

55 years of Historic Naxalbari Revolutionary Struggle!

- Vijay Kumar

The 1967 Naxalbari uprising still acts as a guiding light to the construction of revolutionary movement and to achieve revolution even today. However, it was in 1968/69 that disputes, differences / splits arose about the path to be followed. We need to have clear understanding about those differences / splits.

The first steps to build the Naxalbari movement were taken in the early 1950s. In building that movement - the Telangana armed struggle that came to a standstill in 1951 - acted as an inspiration for the then comrades. From the beginning of the movement until his arrest in 1968, Com Kanu Sanyal was a leader who won the admiration and support of the people, and the rank and file of the party.

The undermentioned comrades were considered to be the leaders of the Naxalbari uprising- Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, Kesab Sarkar, Khudan Mallick, Khokhan Majumdar.

All the party ranks in the Darjeeling district were united in working among the oppressed masses, tribals and tea plantation workers, as well as in opposing the CPSU & Dange politics and supporting the ML party. Due to that reason the ranks in the district, the people who followed the party, all the DC members stood with CPI(M) in the 1964 party split. Ratan Lal Brahmin continued as District Secretary. (He was the MLA of Bengal in 1946 and the Darjeeling MP in 1971). There are differences regarding the revolutionary path within Darjeeling DC of CPI(M) Party. The DCMs decided to work as a set (team) - not leaving the things to the leadership and continued to work with the aim of peoples' armed struggle. Com Charu Majumdar (CM) is a teacher for the party ranks of the district and the leader of this set. As a result of discussions in and out of the jails during the 1964-65-66 period of imprisonment, the DC Comrades decided that the CPI(M)'s top leadership had no revolutionary line and decided to move forward with the mass line. The DCMs (two-thirds of the district committee) have an understanding of armed struggle and the CPI(M)'s effective leadership position. Differences arose on mass movement- armed struggle; between the agrarian revolution and the armed struggle; and on building and leading mass organisations. Some Comrades argued that people would follow enthusiastically if squads are formed and revolutionary politics is propagated and landlords and class enemies are annihilated. Com Kanu Sanyal and others - said that only through our continuous work of organisation and by building the movement can the masses be united against the landlords and the government and take the higher form of struggle, and that's why we have to organize mass organisations, agitations and advance the agrarian revolutionary politics among the masses. Though these differences were serious, still they

all wanted to continue with the same team and practice the two lines in different areas. In March 1967 Kanu, Jangal and others in their practice - harvested crops in Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa areas; occupied lands; distributed among the toilers; people attacked bungalows of the jotedars (landlords) and burnt the debt documents, handed over the mortgaged belongings to the respective people—all these programmes continued throughout March, April, and May. The programme made headlines in North Bangla and across Bengal. In today's terminology it has gone viral. What is remarkable is — Bighul Kishan (tenant farmer) protected his harvest with united strength of masses from the former minister and local MLA Tidke (won over Jangal Santhal); one side seizing land and crops, distribution of lands were continuing, the government started to file cases and attempted to restrain the party ranks. The then Chief Minister Ajay Mukherjee was himself the Home Minister!

Com CM was also arrested and detained in Siliguri. CM was released within 48 hours due to pressure from CPIM and others in the Front. On May 24, SI Wangdi was killed in a scuffle between people and police team that went to arrest and disperse the crowd. The next day, on May 25th, armed police took position on unarmed crowd in Prosadu Jote who gathered for a general meeting. People snatched some weapons from the police. The police officer, made people believe of retrieving back but took up arms, firing indiscriminately. Along with an infant, 11 people were killed in the firing. Thus the Naxalbari armed struggle unfolded before us with struggles lasting from March to May 24th /25th.

Naxalbari Uprising- Struggle of Peasants of Terai Region

It is the struggle for land, livelihood and for liberation of masses (for the establishment of the power to the masses), a struggle led by the communist revolutionaries.

It brought a sharp response within the CPM, the communist movement and the society as a whole. Students of the University of North Bengal in Siliguri openly declared solidarity with the struggle and condemned the state-police repression. Students welcomed it in Calcutta. Naxalbari -O - Krishak Sangram Sahayak Samithi was formed. It undertook solidarity programs. CPI (M) Bengal State Committee member Com Sushital Roy Chowdhury (SRC) wrote in support of the Naxalbari in the party magazine 'Desh Hitaishi'. Eminent personalities like Sushital (SRC), Pramod Sen Gupta, Parimal Das Gupta, Asit Sen, Utpal Dutt (Kallol-Tir) stood in solidarity with it.

In 1966, Humayun Kabir (former Union Minister, eminent Congress leader) and a few other liberals and progressive persons co-founded the weekly NOW with Samar Sen as the Editor. Samar Sen – had written in support of Naxalbari peasants in NOW. NOW organisers have decided to sack Samara Sen and they did. Few of the NOW organisers, along with others, started publishing 'Frontier' magazine with Samar Sen as its Editor. Some in solidarity but many politically, rallied with the cause of the Naxalite uprising. 'Deshabrati' was started with Com SRC as its Editor. The Calcutta Comrades, such as the SRC, consulted CM and the Comrades of other states and organised an All India Conference in Calcutta. The day before the conference, a solidarity meeting was held at the Presidency College Auditorium. Com CM, who was introduced as a comrade linked to the Naxalbari movement in Darjeeling

district, did not speak for more than 5 minutes at the Presidency College meeting. He said that Naxalbari struggle was the right path to revolution and Com Kanu Sanyal was the face of that struggle. He said the revolutionary ranks should be ready to organise such struggles. The next day after Presidency College meeting the All India Conference of Communist Revolutionaries in CPI(M) was held. The AICCCR of CPI(M) was formed with Com SRC as convener. It charted a four-point declaration. 1. Build Naxalbari -type revolutionary struggles. 2. Popularise and spread Mao's thought as a continuation of Marxism-Leninism. 3. Mobilize and organise the working class who tend to limit to economic struggles with the New Democratic Revolutionary Politics (NDR). Transform the working class into a leading force for the NDR. 4. Conduct ideological and political struggle internally and openly against the (erroneous) politics of CPI(M) leadership-and mobilize forces.

The first issue of the 'Liberation' monthly was published in English with the declaration of these 4 points. However, like the Darjeeling comrades in Bengal and the Com SRC, the 'Dakshin Desh' (magazine-Chinta) group (later on MCC-Amulyasen, Kanhai Chatterjee are its leaders), which has long waged an ideological struggle against the CPIM leadership, did not join the AICCCR. This is how the revolutionary political movement began to unite. The APPC Comrades in April 1967 decided and passed resolution to oppose the CPI(M) leadership's document 'New Tasks in New Situations', and fight the CPI(M) leadership's politics as a whole and began to organize an ideological, political struggle.

The AP leadership saw the Naxalbari struggle as a turning point in the communist movement and sought to rebuild the communist movement through relentless struggle.

Those who still consider the Naxalbari to be not only an inspiration but also a guiding force - must strive to accomplish the unity of today's revolutionary forces and revolutionary movements. What is needed is to establish a revolutionary path for the mass movements. We have to persevere our study for executing our tasks.