

The Martyrdom of Komaraya:  
A Turning Point in Telangana  
People's Revolutionary Movement

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# The Martyrdom of Komarayya: A Turning Point in Telangana Peoples' Revolutionary Movement

By 'ADITYA'

July 4, 1946 was the day of martyrdom of Doddi Komarayya, a young man from a poor peasant and shepherd family of Kadivendi village of the then Nalgonda District. (Now it is in Warangal District) He was then a member of Local volunteer squad formed out of the local population, to fight back the armed oppression of one of the most cruel feudal land lords of Telengana. The village happened to be the second Head Quarters of the landlord where his mother resided. One can imagine the extent of the oppression the people of the village had to undergo. This was not the only village which had such volunteer squad. There were some villages where they were functioning.

Komarayya was shot dead while he was participating in a demonstration composed of the volunteers in the main, who were about 30. The person who shot him was the top level agent of the feudal landlord. The attack was preplanned.

We pay homage to this young martyr, who was the harbinger of the new-stage in the peoples' revolutionary movement. It was the stage of armed struggle. As communist revolutionaries we attach more importance to his martyrdom than those who are formal in celebrating such occasions. The movement which gave birth to him is rich with experiences, which can be used now, if we draw correct lessons from them. This is the proper occasion to review at least certain aspects of the movement so that the experience can and should be used by the communist revolutionaries to advance the revolutionary movement, which they are building. There can be no fitting tribute to this martyr than this.

The Telangana people's movement was initiated, organised, and was led by the communist

party ever since 1940 onwards. Earlier there were either some peasant revolts of a local and spontaneous nature or movements for civil liberties and constitutional reforms, led by the liberals connected with feudal landlord families. They were satyagraha type of movements (individual) by the Gandhian leadership of national congress. They led the participants no where some of them being young nationalists were disillusioned with the state of affairs.

Not all the disillusioned were congress-minded. Some were in search of alternative ways. At least a few of them, mostly from students, were almost clear that the congress-type of reformist movement can not deliver goods. Therefore they were thinking of revolutionary methods. We can not say that they were clear on what these methods could be. The Communist party had mobilised a good number of them, disillusioned nationalists and the revolutionary elements from students into an organisation. Party units were formed and all the leading sections were given a preliminary understanding of Marxism-Leninism.

The political situation was too unfavourable to carry on the activities. The Hyderabad was a princely state consisting of Telugu, Marathi, Kannada and Urdu speaking people with their respective regions i.e. Telangana, Marathwada and Karnataka. The Urdu speaking people were concentrated in Hyderabad City, though every town had its share, big or small. The state was supposed to be independent, but the Nizam (the King) was a puppet of British imperialists. The British army was stationed in the capital (Secunderabad), and the key portfolios of the ministers, Revenue and police were invariably handled by Britishers. The Prime minister (as he was called) was appointed by the British government. The administration, economy, politics, and all fields of peoples' life was

controlled by the British who were at the top. The Civil, Criminal and Revenue laws were more or less a reproduction of what the Britishers had enacted elsewhere in India. But the Land Revenue system was oppressive. There were no civil liberties, and no representative institutions of a limited nature, similar to those existing in other parts of India. Obviously, the regime was autocratic and none could raise his voice, not even a liberal, against the regime, however low and mild the voice may be. No political organisation was allowed to exist. The state congress led by liberal elements, was banned. No Kisan organisation was allowed to be formed. The only exception was Majlis-Ithehadual Musalmeen, a progovernment political organisation with a wide influence among the Muslims. Any attempt to form an organisation, political or otherwise was dubbed as an attempt to create communal tension and the matter used to end then and there.

There was an organisation, known as Andhra Maha Sabha, led by loyalist and liberals. Its class basis was merchants in the Towns and of small landlords in the villages. Nationalist elements were associated with it. It was not a functioning organisation. It used to hold its annual conference once in a year or two as and when the leadership had a permission from the authorities. The main aspects of the resolutions were concessions for merchants in the towns and land owning sections in the villages. The other demands were to level up the administrative system in tune with those parts of India which were directly administered by British Regime i.e. British India.

The feudal autocracy nurtured by British Imperialism was bordering on fascism. The government officials, together with the feudal landlords were oppressive. People from all walks of life, rich and poor, landed and landless were victims of this oppression.

Educational facilities were too meagre to reach the middle classes. Overwhelming majority of the population, with their mother Tongues Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, were deprived of education in the respective languages. Their cultures were suppressed. Their religious activities were curtailed to the minimum. In fact the Hyderabad state was a prison house to the people.

The Second World War, which began in 1939, had brought additional burdens to the people. Collection of war funds, grain levies etc. added to the miseries of the people.

The state was kept segregated from the rest of India, so that the people may not be influenced by the nationalist movement which swept throughout British India. But the attempts of the authorities met with only partial success.

What is the way out for people? The same as for the rest of India.

## II

The then Communist Party of India, had a revolutionary programme to overthrow British Imperialism in India, together with a specific programme for the stage of Imperialist war, which was going on from 1939 onwards, we refrain from commenting on it in detail. Suffice it to say that in spite of being a revolutionary programme, it had no correct understanding of hegemony of the proletariat over the national movement in general, and agrarian revolutionary movement in particular. It had neither a correct understanding of National United Front, nor armed struggle. Its understanding of the armed struggle was an insurrection of the Russian revolution type; United Front with "left wing" of the congress leadership whose leader was supposed to be Nehru, the agrarian revolutionary movement was limited to abolition of the Zamindari system and the essence of the demands was to introduce Ryatwari system, which is in vogue in non-jamindari areas; the nature of the work among working class was trade unionist, with occasional anti-British struggles. The result of such an understanding and practice was the Communist party was able to build a mass movement, a militant one at that. But the movement has never gone beyond a limit, which was what the so called "left wing" has desired. One can understand the limitations of ideological struggle, against national reformism and counter revolution, imposed by such a time.

Early communist working under the direct guidance of Andhra PC had to work under near-fascist conditions. In the towns and industrial centres trade union work and work among the students was given prominence. It was not difficult to formulate demands and carry on agitation. Care was taken that the organisations donot bear a communal

character and they were successful in that attempt.

As for the rural masses, demands for implementation of the legal provisions which go in favour of the people even to the minutest degree were put forward. It was born out of two conditions.

**FIRSTLY:** Landlords' word was law in most cases. Despotism was the order of the day. The legal provisions of, regarding forced labour, tenancy, illegal exactions etc. were obviously too meagre to meet the immediate needs of the people. Yet the despotism which was in vogue had reduced them to mere pieces of papers. We can find such cases even today. They see the light of the day only when there is a mass agitation and people come into streets. More often some of the provisions are implemented together with ferocious repression. It is known as, "cannot and stick" policy.

**SECONDLY:** Any radical programme even for propaganda purposes was not allowed by the authorities. It could form a part of illegal activities. By radical programme we mean, abolition of systems of jagirdari (Zamindari) Tenancy, forced labour etc. It was unimaginable in those days to demand abolition of the state together with Nizam's autocracy.

In view of this the demand for implementation of certain provisions was correct. Communists could go to masses and develop contacts with them. They served their purpose to this extent.

But what was the organisation which can be organised for this purpose? The authorities did not allow to organise peasant organisations, which could take up these demands. Therefore the party has decided to work in Andhra Maha Sabha, the liberal-dominated and non-functioning organisation. The nature of the demands was such that the liberals could not oppose the communists. The communists too had their share in the leadership because a section of the lefts had come to their fold. Their presence in the leadership had facilitated the work.

Once the communist took up the day-to-day work through the Andhra Maha Sabha, it had transformed itself into a functioning organisation at all levels and in no time. Of course, it was limited

to the places (Districts, Talukas (tahasils) and Villages) where they had worked. It should be kept in mind that a good section of nationalist elements worked along with them, with their own understanding and limitations. Thus the communists were more or less in a united front with them. A section of liberals too cooperated with the communists in their legal activities.

A specific feature of the Andhra Maha Sabha was, that it could not be equated to peasant organisation. It was more than that. It was a cultural organisation carrying on cultural activities i.e. organising Telugu libraries, reading rooms, night schools for illiterate village youths etc. Though it did not have definite political aim, it used to adopt political resolutions in its annual conferences demanding constitutional and administrative reforms. It used to reflect the demands of urban population, i.e. merchants and certain other strata. Therefore its activities were wider in scope, with a national content, and the Nizam was an oppressor of the Andhras in Telangana, because he was a puppet of British imperialism which in turn oppressed the entire Andhras as a nation including those in Telangana.

The party building was given its due importance, the PC had deputed two organisers for this purpose. One was working openly with some legal cover, while the other was underground. The PC guided the day-to-day work through them, while important work (i.e. annual conference of Andhra Maha Sabha) was handled directly by the P.C. is obvious that early communist units had no experience of party work either in the mass organisations or in the party building. The two organisers held with all their limitations were helpful to have a break-through in this respect.

The type of communists was: some were popular leaders with about 10 years of political life. Some other were students with good oration. All of them and a few more were entrusted the work in mass organisations. At the same time every district had one comrade for each district including the city, who was entrusted with the work of party building. As such we had district level organisers for every district barring a few. But the development of the movement and the party was not the same in all.

The early communist units were given classes in basic principles of Marxism-Leninism together

with a sprinkling of its application to the practice of Indian revolution. Perspective of the Indian revolution was that of Russian revolution. There was a brief criticism of Gandhism, as a counter revolutionary ideology. There were critical comments about the reformist, revivalist movements, and developments in the Telugu literature. It is quite possible that all classes might not have the same syllabus as mentioned here.

### III

With this the ground was clear for day to day political, organisational and practical work. Comrades with the specific responsibility of party building went in search of contacts who could be future functionaries. Not all contacts proved useful in this respect. If some of them had associated themselves with Andhra Maha Sabha and some other mass organisations, some others were sympathetic towards the party and its programme. Soon the party could develop a bunch of cadres who were ready to undertake responsibilities down below.

The Party work in general registered an advance in almost all sections of the people i.e. working class, students, urban middle classes and peasantry. It extended to political, economic and cultural fields. Still it was the beginnings and not at all a developed phase. It denoted a first round of success and nothing else.

Andhra Maha Sabha Issued pamphlets for educating the people on various issues. Important among them was one on forced labour. The pamphlet explained the legal provisions relating to it. The sum and substance of the provisions was the services to the officials while they are on tour were compulsory from the concerned sections of the population, mostly toiling people. But the services were payable and the remuneration was meagre. Together with issuing a pamphlet, a call was given to celebrate a week to explain the legal provisions to the people. It was done accordingly. The mass mobilisation in all districts was considerable. Notwithstanding this, the authorities were not ready to concede it in practice. There was an inherent contradiction between what the people demanded i.e. no compulsion whatsoever, and what the legal provisions conceded i.e. compulsion but with legal remuneration. The provisions were never extended to landlords who were customarily extracting forced

labour. The more oppressive a landlord, the more forced labour and illegal exactions he extracted, and there was no limit to it. Therefore the demand for enforcing the legal provisions did not meet the needs and the then existing level of consciousness of the people. What they demanded was its abolition and not a remuneration.

Though the authorities in general conceded the demand, it was never implemented. Because the official, whether big or small, took it as a challenge to his authority to see a toiler demanding remuneration for his labour or himself offering it. The toiler preferred to refuse compulsory service outright rather than to offer service and then demand remuneration.

It was in Nalgonda district, that the people were mobilised to enforce the legal provisions which in essence meant refusing to offer forced labour outright. It was an organised movement in 20-25 villages, big and small, consisting of a population of 15,000-20,000. The toiling sections of the people including the "Harijans" came forward on this demand, while the peasants including the rich and merchants (small in number) supported it. Most of the villages consisted of small and medium sized landlords who were also sharing in the extraction of forced labour. But it was not so severe in some cases. The party did not touch them for tactical purposes. They were neutralised for the time being on this issue.

There were illegal exactions by village heads (patels and patwaris, i.e. the police and revenue representatives respectively) who belonged to the class of landlords, in almost all cases. It was not difficult to put an end to such practices. A M S (Andhra Maha Sabha) rendered necessary legal help in overcoming the difficulties arising out of refusing payment of illegal exactions. In some cases, local leadership preferred reduced payments through bargaining because it was not ready for direct confrontation with them. (Here local leadership means, the president and members of the committee, who were more often nonparty persons to begin with).

The problem of tenancy was important not only for Nalgonda district but also for entire Telangana. Big and small landlords used to rent out a portion of 'their' lands, while cultivating the rest through farm labourers. Afraid of possible legal

rights which the tenants would get (a draft legislation was pending before the government), they began to evict them. The party and AMS (local) opposed evictions, while they were uncompromising on the question of evictions, they were ready to compromise on the amount of rent, either in kind or cash. But the crux of the problem was the evictions. They were stopped by the organised strength of the people in general and tenants in particular. The struggle was directed against big and small landlords and no differentiation was made between the two. As a result, the small landlords who were neutral otherwise were united with the bigger landlords on this issue. It should be noted that the village rich and a section of landlords joined AMS and attempted to retain their leadership at least at the local level as against bigger landlords. They were opposed to the latter's domination because firstly it extended to them, in spite of their being rural rich. Secondly, once their domination was finished or weakened they can step in their shoes. Their influence as local leaders or sympathisers to the AMS, was an additional advantage for this purpose.

The cultural problems had a wider scope. Except a hard core of feudal landlords, the rest had cooperated. Their sons, with some education at least, had come forward as activists in this field. Some of them together with the rich peasant youth were drawn towards the party, gradually.

There were industries, big and small, in spite of feudal autocracy in the state, which was part of British Colonial regime. Railways, Coal-mines, textiles, rice mills etc., however few and scattered they may be, had given birth to the working class. Communists, wherever they were, worked among them and took preliminary steps to build a trade union movement, which was developed further in the subsequent years. There were strikes in small and big industries. The strikes were often led by communists, braving the repression let loose by the government.

There was a little student population in the district which had no college at all. Non-muslim students were more often under the influence of Arya Samaj, which is a Vedic, reformist, revivalist, religious organisation. Its leadership campaigned against dialectical materialist outlook of the communists. Therefore an ideological struggle against

the influence of this organisation was necessary before the students were mobilised in the movement. Communists did it with success, with the result that the major part of the student community had come under the influence of the communists. As a result a good number of organisers had come forward from among the students who worked among the peasants in the subsequent period.

The communists took up the issues, not all issues, at one place, i.e. a village or a group of villages but according to the situation obtaining there. For example they took up the issue of land (tenancy) in the villages where the tenants have come forward on the issue. There were some other villages where the issue was not so acute but where it was easier to approach the mass of the peasantry by mobilising the youth, in cultural activities to begin with i.e. libraries and night schools for adults. There were villages where it was easier to take up the issue of forced labour against the officials, more often the local petty ones. In short they entered the village once they developed contacts with individuals on whom they could rely for cooperation. The criterion for the issue selected was whether it could mobilise a wider section of the people in a given village.

The wage and the living conditions of agricultural labour was not on the agenda of the party because: firstly, forced labour was a pressing issue on which they could unite with others; Secondly, a section of the rich peasants, some of whom later developed into landlords, constituted the main part of the leadership, who could prevent the issue coming up; Thirdly, the concerned party units did not find any urge in the agricultural labourers (as a class) to take up the issues. Notwithstanding it, party's connections with the rural poor were living because most of the agricultural laborers were poor peasants as well.

The Government collected grain levy from the peasants, for war purposes. The landlords including the village head men (Patels and Patwaris) used the occasion for further coercion and exploitation of the peasantry. To begin with the party units took up the issue and agitated against the forceful collection of the grain. The agitation was directed against the government and the landlords.

There was repression against party workers in various parts of the state. More severe was in Nalgonda, where the struggles took place.

#### IV

The Second World war took place in two stages. It was an Imperialist war to begin with. There was Anglo-US-French bloc on one side. Germany, Italy and Japan consisting of Fascist bloc, was on the other. Since both were Imperialists blocs, they were contending for plunder and hegemony over the world. Therefore the war at this stage was characterised as a imperialist war, which lasted from 1939 to 1941. With Germany's attack on Soviet Union headed by Stalin, the course of war has changed into one of Anti-Fascist war in which the Fascist bloc was on one side and Soviet Union, Anglo-USO-French imperialism together with antifascist countries, nations, and people on the other. A genuine people's movement headed by communists took its birth in Telangana in 1940 and developed from 1941 onwards. Communists had adopted different policies for different war periods. Earlier, they were working for preparing for overthrowing the British imperialism, by opposing the imperialist war. Subsequently they were expected to carry on the same by supporting the antifascist war, but at the same time the struggle against British imperialism and intensifying it as and when the time was ripe for it.

The earlier phase of the Telangana people movement covered both the phases till 1943. As was indicated, a peoples movement took shape with its class-edge directed against feudalism. There was a strong reformist and opportunist trend, which opposed revolutionary methods of struggle; It advocated and employed non-revolutionary methods, which limited the communist and mass activities to legal forms alone, while the revolutionary trend was already found in practice in relying on mass mobilisation, struggles and strikes, which called the defiance of law and authority in the given situation because the people did not enjoy even the marginal liberties which they are having to day. In this connection, one should not equate a reformist trend with a reformist party. While the party as a whole was revolutionary, there were revolutionary and reformist trends the latter being stronger. This does not mean that the rest of the party was reformist from the beginning

or after a certain phase, with no revolutionism in it. It only means that inspite of its being revolutionary, reformist practices were prevalent in it. Limiting the activities to the then existing legal frame work and equating the support to war efforts with support to the government was the result of the reformism.

The clash of the two trends did not reflect in the party either in the form of differences over tactics or in the form of internal discussions, while a section of the leadership was content with remarking that the methods of mass mobilisation were hasty steps the other felt that the struggles were inevitable for realisation of demands within the legal frame:work. It was in this form they manifested. And there was another arena where the trends had become antagonistic and the clash had come into the open. It was Andhra Maha Sabha.

We had earlier stated that the Andhra Maha Sabha was dominated by liberals representing a section of the feudal and mercantile interests who were for meagre reforms, administrative and the like, which did not affect feudal interests (tenancy etc.). Demands for implementation of legal provisions to the extent they were supposed to go in-favour of peoples' interests (meagre compensation for forced labour), together with demands for limited reforms constituted the common basis for united front between the communists and liberals. But the methods of mass mobilisation and struggle were the bone of contention between the two. They characterised the methods as communistic, which had no place in the Andhra Maha Sabha, (AMS) which stood for amity between all sections, according to them. They advocated representation to officials and litigation in the courts as an alternative. Communists argued it was a fact that AMS composed of exploiters (landlords) and the exploited (workers, peasants and the middle classes) at the same time the objective of AMS was to work for the all round well-being of Andhras according to its constitution; to work for the oppressed sections is essentially to work for the realisation of the objective and communists were working for it. It is obvious that there was no common ground between the two. Hence the struggle was inevitable.

The communists had gone to the workers and peasants not only with their demands, but



also enrolled them as primary members of AMS, with elected committees at village and town level. They were functioning committees that were helping the people to fight the oppression of the landlords who had their ties with the liberal leaders of AMS. In fact they were carrying on this responsibility with a certain measure of success. They were providing justice free of cost, which was a costly affair with the landlords, who were often the village headmen. (Patel and Parwarji). Thus the character of AMS, once a slipshod and defunct organisation, was transformed into an active and functioning mass organisation, at village level. Such development was not to the liking of the most of the liberal leaders at higher levels i.e. Taluke (Tahasil), District, and Centre.

The struggle took the form of slander campaign in the press mainly Telugu communists could expose it in the press, through pamphlets and public meetings. Then it took the form of elections at the central level where both the liberal and communist candidates contested. The liberal candidate could win and the communist candidate was defeated with a narrow margin. While the newly elected president (he was elected for the second time) was busy with his offensive tactics against communists, they intensified their activities and extended their work to new areas. He singled out Nalgonda district for elimination of communists from AMS, where the struggle against feudal landlords had begun. He could only "dismiss" some of the communists who were working as organisers. Such a step made no difference to them because they continued to work for which there was no bar according to AMS constitution. Their prestige and influence had grown to the disadvantage of liberals. At last they decided not to hold the annual elections for the organisation because they were sure that they would be defeated in any such elections. Communists openly came out against such a step exposing it as a blow to the organisation itself.

The liberals could not withstand such an exposure campaign which had gone to the extent of defiance of their leadership. They threatened to withdraw from the AMS and resigned emboldened to pressurise the communist leadership to come to terms with it. The communists refused to compromise, took over the leadership, and conducted the annual elections. A section of nationalist elements together with some liberal were with them. Thus

there was change in the composition of the United Front. The hard core of liberals left, while the rest remained in it. The level of the mass movement together with the ideological struggle and political exposure has made it possible. It is quite a normal phenomenon that, when the class struggle reaches a new level, a section of the leadership becomes obsolete and leaves the movement.

'Peoples' movement heaved a sigh of relief with the exit of the hard-core of liberals. The new leadership which had come up was confident to lead the movement, with the experiences already gained in the struggle. The people responded quickly by joining AMS in big numbers. It was to the credit of the organisation, party as well as AMS, in Nalgonda district that the response was more in quality and quantity. Some parts of Jangam Taluk and adjacent areas were the main scene of activities following the takeover by the new leadership. There were about 40 villages with a population of about 0.15 million, who were dominated by the feudal landlords with 75 per cent of cultivable land under their possession. Forced labour, illegal exactions, eviction of tenants, illegal confiscations of movable and immovable properties, beatings and murders by these landlords was the order of the day. The villagers of Madipadige took the initiative in asking one of the district leaders of AMS to come over to their village and help them to overcome the oppression by the local feudal (a Zamindar variety of.) When compared to the others, he was a smaller fry, but the oppression was intense. The AMS leaders visited the village promptly. After preliminary enquiries, he declared in a mass meeting to stop all forced labour, illegal exactions etc, and set up an elected committee to look after the day-to-day work by way of helping them. The committee, ever since, was known as local SANGHAM and the entire organisation was called SANGHAM. (It was difficult to pronounce the name of Andhra Maha Sabha for mass of the people. Hence this simplified name.) The people from other villages took no time to have their own SANGHAMS, a procession, a mass meeting addressed by the AMS leader, his appeal to stop forced labour etc, and the announcement of the local committee and its office bearers was the pattern of the work to begin with. There was no forced labour, no illegal exactions, no evictions, no beatings etc., from then onwards. The entire feudal oppression short of land question and usury

stopped then and there. The said AMS leader showed a remarkable courage and initiative in moving the people of the villages. It was really a revolutionary people's, upsurge, though of a preliminary nature.

Neither the people did know what was in store for them, nor the leader had an understanding of it. He did not know how to build a mass revolutionary movement out of the upsurge. He did not know what the demands of the people were, what were the probable demands to be formulated for the next phase of the movement, the nature of the repression which was in the offing, not to speak of the ways and means of fighting it. He was a typical reformist militant mass leader, with no communist convictions, with no orientation towards revolutionary politics and organisation. Yet he was a "mass leader" who attracted the attention of the people and was widely respected by them.

The District Committee of the party, after preliminary discussions over a crappy report given by the AMS leader, (he was a District Committee member) as well decided to develop and consolidate the party and AMS in those villages. It sent organisers for the purpose. It had sensed the repression by the feudal landlords and the Government which was in the offing. How to face the repression, when let loose, was the question before the party. The committee did not know the conditions, the demands of the people. Nor it had any understanding of the nature of repression and ways and means of fighting it. Therefore the whole matter was referred to the higher committee which took prompt action.

The Leadership went to the people to know the problems past and present. After eliciting preliminary information, it was found that forced labour etc., was thing of past, because the feudal landlords were unable to restore the old practices as long as AMS and the party were leading the movement. Therefore the leadership turned its attention to find out the new pressing problem or problems about which the people were serious. It was surprised to find that they want the land. The specific form in which the question was presented was; they should get back the land which was alienated by the feudal landlords wither by way of evictions of tenants or forced occupations. They were not clear about ways and means of

getting back the lands. They seemed to have legal illusions to the effect that AMS could solve the problem peacefully.

The central Head quarters of AMS put forward the demands: 1) No restoration of old practices, 2) alienated lands to be restored to rightful peasants, 3) stern measures to be taken against the feudal landlords who resorted to illegal and cruel practices in the immediate past. The party and AMS, had propagated these demands not only among the people in struggling areas, but also else-where in the district as well as Telangana and Andhra districts (now Andhra Pradesh.) Even then there was the land problem, which brooked no delay.

## V

The party was still following the old policy of limiting the activities to the legal frame work, utilisation of legal possibilities is one thing putting legal limitations to the activities is another thing. The former helps the casting away the legal illusions existing among the people while the latter strengthens them. The former helps the people to learn by their own experience the futility of having legal illusions, while the latter does not allow this process, which is essential to build the revolutionary movement. The demand for restoration of the alienated lands cannot be realised within the legal limits. It was unimaginable that there could be such a demand in those days. But the need of the hour was to put forward it, keeping in view the legal illusion that they had for the time being. The leadership had two courses before it either to go to the courts or move the peasants into action to occupy the land, which was not within the purview of the party policy.

The war situation was not the same as it was when Nazis attacked Soviet Union in June 1941. The Red Army defeated the NAZIS in Stalingrad battle and took up an offensive to drive out Nazis from Soviet Union, and the victory was a matter of time. Therefore in party's policy of giving support to war effort needed to be adopted to the changed situation. But the party's leadership continued the earlier policy of supporting the war and supporting the government. It should be

noted that the struggle had started in the latter half of 1944.

While the local leadership was groping in the dark as to what to do in the given situation, two incidents took place as a starting point for widespread repression, which was let loose by the police and the armed hands of feudal landlords. **FIRST**: there is a village known as MUNDRAI. About a hundred families of Banjara tribals were evicted from about 50 acres (about 20 hectares) of irrigated land, which the Banjaras wanted to be restored. The landlord mobilised the armed bands of his own together with those of the neighbouring and made his way into the land to forcibly occupy the land. The Banjaras came out to prevent occupation. The leadership present on the occasion decided not to allow the peasants to go ahead because the initiative was with the landlords. The peasants were withdrawn accordingly to find a favourable situation for the step intended by the peasants. The landlord could occupy the land for the time being. This incident took place towards the end of 1944. **SECOND**: there is a village known as Palakurtli. A mass meeting was held which was addressed by the leader who initiated the movement. Some members of the armed band, disguising themselves in different dresses, were present in the meeting. The AMS and party volunteers smart and vigilant, suspected some foul play from the disguised men. The volunteers rushed forward, and beat them. It served as a pretext for the feudal landlord, who was most cruel and oppressive to let loose a widespread repression in almost all the villages. A criminal case (attempt of murder) was registered, and about 18 persons, composed of local leaders and militants of the village and surrounding places, were arrested and imprisoned. There were ordinary cases on all the members of the village committees. All these measures taken together served as an occasion to terrorise the villagers on a massive scale. Rumour-mongering was a chief weapon to begin with. Arrest of the main leader was enough for the landlords to tell the people "look here. Your leader is arrested, your SANGHAM is no more: come and compromise with us and let us both live in peace". Some amount of demoralisation set in. A few of the village leaders (committee members) surrendered to the landlords, some others were vacillating, and a few stood firm. The party and AMS, could retain contacts with about one fourth of the villagers, because the rest of villagers were terror-

stricken. This situation lasted for about 8 months. The party organisers sent for developing party organisation and AMS, had tried their best to maintain the contacts with the people. As a result they picked up courage gradually, only to move on a bigger scale.

Some of the experiences which the party and the people had witnessed were as following:

1. The peoples' upsurge was massive. The unity they achieved was unique. None was left with the landlords except their hard core. 'Either a united village or none at all' was the main feature. Therefore there was no question of a divided village in which a section of the people were supporting the landlord and another section were following AMS. A divided people were not confident of facing the landlord.

2. Sections of the population who were newly converted to Islam kept themselves neutral. Most of them were poor agricultural labourers and the poor peasants. It should be noted that Islam was treated as a privileged religion because the Nizam was a Muslim. In spite of the best efforts they could not be mobilised into AMS and hence anti-feudal struggle.

3. The leadership of the village i.e. the local committee of AMS, consisted of a category of landlords who were once rich peasants, rich and middle peasants, elders of the castes and some pro-landlord elements. It was the desire of the people that influential sections must be on their side and should in no way be on the landlord's side. They did not at that stage mind about the class position of the individual once he decided to be in their camp. The landlords who were invariably money lenders also, had their grievances against the dominant feudal landlords. At the same time, they wanted to control the people of the village or villages, as the case may be, for the purpose of exploitation. Notwithstanding this, people preferred to have them in their leadership.

4. The people had an immense loyalty towards the leader who initiated the movement. He was equated to the AMS. He was a legendary figure. Such loyalties began to disappear as soon as organised work among the masses began. Having confidence in their own organised strength was an experience, first of its kind. It was a revolutionary feature. At the same time personal

loyalties arise out of backwardness of the people. Party's organisational work with a correct orientation alone removes this backwardness and consequently the personal loyalties.

5. Earlier attempts to build a net work of the party, at least a skeleton, with militants from the people proved to be a failure initially. No sooner an attempt was made than the repression started. Therefore more time was necessary for the people to realise the need for a party organisation.

6. In spite of the terror and repression, people did not abandon the idea of AMS. They preferred to lie low than to surrender. Their loyalty to AMS was unquestioned.

7. Criminal cases, police and courts had given them initial experience of how administration functioned. Their earlier understanding was that the landlord was bad, but administration at the top level including the Nizam was good. Efforts to utilise the legal possibilities together with party work had helped them to cast away the illusions.

## VI

The short period of repression was also a period of lull in the sense that people were not in action even on a small scale. The centre of legal work was shifted to the courts, which were utilised to contact people from various villages. Legal defence provided an occasion to contact the villagers, as well as middle and top strata of the towns who came forward to help the people in a way they could. Party's activities extended to more than one field i.e. from day-to-day mass work, to propaganda on a wider scale, legal defence and allied activities, a struggle against treachery of the liberals, who were driven away from AMS, and cultural activities.

Notable of this work was a Janagama Prajaha Veerochita Peratalu. (The heroic struggles of Janagam people) a pamphlet, published by the party, in which specific forms of feudal exploitation and oppression were given with concrete instances. It was the result of more or less thorough survey of peoples' conditions in the 40 villages and some more. The pamphlet provided themes for a good number of literary works like

dramas, novels, songs etc. which had anti-feudal content.

As stated earlier, the people were silent for while, but did not surrender to the feudal landlords. Party organisers were working among them with all their limitations. Criminal cases could not cow them down as AMS could put up a good fight in the courts. The landlords found that their position was not safe even though people were not in action. There they resorted to a further round of repression.

The Second World War had ended in 1945, with defeat of fascism. People's revolutionary upsurge all over the world followed it. There was a revolutionary upsurge in India, (Revolt of Navy etc.). Its impact could be seen even in Telengana. The second round of repression, (rather the third round ever since the party had started its activities) should be understood in this context.

There was a small and toiling peasant family, in Palakurthi (mentioned elsewhere), whose working male members, a father and two sons, were arrested and kept in prison all these months. (Such was the case with many more). The family braved the troubles and stood firm, inspiring the others. (The arrested persons were the leading members of the village committee and the youths). Therefore they had to face the brunt of the landlord repression and they faced it.

The crop of the arrested persons was ready for harvesting. The landlord was planning to snatch the crop in order to pressurise the family to surrender. All the leading male members of the families who could help were in jail, and the people of the village were too-terror stricken to help the family. The party, after considering the situation decided to send organisers together with volunteers so that they may be able to harvest the crop. They did accordingly. They were caught unawares while they were returning from fields, beaten, "arrested", and were taken to the nearby police station, visnooru, the headquarters of the landlord. They were tortured and third degree methods were applied. The barbarism of the police had no limits. (They were subsequently released by the court).

One of the AMS leaders were sent by the central headquarters to investigate the situation on

the spot. But he too met the same fate. He was beaten. His clothes and all the belongings were taken away. The bullock cart (the only transport available) on which he was travelling was burnt. He was forced to return to the headquarters in a helpless situation. The whole matter was represented to the state government. An enquiry by a top official was in the offering. The people were further being terrorised by the armed men, so that nobody came forward to tell what really had happened. There were police atrocities going on elsewhere in the district. A situation had arisen wherein the party had to take a new approach to face the problem of repression which had become part and parcel of anti-feudal struggle. By limiting the activities to representations (to the government), courts, and press statements (not very often), the mass movement could not withstand the enquiries and trials, for which a number of witnesses from among the masses were necessary because of the terror. Nor bringing volunteers from places other than these villages which were victims to the terror, was any solution because people participation in the resistance was absent. Once the people came into action, the volunteers spring out of them and there was no need to bring them from outside.

What could be the new approach? It could only be to mobilise the militant volunteers who were conscious enough to put up resistance against the landlord terror. The situation was such that there was no time left for further consideration and discussion. The leadership on the spot took a decision, to mobilise a small number of volunteers, say about 20, from one of the villages (not the same village Palakurthi), which was also the victim of land lord terror, but to a lesser extent for various reasons. It was Devaruppala. An influential section of the village leadership with a landlord composition did not approve the proposal. It was ready to spend more money if volunteers could be mobilised from some other place. The party leadership wanted to consult people associated with AMS by directly contacting them in their houses, which again was opposed by the leadership. Finally there was an arrangement to call for a meeting of a few individuals. But it so happened that about 200 had attended the meeting. The party leadership, after reporting on latest developments, stressed the need for mass participations in the resistance against the terror, explained the proposal of raising a volunteers corps

from among the people. A voice from the audience was heard to say: "how many volunteers are required?" The leadership said: "Not less than 20." The voice: "Then ask them to raise their hands whoever is ready to join. The leadership asked the people accordingly. About 60 hands were up. They were hardened by toil, and at the same time, were brimming with youthful vigour. The much vexed problem was resolved by the people, in favour of the people, under the guidance of party. These developments should be characterised as a starting part of the struggle against the landlord leadership of the village, while at the same time maintaining united front with it.

The village committee was instructed to get the provisions ready for the 60 volunteers, at least from 15 days. They were ready by early hours of the morning. The volunteers armed themselves with special lathis prepared for the purpose during the night and started on their mission to Palakurthi, to learn the first lessons of defending the mass movement of which they were part and parcel.

The job they were assigned was hard one which needed sacrifice. Yet their journey was pleasant although. The folk songs they sang, the folk stories, they told, the wit and humour in their conversation was unique. The party leadership explained the politics and need for discipline, on the way itself. A commander with a few assistants was appointed to lead the volunteers. They marched through the villages, through which they passed. They reached their destination before midday.

The party leadership contacted the villages, especially those who had been providing shelter, including the family which was a victim of recent terror in connection with the harvesting of the crop. All of these families, without exception were afraid of receiving the volunteers. They knew that the volunteers belonged to the adjacent villages, and not of distant ones, which fact should have emboldened them. But it did not happen. The volunteers paraded through the main streets more than once. Men and women, who were present in the house would come to the doorsteps, see the volunteers parading in front of their houses and then would get back into the houses.

Seeing that the villagers were not yet free from fear, the leadership had decided to camp in an adjoining village, Bammera, where they were assured of the cooperation of the people together with that of local landlord who was himself a victim of the same feudal landlords terror. They reached the place accordingly. The leadership consulted the people and found that they were ready to cooperate till the situation in Palakurthy improved. But the people of Palakurthy, especially the leading members still left in the village, gradually shed away the fear and came forward to welcome the volunteers, when the party leadership came to know the changed situation, the volunteers were back in the village by sunset. Then again, there were parades of volunteers. Local youth joined the People and came into the streets. All were enthusiastic and joyfull. The armed men of the feudal landlord disappeared not to be seen again.

It took no time to get the people prepared to tell the enquiring official, what actually transpired, and how the armed bands were resorting to terror in the village. The official left the place even before the enquiry was complete. It was because, there was a mass resistance to the local police in Aknoor, a distant village in same taluka (Tahasil) and the same district. The villagers refused to part with the grain which was collected as levy. The village was far away from Palakurthy. But the people were influenced by the struggle of people against feudal oppression. The armed police specially. Sent for the purpose, raped the women, looted the movable properties of the peasants and agricultural labourers and tortured them using the third degree methods. It took some time before the party leadership had come to know of it.

Mean while, the district leadership had provided the programme for all party units to organise volunteer corps in all villages within the preview of party and AMS, to face the landlord-police terror, to organise people demonstrations at regular intervals, and a daily procession of the volunteers as a protest against the repression, which was going on all over the district.

It was one such procession, during which Doddi Komaraya was shot dead on 4th July 1946. His martyrdom is directly connected with post-second world war upsurge which was spread over the length and breadth of India. Workers, peasants,

and armed forces took part in struggles and revolts. As a result, British imperialists had transferred power to the congress leadership to suppress the peoples' movement on one hand, and to protect imperialists interests on other. Therefore, Komaraya's martyrdom takes us back to the experiences of post-war peoples' movements and revolts whose lessons are valid even today. The present article deal with some aspects of Telangana part of Indian peoples' movement. At the sametime it was not an off-shoot of post-war peoples' upsurge. On the other hand it was a continuous movement, which took its birth in 1941, extended now gradually now rapidly and reached a higher level in the middle of 1945. It was quite a short time, of not more than four years. It is this aspect which distinguishes Telangana peoples' movement from those which are products of post-war revolutionary upsurge. This is not to say that there were no other such movements.

In the subsequent months, from July 1946, to December 1946, the organised mass movement covered about 120 villages with a population of about 3 lakhs. Grama Rajyas (Village Soviets) had emerged. About 3000 acres of landlords' land was distributed to the landless. Volunteer crops had been formed with indigenous weapons like lathis and slings. They were used to drive out the armed men of land lords and the police. The government could suppress the movement, temporarily with the help of Army. But it took no time for the people to rise again in 1947 and the armed struggle continued till 1951.

## VII

Communist revolutionaries are studying the lessons of Telangana armed struggle diligently to draw correct lessons, which may be used in their party work. They are convinced that these lessons are applicable even to this day. Infact these experiences and the lessons have an important bearing on the general line they are implementing. Therefore they are living experiences too.

Revisionists and neo-revisionists are vociferous in singing hymns to Komaraya and his martyrooms, to capitalise the revolutionary traditions be left for the people and revolutionaries. They have already failed miserably because they have nothing in common with the traditions. When asked about the lessons, they will simply say :

"Ah, there is a lot of difference between then and now; therefore they are not applicable for the present day situation." Here is their departure from Marxism-Leninism. It is a fact that three decades of time separates the present from the past. It is also a fact that there have been some changes in the politics, economic and cultural fields. At same time they are not basic changes. Indian revolution is far from complete. It is yet to be completed. Agrarian revolution remains the axis of the peoples' democratic revolution. Hence their applicability.

Throughout this four years' (1941-45) period, the party had no correct line. The local party leadership had to grope in the dark at every critical points. It did not formally oppose the then official reformist line. At the same time it was with the people, in their struggle against feudalism. It went to the people, learnt from them and worked out the necessary tactics. It has seen the futility of the demands for implementation of legal provisions in practice, with their own experience of work among the people. It never relied on legal provisions for its mass work. It relied on the mobilisation of the masses for struggles, while utilising all possible legal opportunities. This was undoubtedly a revolutionary step in the given situation.

But the situation is some what different today. Communist revolutionaries have basically a correct line. They are implementing it as well. They are better situated in this respect. The mass mobilisation i.e. issuing a hand bill or a pamphlet mass meeting, demonstration etc., can be carried out today within certain limits legally. There are more legal provisions today than in the past. It is not the utilisation of legal provisions that matters much. They are being utilised and must be utilised. The crux of the matter is whether the methods to be adopted are revolutionary or reformist. As Communist revolutionaries, we are expected to adopt only revolutionary methods and not the reformist. We cannot build a mass revolutionary movement, if we limit our activities to pamphleteering, mass meetings and demonstration; the mass movement can not reach a higher-level as and when the situation demands; and the movement turns into reformist one in course of time. We can not ignore them altogether because it is necessary that the people should have this experience to begin with. Those people

who have undergone this experience with reformist methods, must reorientate themselves to revolutionary methods of struggle.

Communists had gained the experience of United Front even in that earlier phase of the mass movement. AMS was one such mass organisation which had provided a forum for this purpose. There was a period when the communists had a United Front with liberals, which normally does not happen. It was because of Nizams feudal autocracy with no share in the Government for liberals. As a result they exhibited a marginal and spineless opposition to the government. They had fallen out even when the mass movement was smaller in extent and was in initial phase. It was because of its landlord class nature with a negligible influence among the masses.

United front with a section of landlords at village level and its positive as well as negative aspects. They attempted to use communists to beat down the bigger land lords and to consolidate their position in the respective villages or group of villages. They attempted not to allow any direct links between communists and the masses, so that they may retain their influence intact, and the communists may not exercise their influence and leadership directly. They had partially succeeded and partially failed. (This aspect of the problem has a direct bearing on the hegemony of the proletariat). This was a negative aspect. With a section of landlords present in the United Front, anti-feudal unity at village level was total and extensive. Such a unity had facilitated to isolate the bigger landlords, and to defend the mass movement. This was positive aspect. It is obvious that more determined struggle was needed to isolate them from the masses while having united front with them.

In the present day situation, communist revolutionaries need not go in search of such landlords for united front. They are there with the ruling and opposition parties which are participating in the elections at all levels. To have them among the people means trailing behind them. Therefore United Front must be built of toiling sections, i.e. agricultural labourers, poor and middle peasants to begin with. As the movement goes further, the rich peasant who is an ally joins the United Front. This does not mean that even if he joins it at an earlier stage, he should be kept out. Communist

revolutionaries have a clearcut programme of agrarian revolution for this purpose.

Then there is the question of party and mass organisation. Younger elements from middle classes, bankrupt landlords, small and medium sized landlord merchants were the cadres. In spite of this, because of the Marxist ideological orientation, they worked as communists. There was no question of landlords leading the party at any stage of the movement, as is being presented by certain perverted elements. They are nihilists who reject the role of ideology and the party. It was a difficult task to build the party consisting of advanced elements from the workers, peasants, to begin with. Night schools for adults in some place did help in drawing the militants of these classes into the fold of the party. The anti-feudal struggle could not draw the younger elements from the people to begin with, partly because the heads of the families took part in the movement, who discouraged them from coming out of house and the piece of land it was cultivating so that the family economy may not be disturbed. But when defending the mass movement was on the agenda, a number of younger militants came forward, to enrol themselves as volunteers. Most of them were the future party members.

The cadres who were real functionaries of the party, worked hard and in a disciplined manner. They were provided with classes in which they were equipped with necessary politics and organisational methods. They could explain the political issues, mainly the role of Soviet Union in the Second World War, the role of congress leadership etc. to the people and to the politically minded sections. As a result they won the affection of the people and commanded the respect of other state of population.

A-section of cadres developed arrogance and self-concernedness once they became popular. They paid little attention to their ideological and political growth. They thought that such a growth was superfluous, and that their popularity as mass leaders could be a substitute for growth. Thus they lagged behind the growing movement. They relied on their past work and popularity for retaining the leadership of the party, and not on their capacity and level of responding to the ideological, political and organisational needs of the movement. There were a few old type of mass leaders with a

reformist political past, who never bothered about a party organisation, nor any preliminary understanding of building mass revolutionary movement. Certain amount of struggle was put up against such elements. But when the party leaders proved in-practice that, they could mass leaders as well, the former had learnt the first lessons of observing the party discipline, together with the realisation of the need for party leadership.

The relation between communists and AMS as mass organisation was not a problem to begin with. They were in a minority and party fractions functioned effectively at all levels of the organisation, under the guidance and control of respective committees. The party and AMS functioned separately, independent of each other. But the situation was different when the liberals were driven out. The party emerged as leading force in the organisation. As a result there was no demarcation between party's political and mass work (peasants) and that of AMS because AMS was a political as well as peasant mass organisation with immediate political and peasant demands. As a result the entire work (in this field) was being carried out by AMS. The only work left for party was ideological and organisational. In the absence of a correct understanding of the relations the situation was leading to liquidation of the party. Limiting the party activities had accumulated the problem. Raising the volunteers from among the people to defend the mass movement, had provided a revolutionary turn to the party organisation, with a militant guidance which was political as well as practical. It was a welcome development in the right direction.

AMS was an anti-feudal anti-(Nizam's) autocratic mass organisation fighting not only democracy, but also against feudal oppression in all its forms, including landlordism. The organisation bore more of an anti-feudal character in Nalgonda district than the others because it was developed on those lines because of continuous anti-feudal struggle it had led. The anti-feudal agrarian revolutionary content has strengthened the national character of AMS.

Peoples' consciousness reached a higher level, from getting organised into a mass organisation to that of organising themselves as armed volunteers together with its leaders. Whether it was



possible in the begining itself or not, it was necessary and an attempt was worth making, even it failed. But formation of volunteer organisation was easier when the people realised by their experience that it was necessary. A prompt and timely step had helped to raise their consciousness to a higher level, together with their struggle. Other-wise there was no demarcation between the volunteers and the people, and there was no leadership which developed from among the people.

It is not necessary that communist revolutionaries go in for party and volunteer organisation only at a later stage and not earlier people, rural as well as urban, are much more politically conscious today than what they were during forties. Every form of mass activity is throwing us the young militants who can be absorbed into an intermediary organisation between the party and the mass organisation. The level of their consciousness in a given time has a relation to the nature of peoples' mobilisation. Therefore we need not wait for such an organisation till the repression is in the offing. We can and should have it as and when it is possible.

Once the liberals were driven out from AMS, there was no political force other than a sprinkling

of congressmen in the field to contend the communists. It was the feudal landlords and the government who stood face to face to communists. It is not the the same case to-day. Congress and Janata parties apart, there CPI and CPI(M) on one side, and various groups of former CPI(M-L) on the other. Therefore communist revolutionaries have to carry on the struggle against right and "left" opportunism, together other ideologies of ruling classes, in all fields so that they may be able to develop and consolidate mass revolutionary movement under the leadership of their organisation. Our experience also shows the correctness of this stand point.

These are some of the experiences and lessons drawn, which are valid even today even though there is a change in the situation. Komarayya's Martyrdom was a turning point in the Telangana peoples' movement, from where it assumed the form of armed struggle. There can be no fitting homage than to study diligently the experiences of this phase of the movement, which was preparatory in its nature. They are more living today than ever.

