma (an Augustine, an Ashoka, a Kafka, an Eliot). And, posited on the other side, not a few rationalists/ Marxists, violated by the rugged imperfections of praxis, have found cheerful telos in an alternate god, nature and the market (a Malthus, a Bernstein, a Gorbachev). And yet others have opted to offer learned comment from sanctuaries offered by expert distance (the names here are too many to recite) in the belief that it is worthwhile, after all, to be impartial, even if somewhat cynical, denoters of partial truths than to sink into silence altogether, particularly if there is some remuneration at the end. Let it be understood that the names I have picked are random rather than inclusive, illustrative rather than exhaustive. (Indeed, were this line of thought pursued in some detail, the procedure could lead to a rewarding compendium of the interfaces between specific histories and individual odysseys. But this is neither the place for such a project, nor the purpose entirely of this piece which is occasioned simply by some learned comment in sections of the media that all reports — of this committee and that commission — are worthless political tools meant to further or hinder some crass interest or the other, and the truth of things such as the Godhra occurrence can never be found). To carry on: there are, however, also those who have found it in them, wittingly or unwittingly, to internalise that text in the Bhagwad Gita which suggests that we discriminate in the momentary here-and-now, between the vile and the not-so-vile, and do our bit on behalf of the latter without seeking to reach after some ultimate consequence, or without confining the ambit of that consequence to the span of our private lifespans. In other words, learn to school our intelligence to recognise that there has been a long line of others before us, and there will be a long line of others after us. So that it were best not to preclude what consequence our honest effort may have in the course of things.

So also of the Godhra event, the Banerjee Report, and the uses to which it has been put. Succinctly, if the Godhra lies could be deployed to win one election, why may not some part of the Godhra truth be likewise pressed to win another?

It is now to be noted that the local Gujarat VHP leader has testified at the Nanavati