

A More than 50 Years Journey Overcoming Many Obstacles

(Continuation from previous issue)

By July–September of 1969, while arrests in some areas were slowing down people’s movements and anti-feudal people’s struggles were gathering momentum on the banks of the Godavari. The Adivasi people of Kondamodalu are rapidly taking up the programs given by the leadership. People’s consciousness is increasing step by step. But it faced structural shortages created throughout the district as a whole. The Kondamodalu movement went ahead even when the district in its entirety was faced with organizational shortfalls due to arrests. It is the time, when 21 villages spread over an area of nearly 20 miles on the banks of the Godavari are leading struggles for land and against repression and leaders are thinking on how to take the movement forward. Comrade Shanti Raju once made an attempt in October, 1969, to meet the state level leaders to get guidance and financial support but returned disappointed as he couldn’t meet any one. Later in November Comrade Subba Reddy went to the state centre. He met Comrade Madala Narayanaswamy, who was at the centre and reported him on the situation in the East Godavari movement. Leaders from the state leadership have been asked to come to the review meeting to be held at the agency in December for deciding the further course of action. He also, explained about the financial difficulties faced by the movement and requested for cooperation. As the State center is in no position to provide financial support, Comrade Subba Reddy mobilised some assistance through his personal contacts and with the help of his family members. However, Nekkelapudi Rama Rao, who was supposed to come from the state centre, did not attend the review meeting scheduled to be held at Yerrametla in December. Comrade Madala Narayanaswamy published a pamphlet titled ‘The East Godavari District Agency Tribal Movement is Rapidly Marching Forward’. This inspired the revolutionaries in the other areas.

Subba Reddy held a meeting at Yerrametla in December with the comrades who returned to the agency; reviewed the activities that took place; studied the available works of Mao. It was found that peoples’ movements were going on in 21 villages and in more than 50 villages there were campaigns about Union programs. They decided to sustain the movement on their own responsibility. The formation of militia and their trainings were conducted with the participation of the people.

It was at this time that the top leadership of the communist revolutionaries was arrested in Madras in December 1969. Though the state and district leadership was arrested, the remaining comrades took up the responsibility of carrying the movement forward. In January 1970, when Comrade Subba Reddy was moving to reach the last mile of Yellavaram Taluk, making efforts to acquire new relations and expand the movement, police waylaid him by sending a false message that people from other villages were waiting to meet him. As per their plan he was attacked and arrested while he was in Peddagudem. He was confined in a single cell in

Chintapalli and other places and was shifted to various sub-jails and Visakhapatnam Central Jail for nearly six months. Later, Comrade Subba Reddy (Comrade Vishwam) was included as the 25th accused in the Hyderabad Conspiracy Case registered against Comrades Nagireddy, Devulapalli and others, showing the East Godavari Adivasi land struggles as evidence of the 'immediate program' document of the Communist Revolutionaries. Comrades Somachari and Shanti Raju who were arrested earlier were also in the accused list of the Hyderabad Conspiracy Case.

Immediately after the arrest of Com. Subba Reddy severe repression was imposed on the East Godavari district Adivasi people. Arrests were made from all the villages where the land struggles took place. Repression was even more severe on the Kondamodalu adivasis. Comrades Kundla Gangaraju, Illa Rami Reddy and several Adivasis were first tortured and later shifted to Rajahmundry Central Jail on charges of 'encroachment of lands' and 'cultivating paddy crop on encroached lands'. Pamuleti Gangi Reddy, an Adivasi, died in the central jail. Adivasi women like Madakam Suramma were also detained in the central jail. For six years from 1970 to 1976, more than 100 adivasis used to walk 60 km to the Rajahmundry district court for every adjournment in about 69 cases. The people's movement temporarily took a back step. But the landlords could not make exploitation their right as before. This situation continued until the leaders were released from prisons at the end of 1972. During this period, Comrade Nakkala Moshe who was not arrested kept moving among the people, assessing the situation and kept boosting their morale with his assumed names of Somayya and Kondayya.

The Adivasi movement of East Godavari district during 1968-71 achieved significant success in spite of many constraints. Politically, outdated Mutadari system was abolished. The adivasis under the leadership of the sangham got back the village common properties of tamarind and fruit gardens from the occupation of the Mutadar. As a result of the movement, the atrocities of the forest department were curbed. Adivasis crossed the reserve lines and acquired podu lands. Wage rates, the problems of the tenant farmers and the illegal exploitation through exorbitant interest rates were curbed. In particular, the movement exposed the problems of land and the intensity of land alienation.

The 69 cases filed against the Kondamodalu tribals for their 'illegal entry into the lands of others' and 'cultivating crops in those lands' were added as supplementary cases in the "Hyderabad Conspiracy Case" registered against Tarimela Nagireddy, Devulapalli and others in 1969. The Kondamodalu land struggles were cited by the police as evidence that a conspiracy was hatched to topple the government as mentioned in the document "Immediate Programme" prepared by the Communist Revolutionaries. Kondamodalu landlords were examined as witnesses in the case. Fully knowing well the owning of the document "Immediate Programme" may lead to death sentence; the accused wholeheartedly owned it. In the midst of this, along with Nagi Reddy, Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao and others, Subba Reddy also owned the 'immediate programme' and exposed the treachery of the landlords in these 69 cases before the court.

Reconstruction of the Movement During 1973-76. Imposition of Emergency-Progress even During Emergency:

The leaders and activists arrested in 1969 were released on conditional bail in the end of 1972 while the cases were on trail. Comrade Moshe and Comrade Bose maintained contact with the people of Kondamodalu. Since Com. Subba Reddy was not allowed to cross Guntur district as per the conditional bail, when he came to Rajahmundry for the adjournment of the cases, he met the comrades and initiated steps to rebuild the movement again. During this time, there came divisions among the communist revolutionaries. The group led by Comrade Chandra Pulla Reddy started its activities in the district, by organizing militia saying that revolution is possible only through organised Militia. Comrade Somachari and Shanti Raju, who were released from jail, took the stand of supporting Pulla Reddy. This was the time when there was a large-scale misinformation campaign against Com. Nagi Reddy. In such a situation and in the midst of court cases, the party had to rebuild while sustaining the movement.

The Kondamodalu adivasis have been united even in the midst of detentions and attended the court adjournments. In some other tribal villages where such arrests have been made and cases have been filed, the adivasi elders failed to keep the people united because they put forward the argument that whoever runs after the courts gets the land. At one time they even turned into adivasi landlords. In Kondamodalu, however, they are united because their foundations are based on strong political consciousness. They collectively faced the cases and detentions. Subba Reddy, who was coming to Rajahmundry for the adjournments, visited the agency in the middle of conditional bail. Later, a pamphlet titled "Get Ready for the Reconstruction of the Tribal Movement" was released in August-September, 1973. It highlighted the achievements of the tribal movement since 1969, explained the present detentions, the deviations in the revolutionary movement and called for the reunification of the adivasis.

During this period, activists exposed the repression against Adivasis through the civil rights movement in East Godavari district and, in the plains. Konaseema Civil Rights Conference and District Civil Rights Meeting were held in Rajahmundry. Mahakavi Sri Sri addressed these gatherings. These conferences condemned the repression on the tribals of the agency area and on their movement.

In February 1974, in a village called Kothagudem, in Kondamodalu region, a landlord beat up tribals by accusing that their cattle grazed in his fields. He dared to do this in view of the existence of the police camp. But the other tribals present there resisted the non-tribal landlord and beat him back. Enraged by this, the landlords attacked Kothagudem on the same night with 30 men and started beating up all those who are caught. People immediately rose in resistance. This incident had proved that even after so much repression, the consciousness of the people is like a volcano ready to burst. While taking steps to rebuild the movement in the agency measures were being taken to rebuild the party in the plains. Again the movement among the people began. In 1975, Comrade Tarimela Nagi Reddy's public meeting in Rajahmundry was successful. It was attended by adivasis from several villages from the agency. Activities among the students and youth at Kakinada Medical College have resumed. At this time emergency was imposed and the limited legal opportunities that existed were lost.

(To be continued in next issue)