

PATH OF INDIAN REVOLUTION PRESENT CONTEXT



Former Revolutionary Students Forum

Path of Indian Revolution Present Context



FormerRevolutionary Students Forum

Path of Indian Revolution -
Present Context
An Anthology of Articles

Publication:
Former Revolutionary Students Forum
January, 2026

Price: 120

For Copies:
P. Vishnuvardhan Rao
Flat No. 11, Block No. 1
MIG-2, Bag Lingampally
Hyderabad
Ph. 9959021484

Printed at
Karshak Printers
Vidyanagar, Hyderabad



He...

Traversed Bastar
and extended himself to the entire country.

From the people's war of our time
he rose as a symbol of humanity's war for liberation.

He stood in the line of great warriors who,
through history, stood as the very embodiment
of defiance.

With his life, his struggle, with his martyrdom,
he uttered an undying message:
that the revolution shall triumph one day.

To understand how wondrous,
how profoundly humane a revolution can be,
he became an example in himself.
Comrade Hidma...

His life-companion,
Comrade Raje...

In the memory of Hidma, Raje and their fellow comrades-
the Adivasi martyrs of the movement...

- Former Revolutionary Students' Forum

Contents

In lieu of Preface	
The Long Night, Not the Last Dawn	5
Distortion and Slander, the Trademark of Capitulation	
- K. Murali (ajith)	9
The Great Betrayal of Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao:	
A Result of Political Bankruptcy -Vimal	13
The Role of the Deep State, the Crisis in the	
Revolutionary Movement, And Questions	
Concerning the Protracted People's War Line -Pani	45
A Discussion on the Path of the Indian Revolution	
- N. Ravi	75
Not An Internal Problem of Maoists	
- N. Venugopal	88
Once Again on the Relations of Production	
- N. Venugopal	97

In lieu of Preface

The Long Night, Not the Last Dawn

Has Naxalbari lost its relevance? Has the path of Protracted People's War in India exhausted its historical role? Should the Indian revolution seek an entirely new revolutionary course in the backdrop of profound changes in Indian society? Was the Maoist movement defeated due to unforgivable strategic and political blunders? Has the Indian revolutionary movement been pushed into marginality because of left-sectarian and adventurist deviations? Is there truly no alternative for a revolutionary party other than laying down arms and surrendering?

These are the central questions addressed by the articles in this book, *The Path of the Indian Revolution – Present Context*. While these questions are not new, the historical moment in which they arise is fundamentally different. Since the days of Naxalbari, similar debates have surfaced repeatedly. Today, however, they emerge from within the revolutionary movement itself- from the very organization that has steadfastly upheld this path for more than five and a half decades. More significantly, these questions have been raised by a leader who served on the Politburo for eighteen years.

Venugopal articulated these positions in his 22-page letter to the cadre in August this year. He argued that the Protracted People's War was no longer feasible and proposed a "temporary" withdrawal from armed struggle in favour of mobilization through open democratic movements. This announcement stunned revolutionary forces across the country. At the same time, it provided the regime with a decisive ideological weapon, strengthening its hand in advancing Operation Kagar.

Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao not only organised the surrender of nearly 250 guerrillas along with their arms, but also spread demoralisation by propagating the belief that the movement was on the verge of total annihilation and that continuing guerrilla warfare was futile. Working in tandem with the state apparatus, they facilitated additional surrenders and sought to portray capitulation as the only remaining option before the people. This was capitulation of the highest order.

These mass surrenders have plunged the revolutionary movement into an unprecedented crisis, one that had already been intensifying over the past decade, particularly since the launch of Operation Kagar.

Operation Kagar was initiated on 1 January 2024. It represents a full-scale war against Maoist guerrillas, especially concentrated in the Dandakaranya region of Central India. Nearly 800,000 state armed forces have been deployed with the declared objective of eliminating the Maoist movement by 31 March 2026, a deadline publicly announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Aerial bombings, drones, and helicopters are now routinely used to provide support to ground operations.

Operation Kagar follows earlier counter-insurgency campaigns such as Green Hunt, Prahar, and Samadhan, during which hundreds of unarmed Adivasi villagers were killed. Under the present operation, Maoist guerrillas have suffered unprecedented losses. Ten Central Committee members of the CPI (Maoist), several Special Zonal Committee and Divisional Committee leaders, and hundreds of guerrilla cadres have been killed in both fake and real encounters.

This brutal war has been launched with a clear objective: to uproot Adivasis from mineral-rich forest regions and hand over these territories to corporate mining interests such as Adani, Ambani, Vedanta, Lloyds, Tata, Birla, and others. For decades, corporate houses have sought control over the billions of dollars' worth of mineral resources lying beneath the lands of Dandakaranya. The alliance between corporate capital and the Indian state has now culminated in a systematic campaign of displacement and dispossession. Standing in the way of this plunder were the CPI (Maoist) and the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army. It is precisely for this reason that the state unleashed its largest and most ruthless counter-insurgency operation - Operation Kagar.

Under the pressure of this all-out war, sections of the Maoist leadership became demoralised, lost faith in the revolutionary path, and began advocating surrender to the Indian state. Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao emerged as the principal voices of this trend. Venugopal issued letters expressing contrition to the people and the cadre, declaring that the movement had reached a historical dead end and that there was no alternative except to "temporarily" abandon armed struggle and shift toward open democratic mobilization.

In response to this capitulationist turn, the Former Revolutionary

Students Forum (FRSF) - comprising activists who had worked in the Radical Students Union during their student days - organized a symposium titled "The Path of the Indian Revolution – Present Context." Several intellectuals, activists, and long-standing participants in the revolutionary movement contributed articles on this occasion. They asserted that Protracted People's War remains the only viable path for the radical transformation of Indian society and for the elimination of semi-feudal and semi-colonial exploitation carried out by feudal and comprador bourgeois classes in collaboration with imperialism. These articles were originally published in Telugu.

This booklet presents selected translations of those contributions.

N. Venugopal (Editor, *Veekshanam*) injects optimism into the atmosphere of despair created by the arguments advanced by Sonu (Venugopal). In sharp contrast to this defeatism, he argues that while revolutionary movements may experience slowdowns and setbacks, more expansive people's movements are bound to emerge in the future, drawing lessons from past defeats. Defending armed struggle, he writes: "Armed struggle is a law of history. It does not depend on subjective decisions." By rigorously scrutinizing the call for a "temporary withdrawal of armed struggle," he raises incisive questions, most importantly: how can one ensure that a temporary cessation will not inevitably turn into a permanent retreat?

Pani examines the role of the deep state in the present crisis. He shows that repression through Operation Kagar alone was insufficient to defeat the movement and that the state therefore attempted to sabotage it from within. Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao provided this opening. Pani critically engages with the arguments advanced in defense of surrender and introduces the concept of "Betrayal Operation Kagar," which operates alongside the military offensive.

Ravi challenges the notion of a so-called "temporary withdrawal" from armed struggle, arguing that such a retreat inevitably becomes permanent. He explains why the development of capitalist relations does not automatically negate the relevance of the Protracted People's War in the Indian context. Those who claim that India has already become fully capitalist implicitly argue that armed revolution has no place today. Ravi dismantles this claim and analyses the relationship between modes of production and revolutionary strategy.

Ajit critiques Venugopal's assertion that the principal contradiction

in India has shifted from feudalism versus the masses to the comprador bourgeoisie versus the masses. Drawing lessons from the revolutionary experiences of China and Vietnam, he demonstrates that shifts in the principal contradiction do not invalidate the path of Protracted People's War. He also exposes the philosophical contortions underlying Venugopal's arguments.

Vimal exposes the fallacies in Venugopal's 22-page letter and demonstrates how his position is flawed both philosophically and politically. He also reveals Venugopal's covert collaboration with the state in the months preceding the surrender and categorically rejects the capitulationist line.

Fascist regimes and apologists of capitalism across history have shared common ideological patterns. *Endlösung der Judenfrage* - the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" - was Nazi Germany's genocidal policy aimed at exterminating European Jewry under Hitler. In the 1990s, Fukuyama proclaimed capitalism as the final stage of human history and declared socialism obsolete. Today, the Hindutva fascist regime - whose ideological predecessors openly admired Hitler and Mussolini - has announced 31 March 2026 as the deadline for decimating the revolutionary movement, presenting it as its own "final solution."

History, however, offers a different verdict. Hitler and Mussolini failed to consolidate their fascist utopias. Can their Indian counterparts succeed where earlier fascists collapsed? History stands as a powerful testimony.

At this critical juncture - when the revolutionary movement faces a combined assault from state repression and internal betrayal - FRSF presents this booklet as an intervention of resistance. The crisis produced by the state's military offensive is visible to all. But the crisis generated from within, through surrender and ideological retreat by former leaders, is far more dangerous.

This challenge must be confronted directly - politically, theoretically, and ideologically. We hope this booklet not only responds decisively to the questions raised by Venugopal but also rekindles debate, sharpens revolutionary clarity.

This is a long night - but it is not the last dawn.

Former Revolutionary Students Forum

Distortion and Slander, the Trademark of Capitulation

- K. Murali (ajith)

Quantitative changes, as per dialectical philosophy, indicate qualitative change. Every quantitative shift reflects a transformation in quality. From that standpoint too, it is contradictory for our Party to argue that the capitalist relations that have significantly strengthened in the country over the past two hundred years have not produced, and cannot produce, any fundamental qualitative change. Even while the CC explains that capitalist relations have developed in certain regions of agriculture and has devised separate programmes for those areas, the CBB document itself states that these changes have since spread nationwide and become dominant. Yet, it insists that there is and will be no change in the principal contradiction. This is untenable - a clear contradiction. Therefore, as in the past, we cannot continue to pursue the path of protracted people's war to seize power region by region. We must formulate an Indian revolutionary path suited to our country's specific conditions - not the Chinese path, not the Russian model.

This para from Mallojula Venugopal's letter of August 22, accurately captures the ideology guiding him and the thrust of his capitulation. Moreover, it also reveals the method that inevitably accompanies them. Take a closer look at the first two sentences. Marxism teaches that quantitative changes 'lead' to qualitative change. Qualitative change takes place through a leap. This comes about at a certain juncture of the process of quantitative change. It doesn't say quantitative change 'indicates' qualitative change. The capitulator surely knows this. So why is he carrying out this sleight with words? Is it an 'innocent' error? The next sentence gives the answer. "Every quantitative shift reflects a transformation in quality." Note the words 'indicates' and 'every'. They are deployed quite consciously. If all quantitative changes indicate that qualitative change has taken place, if ev-

ery quantitative shift means qualitative change, what remains of leap? Nothing. It has no role. The capitulator's philosophy thus eliminates the role of revolution in social transformation. It lays the groundwork for what follows.

The CPI (Maoist) document on Mode of Production (MOP), as seen in the public domain, does acknowledge the growth of capitalist relations in the country, of a particular type. Whatever that may be, does this growth indicate a 'fundamental qualitative change'? Will this growth cause this sort of a change? The document clearly rules this out. And that upsets the capitulator. According to his philosophy such change must have taken place. It would be more accurate to say—he needs it to justify his shameful surrender, his abandoning the revolutionary path. Following his convoluted logic, he proceeds to demand that the understanding on principle contradiction should be changed. Further, the path of protracted people's war itself should be abandoned. Thus he ends up with that worn out false thesis, 'neither Chinese nor Russian', touted by revisionists ever since the betrayal of the Telangana armed struggle.

Let us see what the MOP document says. While noting various changes that have taken place in the country's economy, it stated:

Semi-feudal relations are continuing in new forms... if we see how feudal hegemony yet continues in the economic, social and political sectors and superstructure we understand that it is a change in form but not content...During the globalisation period, the old and the new feudal forces of the dominant castes in the rural areas were the social prop in every step that the state took up in the interests of imperialism and comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie... These old and new feudal forces directly exploit the oppressed people in many ways through wage exploitation, exploitation of rent, high interests, maintenance of paddy go-downs, business and other such things...The landlords yet extract surplus in a large scale through rent, interest, bonded labour, semi-bonded labour, neo-bonded labour and other such forms. For the past three decades of globalisation, bonded labour did not disappear in places of modern agricultural methods but is continuing in various forms...On the whole imperialism is unleashing control on social, economic, political, cultural and all the sectors on the semi-feudal base in the country historically and in the present phase of globalisation...All the modern agricultural methods said to be capitalist in several areas of our country are in fact dependent. Foreign MNCs and domestic comprador corporate companies that collabo-

rated with the local new landlord forces constituted with the government and non-government systems possess hegemony on the modern agricultural methods and on the entire mode of production. Therefore those only serve the interests of the foreign MNCs, the domestic “corporate companies and the big landlords that collaborated with them. Land question, tenancy, displacement and the question of related sectors of agriculture show the intensity of agrarian crisis in the country. As a result the forces of production are being destroyed. Growth in economy came to a standstill. This is the result of the old semi-feudal relations. Revolution means to break these chains...As per the changes in the past seven decades, it is undoubted that Indian economy is neither capitalist nor in the path of transformation into a capitalist society, that there is no such democratic trend in the country and that on the contrary semi-feudal relations relatively weakened. Land question is still the main question in the vast rural areas and revolutionary land reforms on the basis of land to the tiller is yet the most important and relevant issue.

Evidently, the document does not suggest, even remotely, that capitalist relations have developed. It was pointing to distorted capitalist relations, associated with continuing semi-feudalism. The document on comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie (CBB) is not available in the public domain. Therefore we cannot directly verify the claim the capitulator makes about it. But certain things can be safely concluded. It must have been based on the analysis made about the mode of production as a whole in the MOP document. It would not have presented a view contradicting this analysis. After all, the character of a ruling class cannot be understood in separation from the mode of production existing in a society. As for the matter of the CBB being dominant, first of all that relates to the relation between the two ruling classes, the CBB and the big landlords. It does not mean that capitalist relations are dominating. Secondly, this assessment about the CBB is not something new. It was seen in the Strategy and Tactics document—“In the alliance of comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie and big landlord class, the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie plays the leading role.

Now about the principal contradiction. Let us, for the sake of argument, accept the capitulator’s demand that the contradiction between feudalism and the broad masses can no longer be considered principal. Let us assume that either the one between the CBB and the broad masses, or between the alliance of imperialism, CBB and feudalism and the broad

masses is principal. But will this necessarily indicate "...we cannot continue to pursue the path of protracted people's war to seize power region by region." The answer is NO. This can be understood without going into all the factors that make the path of protracted people's war (PPW) necessary in our conditions. Did the Chinese communist party leave the path of PPW when the principle contradiction changed during the Japanese imperialists' invasion? During most of the Vietnamese national liberation war the principal contradiction was between imperialism and the broad masses. But was the path anything other than PPW? Obviously, one cannot make a simplistic equation between the path of revolution and the principal contradiction. There are many other important factors, the main force of revolution for example. No doubt the path of PPW must be developed in accordance with changes that have taken place—in society, in the capabilities of the ruling classes and imperialism, in technology and so on. But that is totally different from the plea made by the capitulators to abandon PPW altogether.

It can't be the case that the capitulator is unaware of all these things. He must have been a key participant in the study and analysis, the drafting, of all the key documents. But he can't be burdened by all of that now. He is in a hurry. Desperate to jump into the parliamentary pigsty, taking the lead from the betrayers of the Telangana armed struggle. Hence the show of giving up weapons won with the blood of martyrs and posing with the Constitution. Therefore, without the slightest hesitation, he confounds 'initiating peace talks' with 'laying down arms'. With this sleight of words he stoops to the low of slandering comrade Basavaraj, claiming that he too had decided to lay down arms. Thus he seeks to reduce the martyrdom of the comrade and his companions to a meaningless, foolhardy, gesture. Contrary to his despicable bid, their heroic resistance against a vastly superior force, holding high the crimson banner of communism and setting a glorious example of self-sacrifice, will forever continue to inspire the people as they march forward along the path hewn by Naxalbari.

The Great Betrayal of Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao: A Result of Political Bankruptcy

-Vimal

1

The month of October has given birth to two great revolutions in history. The Russian Revolution of 1917 achieved victory in October, and seventy six years ago, on October 1, 1949, Comrade Mao proclaimed, with the message “The Chinese people have stood up”, that China had been liberated from centuries of imperialism, comprador bourgeoisie, and landlord classes.

Former CPI Maoist Politburo member Venugopal alias Sonu, and Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee member Satish alias Vasudeva Rao, chose the same month for their surrender. On October 14, with sixty people carrying firearms, led by Venugopal surrendered before the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, both enjoying bonhomie. Two days later, Satish, along with nearly three hundred people in Chhattisgarh, with more than two hundred arms, also surrendered. Under police protection, these two leaders are continuing their campaign to induce further surrenders.

The central government, declaring that it would make India Maoist free by 31 March 2026, began Operation Kagar, “the final war”, in January 2024 with the intention of intensifying the ongoing conflict. Large scale deployment of forces, intensification of military campaigns of cordon and eliminate, expansion of carpet security camps, firing indiscriminately from deep forest military camps to terrorise the people, mass arrests, detaining large numbers of civilians for months in military camps, suppressing all peaceful mass struggles, and banning people’s organisations, all formed part of this operation.

Operation Kagar Begins with the Killing of an Infant

The brutalities of Operation Kagar began with the killing of an infant, Mangli, in Muttuvendi village of Bijapur district. In the same attack, five other villagers also lost their lives due to police firing. Over these twenty two months, nearly seven hundred people, including Party leaders and ordinary civilians, have been killed. Among them were nine Central Committee members, including the General Secretary, Comrade Basavaraju. Seventeen State Committee members were also among the dead. Latest was the brutal murder of Com. Hidma (45), the youngest Central Committee member of the CPI (Maoist) was caught in Vijayawada and killed in cold blood on November 18th in a fake encounter in the forests of Alluri Sitaramaraju district, Andhra Pradesh. Such heavy losses to the leadership of a revolutionary party, within such a short span, can be compared to the setback suffered in Turkey in 2005. In a military attack by the Turkish army, during an aerial strike while members of TKP/ML leadership were travelling for an enlarged Central Committee meeting in preparation for their Second Congress, the General Secretary, Kaypakkaya Kanger, and five other Central Committee members were killed, totalling seventeen martyrs in that assault.

Massacres amidst the Talk of Peace Negotiations

As Operation Kagar's atrocities against ordinary Adivasis intensified, civil society in the Telugu states appealed in late March for both the government and the Maoists to establish peace. The Maoist Party responded immediately. In a letter, spokesperson Abhay accepted the appeal for peace negotiations put forward by civil society and urged the government to create a conducive environment. The Party declared a halt to armed actions from its side. The Telangana Committee unilaterally declared a ceasefire. The Telangana government reacted positively.

Even as civil society was campaigning for peace negotiations, and proposals were taking shape, the central government launched Operation Karregutta, an unprecedented mobilisation of nearly twenty thousand security personnel, and conducted a surround and eliminate campaign for about twenty one days during April and May. In that revolutionary

suppression campaign, thirty six cadres became martyrs. A month later, in another massive assault in the Maad area, in the Gundekot region, between May 17th and 21st, involving nearly twenty thousand personnel, thirty eight cadres, including Comrade Basavaraju, were martyred. According to the guerrillas who escaped the attack, Comrade Basavaraju, who was severely ill, was captured and shot dead.

4

From Peace Talks' Proposal to a "Temporary Suspension of Armed Struggle": Beginning of Venugopal's Countdown to Capitulation

From April 2025, announcements regarding peace talks from the Maoist Party Central Committee began to come through Venugopal. According to him, these had the approval of the General Secretary. After Basavaraju's martyrdom, the proposal for peace talks, which was acceptable to all, including a ceasefire, was diverted by Venugopal. Abruptly, in August, he unilaterally called for a temporary halt of armed struggle. Venugopal did not hesitate to take this decision even at the risk of splitting the Maoist Party.

Let us consider some background to this development.

Venugopal's closest associate, Giridhar, a former DKSZC member, surrendered in June 2024. On 1 January 2025, under the leadership of Venugopal's wife, Tara, ten others surrendered with arms before Fadnavis, CM, and Maharashtra. Speaking at the surrender meeting, Fadnavis called upon the group to persuade others to surrender as well. During the meeting, he said that Tara's surrender was a turning point, a game changer, to end the Maoist movement in Maharashtra. He even stated in January that he had information that "Venugopal will come within six months".

Just two days after Basavaraju was martyred, reports emerged that Venugopal, along with his group, was preparing to surrender soon before the Gadchiroli police. Within five months, Venugopal made this entirely true. In another speech, Fadnavis said that through certain intermediaries, and via secret negotiations in the previous two months, made this surrender possible. It is not difficult to guess who those intermediaries were.

In fact, ever since Tara surrendered, it has been widely known that she played a key role in Venugopal's surrender. It is no surprise that Giridhar, a close associate of Venugopal, and Yaseen, who surrendered in 2024 and

is now working at Lloyd Metals Company in Gadchiroli, as well as his wife Anju, who works in the police rehabilitation camp, Gadchiroli, “educating” surrendered Maoists, acted as intermediaries in these secret negotiations.

At the very meeting where Venugopal surrendered, the head of Lloyd Metals, a company with an annual revenue of seven thousand crore rupees, offered to appoint him as the company’s ambassador. Oh! Splendid! What does it indicate when a person who once fought alongside the Adivasis of Surjagad, Gadchiroli, against the operations of Lloyd Metals¹, is now being proposed as the ambassador for that very company?

Prabhakaran, the Managing Director of LMEL, said: “If a leader like Bhupati, that is Venugopal, returns to the mainstream of public life, and if we make him a brand ambassador, it may draw the remaining Naxalites too onto the same path.”²

Across the world, there are many experiences demonstrating how the system absorbs leaders once they come back into the mainstream. Writing about leftist intellectuals, James Petras portrayed, with remarkable insight, how intellectuals who yielded to authoritarian regimes and returned to the “mainstream” became corrupted. His article *Metamorphosis of Latin American Intellectuals*³ captures this vividly.

In the light of all these developments, whatever the future brings, it is already clear what ‘Sadhana’⁴, the author of novel *Rago*⁵ will become. Yaseen, his disciple who surrendered in Gadchiroli in 2024 and who is now an employee of the Lloyd Company, said the following to The Indian Express. “Sonu, that is Venugopal, in fact, functions as an ideological counter to the extremist left.”⁶

Could we not already understand the role that Venugopal is going to play in the coming period?

The efforts that Venugopal had been making with the government for his surrender even before the Maoist Party General Secretary became a martyr, became fruitful by October. By ensuring that his wife surrendered first, bargaining through her, giving the assurance that he would orchestrate the surrender of at least five hundred people with arms. And, after the martyrdom of Basavaraju, by engaging in deliberations with Satish, creating the impression that Comrade Basavaraju had also agreed to an armed surrender, masking their own weaknesses with ideological colouring,

deceiving the cadres, and contributing their share to the government's celebrations that the state has been now very close to the success of Operation Kagar, Venugopal and Satish culminated their planned surrender in October.

In any war, desertions occur. And in any revolutionary movements, surrenders and betrayals are nothing new. In the history of the Communist Party of India, in 1951 the party leadership itself withdrew the struggle and placed the weapons before the government. Everyone knows what the subsequent history of that leadership was. After that historical betrayal, it took sixteen years for the revolutionary movement to re emerge from revisionism. In the meantime, the Communist Party sank fully into the quagmire of the parliamentary path.

Joining a revolutionary movement is voluntary, and leaving it is equally voluntary. But one should not betray the movement in which one has worked for so long.

This is precisely the betrayal committed by Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao, just as Chang Kuo Tao's case did during the China's Long March.

How should we describe Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao's mass surrender with arms? What name should we give it for secretly negotiating with the enemy from within the party without an inkling to the General Secretary? At a time when the party had formally proposed peace talks to the government, what should we call the act of sabotaging those peace efforts, and, without letting anyone in the party know, attempting to organise a mass surrender like "making hay while sun shines"? Carrying the policy of "Temporary Withdrawal of the Armed Struggle" that were never placed before the higher committee, that were never approved by it, and pushing them downwards, and, in the name of protecting cadres, in the name of stopping repression on the people, in the name of changing conditions, handing over the arms which were painstakingly acquired through struggle, and, more importantly, performing the last rites of the revolutionary path itself- what kind of politics is this, if not capitulation of the highest order?

Marxism teaches honesty. Materialism demands that facts be stated plainly. Dialectics insists that class struggle must not be abandoned.

Did Venugopal really surrender for the sake of the people or the cadres? Or did he surrender because he believed that Operation Kagar

would anyway swallow the entire movement and himself along with it? Why did he and Satish ask the government to halt operations for a month? Was it not to implement the plans they had already made, although they knew those were only personal opinions? Was it not to fulfil the government's demand that their personal surrender would be accepted only if it was accompanied by large scale surrenders, hence the promise to produce at least five hundred people? Taking advantage of Comrade Basavaraju's martyrdom, telling the blatant lie that Basavaraju himself had agreed to giving up arms, deceiving cadres, and unilaterally calling for a temporary suspension of armed struggle, under what Marxist organisational principle was this done? If they invoke the General Secretary to justify a temporary halt to armed struggle, did he ever say to surrender with arms? Did he ask them to kneel before the enemy? Did he renounce the path of protracted people's war? Should so many people be used as a protective shield for personal weakness? Should dialectics be twisted to attach a philosophical veneer to political bankruptcy?

Are not the ordinary Adivasi people far better than this? They work in the movement, if they cannot continue they surrender, if the police send them to jail they go. The Venugopal–Vasudeva Rao duo, however, put forward false theories and deceive the masses.

The call for surrender under the name “temporary suspension of armed struggle” is nothing but a euphemism for capitulation.

What lies ahead for Rago? What reply would Sadhana now give to the question Balagopal once raised⁷? Will he say that the woman he modelled his novel's protagonist upon was martyred⁸, and that the writer betrayed her ideals and led a surrender? Will Venugopal advise all the remaining Ragos should follow the path of Taras, and in that process offer his own phone number and Vasudeva Rao's phone number?

The Telangana State Committee criticised Venugopal's declaration announcing the temporary halt of armed struggle¹⁰. It stated plainly that the declaration represented only his personal opinion and did not reflect the position of the entire party. What was wrong in that? Already engaged in secret negotiations, Venugopal raged in anger.

He said: *“It is not as if he is unaware that, confined to his own state, he must express his view on my statement. I specifically requested that within my declaration.”*¹¹

Venugopal is telling the Telangana Committee to confine itself to its own state. Fine. But then, according to which organisational principles did he select 15 August, a date that would give even greater pleasure to the ruling classes, to announce the temporary withdrawal of armed struggle? Which committee gave him this authority? Under which organisational principle do his public appeals that repudiate the party's strategy and revolutionary line fall? While engaged in secret negotiations with the government, while entirely diluting the call for peace talks, while first issuing the call and then frightening the cadres and injecting his defeatism into them, and ultimately leading them to surrender their arms before the government, how can the Telangana Committee simply offering its opinion be considered wrong?

Venugopal said: *"If the comrade had read the 22-page appeal¹² to the cadre that I issued in Telugu for internal circulation within the party, and if he had given his valuable opinion on it, it would have been very useful to our CC and the party. I must make it clear in advance that everything I wrote in that 22-page appeal was already contained in the circular released by our PB¹³ in August 2024."*

Let us assume for a moment that everything Venugopal wrote was indeed in the party circular. What were the measures prescribed by the party to change those conditions? Was it the "temporary cessation of armed struggle" proposed by him? If that were truly be the case, the party would have announced it as a decision, would it not? Going further, how are we to describe Venugopal's descent into collective armed surrender, from "temporary cessation of armed struggle" to that position, within merely two months, driven by "guilt"? Was this too the unanimous position of the party?

He said: *"I once again appeal to comrade Jagan (Spokesperson of Telangana State Committee) that the long-term protracted people's war path aimed at seizing political power region by region is no longer suitable to the conditions of our country. Many revolutionary movement areas in the country, including Telangana, have already demonstrated this. Your state committee secretary and the CCMs guiding you recognised this matter as early as 2020. You may ascertain this from them."*

Venugopal has finally come to the real point. The core issue for him is the path of protracted people's war.

Maoist leader Venugopal's doubts are fundamentally about the revolutionary line itself

Let us set aside for a moment whether the protracted people's war line is correct or incorrect. Let us focus on the phrase "no longer". According to him, it was correct earlier. The problem for him lies only in the present. Why? Because the conditions of our country have changed. And not only have that, several revolutionary regions across the country, including Telangana, demonstrated this unsuitability.

He says: "*Your state committee secretary and the CCMs guiding you already recognised this in 2020.*" A fine suggestion. Since the secret internal matters of the party are not accessible to outsiders, let us accept his statement as true. Even if those leaders recognised it in 2020 and even if they had differing views, they did not violate organisational principles by publicly announcing them the way Venugopal did. What would happen if everyone, like him, chose to openly discuss in an underground revolutionary party?

After the Andhra Thesis was rejected in 1948, it took nearly two decades for the protracted people's war line to re-enter the agenda. Revisionists and neo-revisionists loudly proclaimed that it was "unsuited to the conditions of our country". They advanced the argument of a "strong state". They spoke about the presence of legislatures. Naxalbari shattered the backbone of those revisionist arguments. It heralded the protracted people's war line. Even though the Naxalbari struggle, like the Paris Commune, was soon suppressed, armed peasant struggles erupted in many parts of the country.

After the setback at Naxalbari, efforts to rebuild the revolutionary movement were made across regions. The movement revived in Bihar and Jharkhand. It resurged in the Telugu states. There were those who doubted whether it could ever emerge in Bengal after the set back of Naxalbari. Even if delayed, the martyr Kishanji demonstrated that it was possible. With the Lalgarh movement, the people's war in Bengal began. That was a major breakthrough.

The Naxalbari line is nothing but the line of protracted people's war. Upholding that line, People's War, Party Unity, and MCC united to form CPI (Maoist). They built people's guerrilla forces, widely organised

guerrilla struggles, created guerrilla zones, established guerrilla bases, and built primary organs of revolutionary people's power. The achievements of the Maoist Party have been listed by Venugopal himself in his letters. He wrote: "Following the party's document 'Strategy and Tactics', we expanded the revolutionary movement to many regions of the country. We organised many oppressed sections of society. We mobilised the working people in urban areas, plains, and forest regions. Following the line of protracted people's war, the party tirelessly strove to build the revolutionary movement. After the setback of Naxalbari, we not only rebuilt and achieved successes that no revolutionary party in the country had achieved but also united our once-splintered party and the genuine revolutionaries in the country. We strove intensely to unite revolutionary parties and forces across South Asia and succeeded. The long-standing militant struggles and sacrifices of oppressed people under our party's leadership earned strong recognition from Maoist and revolutionary parties worldwide. On that basis, our efforts won their confidence and achieved positive results, as is evident from our practice."

Not only did it outline how an alternative model to the semi colonial, semi feudal system would look, it also placed before the people the contours of New Democracy by building united fronts against imperialist, feudal and big capitalist forces, and by demonstrating these through the practice of struggle. In this process, it carried out numerous experiments. While remaining firm and unwavering on revolutionary strategy, it acted creatively and flexibly with respect to tactics, and it strove to unite with all revolutionary parties practicing the line of protracted people's war. It succeeded in that effort.

Whatever achievements Venugopal claims the party and the people accomplished across the country, he acknowledges that all these were grounded entirely in the strategy and tactics the party had followed until now. If so, it must be stated clearly that those very strategy and tactics have now outlived their time. More than that, his contention is that because the conditions of the country and times have changed, the line of protracted people's war is no longer viable. What alternative line he proposes is unclear even to himself. Therefore his logic is simply that, "from now on", this path will not work.

"Our party's achievements may be great, but the mistakes we committed have

been even more serious, and as a result we have been unable to build, in any part of the country, a relatively stable and strong organised revolutionary movement. This is a bitter truth."

Leaving aside dates and timelines, the revolutionary movement has moved from a difficult situation into a severe setback. This has been continuing for a long time. It is difficult to even say how long. How did the revolutionary movement assess this situation? According to the statements released by the Central Committee, in 2020 it reviewed the party's practice from the previous party conference to the present. In February 2024, it announced that the Politburo had issued another circular reviewing the past three years of work.

According to Venugopal, mistakes of left deviation, in fact the party's own self created errors, are solely responsible for the movement reaching this state. The Central Committee, in its statement, says: "Along with the subjective errors committed by the party, the sustained counter revolutionary offensive and widespread war waged for decades by the strong and powerful Indian state have also been responsible for this situation. This is the conclusion the party reached, which he, Venugopal, rejects." His charge is that the Central Committee is underestimating the enemy. Now he is downplaying the enemy's offensive while intensifying his attack on the so called "left deviationist" line within the party.

When exactly did this enlightenment dawn on Venugopal? Since when did the path of the Indian revolution become erroneous in his eyes? In fact, even such thinking is not wrong in itself. Clashes between ideas and lines are inevitable. But he must explain when he presented an alternate document within the revolutionary party opposing what he now calls the "left deviationist line". Had he presented such criticism at the correct time, and guided the party as a whole towards the correct path, as comrade KS did in the past, the party would not have reached this setback, would it? Why did he not do it?

Had there been any internal history of Venugopal fighting against the line of protracted people's war, arguing that it was unsuitable for the conditions of the country and times, such a clash of lines would have helped advance the movement. A synthesis emerging from that struggle would have eliminated weaknesses and propelled the movement forward. After the Naxalbari setback, by upholding the correct strategy and

identifying the left deviationist errors in tactics, the movement advanced in the Telugu states. It became a benchmark for movements in other regions. This is what synthesis means, is it not? Preserving what is correct, correcting what is wrong, rectifying even the errors within the correct line, absorbing whatever elements from incorrect lines may still be useful for the development of the movement, and elevating the line to a higher stage.

6

The Principal Contradiction Has Changed – Therefore, Protracted People’s War Is No Longer Valid

It is not merely a change in tactics that Venugopal is asking for. He is insisting on rewriting the very **strategic line** of Protracted People’s War. His argument is that the **principal contradiction itself has changed**. According to him, the semi-feudal system today is only a *basic* contradiction but not the *principal* contradiction. The comprador, bureaucratic big bourgeoisie has become the principal contradiction.

In his own words:

“In the 2007 Party Unity Congress, the majority decided that neither of the two ruling classes could be called the principal one and that both had equal roles. The present document rejects that decision and clarifies the changed role of the CBB. Therefore, since the CBB has become the leading force among the exploiting classes, and since it has become the main conduit of imperialist exploitation and has been included among the fundamental contradictions, we must change the principal contradiction we have been stating till now. Otherwise, writing this document would be only for discussion’s sake.”

(pp., Sonu August Appeal to Cadres)

Venugopal further states:

*“Our revolutionary practice must directly confront the intensifying corporatisation (finance capital) in the country. This means strengthening mass struggles against the finance-capital relations that have grown in India. The newly drafted document analyses the strengthened role of the CBB, synthesises its leadership role among India’s ruling classes, and underlines its position as the main vehicle of imperialist plunder. It stresses fighting finance capital. Yet, the **party hesitates to make foundational changes regarding the principal contradiction**. Consider how contradictory this position is.”* (Emphasis added)

Let us assume, for argument's sake, that the principal contradiction *has* changed. If so, does the path of Protracted People's War (PPW) change?

Are you Indian detachment of Trotskyists' International? I assume you are not. You are not arguing that India has become a fully independent capitalist country. If so, how do you intend to wage the liberation struggle against the comprador, bureaucratic bourgeoisie and international finance capital? By following the path of PPW? Or through armed insurrection? Or by adapting Prachanda's so-called "Fusion Theory" (which martyr Azad described as "Confusion Theory")?¹⁴

A retreat also must be strategic. It cannot be chaotic. That applies both in military matters and ideological matters. Your collective armed surrender is not a military retreat; it is an abandonment without an alternative revolutionary strategy. Renouncing an existing revolutionary line without proposing a viable replacement is nothing but ideological bankruptcy- indeed, liquidationism. It demobilises the party, paralyses the army, and pushes revolutionary masses and sympathisers into despair and confusion.

Venugopal, who has read Maoist party documents and Mao's writings meticulously, gets exposed how dangerous opportunism becomes when one ties the principal contradiction to the revolutionary path. He continues to recognise India as a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country. According to Maoism, PPW is the correct revolutionary path for countries of this type. If he now openly declares that he no longer accepts Maoism, that would at least be ideologically consistent. Or, if he agrees with the domestic Trotskyists that India has already become an independent capitalist country and therefore armed insurrection is the revolutionary path, that too would be consistent. (In reality, these people will never organise an insurrection. Have you ever seen them attempt anything of that sort?)

Let us quote him again:

"At least now, we must bid farewell to the dogmatic practice of repeating 'Protracted People's War' and 'armed struggle' without regard for changing conditions and space-time factors, or of clinging to Chinese or Russian paths. The only remaining duty before the party is to adopt a path appropriate to India's concrete conditions and make the Indian revolution victorious."

From this, one cannot help but suspect that Venugopal no longer believes even in the necessity of armed struggle ¹⁵. In 2010, Prachanda insisted that his theoretical contribution to the Nepali movement be called the “Prachanda Path”. Now Venugopal wants a path suited to India’s conditions. So, we are all expected to wait in limbo for the revelation of the ‘Venugopal Path’.

The central question of any revolution is the seizure of state power. How will the proletariat seize power from the bourgeoisie? There is no route other than armed struggle. Bernstein’s evolutionary socialism, Khrushchev’s peaceful transition, and parliamentary paths to socialism are all class-collaborationist politics. They contradict the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the state.

How did the Russian proletariat seize power? The model before it was the way the European bourgeoisie had dethroned feudal authority. First seize the key centres of power; then extend control to the rest. Even barricade struggles- originally forms of bourgeois rebellions- were further developed by the proletariat. In the Moscow uprising of 1905, they were used effectively. Urban guerrilla warfare and general strikes were also important in 1905. In 1917, unlike 1905, the Tsar fell quickly, the Kerensky government that followed was weak and unpopular, the army was demoralised by war, and within eight months the government collapsed. The Bolsheviks, through the Red Guards, carried out an *armed insurrection* to seize power.

In capitalist countries, such insurrectionary tactics became the model form of revolutionary path.

The Chinese Communist Party too initially attempted general insurrection. Only after repeated failures did the path of PPW emerge from practical experience. Initially, they believed this path applied only to China. But later, Maoism established that PPW is the correct revolutionary strategy for colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Japan invaded China in 1933. The Communist Party sought to transform the internal civil war (ongoing since 1927) into a national war against Japanese imperialism. From 1936 onward, these efforts succeeded. Even though the *principal contradiction* changed during the national-revolutionary phase, the PPW line remained unchanged. It did not shift to

insurrection or any other “new path.” The same applies to Vietnam and to Cambodia and Laos in Indochina. None of them abandoned PPW.

Therefore, even if, as Venugopal claims, the principal contradiction in India has changed, it does not require a change in the revolutionary path. If the comprador bourgeoisie- acting as the main vehicle of imperialism- becomes the principal contradiction, the revolution becomes a national revolution. In that case too, the path remains PPW, as in China and Vietnam. Only if India had genuinely become an independent capitalist country would the scenario differ. Venugopal himself does not say that. He is simply disoriented by the defeat of the movement.

This is nothing but changing the *direction* without changing the *colour*.

When we say “China’s path is our path,” the essential principle is that our revolutionary path is not armed insurrection but Protracted People’s War. This is the core and universal aspect. Its concrete application, however, must correspond to India’s specific space-time conditions. In China, the Party already had an armed force under its influence. Here, the people’s army has to be built. India has a strong centralised state and consolidated armed forces. In China, central authority became weak; in reality, there were two governments: the Japanese-puppet Wang Jingwei regime in Nanjing and the Chiang Kai-shek government in Chongqing. Japan’s attempt to colonise China facilitated the Chinese revolution. The world war situation and the existence of socialist Russia accelerated the transition of PPW from defeats to victories. Guerrilla zones soon developed into liberated areas.

In India, by contrast, not all regions are favourable for guerrilla zones; they may have to exist for a longer durations. The Maoist Party is very clear that liberated areas will emerge only in the final stages, except under exceptional circumstances. In a revolution that proceeds in cycles- defeat, victory, defeat, victory- some temporary defeats may last longer.

Given all this, when Venugopal now claims that the Party never understood these principles, one can only imagine how truthful he is being.

No revolutionary party following Maoism believes that events will unfold “exactly” as in China. There is complete awareness that each contradiction must be resolved concretely. But should we therefore reject the entire strategic generalisation of PPW altogether? Should we throw the baby with the bath water?

Venugopal's Objections to the Ceasefire

The Telangana Committee rejected Venugopal's call for a temporary suspension of armed struggle. It stated that the call reflected only Venugopal's personal opinion. Naturally, Venugopal reacted sharply.

He said:

“Even now, at least recognise this. You requested the Telangana government for a six-month ceasefire. That period is about to end. After that, and after that, and after that, you imagine for yourselves how long this will go on. You cannot deny that during the ceasefire period the police will remain extremely vigilant regarding our revolutionary activity. Therefore, revolutionaries must act prudently to avoid unnecessary losses.”

Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao demonstrated this so-called prudence in practice. Venugopal laments that the Telangana Committee has not yet acquired such prudence. First, peace talks, then temporary suspension of armed struggle, and finally collective armed surrender. This is the sequence of developments produced by the prudence of Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao. No one can predict how long a ceasefire may last. If possible, every well-wisher of the revolutionary movement would prefer attempts toward a ceasefire rather than collective armed surrender.

The Indian government has maintained a ceasefire with the Naga fighters for decades. Their weapons have not been confiscated. The Communist Party of the Philippines has been in negotiations for decades without any ceasefire, with guerrilla warfare continuing simultaneously. The form of peace talks varies according to circumstances. At a moment when public opinion was gathering momentum in favour of peace talks, Venugopal, without facilitating wider discussion within the Party, announced a temporary suspension of armed struggle on August 15, and within two months began to become restless to go for the collective surrender. This helped the central government throw the peace process into the dustbin. Had public opinion strengthened further, no one can say what form the peace talks might have taken. Now, however, the possibilities have almost vanished.

Even so, alongside the Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao duo who have split the Maoist Party, some of the previously surrendered leaders, who

now see disarming the Maoist Party as their principal mission, may join the so-called peace process under the guidance of the central government. Or, if Venugopal forms a new communist party, the government may invite that party for peace talks. Or perhaps Venugopal, having already found his peace, may avoid all such processes altogether.

Venugopal states:

“In my statement, I made it very clear that we wished to continue the peace talks initiated by our Party’s General Secretary, the martyr Comrade Namballa Kesavarao. I, along with several comrades, wanted to carry them forward. Comrade Rupesh was one among them. Therefore, it goes without saying that this was not a unanimous decision of the entire Party, and Jagan need not point it out separately.”

Once the Party agreed to peace talks, the Telangana Committee opted for a ceasefire to create a conducive environment. Why did Venugopal object to that? At a time when the entire civil society was making enormous efforts to advance the peace process, when there was positive response within and outside the country, why did you suddenly turn towards collective armed surrender, and that too unilaterally? One rule for you, and another for the Telangana Committee? Moreover, you unilaterally announced rejection of Protracted People’s War, admission of defeat, and collective armed surrender. In a clandestine Party, can such sweeping changes be made merely through email exchanges and telephone conversations?

According to your formulation of surrender, let us give it a name, ‘Temporary Suspension of Armed Struggle’, all people’s armed forces, wherever they are, regardless of where the leadership is located, and even political prisoners in jails, all must follow your line. The army would no longer be necessary, and the underground Party would not be necessary either. Let us build a mass base through legal struggles permitted under the Constitution. If the political prisoners and the people accept your line, you would stand as guarantor for their release. If they do not accept your line, you would abandon them. Yes, it is convenient to forget the demand for unconditional release of political prisoners. Those who do not agree with your line would be exposed openly before the enemy.

You have always misconceived Party’s emphasis on militarisation, yet you failed to build impregnable structures against the enemy. Having so seriously misjudged the military question, why did you now embark

upon such manoeuvres? Is it the panic created by the approaching deadline announced by the Honourable Amit Shah? After accepting defeat, such panic is natural. Your nervousness is understandable.

8

Peace Talks and Disarmament

Venugopal argues that the government insists on disarmament, that peace talks cannot proceed without it, and that for this reason they had opposed the very idea of peace negotiations. Yet, when the Telangana Committee unilaterally issued a statement in favour of peace talks, they were compelled to accept it. In his words:

“In November 2024, in the presence of the General Secretary, some of us in the Central Committee discussed the issue of peace talks and concluded that the government would not agree to negotiations without disarmament, and therefore we should no longer think about peace talks. However, contrary to this, the CC members available with you sent an opinion in March 2025 to the Telangana peace interlocutors stating ‘we are ready for peace talks’. Since the government repeatedly emphasised disarmament, even the few available CC members should have taken a clear decision and sent a statement accordingly. Because that was not done, Comrades Basavaraju and Rupesh, following that earlier statement, consulted each other and were compelled to release announcements on peace talks. Comrade Jagan must ascertain from his concerned comrades that all this was contrary to the November 2024 understanding. Even so, the Party viewed their initiative as arising from the gravity of the situation, and my present statement must be understood as part of that continuum. If he lacks clarity on developments within the CC, he should first learn the facts and, if needed, send his position to the CC. Although he had every opportunity, he did nothing and instead issued statements of this kind. This is unfortunate.”

Venugopal says: *“We concluded that since the government is unwilling to negotiate without disarmament, we should no longer consider peace talks.”* This implies that peace talks should not be held on the condition of disarmament. Yet when a proposal for peace talks emerged, he agreed to it. That was appropriate. But why must agreeing to peace talks be equated with compulsory disarmament? It is as though he is asking us to believe that the temporary suspension of armed struggle was undertaken solely for the sake of peace talks. Venugopal even claims that it was the martyred General Secretary, Basavaraju, who accepted disarmament.

He says:

“Comrade Basavaraju did not consider disarmament merely as a means of saving his own life. Even if some of you now judge his proposal as wrong, that would be purely your personal opinion.” He adds further: “Ask the CC members who guide you whether I made this announcement about suspending armed struggle out of self-interest. If Basavaraju acted out of self-interest, assume that I too acted out of self-interest. Our Party’s mistake lies in failing to adjust to changing conditions. You should at least recognise this now.”

Can you deny what General Secretary Basavaraju himself wrote about disarmament, Venugopal? The Central Committee of the CPI (Maoist) stated unequivocally in its public declaration of 5 November:

“They are claiming that before his martyrdom, our Party’s General Secretary Comrade Namballa Kesava Rao said that we should give up arms and agree to peace talks. This is completely false. These are distortions spread by Sonu and Satish.”

The statement continues:

“In fact, martyr Comrade Namballa Kesava Rao wrote letters to Satish clarifying the deficiencies in his understanding regarding peace talks. In these letters, he explained that the Party should never consider disarmament, and even if any such idea ever arose, only the Central Committee could deliberate on it. He reminded that in the history of the world revolutionary movement, whenever severe repression descended, revolutionary parties suffered heavy losses and the people endured immense hardship and calamities. He wrote that the Party in Chile, after abandoning armed struggle and coming overground, became irrelevant. To overcome the losses sustained during the Kagar operations, he emphasised firm implementation of the plans devised by the Central Committee and Politburo in February and August 2024, and also the need to adopt tactics suited to changing conditions in each area. Therefore we state clearly that the idea of relinquishing arms and going for peace talks was never the opinion of Comrade Namballa Kesava Rao.”

Knowing full well that martyr Basavaraju did not agree to disarmament, do you not fear what the cadre will now say about you? Why should you fear? Your objective has already been achieved.

Venugopal is, in reality, opposed to the strategy of the CPI (Maoist). He merely repeats the assertion that India remains semi-colonial and semi-feudal, but he has abandoned Maoism’s central strategic line of protracted

people's war. He vaguely leaves open the idea that a new revolutionary path must be discovered. In truth, he has turned against the very conception of armed struggle. He opportunistically invokes the 1977 call issued by KS. That slogan was adopted to divert the cadre's attention on the annihilation of class enemies as the only form of struggle, and to build a strong mass base for conducting the protracted people's war. It was never a call for disarmament, nor a call to bring the Party overground.

Today, whatever Venugopal may say in words, his underlying understanding is that the revolution has suffered a strategic defeat, like Indonesia. Under the leadership of General Suharto, the Indonesian army massacred five to ten lakh leaders, members, and supporters of the Communist Party between October 1965 and March 1966. In effect, Venugopal's temporary suspension of armed struggle amounts to a permanent cessation of armed struggle. If he had stated that openly, none of the people now following him would have come to his side. He is fully aware of that.

9

Venugopal's Defeatism

Venugopal's surrender is, politically, liquidationism; militarily, it is desertion; organisationally, it is splittism. Philosophically, he has become a victim of a severe form of subjectivism. After assuming that the setback would continue for a long period and subsequently concluding that we had suffered a strategic defeat, he lost the dialectical optimism that transforms defeat into victory. His heart collapsed, and he fell prey to the illusion that the government had already secured victory through Operation Kagaar. Having engaged in indirect negotiations with the government for seven months, and in direct negotiations for the last three months, trampling upon all organisational principles, he surrendered collectively with arms, and- driven by fear for his life- crossed over to the camp of the enemy. While doing so, he maligned the revolutionary path developed for the specific conditions of India through decades of struggle and the blood sacrifice of innumerable martyrs. History will consign Venugopal to its dustbin. This is indeed tragic, but history is always ruthless.

Venugopal claims that the Party and the People's War have already been defeated. Let us see how Lenin taught us to view "defeat" in an

optimistic and dialectical manner, even when the defeat is real. In June 1905, the armed insurrection attempt in Odessa failed. We have all seen the depiction of the Odessa uprising in *The Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925). Lenin wrote:

*Thus, the Russian revolution, too, provides us almost weekly with an amazing wealth of political material for verifying previously-made tactical decisions, and for drawing most instructive lessons with regard to our entire practical activities. Take the Odessa events. **An attempt at insurrection has failed.** A bitter reverse, a severe defeat. ... **Engels once said that defeated armies learn their lessons well.** These splendid words apply in far greater measure to revolutionary armies, whose replacements come from the progressive classes. Until the old, corrupt superstructure, whose putrefaction infects the whole people, is swept away, each new defeat will produce ever new armies of fighters. Regarding the Odessa events we say: **the revolutionary army has been defeated- long live the revolutionary army!** (Emphasis added)¹⁶*

Six months later, in December 1905, the Moscow uprising began. That too was defeated. The Mensheviks argued that the workers should not have taken up arms. What did Lenin say? He stated categorically, without hesitation, that arms should indeed have been used. 1905 and 2025 are undoubtedly different contexts. Yet Lenin did not move from “defeat” to defeatism. Neither Marx, nor Engels, nor Mao ever did this.

The Paris Commune was defeated. How do we evaluate the Paris Commune today? Marx believed that the objective revolutionary situation was not yet favourable for the Paris struggle. But once the struggle began, and even after its defeat, Marx, Engels, and the entire International stood firmly in support of the Commune. Marx never called for withdrawal from armed struggle. The lessons given by Marx and Engels remain invaluable to this day. We continue to commemorate the sacrifices of the Communards.

Between 1927 and 1935, during the Chinese civil war, around 300,000 people- including masses, supporters of the revolution, and activists- were killed. In 1927, during the Kuomintang attack that sought to annihilate the Party in Shanghai, 5,000 comrades were killed. After the Fifth Military Campaign against the Jiangxi Soviet, during the retreat (the Long March, 1934–36), the Red Army of 300,000 was reduced to thirty thousand. Yet the Chinese Party continued to learn from its mistakes and move forward. They did not panic. They did not kneel before the enemy.

The Russian Revolution shook the world. The great Chinese Revolution marked another turning point in the global socialist movement. In the 1970s, the Vietnamese Revolution profoundly inspired a new generation and shook American imperialism. Later, the restoration of capitalism first in Russia and then in China turned both into imperialist powers. After Stalin's death, the Eastern European countries, influenced by Soviet revisionism, collapsed like nine pins one after another in the 1990s. Today, there is no socialist country anywhere in the world. The great revolutionary movement in Nepal succumbed to Prachanda's revisionism. In Peru, the Maoist movement suffered a major setback after Gonzalo's arrest. The Maoist movement in Turkey is also facing severe difficulties. In Bangladesh, the Maoist movement continues to face ups and downs. In the Philippines, the number of guerrilla fronts has declined compared to the past. How should we view all these? With optimism? Dialectical logic is the basis of optimism. Where does optimism come from if one views defeat purely in strategic terms?

Venugopal argues that the movement began declining from 2010 onwards; that we failed to sustain movements anywhere; that unrealistic tasks were adopted; that an ultra-left path was pursued; and that this ultra-left line led to defeat. Another claim he makes is that insufficient importance was given to mass work. He also alleges that military activities were given undue priority and mass work was neglected. According to Venugopal, our own mistakes- not enemy attacks- brought about this defeat. While mouthing a token acceptance of responsibility, he simultaneously accuses the Central Committee. He claims: "***Our tactics were wrong, and our strategy was wrong. Failure to identify the principal contradiction as the contradiction between the comprador-bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the vast masses of the Indian people was both dogmatic and erroneous.***" He further argues that the path of Protracted People's War itself is mistaken; that it is not yet possible to specify what path the Indian revolution should take; that a new path must be formulated in accordance with changed conditions; that guerrilla zones and liberated areas are mere fantasies irrelevant to Indian reality; that we failed to build an underground party; that we neglected legal struggles; and that the task of building liberated areas was imposed by ultra-leftism without recognising that the movement was being harmed by this approach. Thus, according to him, this defeat was caused by all these factors. "*The damage caused by the enemy is less than the damage caused by our own mistakes.*"

He mentioned all these points in his 22-page open letter. He claims to have discussed these in the committees.

The Central Committee, in a statement issued on 5 November, said:

*It is only because they failed to evolve themselves in accordance with the conditions that Sonu and Satish have deviated. For long, they have been suffering from ideological, political, organisational and operational weaknesses. Instead of accepting and rectifying the criticisms being raised by higher, equal, and lower-level committees, they lacked the honesty to correct themselves, and have now reached this state. Moreover, they are accusing the Central Committee. **As a CC member, Sonu bypassed committee discussions and made public- under the guise of an 'Appeal to the People'- his views that the Central Committee had unanimously rejected.** This shows his political decline and opportunism. Had Satish, at the SZC level, taken initiative to implement the ideological, political understanding and tactics given by the Central Committee, it would have benefitted the movement greatly. (Emphasis added)*

It is therefore clear that Sonu did not raise these matters for discussion within his Committee.

10

In all this, Venugopal does not explain when, while being in the midst of the revolution, he began to feel that the path of Protracted People's War was wrong; nor does he clarify what efforts he made, or what internal struggle he undertook, as a party leader, to seek answers to these questions. Public statements by Maoist party indicate that a political-organizational report reviewing the party's entire work from the 2007 Congress up to 2020 was produced. How then did Venugopal suddenly arrive at so many divergent opinions¹⁷? Why did they arise? Did they emerge out of a sense of despair that Operation Kagar would now completely defeat the movement?

The Maoist Party has consistently stated that it has been facing a difficult situation since 2011, and that by 2018 it had suffered a setback. It has also said that although it faced that situation, it was unable to overcome it.

The question facing everyone is this: should we confront the most intense counter-revolutionary campaign courageously, adapt right tactics, and fight on? Or should we suspend the struggle, accept defeat in advance,

and opt for collective armed surrender? “Without a people’s army, the people have nothing” (Mao, *On Coalition Government*, 1945) is the line that divides revolutionaries from revisionists. By severing the dialectical relationship between military work and mass work, and by artificially creating a contradiction between them, Venugopal repeats the very charges that revisionists ordinarily hurl against revolutionary movements- claiming that militarisation has become primary.

Consider the Salwa Judum offensive. Was it not the combined strength of the Party, the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army, the revolutionary mass organisations, and the embryonic Janatana Sarkars at the primary level that defeated Salwa Judum? Could this have been accomplished without the people’s army?

The global economic system is in deep crisis. Yet imperialism imagines that it will continue forever with unprecedented confidence. In the book “*The End of History and the Last Man*”,¹⁸ it is argued that liberal capitalist order- market capitalism- is the final mode of production, implying that socialism has no place in history. The inequality reports themselves reveal how thoroughly monopolised this liberal-capitalist order has become. The top 1 percent hold 43 percent of global wealth; in the United States, 31 percent; in India, 40 percent in 2023. Between 2000 and 2003, the wealth of the top 1 percent in India increased by 62 percent.¹⁹ In a world where inequalities are rising at extreme speed, where is the supposed liberal capitalist order? Only revolution can resolve this monopoly.

How does a revolutionary party that has embraced Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism as a science- both as microscope and telescope- lose its optimism? How did Venugopal lose his?

Metaphysics views the present situation as immutable. Once we slip away from dialectics, tomorrow becomes invisible. If the enemy’s strength is treated as absolute, we drift into despair and pessimism. When the revolutionary situation is favourable on one side, but subjective forces are weakening on the other, the desire to preserve those subjective forces is not wrong; it is justified. In fact, in a Protracted People’s War against a strong enemy, the policy to preserve subjective forces is always present. Losses may increase under enemy superiority; forms of struggle must change; defensive tactics must be adjusted; whole revolutionary areas may need to be vacated.

This setback is not a strategic defeat. Therefore, halting the armed struggle would be tantamount to suicide.

Venugopal, who had accused the Party of failing to function as a clandestine organisation, has now exposed the entire Party and prostrated before the enemy. Claiming “excessive militarisation”, he has derided the very necessity of a people’s army. By creating the false impression that the Party rejects legal struggles, he forgets the limits of such struggles at a time when Brahmanical Hindutva fascist rule is brutally suppressing people laws and even fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution. Has Venugopal forgotten the Party’s long history of organising diverse mass struggles? Decades ago, the state banned the mass organisation formed against displacement. In 2024, the government banned the Adivasis’ “Moolvasi Adhikar Manch”, formed for fighting for basic democratic rights. Many people’s organisations have been banned by the government. Yet the revolutionary movement has never distanced itself from open struggles. It has always demonstrated tactical flexibility.

11

Venugopal’s Philosophical Confusion

“According to philosophy, quantitative changes indicate changes in quality. Every quantitative change reflects a change in quality. Seen in this sense, the party is discussing contradictions by saying that even though capitalist relations have strengthened significantly over the past nearly two hundred years in our country, they have not produced, and will not produce, any fundamental qualitative changes. (Appeal to Cadres, p. 18).”

Quantitative changes can, under certain conditions, lead to qualitative changes. Marxist dialectics never claims that all gradual changes necessarily become qualitative changes. In nature there is orderly evolution. But even though a qualitative change in a thing is the result of quantitative changes, that qualitative transformation is possible only through a leap. If one fails to recognize that leap, then the fact that qualitative changes arise only through evolutionary processes leads to a quantitative-ism. It is precisely this philosophical basis that revisionist Bernstein used to propound his “evolutionary socialism.” Some qualitative changes take very long periods to occur. How long they take depends upon the internal contradictions of a thing and its external contradictions. The transition from primitive communist society to class society took an extremely long period- at least

hundreds of thousands of years. In Europe, the evolution of feudalism into the capitalist system took about a thousand years. How long will any evolution in any particular country take? Astrologers may say. Social scientists do not.

Therefore, to argue that today's distorted capitalist relations have already undergone qualitative transformation, and that semi-feudal relations have, even before any such qualitative transformation, become entirely vestigial, and to thereby change the revolutionary strategy of the country—this would push the party and the revolutionary movement entirely into a rightist deviation.

He says: *“Every quantitative change reflects a change in quality.”* What a profound dialectic indeed!

“Note the words ‘indicates’ and ‘every’. They are deployed quite consciously. If *all* quantitative changes indicate that qualitative change has taken place, if *every* quantitative shift means qualitative change, what remains of leap? Nothing. It has no role.”²⁰

He continues: *“The party is discussing contradictions by saying that even though capitalist relations have strengthened significantly over the past nearly two hundred years, they have not produced and will not produce fundamental changes in quality.” Two hundred years have passed, have they not? Then what? Would they still not have produced fundamental change? Venugopal arrives at this conclusion. Without any leap, without any revolution, have the remnants of the semi-feudal system either simply become vestiges, or have they disappeared altogether, rendering an agrarian revolution unnecessary? Venugopal is teaching us that significantly strengthened capitalist relations can achieve qualitative transformation without any leap. Venugopal is asserting that qualitative change is possible without leaps, without revolutions. Having decided today to abandon revolution itself, he is now discarding Marxist dialectics and introducing his own logic to justify his decision.*

“According to philosophy, quantitative changes indicate changes in quality.”

This is a new formulation added to Marxist philosophy. And through this formulation, he wants to assert that capitalist relations have already been established and have become dominant in our country. Without explicitly saying it, Venugopal is essentially stating that semi-feudalism has run its course and is finished.

One thing, however, is true. The rightist tendency that has emerged in Venugopal did not arise suddenly. Recent mass armed surrender is itself the cumulative result of many years of such erroneous rightist ideas accumulating quantitatively. Losing faith in the path of Protracted People's War created fear for his own life. Over the last fifteen years, the revolutionary counter-offensive war being carried out by the enemy has intensified, and Operation Kagaar has assumed a most ferocious form. As the revolutionary movement entered a difficult situation and experienced setbacks, Venugopal's mistrust solidified. He lost faith in revolutionary transformation and, overestimating the enemy's strength, arrived at a false and deceptive conclusion that the setbacks were primarily due to mistakes within the revolutionary movement, and not due to the enemy's counter-revolutionary war.

To cover up his opportunism and moderate political line, Venugopal wrote in "*Appeal to Cadres*" that the revolutionary movement is suffering from "left-adventurism." When a movement is in ebb, right deviation tend to appear. When a movement is on the swing, left-adventurist tendencies generally appear. Since 2010, the movement has been in a phase of self-defence. In this situation, Venugopal fell prey to right opportunist line.

On November 25, the Central Military Commission (CMC), and CC of CPI (Maoist) issued a statement unequivocally rejecting the arguments advanced by Venugopal, who had labelled the revolutionary line as a "left-adventurist line." It stated:

'To prove that the political line followed by our party is wrong, Sonu has given three major reasons: that we do not have a revolutionary party, that the Central Task formulated by the 2007 Unity Congress was an ultra-left decision beyond the strength of the movement, and that we have rejected legal struggles.

Bringing forth the strange argument that 'when we say Party, it means only the Party committees consisting of full-time revolutionaries,' Sonu rejected the Party consisting of part-time party members across the country. Because full-time revolutionary party committees operate armed, he refused to recognize them as Party and described them as 'army.' Under the guise of the carpet security situation, he refused to recognize as Party even those AC, Div Com/DC members and party members who, while unarmed and in civilian attire, carry out mass work. All these are false conclusions contrary to reality. In his view, only those party committees that live among the people in villages and towns without arms are the Party. According

to his arguments, therefore: a revolutionary party composed of part-time members in villages and towns is the Party; but the Party committees from Area Committee to the Central Committee, which function armed, are not the Party. These are all false theoretical arguments about the construction and functioning of the revolutionary Party. They are purely moderate revisionist arguments.

It is also a right opportunist, revisionist argument to say that the Central Task formulated by the 2007 Congress was an ultra-left decision beyond the strength of the movement. By the time of the 2007 Congress, in Dandakaranya, class struggle had been waged for 27 years and the area had developed into a guerrilla zone. In Bihar-Jharkhand, class struggle had been waged for 37 years and that region too had developed into a guerrilla zone. In both these regions the revolutionary movement had a widespread and solid mass base. Together with those regions, in some other parts of the country the revolutionary movement was at a level of red resistance, while some areas were in temporary retreat. In addition to this, the merger of the two big parties created the Maoist Party, which generated great enthusiasm and confidence across the revolutionary camp nationwide. Considering all these conditions, and keeping in view the then international and domestic political situation, the Congress formulated the task of developing Dandakaranya and Bihar-Jharkhand into liberated areas. To build liberated areas in these regions, it was necessary to consolidate struggles at the level of red resistance, develop them into guerrilla zones, bring movements in temporary retreat back to the front line, and develop the urban movement. It formulated immediate tasks accordingly. ... However, due to our failure to seriously rectify non-proletarian tendencies within the Party, and due to the intense, continuous repressive attacks carried out by the central and state governments, by 2012 the revolutionary movement nationwide reached a difficult stage. In that situation, the Central Committee decided that we could not fulfill the task of developing the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army into a regular army, nor could we develop guerrilla warfare into mobile warfare, and therefore modified the Central Task. Ignoring all this, to call the earlier Central Task 'ultra-left' means limiting the revolutionary movement to partial struggles and economic struggles only, without fighting for political power. That would mean sacrificing the revolutionary movement to economism and reformism. It is a legalist argument to insist that the movement must operate only within legal boundaries.

The argument that we have abandoned legal struggles is also untrue and a distortion of facts. During the 2007 Congress period, when the movements in North Telangana and Andhra AOB were in a temporary setback and the mass strength

had declined, the Party conducted many legal and open struggles in those regions. As part of that, it led the political movement for separate Telangana. In the AOB Adivasi regions of Telangana and Andhra, it waged struggles for the implementation of the Fifth Schedule and PESA laws. Between 2006 and 2011, in West Bengal, coordinating legal and illegal struggles, we led the Singur and Nandigram struggles. In the same period, we led the Narayanpatna struggle in the forest region on the issue of land. When the Central Government enacted the new Forest Rights Act in 2008, the Central Committee decided that in regions where the revolutionary movement was damaged and in newly expanding areas at a primary level, the Party should fight for the pro-people provisions of that law; and in areas where the movement was strong and Janatana Sarkars (people's governments) had been established, those people's governments should themselves give land titles to the Adivasis. In 2013, the CRB prepared a document outlining the Party's position toward the exploitative classes' reforms. That document stated that depending on changes in the strength of the movement, we should utilize legal, illegal, open, and underground forms of struggle to wage class struggle. Subsequently, in Gadchiroli district, we led the movement for PESA and for formation of Gram Sabhas. From 2021, across Dandakaranya, sustained open legal struggle for PESA and Gram Sabhas has been undertaken. Since the inception of the Maoist Party, it has led open, legal mass movements across regions of the country against displacement. Ignoring these realities and isolating the DK situation alone- distorting even that- and claiming that we have abandoned legal struggles is itself a revisionist argument intending to limit the movement to legal struggles only.

If we examine the two articles recently written by Sonu, the declaration of temporary suspension of armed struggle, the appeal to the people, and the request to cadres, it becomes clear that he is not only rejecting the revolutionary line followed by our Party, but also rejecting armed struggle altogether. He has no alternative line. His line is the line of surrender. The essence of his argument is to conduct mass struggles only through legal methods, and to convert the Party into an open party on the pretext that there is no underground Party.

These are theoretically revisionism. Having rejected what the Party said, and having handed over Party weapons to the enemy, he has become a counter-revolutionary. Having gathered his followers, he has split the Party. Satish agreed with all of this and he too has become a traitor to the revolution, a splitter of the Party, and a counter-revolutionary. Therefore, we must expose the deceit and hollowness in the arguments raised by Sonu and Satish to the entire revolutionary camp, remove the confusion they have created, restore clarity, eliminate the despair

that has arisen among some, and instil confidence. There is not a shred of honesty in the arguments advanced by Sonu and Satish. Both have concocted these arguments only to justify their surrender out of fear for their lives. They lied that the General Secretary himself had proposed temporary suspension of armed struggle, misled politically and ideologically weak cadres, and caused them to surrender before the enemy. Hence, their deceit must be exposed before the revolutionary camp.”

Venugopal argues that the mass armed surrender was undertaken to save the movement from the losses inflicted by Operation Kagaar. In truth, it is the revolutionary movement that must be saved from Venugopal’s right opportunistic and liquidationist politics.

Footnotes:

1. Maoists torched 69 trucks and three JCBs at Surjagad Lloyd Metal’s iron mine, barely five-km from Hedri police post in Maharashtra’s Gadchiroli district, opposing destructive industrial encroachment on tribal lands (24 Dec 2016, Indian Express)
2. *Times of India*, Mumbai Edition, 16th October, 2025
3. Petras, James. “*The Metamorphosis of Latin America’s Intellectuals.*” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 24, no. 14 (April 8, 1989), pp. 719–722.
4. Venugopal’s pen name.
5. The first novel of Venugopal published in *Srijana*, in 1993.
6. *Indian Express*, 18th October 2025, Mumbai edition.
7. Balagopal, who had publicly declared his *Weltanschauung* to be Marxism-Leninism-Mao Thought ⁸, later retreated from that avowed revolutionary outlook and turned into a liberal. The foreword he wrote to the novel *Rago* clearly reflects his backward journey. The foreword came out as a booklet: *Manishi-Charitra-Marxism* (Man, History and Marxism)
8. Balagopal, K. “*On the Question of People’s Struggles?*” Published: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 19, No. 47 (24 November 1984), pp. 1993–1995.
9. The Adivasi woman who inspired the character “*Rago*” in the novel – Jaini alias Chaitu Akra – worked in the revolutionary movement

for more than three decades and was killed in the second week of July 2020 in an encounter near Jarawandi in Gadchiroli district.

10. Telangana Committee's State Committee letter dated 9th September 2025
11. Venugopal's letter in reply to Telangana Committee dated 22nd September 2025
12. Venugopal 22 page letter, viz., *Appeal to the Cadre*, (Telugu) dated August, 2025 refuted the basic line of PPW in particular and armed struggle in general.
13. PB of CPI Maoist issued a circular in August 2024. This circular is not in the public domain.
14. Prachanda formally proposed the "fusion theory" - integrating Mao Zedong's strategy of Protracted People's War with the Leninist model of armed insurrection at the Second National Conference of the CPN (M) in February 2001. This was outlined in his keynote document, *The Great Leap Forward: An Inevitable Need of History*, adopted by the conference. This proposal was later elaborated in Prachanda's May 2001 interview with *A World to Win*.
15. Venugopal in an email interview, Indian Express, 4th December, page 12, Delhi edn) said: *"The conditions of the 1980s are no longer present in the 21st century. Even in the past 25 years, significant changes in the country's economic system {part of the world imperialist system} have taken place...Facing losses upon losses, as the movement weakened and hopes and beliefs faded, **we realised that stubbornly sticking to armed struggle would be unwise.**"* (emphasis added)
16. Lenin, *"The Defeat of the Russian Revolutionary Army"*, (1905), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/nov/04.htm>
17. In the interview to the Indian Express (op.cit.,) Venugopal said he had differences **since a quarter of the century**. The fact is that he failed to raise single difference in 2001 or 2007 Congresses of the Party. In the same interview he said that "he understood Party's basic mistakes" after the death of his brother- martyr Mallojula Koteswara Rao alias Kishenji.
18. Authored by Francis Fukuyama, published in 1992.

19. Oxfam International: “*Multilateralism in an Era of Global Oligarchy*” (September 23, 2024), World Inequality Lab: “*Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj*” (April 2024).
20. Ajit, Distortion and Slander: Trademarks of Capitulator, Ajit’s page: <https://ajithspage.in/wp/pages/lekhanam-essay/english/eng-essays/sonu1/>
21. Kovasi Bhima alias Babu, a resident of Bhattigudam village located three kilometres from Hidma’s native place Puvvarti, worked for twelve years as a security guard for the CPI (Maoist) supreme commanders Muppalla Lakshman Rao alias Ganapathy and Nambaalla Keshava Rao alias Basavaraj. He recently surrendered due to ill-health. He said this honestly to Sakshi, a Telugu news paper.

“I was inducted into PLGA Company 7 in 2012. The responsibility of providing security to the Party’s General Secretary rests with this Company. There, I worked in the press and medical teams. I got to meet Ganapathy dada twice in person. I spoke with BR dada (Nambaalla) many times. As health issues emerged, I was relieved from Company 7 this January and assigned other duties. But as my condition worsened, I handed over my weapons to the Party and surrendered in the first week of May. My surrender was officially recorded in June.

When BR dada was killed in the encounter, I was already in police custody. The entire day, the camp was in commotion. The officers there told me, “Your Company 7 has fallen into our hands.” ... Constant movement of camps due to Kagar made it difficult for him to climb hills and slopes. To escape the encounter, BR dada struggled for three days without minimum rest, food, or water. But tragedy struck.

People outside say that development has stopped in our region because of the Maoists: no roads, no electricity, no hospitals, no schools. But our lives changed only after the dadas (Naxalites) came. They redistributed land. They taught agriculture. They dug wells and tanks to provide drinking water. Doctors trained guerrillas for three to four months on the illnesses common in this region, their symptoms, and how to treat them. This training greatly helped the local people. They opened more than five hundred schools. . Now, in the name of development, four-lane roads are being built. The people here do not even have a bicycle. Intellectuals must think about for whom such big roads are being built and who stands to benefit.

There are criticisms from outside that Telugu leaders dominate the Maoist Party and that Adivasis are weakened at the lower levels. Because of Operation Kagar, the squads no longer have even a single day to camp safely. If a squad has ten people, a thousand security personnel surround them. They must remain alert at every moment and take decisions quickly. When setbacks occur in this process, discussions do take place. Decisions are reviewed. Confusion is being faced regarding what decisions should be taken for the Party's future. Beyond that, there is no division inside the Party between Telugu leaders and Chhattisgarh Adivasis.

There was a time when the Party was strong here. Under Hidma's leadership, the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army consisted of one battalion and twelve companies, with additional armed formations. But that is no longer the case. Because of Kagar, the Party has become very weak. With the new roads, electricity, internet, mobile signals, and other modern facilities, the Bastar forests can no longer serve as guerrilla bases. Still, ideologies like Communism and Maoism do not come to an end. As long as exploitation, inequality, and oppression exist, these ideologies will continue. Only their form of struggle will change."

The Role of the Deep State, the Crisis in the Revolutionary Movement, And Questions Concerning the Path of Protracted People's War

-Pani

The state has assassinated Hidma, a valiant Maoist commander. He was like Basayi Tudu in Mahasweta Devi's story. How many times has he died, and how many times has he lived again? Rising from the legacy of Adivasi armed struggle, Hidma transfigured himself into the history of the Maoist movement. He was a young leader capable of shaping the revolutionary movement's future- a true warrior of our times, who became even more formidable and legendary after his martyrdom. In this war, the Indian state brags that it gained an upper hand by killing Hidma.

Some are scripting obituaries on the revolutionary movement. Others are sinking into despair. Undoubtedly, these are times of grief. We stand in a time when heroes are falling and traitors are growing audacious. This situation must be confronted with courage and reason. Shall we assume defeat? Shall we interpret this condition through a defeatist psyche? Or shall we stand firm and understand this episode as part of this long historical phase in the extensive human history in which setbacks and the prospects of victory are concomitant? We must decide.

The Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) – The Present Context

The Indian revolutionary movement has surpassed many crises. Now it has entered a phase marked by acute warfare and perfidy at the top. At this juncture, a debate is underway over the future path of the Indian revolution. For the disrupters, this debate is merely a pretext. In reality, both repression and treachery are integral components of Low-Intensity

Conflict (LIC). LIC tactics are designed not only to encompass episodes of bloodshed but also to function as the superior strategy of counterrevolutionary warfare. LIC is an intelligence-driven conflict policy, so infiltration or destruction of the movement from within becomes the core method of this form of warfare.

How many forms does the state penetration take? This takes three forms. First, sending agents directly into the movement from outside. Second, turning those who are already inside the movement into traitors. Third, after securing a foothold within the organisational structure through one means or another, they positioned their own people to pursue objectives entirely contrary to the movement's interests. For this purpose, some are tasked with transmitting inside information to the outside. Others embed themselves within organisational structures, cultivate networks of collaborators, and systematically work to generate internal crises. This is precisely the scenario we are witnessing today.

Within the Indian revolutionary movement, low-intensity warfare has been discussed on and off for at least two decades. When we examine the current developments closely, we find that, though there is some awareness of the concept, there has been little real understanding of the ramifications of the low-intensity warfare. And how the combination of these multiple forms would encircle the movement from both outside and within. Successive governments have broadly implemented this very method since the period of Salwa Judum. Numerous suppression campaigns have inflicted severe damage to the revolutionary movement. But the state realised that it could not contain the revolutionary movement entirely.

This is the backdrop.

Aftermath of the Surajkund Plan

The Hindutva state formulated a counterrevolutionary military suppression programme at the Surajkund meeting in Haryana in October 2022. It set the objective of achieving a Maoist-free India by 2024. This failed to materialise. Operation Kagar was then initiated in January of that year. Once it became evident that even Kagar might not ensure the complete annihilation of the revolutionary movement, the ruling classes planned to orchestrate internal treachery. In line with the tactics of low-intensity warfare, they adopted all the three methods described earlier. The actions

of Mallojula Venugopal Rao and Takkellapalli Vasudeva Rao fall within this pattern. Put differently, they are integral to the Surajkund plan.

The Current betrayals must be seen from this backdrop. Are those who surrendered in this extermination programme merely individuals who capitulated to the state, or are they active collaborators assisting in the implementation of the counterrevolutionary suppression plan? The surrendered attempt to justify their actions under the cloak of theory, including by invoking debates on Protracted People's War. This essay addresses their arguments on PPW. It also examines the manner in which the state induced the current treachery.

Has the Maoist Movement Run its Course?

A wide range opinions are emerging about the current crisis confronting the Maoist movement. Why? Because complex developments are playing out with unusual rapidity. Yet no one can casually dismiss this merely as party's internal crisis. Setting aside personal predilections and prejudices about the revolutionary movement, it is evident that the situation cannot be understood solely through the prism of the party's own errors. This challenge has arisen within the broader conflict between opposing forces characteristic of a historical epoch in transition from one phase to another.

Why did lakhs of people work under that party's leadership for over half a century? How many demanding tasks did they undertake? How many varied experiments did they attempt? How many exhilarating victories did they secure? How much blood did they shed? How many obstacles did they overcome to reach this stage? Only those who understand the dialectical forces that shaped such a long and complex history can correctly evaluate the leadership's shortcomings that have surfaced within the movement. They only can grasp the gravity of this historical moment- one now confronting the people of India through the accumulated experiences of both its achievements and its failures.

*Dokesophia*¹ dominates many Telugu intellectuals. Only those who overcome this delusion can perceive reality with clarity. The ability to comprehend the multi-layered nature of the confrontation, to gauge the ferocity of the battles, and to assess the potential for escalating violence is the true touchstone of intellectual maturity. Five decades of the

revolutionary movement's experience has shown how immense and sustained the effort must be to *fanshen*² the society and the state- and transform them even by a sliver. The history of Maoist successes and failures itself stands as living testimony to the enormous obstacles that confront such transformative attempts, to their ruthlessness, and to the force with which they drag back every possibility of change.

How will the Maoist movement confront this crisis? How will it reorganise and rebuild itself? How will it absorb fifty years of experience and rejuvenate with greater brilliance? How will it produce new concepts and creative forms of practice suited to the coming period? How will it conduct a profound internal churn that enables it to fathom this blow down to the most microscopic level? For all this, one must wait.

In the meantime, many intellectuals are pronouncing that the movement has run its course. The struggle stands defeated, they assert. And it was doomed from the outset, some opine. It has merely arrived at its predetermined destination, many argue. The only real surprise is that it survived this long at all; some would pass judgment.

Some argue that the repression and treachery confronting the Maoist movement today need not be taken seriously. According to them, it is merely one movement among many in the country; its revolutionary force has long since diminished, and whatever influence it once possessed has steadily eroded to arrive at this juncture. Others insist that the present crisis is a consequence of the very path the movement chose to follow. These views are not new; however, in recent months, they have grown exponentially.

Those who long believed that the Maoist Party itself obstructed the Indian revolution- either by diverting it from the correct path or by denying it the opportunity to find one- may now feel vindicated as they watch the movement entangled in its current internal crisis. Many had dismissed it as mere extremism, as the violence of isolated individuals, and as adventurism divorced from the people. Some went further still, branding it a form of Narodism. For such critics, the present turmoil has opened a new avenue to reiterate their long-held accusations. Their claims have acquired renewed force, now seemingly "reinforced" by the arguments echoed by leaders who once belonged to the movement but have since betrayed it.

On the other hand, the fascist rulers are celebrating, convinced that they are liberating the country from the Maoist revolution and its ideology. They are eager to proclaim a “Maoist-free India” as the fourth major milestone in their long-standing agenda- after the removal of Article 370, the construction of the Ayodhya Ram temple, and the enactment of a Uniform Civil Code. In this spirit, they are waging what they present as a final war. It is amid this unilateral offensive, which has effectively assumed the character of an internal war, that regime-sponsored internal treachery has set in motion.

Repression and war can assume many forms. When people embark on the path of Protracted People’s War (PPW), the state likewise adopts a long-term strategy to crush them. Just as the character of imperialist warfare changed after World War II, so too did its operational methods. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, imperialism reconfigured its military strategy and adopted low-intensity warfare tactics. Indian rulers applied this framework to suppress nationality movements. While deploying large-scale military forces on one front, they simultaneously cultivated internal ruptures and engineered betrayals as a systematic counterinsurgency strategy. In this design, bloodshed is prolonged over years, while a psychological climate is simultaneously manufactured to convince people that further struggle is impossible. War is waged not only through military means but through sustained psychological operations. It develops into a one-sided offensive, expressed relentlessly in multiple, mutually reinforcing forms.

Designs of Deep State: Seeks to Destroy the PPW Line

Counterinsurgency operates through both gross and subtle ways. The military is visible in the gross domain, but in the subtle terrain, the presence of informers, covert networks, and treacherous elements remains largely unseen. For two decades, suppressing the revolutionary movement has taken three forms: military force, reformism, and betrayal. Since the movement itself frequently acknowledged that many encounters resulted from betrayal, it is only natural to wonder how so many traitors and informers could infiltrate a movement that was, by its very nature, humane, trustworthy, and resilient.

From the outside, this may appear to be a matter of values or culture. However, it becomes clear only when one recognises that the state depends on treachery just as much as it depends on military force in its war strategy.

To fracture people's struggles from within, the state employs any method that becomes available; it seizes whatever falls into its hands. Over time, decades of violence and repression close off the avenues for advancing the movement, and continuous bloodshed reshapes civil society's responses. Only through creative political thinking can a revolutionary movement withstand such conditions, and this to some extent. Yet alongside it, certain tendencies also emerge- mechanical thinking, desertion, capitulation, and the cultivation of relations with the enemy- even within the leadership.

At first, these tendencies appear institutionally. Gradually, as state violence intensifies and state penetration deepens, they draw some into the enemy's lap. It is not difficult to see how this dynamic contributed to the surrender of the two top leaders of the Maoist Party. Their capitulation generated severe turbulence among intellectuals.

When revolutionary movements intensify, they generate an ideological sphere. Under its influence, individuals engage in a range of intellectual and creative fields, while groups and organisations carry this work forward in constructive ways. The path, methods, practices, and aims of the revolutionary movement are articulated and disseminated as rational and coherent. In Telugu society, across three generations, numerous individuals undertook such efforts. Through this process, they shaped their own personalities and emerged as influential figures in their respective domains.

All this occurred at a time when the revolutionary movement was still robust and relatively expanding. Yet, when that very movement sought qualitative advancement, it came under severe repression. It was further weakened by certain tactical errors. In such a conjuncture, how do the intellectuals respond? What do they say?

There are those who grew under the movement's direct or indirect influence; those who shaped their intellectual and political journeys within its ambit; those whose ties to the movement are almost umbilical; those who once proclaimed such ties with pride when everything seemed favourable; those who worked within the movement briefly and later left; those who thereafter made no attempt to understand its subsequent developments; those who, even when they tried, attended only to their own habitual ideological proclamations rather than to concrete conditions; and those who have turned opposing the movement into a daily ritual. There is not a single type.

Today, diverse segments of society are speaking about the revolutionary movement from multiple directions. Pessimism, fear, anxiety, irritation, naiveté, hostility, hollow humanism, intellectual exhibitionism—the arguments are cascading from innumerable angles.

Whenever revolutionary movements enter a crisis, doubts about fundamental questions arise, betrayals occur, and ideological attacks emerge from outside. This is nothing new; it has happened in every country. What is happening now reflects the condition of the Indian revolutionary movement.

“Will you not examine such a massive crisis even now? Will you learn nothing from such a devastating blow? Will you insist, stubbornly and blindly, on suffering further losses? Will you not change your path? Will you at least not step back temporarily from armed struggle and save your lives?” Countless opinions of this kind are being voiced. Some express them sympathetically; others with scorn. But in essence, all of them argue that the line of Protracted People’s War is itself wrong. Their words may differ, and their tones may vary, but the core issue remains the same: this is a debate about the very path of the revolutionary movement. The state, too, seeks to destroy precisely this line.

It is a bewilderingly chaotic atmosphere. The very individuals and circles that once responded with ovations have now fallen silent. The affirmative voices of the revolutionary movement have grown exceedingly faint. No new mistakes have been committed by the movement; no fresh defects have emerged in its line. In fact, during this period of intense confrontation, the movement has demonstrated even greater resolve in its political path than ever before. It has advanced new ideas and carried out creative experiments. Amid this massive, ongoing Kagar war, it has endured devastating losses for twenty months and yet remained unwavering. One can identify numerous such positive features.

Counter Attack Dominates

And yet, what predominates today is the counter-attack. The very hands that once applauded are now the hands that hurl stones.

This situation is, in many ways, reminiscent of the experience of the 1905 Russian Revolution. Though the spatial and temporal contexts are entirely different, the sequence of developments has come out in a

strikingly comparable manner. The essential question now is how the Indian revolutionary movement- just as the Russian movement did then- will reconstruct itself by assimilating the lessons of this moment.

Such reconstruction demands substantial intellectual labour, both within and outside the movement. The intelligentsia bear the responsibility of undertaking the theoretical and strategic reflection necessary for the next decisive leap. We must now see how many will engage in this task with constructive commitment.

Will they merely express sympathy- “Alas, how did matters come to this?”- or offer the kind of facile counsel that suggests, “At least now, it would be better to act in this way”? Will they seize this moment as an opportunity to mount their own offensive? Will they complacently proclaim, in tones of exaggerated triumphalism, that the ‘failure’ of the Maoists has vindicated their own path? Or will they, instead, undertake something more meaningful than any of these gestures?

This remains to be seen.

Ultimately, on the other side stands a fascist state determined not merely to dismantle the revolutionary organisation, but to annihilate its ideology. Though it repeatedly proclaims that it will kill even the last Maoist, is its objective confined only to that? It seeks to demolish Maoism itself- its theoretical and ideological world, its cultural and ethical edifice built upon extraordinary sacrifice, and the historical conviction that the revolutionary movement shapes the future.

When destruction occurs on such a vast scale, how can any society remain unshaken? Without reflecting on this question, without discussing what must be done in the present circumstances, how can one argue that the priority now should be to lay down arms and preserve life? *If such a course were taken, would we not also be striking a blow at precisely that which fascism seeks to destroy?* If one truly wishes to prevent loss of life, then the demand must be to halt Operation Kagar. Without undertaking that effort, they argue that the revolutionary cadres need not resort to violence, and the state’s violence will simply stop on its own. *Will violence cease merely because the movement is paused, while the fundamental contradictions remain unresolved?*

Throughout history, even as it traverses innumerable peaks and valleys, the people’s struggle endures as an unbroken life-force. It persists

as human rationality, as the quest for truth, as cultural practice, as a tide of defiance, and as a path of struggle. As a continuation of thousands of years of history, in the modern and postcolonial era, it culminated in the Maoist revolutionary movement. Some may dislike this assertion. But history is not a stage for displaying individual preferences or prejudices. In the postcolonial history of India's struggles and reconstruction, the role of the revolutionary movement- its direct and indirect impacts- can neither be diminished nor exaggerated.

Today, however, the fascist state declares that it will destroy all of this. Some may take literally its claim that it will kill even the last Maoist, and therefore imagine that it poses no threat to them. Some may feel it brings them no inconvenience. Still others may even believe that something 'good' will emerge from this.

For this reason, many are rushing to proclaim that the path of PPW chosen by the Maoists is inherently wrong. They feel that silence would be inappropriate in this moment and are therefore delivering sermons of various kinds. Certain intellectuals are doing this. Unless this is stated plainly, even those who are yet to speak their minds may escape this criticism. If we avoid criticism, it will amount to opportunism- an attempt to run matters smoothly without causing discomfort to anyone. Hence, in this class war, intellectuals must stand with the people and the revolutionary movement, prepared to wage ideological and theoretical class struggle.

Even so, the rulers and the intellectuals can never be one and the same. There is no basis for comparison. During the crisis that the Maoist movement is now facing, this distinction is starkly visible. In every respect, the Maoist path has become a subject of debate. War has no sentiments. It piles up corpses and questions around us. There is no avoiding this.

While experiencing the emotions that death inevitably evokes, one must still seek rational answers to the questions that confront us. These answers can be traced by entering history and examining the successes and failures of the revolutions of the last century. They can be drawn not only from the experience of the Indian Maoist movement, but also from the recent crises confronted by Maoist movements in other countries. Ultimately, the essence is this: the present crisis is not merely that of the Maoist movement; society and history themselves are advancing, tragically, toward the same precipice. This must be stated plainly.

One may offer endless analyses. For the revolutionary movement, the real answer lies in overcoming this crisis. The correct resolution lies in learning from this experience and eventually rising to a higher level. Meanwhile, there must be a discussion of what the revolutionary movement has done over the years, what understanding guided its practice, and how it developed PPW within our own spatial-temporal conditions and among our own people. No matter how severely the revolutionary movement is battered, one must still explain-rationally and convincingly- why this society needs revolutionary politics.

Is Protracted People's War merely a facsimile of China's Revolutionary Strategy?

In academic pedagogy, and even in the common-sense of sections of the people's movement, it has become entrenched that the Indian Maoist line is a mechanical transposition from China. One such assumption concerns the path of Protracted People's War. But anyone acquainted with the history of the Chinese Revolution, the history of India's revolutionary movement, or Marxism itself would never arrive at such a naive conclusion.

In the Chinese revolutionary movement, certain specific conditions proved favourable, leading in 1923 to the formation of a revolutionary united-front government under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen, with the Communist Party participating in it. Consequently, by 1927, the Communist Party already had an army. Up to that time, the working class had only the experiences of the Paris Commune and the Soviet Revolution as precedents for the seizure of state power. Along those lines, the Chinese Communist Party also attempted an armed insurrection in 1927, which resulted in a severe setback. Only thereafter did Mao decisively intervene in determining China's revolutionary path. With the army's surviving forces, he retreated to the Chingkang mountain border region, transforming it into a revolutionary base area. Between 1927 and 1930, there arose opportunities to establish several such base areas. While Mao was developing the line of Protracted People's War through this practice, ultra-leftism resurfaced within the Party. A tendency emerged advocating armed uprisings from existing base areas aimed at encircling nearby cities. In 1930, at the Sixth Central Committee's Third Plenum, Mao comprehensively defeated this tendency. Thus, the Protracted People's War became the official line of the Chinese Party. It became part of Marxist revolutionary theory. The period from 1927 to 1930 was decisive in the Chinese Revolution.

Drawing upon the defeat of 1927 and the victories achieved over the subsequent three years, Mao determined, through practice, how the Chinese Revolution must proceed. The first principle was the recognition that the enemy was strategically stronger than the people and their army, and that it was impossible to win state power through a single uprising. Therefore, the revolutionary process had to be protracted. The second principle was that this protracted process would manifest in the form of a people's war. These are the meanings embedded in the two words "Protracted People's War." Even earlier, in 1926, Mao wrote his famous essay, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society." On that basis, he formulated the line of Protracted People's War and defined the stage of the New Democratic Revolution. The experiences gained during the Second Civil War from 1927 to 1937 demonstrated the correctness of these formulations.

For anyone who seeks to make revolution, a fundamental understanding is that the enemy is strategically powerful. This is a precondition for revolutionary practice. In the notion of "protractedness" itself lies the dialectical sequence of victory–defeat–victory. To achieve final victory, one must be prepared for the sequence of victory, setback, and ultimate triumph. Ordinarily, "protracted" is taken in a merely colloquial sense to mean "long duration," but philosophically, it is a concept that recognises the contradictions inherent in motion. Protracted People's War expresses the dialectical historical movement in which social development advances and retreats, yet ultimately advances. It signifies the effort humanity must undertake across vast stretches of history to reach a higher qualitative stage. Indeed, this principle is visible even in past history.

The seizure of state power is a revolutionary political act, and militarily it takes various forms of guerrilla warfare. This synthesis of understanding is embodied in the Protracted People's War. In China's specific conditions, the existence of an army from the outset made it easier for Mao to shape the path of Protracted People's War directly through mass practice.

In determining the revolutionary path, one must consider the nature of the ruling classes, the social structure, the political conditions, the people's traditions of struggle, cultural specificities, the functioning of the state apparatus, geographic characteristics, and more. Since the enemy is powerful, adopting PPW necessarily means accounting for numerous factors that

condition the possibility of ultimate victory. A central aspect of this is identifying the revolution's allies. For Mao, the united front with allies received as much emphasis as the party itself. This is possible only when the class composition and the country's social structure are properly understood.

To put it broadly, drawing from the advances and retreats of the Chinese Revolution, Mao crafted a path distinct from that of the Paris Commune and the Soviet Revolution. In selecting a revolutionary line, the decisive considerations must be the powerful nature of the state and the character of the classes commanding it. Although the seizure of state power is the goal of revolution, it is simultaneously a social, cultural, and ideological process. When the relationship between state and society is clearly understood, clarity emerges regarding the line or path. On the foundations of production, practice, and class struggle, Mao elevated this interpretation to a very high theoretical level.

At the time the path of Protracted People's War was formulated, China did not have a centralised state. Hence, it lacked modern systems of state administration. Because society itself was backward, the state's armoury lacked technological capabilities. Yet, based on a class analysis of China's concrete conditions, Mao concluded that the state was stronger than the people's forces. To confront such a powerful state and seize power, he adopted the path of PPW.

After the Second World War, under post-colonial capitalist systems and in the era of imperialist globalisation, the state apparatuses of virtually all countries became more powerful. The classes that dominate the state machinery now deploy increasingly authoritarian methods to sustain exploitation. Under these conditions, one may run reformist politics in various ways. But if one seeks to make revolution, the existing state must be overthrown and a new state erected in its place. No matter how interesting anyone's observations about Marxism or revolution may be, the crucial question of the seizure of state power cannot be ignored. PPW has been integral to Mao's thought for nearly a century. At present, with a few exceptions, wherever revolution is conceived against the state and the dominant classes, the PPW path must be adopted in principle. This is what is meant by "line" or "path." A strategy devised by Mao for Chinese conditions has become increasingly relevant over time. If one intends to operate within the parliamentary framework, that is another matter. But

can that be called a revolution? Or merely a somewhat improved form of governance? For such aims, one may attempt whatever seems suitable. But for the political, military, and cultural transformation required for society to advance qualitatively from one stage of history to another, PPW has become even more indispensable in today's world.

However, not all elements of the Chinese formulation of PPW apply to India. Some are impossible, others unnecessary. Just as in China's revolutionary period, entirely new and favourable local conditions may exist in our country today. At a broader level, global developments have rendered PPW applicable in semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries and backward capitalist countries alike. In India, this is one of the crucial turning points marking the transformation of Mao's thought into Maoism. The specificities of China in Mao's time, of India in the 1969–74 period, and of international conditions in those eras are now irrelevant. For example, when Mao formulated and implemented PPW, the Soviet Union was in existence. When Naxalbari emerged, the Cultural Revolution in China exerted influence. Internationally, conditions existed under which communists did, to some extent, entertain the possibility of a Third World War. None of these factors exists today. All belong to history. To interpret PPW merely as Mao meant it in those specific Chinese circumstances, or to accept or reject it mechanically based on those conditions, is sterile dogmatism.

Even today, some continue to think from the standpoint of the domestic and international situation of that earlier era or from the standpoint of the movement's earlier stages. They are mired in the swamp of the past. Because they cannot relate to the present, they explain the problems the revolutionary movement currently faces by invoking causes from the twentieth century. Such arguments are irrelevant to the present or the future. They yield no useful analysis. To move forward, one must break free from all this and grasp the fundamental concepts embedded in the path of Protracted People's War, and examine how they have continually developed within the Indian revolutionary movement.

Protracted People's War in India

Rejecting the parliamentary path pursued by revisionists in India, the Marxist–Leninist party adopted the path of Protracted People's War in order to build a revolutionary movement. Formed under highly complex

conditions, the ML party initially possessed no people's army. It had to build armed squads as the primary embryonic form of an army. Although it had adopted the path of Protracted People's War, its early practice veered in a different direction. With unrealistic, exaggerated expectations about revolutionary conditions, it concluded that revolution would triumph within five or six years. Misunderstanding the international situation, it assumed that a world war was imminent and that such a war would inevitably usher in revolutions. Based on the pattern of revolutions and national liberation struggles that accompanied previous world wars, it arrived at this conclusion.

It even proclaimed that "by the end of 1975, fifty crore Indian people will complete their great revolutionary task." The Eighth Congress declared that the American invasion of Cambodia had inaugurated the Third World War. It officially stated that the final war to annihilate imperialism had begun and that the world socialist revolution was not far off.

Alongside these, it erred in its assessment of a matter crucial to the Protracted People's War in India: the strength of the Indian state system. These anticipations, and the practices based upon them- along with many other factors- led to near-total devastation of the party. All of this stood in complete contradiction to the conception of Protracted People's War.

At that time, the party also issued the call: "Every inch of India is surrounded by revolutionary flames. Therefore, any region can be liberated. There is no need, as in China, to first establish base areas in the hill regions and gradually liberate one area after another." Such positions created a sharp contradiction between the stage of development of the Indian revolution, the prevailing political conditions in the country, the state's strength, and the path of Protracted People's War. To put it negatively, the leadership of that period did not even adhere to the spirit of the "Chinese Path."

However, the Marxist-Leninist party did maintain focus on this path from the beginning. Even though the slogan "China's path is our path" carried exaggeration, it nevertheless contained a political orientation- namely, the desire to appropriate the Protracted People's War pursued by the Chinese people for revolution. Behind the slogan "Sabka Naam Vietnam" lay not merely solidarity with Vietnam's anti-imperialist struggle, but also a deep affinity for the Protracted People's War chosen by Vietnam's revolutionaries, adapted to their own conditions. It expressed an

international revolutionary consciousness that rejected the rulers' false nationalism. Despite all these positive aspects, there existed- especially in the beginning- tendencies that diverged from the path of Protracted People's War.

All these issues were evaluated in the 1974 self-critical document titled "*Review the Past and Advance on the Path of Armed Struggle.*" In the context of India's conditions, and in the phase of reconstructing the revolutionary movement, it articulated the people-oriented line that must be integral to the Protracted People's War.

Today, taking advantage of the repression and betrayal confronting the Maoist movement, some compare the present situation to conditions of forty years ago and insist that the two are identical. Anyone who assesses the entire movement only from the standpoint of losses will reach disastrously wrong conclusions. At a minimum, one must take into account the fifty-year history, extending from the 1974 self-criticism document through the period after the formation of KAGAR, including the guidelines formulated to overcome losses.

Across this entire period, revolutionary consciousness and forms of practice must be viewed together. The relationships between them, as well as the contradictions that arise between the two, must also be taken into account. This is essential for understanding the Indian revolutionary movement. At the same time, it helps in grasping how the path of Protracted People's War (PPW) adopted by the revolutionary movement has taken concrete shape in practice- how it has developed, expanded, and how it is presently confronting challenges.

Rooted entirely in local conditions, the Indian revolutionary movement undertook the task of preparing individual activists, building the Party, and creating armed squads as the primary form of the army. To achieve this, it placed equal emphasis on people's war and democratic struggles. Within the framework of PPW, where armed struggle constitutes the principal form, the Indian revolutionary movement evolved a distinctive feature: the coordination of legal, open, and partial struggles with armed struggle. Another distinctive aspect of our country's revolutionary path- one that imparted both local rootedness and a sense of novelty- was the method of identifying individuals one by one, shaping them into political activists, and moulding them into revolutionary fighters from the very

beginning. Many such distinctive features influenced and decisively shaped the Indian revolutionary path.

Armed with 'legal' authority and immense military power, the Indian state has unleashed intense repression. To confront such a state and to advance the people's cause, the revolutionary movement has had no option but to adopt a military path from its very inception. There are those who argue that, since the state is stronger, taking up arms would only lead to losses. It is precisely for this reason that the revolutionary movement cannot avoid waging armed struggle. Within the path of protracted people's war, this constitutes a crucial understanding, and along this path, lakhs of people must be mobilised.

For such mobilisation, it is necessary not only to address the people's immediate needs but also to study their cultural and psychological specificities. One must go as far back as possible to recover the people's legacy of struggle and apply it to the present conditions of PPW. No matter how extensive such efforts may be, there must be clarity regarding the path that provides direction, ensures development, and draws out the revolutionary energy inherent among the people. If such clarity exists, even mistakes can be corrected. Without such a guiding path, however, no matter how many people's struggles are built, how many studies are undertaken, or how many theoretical formulations are made, they will yield no real benefit.

One important aspect of PPW is the seizure of state power on an area-by-area basis. The revolutionary movement focused on this concept as early as the 1974 reconstruction phase. From jail, K.S. wrote to the comrades in the leadership who were guiding the movement, enclosing a diagram that explained the region's geographical advantages and how it would be conducive to becoming a future revolutionary base area. It was here that the foundation for the expansion of the Indian revolutionary movement was laid.

Today, amid the severe crisis confronting the Maoist movement, a debate has emerged over whether the establishment of liberated areas in India is possible at all. During the Kagar offensive, the guerrilla zones established by the revolutionary movement may have suffered serious damage. The experience gained in this phase is by no means ordinary; it calls for deep, serious reflection. Nevertheless, the strategic perspective

underlying the establishment of base areas remains, in a broad sense, correct. There may have been shortcomings in practice, and tactics appropriate to changing conditions may have been inadequate or absent.

To safeguard the forms of people's state power established in areas where the state is relatively weak, it is necessary to generate a revolutionary situation across the entire country. It appears that the movement's leadership possesses this clarity. Their understanding may not be comprehensive. The state clearly recognises that if such a situation were to be achieved, revolutionary base areas and forms of people's state power would acquire a measure of protection. Precisely for this reason, the state acted to prevent such a development. As a consequence, the revolutionary atmosphere outside the guerrilla areas was severely damaged.

The state has a very clear understanding of the impact and consequences of the revolutionary movement. The movement stands as an obstacle to the objective of transforming the country into a corporate India. As pressure from corporate interests intensified, state repression escalated in turn. As a result, even within the base areas, the revolutionary movement passed through a phase of expansion followed by contraction, ultimately culminating in contraction. Over the past two decades, coordination between the plains and the revolutionary areas has been gravely weakened.

In a country as vast as India, marked by numerous specificities alongside common characteristics, regions assume particular significance during a revolution. It is not possible for a revolutionary movement to bring the entire country under its political influence simultaneously. When compared to the possibilities of building the movement region by region and advancing step by step toward power, the conditions for seizing the entire country and establishing power in a single stroke are far more unfavourable.

Taking into account the changing political-economic conditions and the manner in which the state functions, it is necessary to wage a protracted people's war and, through that process, capture political power. In light of the experiences arising from the Kagar offensive, it may therefore be necessary to explore different methods and forms for creating liberated areas.

The Indian state is not only a powerful, centralised structure; it is spread across all regions of the country. At the same time, it also functions as a deep state. It has amassed limitless technological capacities. Even so, the strength of the state should not be viewed in absolute terms. It is only within the dynamic interplay between strength and weakness that the state's power can be assessed realistically. Even under these conditions, areas with relatively weaker state dominance receive priority in the revolution. There exists the possibility of initiating the movement in such areas and expanding from there to other regions. From the outside, it may appear that the state possesses uniform strength and functions in the same manner everywhere. But within that, there are differences. Failing to recognise these differences amounts to denying the very possibilities available for revolutionary practice. Without this understanding, initiating the movement in areas where the state is strong will only lead to far greater losses.

In addition, the background of international finance capital has made uneven development an inherent and dominant tendency within Indian capitalism. Social and cultural inequalities are increasing at innumerable levels. Far from being eliminated, traditional forms of inequality persist, while new forms of inequality have multiplied. Alongside social inequalities, regional inequalities are also deepening. For this reason as well, regions continue to hold enduring strategic importance.

From the standpoint of geography, uneven social development, and the traditions of people's struggles, the experiments carried out by the Maoists represent an advanced stage in the experience of the Indian revolutionary movement and in the revolutionary movements of the world in this century. The state may have resorted to the most brutal and unrestrained repression and may have inflicted damage on the revolutionary movement. Yet these developments have taken shape within the dialectical logic of victories and defeats inherent in a protracted people's war.

To put it differently, within the three stages of protracted people's war, the revolutionary movement was able to sustain itself for nearly twenty years in the stage of strategic defensive. That numerous crucial decisions were taken and efforts made during this entire period to break out of this stage becomes evident from quotations found in the letters of recent surrenderees, as well as from the responses issued by the revolutionary movement to those letters. However, the movement was unable to

implement those decisions. There is a vast hiatus between understanding an issue and translating it into practice. There is also a contradiction between the two. Because the movement could not overcome this contradiction, it not only failed to advance over the past twenty years but was compelled to retreat. It suffered serious damage.

Seeking the reasons for this setback solely within the revolutionary camp would be an incomplete approach. The revolutionary movement advances or retreats depending on the balance of forces in the dialectical relationship between the ruling camp and the people's camp. Over the past few decades, the strength and capacities of the opposing camp have increased manifold. Among the sections that ought to have become part of the revolution, divisions, distances, and hostilities- previously unseen- have emerged. Not only the contradictions between the ruling and revolutionary camps, but also those within the people's camp itself, have contributed to the specific local characteristics of the path of protracted people's war in our country.

The particularities of India's social and political conditions are influencing the path of the protracted people's war. They are making the revolution more complex and more prolonged.

Complexities of the Indian Revolution- New Challenges to the Movement

Because of this objective situation, the revolutionary movement has been compelled to take many twists and turns. It has become entangled in multiple knots. The objective conditions surrounding the movement have turned into obstacles to translating the leadership's understanding into practice. These very material conditions have also hindered the emergence of innovative thinking and practice capable of breaking out of this situation. These are new challenges that were absent in the Chinese revolutionary movement, where the concept of protracted people's war was originally formulated.

Due to colonial rule, which prevented a democratic revolution, parliamentary methods were established, giving rise to growing illusions about parliamentary politics even among many groups otherwise sympathetic to revolution. At a time when parliamentary democracy is degenerating ever more grotesquely, illusions about it are paradoxically

increasing. This problem did not exist during the days of Naxalbari- or even if it did, not to this extent. Consequently, in the fifty years of implementing the path of protracted people's war, at least three or four distinct phases can be identified. In passing through these phases, the revolutionary movement attained maturity. For example, coordination between legal struggles and armed struggle advanced considerably in the decades following the 1970s.

The purpose of this detailed discussion is to underline that the protracted people's war in our country has come into operation as a comprehensive political, politico-economic, cultural, and social path. Its practice is found across many levels and in various spheres. Therefore, this path is not merely military, nor merely political. It is an integrated mode of struggle that applies to our specific space and time, our cultural consciousness, and our local historical particularities. This constitutes a natural characteristic of the Indian revolutionary path.

Mao's understanding that armed struggle is the principal aspect of protracted people's war was not accepted in a mechanical or abstract sense. Rather, in light of local, historical, and political conditions, it was developed in revolutionary practice. The meaning once attached to the term "path" a hundred years ago has, in Indian revolutionary practice, reached a comprehensive essence. Mobilising people through a protracted armed struggle is fundamentally different from mobilising them through general democratic struggles. Protracted people's war integrates all people's struggles, spatial and temporal particularities, levels of popular preparedness, ongoing changes, and numerous concrete demands, and advances them toward the seizure of state power.

A revolutionary path is never settled through scholarly sophistry. Whether in Russia or in China, it developed continuously through practice. The forces engaged in practice elevated it into the realm of political theory. History presents the paths of past revolutions to people preparing to undertake new ones. That same history also guides them to formulate a revolutionary path suited to their country's specific conditions, taking into account changes occurring worldwide. While a broad path may be outlined in advance, numerous modifications inevitably occur in the course of building a revolution. These changes are also shaped by the particular stage of the revolution.

In any country, the classes holding state power can be identified through the mode of production. Based on the mode of production and the nature of the state, the revolutionary programme is determined. The revolutionary path forms part of a political strategy. A protracted people's war does not mean that the Communist Party merely waits for the people to spontaneously take up arms and rise *en masse*. It is a process of preparing the people for revolution. From the very beginning, people must be trained as political activists capable of handling arms. The people must transform themselves into a force capable of confronting a powerful state.

For this to happen, the people must free themselves from the social and cultural shackles that have bound them for hundreds and thousands of years. In our country, the protracted people's war is evolving into a multidimensional process through which oppressed people liberate themselves socially, transform into a political force capable of seizing state power, and become an army capable of confronting a powerful enemy strategically. Even the decisive struggle to break free from social backwardness, which obstructs people from becoming a revolutionary army, has a protracted character. It advances through multiple phases and stages, amid victories and defeats. Through this process, the specificity of the Indian revolution itself is crystallised.

The Paradox of the Argument: "The World has Changed"

Those who do not understand this process argue that the people are not ready for revolution or question why everyone must take up arms. There is no shortage of those who propose a theory that first people must be ideologically awakened to take up arms, and only later carry out the revolution. Nor is there any shortage in our country of those who argue that the Communist Party should assume leadership only after crores of people independently take up arms and march toward the seizure of state power.

There are also those who insist that arms will eventually have to be taken up, but argue that conditions are not yet favourable, and that armed struggle should be considered only when that day arrives. Another argument claims that armed struggle is not required in all times and all places- that it should be undertaken only when conditions are exceptionally favourable. Many others argue that the world has changed so much that the path of protracted armed struggle is no longer necessary. Merely invoking the phrase

“the world has changed” seems sufficient to argue against the PPW. Under that pretext, anything can be justified. Those who hide behind theory and those who create a gulf between theory and concrete reality can comfortably pass their time in intellectual debate.

A protracted people’s war is not about taking up arms occasionally, when compelled, or at some distant moment. Tactics may be altered in numerous ways, but it remains a scientific, comprehensive, social, political, and cultural path of struggle. It has developed in accordance with the specific conditions of India and the present stage of movement development. The extent to which the protracted people’s war proceeds in this country through ups and downs, fluctuations, and immense hardship has already been proven. The setbacks it faces today do not signify its failure; rather, they demonstrate that it is, in essence, the correct path.

Are the present massacres occurring merely because people have taken up arms, or because they are pursuing the path of a protracted people’s war?

The argument that the government resorts to armed repression because revolutionaries have taken up arms has long existed. If this were true, the state should at least ignore the unarmed struggles carried out by the revolutionary movement. There should be some space, however limited, for legal struggles. In our country, even this space is being systematically choked out. The ruling classes fear that unarmed struggles, too, will evolve from partial, issue-based struggles into struggles for liberation. They are anxious that such struggles will come under the leadership of the revolutionary movement. It is this fear that has driven them toward massive military offensives.

At its core, this conflict is between the parliamentary-democratic path and the path of liberation through protracted people’s war. Unlike the ruling powers of the past, today’s fascist rulers do not believe that killing individuals will eliminate the threat. They seek to annihilate the very path of protracted people’s war, which has developed among the people as a revolutionary tradition of struggle, an insurgent energy, and a culture of defiance. For rulers committed to a corporate-capitalist model of development, the decimation of this movement has now become a decisive state policy.

They may never succeed in this task, but they will not confine their agenda to armed repression alone. Just as the state demands that the people submit to all its armed forces, it also demands that all thinking minds surrender to its ideas. A state that unleashes extreme repression through weapons first declares that people have no right to take up arms. Thereafter, it spreads the argument that people are not prepared to take up arms. One operates in the legal domain; the other in the ideological realm. Both aim at undermining the revolutionary path of protracted people's war.

Accordingly, the state also launches an ideological war. Because the revolutionary path encompasses political, social, cultural, and military dimensions, the state attempts to destroy the protracted people's war from multiple fronts. The claim that there is no place for violence in a democracy is not merely a deception employed by an extremely violent state to mislead the people. It is deliberately crafted as an ideology to eliminate another ideology. It is precisely for this purpose that the argument-"this is not the time for armed struggle"- is systematically propagated throughout society.

This argument resonates with sections of the intelligentsia. They may know little about weapons. They are hardly familiar with ground-level military tactics. Their domain is the realm of ideas. Therefore, they are capable of understanding how ideas are born, how they spread, and whom they seek to secure approval from. Regrettably, they have failed to grasp this dynamic. Instead, from a narrowly humanitarian standpoint, they argue that saving lives is the most important priority.

Without criticising the state and the parliamentary path that have created a climate of terror in society through indiscriminate killings, they enter into an illogical debate addressed at revolutionaries: Is the path more important, or is the protection of lives primary? It is the state itself that has manufactured this social and psychological condition and pushed everyone into this false dichotomy.

Because this massacre is being carried out in the name of parliamentary democracy itself, this fact alone should provoke outrage among the intelligentsia and compel them to reject the parliamentary path as unworkable. Instead, the state has carefully drawn society- including the intelligentsia- toward its side in this ideological war. While waging armed war against its own people, it has made the revolutionaries' weapons the central issue. It has created a situation in which armed struggle is made to

appear incapable of advancing further. The real objective is to wipe out the path of protracted armed struggle altogether, and thereby proclaim that society endorses the parliamentary path.

Over the past five or six months, in this entire process, only those sympathetic to the revolution have stood firmly by the argument that armed struggle must continue. This development should astonish anyone. Over the last twenty-five years- indeed, especially over the last ten years- parliamentary democracy has degenerated in a far more grotesque manner than ever before. Yet, during this very period, the state has successfully engineered a profound ideological shift.

On the one hand, large sections of the intelligentsia criticise the Indian state for having transformed into an authoritarian, even fascist force. On the other hand, they argue that revolutionaries should follow the parliamentary path precisely. Moreover, they claim that Maoists are oblivious to the changed conditions of the present. According to them, had armed struggle been abandoned long ago, such violence would not have occurred.

Some go even further. Even as they describe in detail how thoroughly electoral politics has been corrupted, they continue to advise revolutionaries to abandon the path of armed struggle. Once this path is renounced, what exactly is the revolutionary organisation expected to do? Do they mean to suggest "legal" struggle? There is no clarity whatsoever. Is there, in fact, any legal space for struggles that go beyond routine agitations and that genuinely raise the militancy of the people? There is none. Therefore, they argue, Maoists must first abandon their militancy and their revolutionary objectives. Only then, they suggest, can struggles be conducted cautiously, ensuring that the people do not become militant.

Do any of those who argue that protracted people's war is inappropriate, wrong, must be altered, or at least should now be abandoned, possess such a practical perspective? Do they have the understanding that it is not rational to claim that the Maoist movement has reached its present condition merely because it adopted this path?

Many of those who declare that protracted armed struggle is inappropriate do not actually understand what exactly PPW means. Those who do understand it deliberately distort it. There have long been people in society who argue that a protracted people's war is wrong. They have held these views for years. Yet, nothing happens automatically as a result.

The state does not always attempt to annihilate the revolutionary movement through direct repression alone. Instead, it systematically creates the material and psychological conditions in which such arguments can flourish. It even cultivates, from within the movement itself, individuals who proclaim that the movement's own path is fundamentally wrong.

The Appearance and the Core Dynamics of the Betrayals

It is in this context that the recent surrenders, carried out in the name of renouncing armed struggle, must be understood.

So what, then, has actually happened? How are we to comprehend this development?

Only by closely and clearly examining the surrenders of senior Maoist leaders Mallojula Venugopal Rao and Takkellapalli Vasudeva Rao can one grasp the depth of the present crisis confronting the revolutionary movement. Although these acts were carried out by individuals, they cannot be confined to individual action alone. Even though this treachery occurred amid the annihilation campaign known as Operation Kagar, it would be incorrect to assume that repression alone forced them out of the revolutionary movement and compelled them to step outside it. Nor can this be explained simply by arguing that stagnation over the last decade-caused by repression and other factors- led them to this decision.

In this context, Mallojula Venugopal Rao has raised several theoretical and practical issues. Such issues inevitably arise within any living political formation. We have also seen, in the revolutionary movement's own statements, how long these discussions have been underway. Merely declaring these positions to be wrong will not, by itself, enable us to overcome the present crisis. At this juncture, it is essential once again to discuss the revolutionary path and to expose the hollowness of his arguments, and this task must be carried out effectively.

At the same time, it must not become an obstacle to understanding the crucial question of what actually transpired within the revolutionary movement. One must be careful not to accord even an indirect "theoretical status" to this surrender. Doing so would be harmful in every respect.

For anyone familiar with the organisational robustness and combative character of the Maoist movement, the ongoing surrenders that have followed the armed counter-offensives of these two leaders are deeply

shocking. They cannot be attributed merely to individual weaknesses, nor simply to the conditions of repression and uncertainty produced by Operation Kagar. Such factors may exist, but they do not explain the phenomenon as a whole. The central question is this: from which direction, and toward which direction, has this entire process evolved?

Even when extremely adverse conditions had fully emerged by the time of the Karregutta encirclement and the martyrdom of Basavaraju, the revolutionary ranks appeared to remain courageous, resolute, and committed. This situation persisted until the end of May. What forces came into operation thereafter, producing such a rapid shift within a short span of time? How did they operate? What led to the large-scale destruction of organisational structures?

Comparisons are often misleading. Yet if we place side by side the immense human devastation wrought by Kagar- resembling an internal war- and the organisational destruction that followed the internal betrayal, what does this comparison reveal? Over the last twenty-two months, and particularly over the last two months, which of these has delivered the more severe blow to the revolutionary movement?

If the essence of betrayal is not grasped, discussion remains confined to its outward form. Analysis then proceeds in fragments rather than as a totality. Isolated pieces of information are debated, their merits and demerits weighed, evidence and exceptions measured, one claim pitted against another in an attempt to determine what is true. Such an approach leads not to clarity but to confusion. Individual elements must be integrated into the whole, appropriate weight must be assigned to each, and the decisive factor emerging from their combined interaction must be identified. That alone constitutes a correct method of analysis. This entire matter must be examined precisely in this way.

Those who committed betrayal first transformed surrender into an ideology. This was not done in a single act, but step by step. By asserting that the abandonment of armed struggle was the decision of the martyred Basavaraju; by declaring that the revolutionary movement had failed; by presenting Kagar as the determining cause for the surrenders; and by arguing that, under present conditions, saving lives itself was revolutionary, surrender was sought to be converted into an official ideology. Through this process, legitimacy was conferred upon surrender.

No ideology emerges out of thin air or operates abstractly. It necessarily acquires a material base. The revolutionary movement has stated that Mallojula Venugopal carried out his surrender policy within the ranks, in violation of organisational principles. In this sense, the ideology of betrayal reached the ranks first. Precisely because it penetrated organisational structures at multiple levels, surrenders on such a large scale became possible.

The revolutionary movement has thus reached a profoundly tragic situation: a key leader transformed surrender into a policy. One can readily understand the consequences such a development produces within a clandestine organisation operating under intense repression. These are not ordinary consequences. From the enemy camp, repeatedly releasing videos urging everyone to surrender, providing phone numbers, and actively spreading the surrender tendency- only by viewing all these actions together can one grasp the depth and objective of the campaign that was conducted.

It requires no great effort to understand that this campaign was aimed at creating a favourable atmosphere for surrender, organising surrender, and drawing as many people as possible into it. From the outside, it may appear that phone numbers were merely provided so that “those on the other side” could make contact. In reality, the campaign was far more deliberate and systematic. Those involved were openly and consciously discharging their role.

While extensive discussion has taken place regarding the armed surrender of these two individuals, their subsequent and deliberate actions have scarcely been addressed. Reports indicate that the police have posted posters with their phone numbers in certain areas of movement. In other words, both sides are advancing the surrender process together.

When all these elements are taken together, no one can naively believe that these two simply returned home because they could no longer cope. Nor can their betrayal be reduced to the act of surrendering with arms. Even here, arms cannot be treated as the central issue. What is unravelled is a far deeper process. The coercive power of the state has expanded into orchestrating betrayal and surrender. Otherwise, the process would have remained limited to the surrender of these two individuals, perhaps followed by a few others.

It is also evident that even after surrendering, they continue- through their counter-revolutionary actions- to confront the revolutionary leadership's decision to persist with armed struggle. By observing everything that the state and the traitors are doing, the fascist slogan of a "Maoist-free India" becomes clearer in its real content. Compared to the killings carried out over twenty-two months, from ordinary people to the general secretary, the rulers have moved far more rapidly toward their objective in just these two months.

Is the aim to kill even the last Maoist and turn everyone into martyrs, or to transform them into traitors, defectors, and surrenderists? The state has confronted past movements in much the same way; there is nothing new in this approach. After a year of Kagar, the fascist state appears to have realised that it was not possible to completely annihilate the revolutionary movement through military means alone. From that point onward, it combined a strategy of enacting betrayal with military repression, running both simultaneously.

In the past, the state primarily used betrayal to intensify physical violence. Through it, individuals could be eliminated, and the movement weakened. This betrayal, however, is of a different kind. Because the person prepared for betrayal was a former leader in the highest body, the objective here is to destroy the organisational structure itself, erase the revolutionary path, and strip revolutionary ideology of its credibility, its capacity for resistance, and its historical legitimacy.

Alongside all this, the aim is to inflict a moral blow on the revolutionary movement- so that whenever sacrifice is remembered, betrayal comes to mind; whenever struggle is mentioned, counter-revolutionary surrender is recalled. This is precisely what has occurred. The decisive question is whether we recognise this betrayal for what it truly is, or whether we fail to grasp its full political and historical meaning. That is the question.

To grasp the roots of this destruction is to undertake a strategic effort of reconstruction for the future. Debate alone will not suffice. We know the history of struggles and sacrifices, and we know the history of betrayals as well. The Indian state today may have resorted to monstrous conspiracies and betrayals, but it has never ultimately achieved what it set out to accomplish. What it has succeeded in doing, on a large scale, is inflicting damage on organisational structures. These tasks have been carried

out by these two on behalf of the state. Questions of who led the betrayal and who followed belonged to the initial phase, when the thought of surrender entered the organisation like a worm gnawing at the roots. That distinction no longer holds. Advising everyone to surrender and actively managing matters in that direction is no ordinary betrayal. By declaring that the world has changed and that this is no longer the era of armed struggle, surrender has been transformed into the idiom of this period of betrayal.

In essence, this is a military and ideological war of annihilation chosen by the state. Only by clearly recognising the present phase of war can the relevance of the Indian revolutionary path be understood more profoundly- and its necessity for the future grasped.

All supporters of the revolutionary movement must carry this understanding to the people. This is an imperative task.

Footnotes

1. “The illusion of wisdom” in Greek. Used by Plato to describe sophists- those who *think* they know but do not.
2. The term *fanshen* literally means “to turn over”. In revolutionary usage it came to signify a radical transformation. In the context of the Chinese revolution and Hinton’s book, it refers to peasants *throwing off the landlord yoke, standing up for themselves, gaining land and political consciousness, and entering a new social order.* *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* was **first published in 1966**, which is when Hinton completed and released the book based on his notes and experiences from the late 1940s in rural China.

A Discussion on the Path of the Indian Revolution

- N. Ravi

The Indian revolutionary movement is mired in an extremely severe crisis. Over the past two decades, although it has faced defeats and retreats in some regions, it has also moved forward in others with inspiring successes, continuing to provide hope to India's oppressed people. However, over the last decade, the movement has entered a state of stagnation.

On top of this, after the central government launched the “Kagar” war in the Dandakaranya and Jharkhand regions in 2024, ten Central Committee members—including Central Committee Secretary Comrade Basavaraju—were killed within just one and a half years. Among them, Comrades Raju, Kosa, and Hidma were captured and shot. Additionally, many State Committee members, hundreds of leaders and activists, ordinary Adivasi people, and PLGA fighters have been killed. In the wake of these losses, doubts have begun to arise regarding the very survival of the revolutionary movement.

In such situations, reformist or ultra-left tendencies often emerge. Defeatism, desertion, and even betrayal can surface—trends for which there are countless examples in both the Indian and international communist movements. After five decades of protracted people's war leading to stagnation, we are once again witnessing the emergence of such tendencies in India.

In October, first under the leadership of Mallojula Venugopal and Vasudeva Rao, and later under the leadership of Ramder—the first Adivasi Central Committee member from the Dandakaranya region—up to three hundred people surrendered to the government with their weapons. Then a few more hundred guerrillas and leaders surrendered in different batches.

This has strengthened the argument that confronting the powerful Indian State through protracted armed struggle is impossible.

In a 22-page letter, Mallojula Venugopal wrote that India should follow neither the Russian path nor the Chinese path, but should instead develop a unique “Indian path.” However, he did not explain exactly what that meant. Let us look at some of his main criticisms. (Another article by Comrade Vimal in this booklet discusses these aspects in detail, so I will touch upon them only briefly.)

Venugopal writes that however great the party’s “achievements” may be, the mistakes it has committed are even more serious. He argues that the party has failed to build a relatively strong and stable organized revolutionary movement in any region. He states: “It has lagged behind in understanding changing social conditions. It has continued to make mistakes in assessing the enemy’s strength and the strength of revolutionary forces, and in building the revolutionary movement with appropriate tactics. It has committed dogmatic errors in applying the teachings of Marxist teachers to the specific conditions of time and place in our country.”

Some of these criticisms contain partial truths. There are certainly aspects that need to be corrected. As Venugopal himself acknowledges, the party’s line and policies are the reason for its past achievements. It is also partly true that the movement faces a severe situation today because of past mistakes. However, we must examine the solution Venugopal proposes.

Even today, mistakes regarding mass organizations should be viewed critically, and the party must correct them. In that sense, the entire party needs to be reshaped. These are matters that mass organizations, their leadership, and the party must resolve. It is clear that unless the issues raised by Venugopal are creatively resolved, the movement cannot move forward.

However, as a solution, Venugopal proposes temporarily abandoning armed struggle and rebuilding the party by working openly among the people. He claims the party’s only remaining task is to renounce dogmatic practices—such as invoking the “line of protracted people’s war” and rigid adherence to the “Chinese path” or “Russian path”—and to adopt a line suited to Indian conditions. Yet, Venugopal does not define what that line

is. For now, his logic seems to be: abandon armed struggle first, and think later.

In the search for a line suitable to India's concrete conditions, many Marxist-Leninist parties have emerged, and various tactics have been attempted. None have succeeded. The Maoist party, which has adhered to the protracted people's war line, is the only one that has built strong mass organisations and significant struggles. It is becoming clear that even this is not sufficient. But is the "temporary abandonment of armed struggle" the answer?

Today, there is nothing "temporary" about abandoning armed struggle; it would be a permanent surrender. When Comrade Kondapally Sitaramayya called for a temporary withdrawal in 1977, there was no practical abandonment of the armed struggle — only a suspension of certain "actions." Today, the proposal implies surrendering weapons and dissolving guerrilla forces, effectively washing away nearly fifty years of effort.

In the present era of fascist rule, who does this strengthen? Undoubtedly, it only strengthens Modi, Shah, and the Hindutva forces. Are there conditions in India today to build a mass movement completely in the open? This is a state that brands Sonam Wangchuk as having links with Pakistan merely for demanding the inclusion of Laddakh under the Sixth Schedule. It is a state that banned the "Mulvasi Bachao Manch" and jailed its leaders on the ridiculous charge of criticizing government policies—simply because they demanded constitutional rights. This is the reality in almost all Adivasi areas and many rural plains.

If the leadership abandons armed struggle, will they really be allowed to build mass movements? Venugopal knows they will not. He writes: "With our party no longer among you as before, we know how much the counter-revolutionary forces... will harass you." Should the Adivasis be left to face brutal state violence on their own? This will not help the movement now or in the future.

Furthermore, Amit Shah did not even acknowledge this offer of "laying down the arms" and declared "either surrender or perish". This statement once again exposes the true nature of the fascist state.

Ultimately, the decision to carry on an armed struggle must be made by those who are actually waging it—those who are losing their lives in the

process. The opinions of the Adivasi people, leaders of mass organizations, and local leadership in Dandakaranya, Bihar, and Jharkhand are crucial. Since the period of *Salwa Judum*, they bore immense hardships and stood as the backbone of the movement. For them, this is not a theoretical debate; it is an immediate question of life and death. Are they all truly thinking of surrender?

When a struggle is in a difficult position, even if a section of the people wavers, it is the responsibility of the vanguard party to instil optimism and a historical perspective. At the same time, the party must deeply analyze and correct its “grave political, strategic, and tactical mistakes.” Unilateral abandonment of armed struggle and surrendering the arms to the fascist state is not the solution.

Let us now examine the question of the path of the Indian Revolution more closely.

Even before Venugopal’s letter, many argued that “capitalism has arrived in India,” and that Maoists—like ostriches burying their heads in the sand—have failed to recognize this. They claim the movement clings blindly to the analysis that India is a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society, leading to a failed struggle and needless sacrifice. Therefore, we must discuss the path of the Indian revolution.

In the history of the world communist movement, two principal paths have developed:

1. General Insurrection (The Russian Path): Under Lenin’s leadership, the working class formed an alliance with the peasantry to carry out uprisings in cities—the centers of political and economic power—to seize state power.

2. Protracted People’s War (The Chinese Path): After urban uprisings were suppressed in 1927, the Communist Party of China, under Mao, retreated to the Jinggangshan mountains to establish liberated areas. Mao concluded that in a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society, the revolutionary army must first liberate rural areas where the enemy is weak before ultimately seizing the cities.

Marxist teachers have always emphasized that these general principles must be applied concretely according to the specific conditions of each country.

There is also a third path— the parliamentary path. Except for hardened revisionists, no Marxists accept this line. History provides numerous examples showing that the working class can never attain state power through the parliamentary path. Therefore, this article does not discuss this revisionist route. Instead, we will focus only on the two primary revolutionary paths and the specific path that may be adopted under Indian conditions.

Whether it was the insurrection in Russia or the protracted people's war in China, both succeeded only under specific conditions.

Historical Conditions for Success

* **The Russian Path (General Insurrection):** Russia was a weak, only recently developing capitalist country. Unlike Western Europe, it had not undergone a democratic revolution, and no democratic system had been established; a monarchical system prevailed. Additionally, the First World War created unique pressures. Under these specific conditions, a general insurrection succeeded in an extremely backward capitalist country.

* **The Chinese Path (Protracted People's War):** In China, semi-feudal relations and warlords prevailed. There was not even nominal parliamentary democracy. Crucially, the Communist Party of China (CPC) possessed an army from the outset as a result of earlier uprisings. Furthermore, because a Soviet government already existed in Russia, the CPC received strong external support.

Formulating a Military Strategy

Regarding military strategy, no fundamentally different approach has been conceived beyond these two types. While there may be local variations, there are broadly only two paths:

1. **General Insurrection:** Secretly preparing and mobilizing the people for a primary armed uprising in the cities to seize state power and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this path, an army is not built prior to the uprising.

2. **Protracted People's War:** Preparing for revolution by building a people's army in backward rural areas and geographically favourable regions. This involves guerrilla warfare to liberate the countryside before

ultimately seizing the cities. This path cannot—and should not—take the same form in every country. For instance, in Vietnam, the 1968 “Tet Offensive” involved a simultaneous attack on a hundred cities. Though the communists suffered heavy losses, it was a decisive turning point in the anti-American struggle.

The Problem of Mechanical Application

In the global revolutionary movement, these two paths were often mechanically generalized. A specific formula gained universal acceptance: in capitalist countries, follow the Russian path of insurrection; in semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries, follow the Chinese path of protracted people’s war.

This led to a peculiar situation in India. After the Naxalbari uprising of 1967, the CPI (ML)—under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar— theorized that India was a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country and adopted the slogan, “*The Chinese path is our path.*” They even went as far as declaring that Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the Communist Party of China, was “our Chairman.”

Consequently, the Naxalite movement faced years of stigma and distortion. Although the slogan regarding the Chairman was withdrawn shortly thereafter, the movement struggled for a long time against the label of being a party that blindly imitated the Chinese model without regard for local realities.

The Evolution of the Maoist Line

Because of the ultra-left tactics adopted by the CPI (ML) in its early years, the protracted path itself came under scrutiny. However, by correcting those errors and firmly adhering to the line of protracted people’s war and mass line, parties such as the CPI (ML) People’s War, Party Unity, and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) successfully built the People’s Guerrilla Army and expanded into several states—a history we shall set aside for now.

If we ask whether the Maoist party today is completely bound to the political and military line adopted in China, the broad answer is “yes,” but with significant modifications suited to India. As previously noted, unlike the Chinese experience, there was no standing army here at the outset. It was only after nearly two decades of mobilizing individuals and

engaging in struggle that the People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) was formed in 2000 which was subsequently changed into People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) after the formation of CPI (Maoist), with the merger of CPI (ML) People's War and MCC. Even now, it has not transitioned into a People's Liberation Army (PLA). Consequently, military tactics have had to adapt to this reality. Since it is impossible to adopt Mao's military tactics exactly as outlined, the claim that the party has "blindly followed" the Chinese path is incorrect.

The Debate over India's Mode of Production vis-a-vis Revolutionary Path

Alongside this military line, several parties have argued that India is a capitalist country rather than a semi-colonial, semi-feudal one. Setting aside the CPI and CPI (M), groups like the SUCI and CLI have asserted since the formation of the CPI (ML) that India is capitalist, criticizing the movement for imposing an unsuitable revolutionary line.

However, we must ask: did these parties make any attempt—along the lines suggested by Lenin—to build a revolutionary party, a working-class movement, or a peasant movement based on their capitalist analysis? There is no evidence of such preparations for revolution.

Conversely, since the Naxalbari struggle, many ML parties have argued for tactics that concretely apply to Indian conditions. They experimented with using elections for revolutionary ends or argued that it was not yet time for guerrilla struggle. Yet, none achieved the successes of the Maoist party, nor could they expand or mobilize the masses into mass struggles and people's war to the same degree. Their failure to build strong mass organizations serves as practical experience—tested on the anvil of practice—that refutes the correctness of their tactics.

New Challenges and Changing Relations

Now that the movement has suffered severe setbacks—with many leaders martyred and others surrendering—the party's line and tactics are under intense scrutiny. Since Mallojula Venugopal has questioned long-standing tactics and called for an "Indian path," the argument that continued commitment to armed struggle is "dogmatism" has gained traction among some.

Undoubtedly, India has undergone significant social changes in the six decades since Naxalbari, driven by two factors:

1. Peasant Armed Struggle: In regions like the Telugu states, Bihar, and Jharkhand, landlordism was shaken, and feudal land relations were transformed significantly due to anti-feudal peasant struggles.

2. Imperialist and Comprador Interests: Imperialists and the Comprador Big Bourgeois (CBB) forces and introduced changes in land relations to suit investment needs.

Consequently, while land remains a crucial issue, it has become harder to mobilize the oppressed under the simple slogan of “land to the tiller.” Market relations have reached the remotest corners of the country. While some argue that no qualitative transformation has occurred and the society remains semi-feudal, let us discuss the revolutionary line from a different angle.

The Rise of the Comprador Big Bourgeoisie (CBB)

The CBB and landlords constitute the ruling classes in India. It is a fact that the CBB has risen to a leading role. In 2001, the People’s War Congress recognized the contradiction between the CBB and the Indian people one of the main contradictions. Although this position shifted when the Maoist party formed in 2004, Venugopal’s letter suggests the party is again preparing to recognize the CBB’s growing leadership role and the contradiction between it and the masses as one of the main contradictions.

Even while identifying changes in production relations, the Maoist party has concluded that a qualitative transformation into capitalist relations hasn’t happened. However, in the coming decades, there will be further growth of capitalist relations. In some states, the urban population has already reached 40–45%. Even in rural areas, villages are no longer isolated; transport and communication have expanded enormously.

In such a changing landscape, what should the revolutionary line be?

The Relationship between Production Relations and Revolutionary Strategy

This is precisely where the relationship between the relations of production and the revolutionary line needs to be determined creatively.

Instead, what has been occurring is a mechanical borrowing from the past experiences of Russia and China. The revolutionary line consists of two fundamental components: the political line and the military line.

The political line is directly linked to the relations of production. For example, if capitalist relations have become the decisive relations in a country—even if feudal remnants persist—then the revolution that must take place there is a socialist revolution. Even in this case, the role of specific extra-economic relations in that country (for instance, in India, relations shaped by the hierarchical caste system or by the relations among different nationalities) also influences the direction of the revolution. Broadly speaking, however, it can be said that such a revolution would be socialist in character.

Even in semi-colonial countries, capitalist relations may grow, and by taking this into account, there may be specific changes regarding the classes that can be united. Likewise, in a country where semi-colonial and semi-feudal relations—rather than capitalist relations—remain decisive, the revolution can be characterized as a New Democratic Revolution led by the proletariat leading four class alliance of workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. Feudal Class, Comprador Big Bourgeoisie and Imperialism are the targets of the revolution.

The Impact of Imperialist Domination

In our country, discussions on changes in the relations of production mainly revolve around the transitions taking place in the agricultural sector. That focus is inevitable. However, we must also keep in mind the reality that the economic domination of imperialist monopolies will, under no circumstances, allow India to break out of semi-colonial relations. This is a crucial factor in determining the political line.

Regarding the question of the military line, until now it has largely been discussed only in relation to the relations of production—specifically, whether it should take the form of a general insurrection or a protracted people's war. Based on this assessment, communist parties have determined their respective lines.

The Distortion of Democracy in India

However, in a country like ours, even if there are significant changes in the relations of production and capitalist relations expand considerably,

it is clear that they will not mirror those in Europe or the United States. That is to say, democratic rights and parliamentary democracy of that kind have no possibility of being established here in the foreseeable future. Parliamentary democracy has been reduced to the act of casting votes once every five years. Even regarding that, we are seeing today how the fascist BJP buys votes and even elected representatives and resorts to *Vote Chori*.

We are also witnessing how all the so called “independent” systems and institutions—including the judiciary—are shamelessly and openly prostrating themselves at the feet of the rulers. Even the minimal democratic rights that previously existed in our country are being trampled day by day. “Bulldozer justice” is being implemented, and there is no one to question it. Not only do the police impose illegal repression on movements and activists, but they also take lives in the name of “encounters,” and there is no one to ask questions. In capitalist countries where bourgeois-democratic revolutions have taken place, such extra-legal repression against their own citizens generally does not occur. Furthermore, there is not even a minimally “independent” media.

State-Backed Violence and the Limits of Open ‘Legal’ Struggles

Alongside this direct state violence, private upper-caste violence and Hindutva violence—which operate with State backing—are Omni-present. This violence is not restrained by any police force, any law, or any courts. In Bihar, private armies once ruled with impunity. In many regions, even if not in the exact form of the private armies seen in Bihar, landlord and upper-caste violence functioning with State backing exists on a large scale. Such phenomena are not seen in bourgeois-democratic countries.

All of this reveals the true nature of the Indian state. Even the limited possibilities for democratic struggles in our country must be utilized fully and necessarily, but their limitations must also be clearly understood. By looking at the repression and rights violations being imposed today on all supposedly “non-violent” and “within-the-law” movements, the limits of such struggles become clear.

Whether in the national capital or in the capital of Telangana, authorities are not giving permissions even for small demonstrations, *dharnas*, or even hall meetings. Freedom of expression itself is facing severe

violations. Incidents that constantly remind us that Indian democracy is not even a bourgeois democracy of the Western type are occurring every day. Therefore, even if we assume that the relations of production in India have transformed into distorted capitalist relations, what exists here is a distorted, deformed democracy. Consequently, “legal struggles” are subject to severe limitations.

On the other hand, revolutionary mass movements must be built by fully taking into account the changed social, economic, and political developments. Only by correctly analysing the changed and changing relations of production and class contradictions, and launching struggles accordingly, can the masses be mobilized. However, even if relations of production have changed, armed struggle has not become irrelevant in our country.

Learning from the Experience of the Last Decades

That said, the revolutionary movement can advance a protracted armed struggle only by drawing lessons from the experiences of the past four decades—especially the last two. It is necessary to review where, since the 1990s, there has been a lack of alignment between the changes taking place and the tactics being adopted. It is necessary to examine where and at what point the tactics adopted in the military line went wrong. Likewise, it is essential to review where mistakes were made in the political tactics that should have been adopted in accordance with the changes that have occurred over these three decades. All of this must be done. Without doing so, there is no possibility of the revolutionary movement emerging from its crisis. Even so, thinking that abandoning armed struggle is the way to overcome these shortcomings is incorrect.

Many people argue that a protracted war is no longer possible by pointing to the growth of communication facilities, surveillance, and a modern army. But they forget that “Orwellian” surveillance is even more extensive and easier to implement in urban areas. The tactics that need to be adopted in urban areas and plain non-forest regions must also be developed creatively. Therefore, whatever actions need to be undertaken in urban areas to build mass movements and the revolutionary movement must also be carried out within the framework of a protracted people’s war.

Breaking the Mechanical Linkage

This also means that the mechanical relationship—the idea that capitalist relations automatically imply general insurrection, and semi-feudal, semi-colonial relations automatically imply a protracted people’s war path—must be abandoned. That is not a stone inscription. If we abandon this mechanical linkage, even those who believe that the protracted people’s war path is the correct one will be able to look at the relations developing in society more objectively and openly. We can shed the “fear” that recognizing capitalist relations necessarily means abandoning the line of protracted people’s war.

On the other hand, those who argue that protracted people’s war must be abandoned because capitalist relations have been established must also abandon their mechanical view. They must stop believing that, because it is a capitalist society, one should confine oneself to open mass struggles, use elections, and prepare for a general insurrection (while theoretically accepting an underground party yet failing for decades to take even a single step in that direction).

The Revolutionary Path for India

Under India’s present specific conditions— old feudal relations have ceased to exist in their earlier form, and distorted capitalist relations are developing (due to people’s struggles and to the extent permitted by imperialists in pursuit of their interests) and will certainly expand further in that direction in the coming decades.

However, along with the relations of production, one must also take into account the authoritarian nature of the State, the actual manner in which the distorted “bourgeois democracy” is being implemented, and the possibilities for the survival of a people’s army and the continuation of a people’s war due to the geographical and social conditions that are conducive to protracted people’s war. Both the political line and the military line— in short, the revolutionary line—must be determined after taking all these factors into consideration. In India, that can be nothing other than the line of protracted people’s war, making concrete changes that are suitable to the Indian conditions.

The Challenge of Mobilizing the Basic Classes

The Maoist party has never believed that the revolutionary movement

should be confined only to the forests. This is clear to anyone who has read the party's documents. Alongside protracted armed struggle in India, the movement has always maintained the consciousness of organizing millions of workers to build a strong revolutionary working-class movement. It has aimed to mobilize landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants in the plains under the slogan "land to the tiller," and to build movements around broader peasant issues.

However, it is a fact that the party has been unable to resolve the problems that have arisen—and continue to arise—in translating this into practice. For two decades, it has been unable to break through this impasse. Except among the Adivasi people, it has not been able to overcome the difficulties in building mass movements among the basic sections of the population. It is necessary to review whether this is related to specific tactics and tasks adopted under the protracted path. That work must be done. But abandoning armed struggle in the name of a "temporary withdrawal," especially at the initiative of only a few leaders, is incorrect.

Preserving Forces vs. Preserving the Revolution

Even defeated struggles can continue to inspire future generations, but struggles that permanently compromise and capitulate plunge the people into despair. If one thinks only of preserving fighting forces from a purely humanitarian angle, that approach ultimately harms the revolution and thereby ultimately the interests of the toiling masses. Furthermore, if those same forces imagine they can move forward by adhering to democratic methods and building struggles from the ground up, they would be failing to understand the nature of the Indian State entirely—and would once again be plunging the people into illusions about the existing system.

Summing up the above discussion, a few conclusions can be drawn:

- * We must move away from the mechanical linkage that dictates: if a country has capitalist relations, a general insurrection is the only path; if it has semi-colonial, semi-feudal relations, then the line of protracted people's war is the only path.
- * Protracted people's war should not be equated mechanically with the Chinese path. Keeping in mind a country's specific conditions, the changes taking place in the relations of production, and the strength of the modern state, suitable modifications must be made to this line.

- * Whether on the grounds that mistakes need correction or out of a humanitarian concern to preserve forces, abandoning armed struggle at the present juncture is incorrect. Especially while fascist forces are in power, such a step would strengthen those forces and cause the people to lose hope in revolutionary struggle. Claiming the struggle can be carried out “democratically” reflects a complete misreading of the Indian state.
- * Given the importance of the workers’ movement, urban movements, and the peasant movement in our country, political and military tactics must be developed to integrate these sectors effectively.
- * In light of five decades of experience, appropriate tactics suited to Indian conditions must be evolved by learning from mistakes within the revolutionary line itself. This applies to both military and political shortcomings.
- * Even if capitalist relations expand in India, they will remain highly constrained and distorted. The authoritarian, fascist nature of the state, the severe limits on open, legal forms of “democratic” struggle, the erosion of minimal rights, and the existence of vast rural regions all indicate that a protracted people’s war—reshaped to suit Indian conditions—is the only revolutionary path for this country.

Not An Internal Problem of Maoists

N. Venugopal

From the days of the Naxalbari uprising, for more than five and a half decades, with periodic creative additions and changes, remaining committed to that path in different forms, exerting a wide influence on Telugu society as People's War from 1980 to 2004, and over the last twenty years existing under the name Communist Party of India (Maoist), the revolutionary movement's organisational structure has seen its situation turn upside down within a single month. Described two decades ago by the Prime Minister of the country as the gravest internal security threat, having expanded its organisational presence to more than twenty states, having achieved many political and military successes, and having exercised an immense influence for five and a half decades on Indian social life as a whole, and on Telugu social, political, and cultural life in particular, this revolutionary movement has now reached the complex question of what its future will be. From a historical and philosophical perspective, one can express optimism that as long as class society exists, as long as class struggle—direct or indirect—continues, as long as people suffer problems in their daily lives, and as long as people have aspirations for a better life, such organisations and struggles may experience ups and downs but cannot be completely wiped out. Even so, in the present moment, a practically helpless and despairing predicament has taken shape in reality.

In truth, this helpless and despairing situation did not begin suddenly just now. The Salwa Judum of twenty years ago and Operation Green Hunt of fifteen years ago tried and failed to bring about precisely such an outcome. After that, once the Sangh Parivar government came to power, a more systematic, coordinated, and perhaps more decisively planned assault—possibly with even greater assistance from Israel's Mossad—was launched. The attacks carried out under various names such as Operation Samadhan, Operation Prahar, and Operation Anaconda functioned like a

kind of dress rehearsal. Thereafter, Operation Kagar began, and for the past two years the revolutionary movement has been taking successive blows. Many leaders have been killed at the hands of state forces. Numerous Adivasis who were not part of armed formations were also killed by the security forces. Adivasis were intimidated. Camps were set up deep inside forests, and with thousands of security personnel the forests were combed thoroughly. Adivasi villages were plunged into fear in an attempt to deprive revolutionaries of shelter. Using the most advanced technology, unprecedented methods were employed to track down the whereabouts of revolutionaries. Attempts were made to turn Adivasis, and even some among the revolutionaries, into covert informers. The totality of these multiple attacks is what constitutes Operation Kagar. Declaring this to be the final war, the Sangh Parivar announced that it would create a Maoist-free India by March 31, 2026.

As the killing of revolutionaries and Adivasis continued on such a massive scale, and as people recognised that this war was being waged with the strategy of handing over the mineral wealth of central Indian forests to corporates, strong opposition to Operation Kagar began to emerge in wider society. There was a surge in demands to stop Operation Kagar and to hold talks with the revolutionary movement. Since this opposition and these demands arose not only from sympathisers of the revolutionary movement but also from all opposition political parties, from civil society activists who generally do not agree with revolutionaries, and from people's organisations, the ruling classes slightly altered their tactics. While somewhat reducing the massacres of Adivasis, they began intimidating them and showcasing surrenders, while at the same time launching even more intense security force attacks directly against armed revolutionary activists. They formulated a new strategy combining military and psychological warfare, recognising that it was necessary to inflict psychological damage even more than military damage on the revolutionary movement. On one side, massive troop deployments and successive attacks continued; on the other, efforts began to undermine public confidence in the revolutionary movement, to sow seeds of doubt about it, and to spread confusion, despair, and despondency. Perhaps these developments are an illustration of the deep state's strategy against the Indian revolutionary movement.

As it became clear that the revolutionary movement was being battered by successive attacks and was in a weakened condition, a counter-

current emerged in media: its role was belittled, mocked, blamed, and subjected to sarcastic and often meaningless commentary. Various criticisms were launched claiming that the revolutionary leadership and its sympathisers lacked understanding of social conditions, or that whatever understanding they had was insufficient. Some of these criticisms may have relevance and can be discussed seriously, but the context in which they emerged and the cheap manner of their expression are particularly noteworthy. Those who had so far refrained from voicing criticism because of the revolutionary movement's influence; those who believed in the theory of class collaboration under the influence of parliamentary communist parties and in Khrushchev's theory of "peaceful transition"; those who once were with the revolutionary movement but abandoned its practice, ideology, and values; those who know nothing at all about the revolutionary movement; those who know nothing yet believe they know everything; those who were once revolutionary activists or leaders, later surrendered to the state, and now live their own lives but are eager to throw stones at the revolutionary movement whenever they get the chance; those who, out of blind hatred for Maoists, demean their own intellectual standing through absurd commentary; those who for twenty or thirty years have carried poison in their minds against the revolutionary movement and now feel they have found an opportunity to spew it; and Sangh Parivar activists who boast that Marxism and revolution are useless to this country and that only the Sanatana Manusmriti is India's culture—all these varied groups joined this chorus. It is astonishing how many mouths opened in such a short time to hurl stones at the revolutionary movement. One might recognise that about ten percent of these constitute critiques that deserve discussion, but ninety percent is mere meaningless verbosity and hatred. Moreover, ninety out of a hundred of these people have never uttered even a single word condemning the state's atrocities or constitutional violations.

In this context, individuals occupying the highest positions within the revolutionary movement itself declared that the revolutionary path was wrong, that because of this the movement could not progress and suffered losses, that present conditions do not favour armed struggle or the path of protracted people's war, and therefore that laying down arms and engaging in legal struggles among the people is the correct course. They announced their surrender before chief ministers and police officials

in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana, and handed over their weapons. In this process, some also said that revolutionary consciousness had not left them, and that they would enter public life and fight over people's issues. Whether these words will turn out to be true or not will be decided by the future.

These three kinds of combined attacks have to some extent stunned the revolutionary camp. On one side, people's everyday problems are increasing, ruling-class brutality is intensifying, and the need for struggle and revolution among the people is growing; on the other side, there is a situation where no form of struggle seems possible, where those who were long-time leaders of struggle themselves surrender to the state saying "this is not the time for struggle"; on yet another side, the very idea of struggle, and Marxism as the science of struggle, is being denounced; and on another side, fascist repression by the Hindu Brahmanical state is intensifying. Caught in this vicious cycle, the people are trapped.

In this entire situation, questions about who said what, who surrendered, and who intends to continue the struggle are not of primary importance. What matters is whether this overall situation benefits or harms society, people's aspirations, people's struggles, and the future. What matters is whether this situation strengthens the ruling classes or the oppressed classes in the ongoing class struggle. Even if one accepts for the sake of argument the claim that stopping the struggle at present is an unavoidable conclusion, what is the plan to take up the struggle again tomorrow? What is the method? How will the people's trust, betrayed today, be restored tomorrow? With what confidence will people who have lost faith today return to the path of struggle tomorrow? Or will this temporary withdrawal turn into a permanent withdrawal, forcing people to reconcile themselves to their fate and live unbearable lives? Or will people, instead of organising collectively, engage in scattered, ad hoc struggles in small, individual groups as best as they can? Ultimately, will the class system and class exploitation remain intact, with society continuing in an unequal, exploitative, and oppressive state, sustained only by small reforms, patchwork solutions, and makeshift fixes? Many such questions arise.

In this process, many harsh, mocking, and sarcastic comments were directed at the revolutionary movement, its sympathisers, and those who, through historical study, assert that the continuation of class struggle in

society is a law of history. Those who expressed the philosophical and historical conviction that armed struggle is the highest and inevitable form of class struggle were branded as people who want struggles—and deaths—to continue. Vulgar remarks were made: “Do you want them to die? Will you carry corpses in processions if they die? If you are so enamoured of weapons, why don’t you go and fight yourselves?”

If one states the historical truth that struggle will continue, and the social reality that struggle is necessary given the current state of our society, one receives bizarre replies such as “Then do you want people to die?” or “You go and do it yourself.” What is surprising is that these replies come not from ordinary people but from highly educated intellectuals who constantly preach and present themselves as Marxists.

The false meaning that struggle equals death has been imposed by the rulers. Rulers who desire a cemetery-like peace devoid of struggle say—and implement—the idea that if people struggle, they will be killed, that death is the answer to struggle. Do these intellectuals also share the same outlook? Instead of confronting the state and asking, “Struggle is human nature; when there are problems, there will be struggles—why do you kill people for struggling?”, these intellectuals advise the oppressed, “Struggle means death, so give up struggling.” Not stopping there, they mock those who stand with struggle, history, and the fulfilment of people’s aspirations by saying, “Then you go.” This is an empty, cheap argument—like saying “If this food is not good, then you cook it,” or “If this writing is not good, then you do it yourself.” In society, struggle finds expression in many forms. Based on their capacities, inclinations, preparedness, and many such factors, individuals choose different forms of struggle. No form of expression should be answered with killing. Yet the state refuses to tolerate certain forms of expression and uses killing as its response. That said, it is not as if killing is not used against other forms of expression as well—the state has killed hundreds of people who were not engaged in armed action.

Knowing all these realities, these intellectuals—who have never raised even a single question against the state or its atrocities—reserve their harshest words only for those who question the state and struggle against it.

Ceasing armed struggle, laying down arms, and waging legal struggles over people’s issues are not, in themselves, things that must necessarily be

rejected. Although armed struggle is an inevitable, implicit, and underlying component of class struggle, depending on spatial and temporal conditions, it may or may not take an explicit form. Even when it exists in explicit form, circumstances may necessitate its suspension.

In any such situation, weapons should not become the central issue. The necessity of taking up arms, the consciousness behind it, and the person who takes up arms are what matter. In the entire discussion on disarmament today, there is no mention at all of necessity, consciousness, or the human being. There may be differing opinions on whether the necessity to take up arms exists or not, but one must answer the question of whether systemic change can occur without force. In conditions where even relinquishing a small amount of power or property does not happen voluntarily or peacefully, is it not naïve to believe that a complete transformation of the system can occur without arms?

Therefore, the question is not whether one or two individuals, or two or three hundred people, have laid down arms, surrendered to the state, or withdrawn from struggle. The real question is: what message do they seek to convey about systemic change as a whole? What are they saying about history and about the people?

Some ask whether their actions negate the great victories they achieved in the past, the sacrifices they made, and their history. History is impartial. It will certainly record victories and failures, sacrifices and selfishness, exactly as they are. Today, someone in a fit of passion may erase all positive aspects and highlight only the negative ones—that may be their haste or temporary agitation. But at the same time, one must recognise this: is it not a betrayal of the very history they built, when those with such a glorious history of sacrifice fail to adhere even minimally to the methods, values, and discipline learned from that history, and place at the feet of the state—almost as if it were their personal property—both the physical and intellectual arsenal built with the sacrifices and heroic courage of thousands of martyrs?

Some believe that they acted out of grief over fallen comrades, with the noble intention of preventing further loss of life, to save their comrades' lives even at the cost of their own reputation; that they genuinely had ideological differences; that what they did was “for advancing the revolutionary movement”; and that they will henceforth fight legal, open

struggles over people's issues. How unreasonable this belief is can be shown through historical examples—or the future itself will provide the answer.

This sequence of news, arguments, and counterarguments has also led to many undesirable developments: mutual accusations, abusive language, mockery, sarcasm, sweeping generalisations, distortions of history, and self-glorification coupled with denigration of others. Therefore, what exactly has happened, how it should be viewed in a historical sequence of developments, and, amidst today's dusty whirlwinds of confusion, what ground must ultimately remain—all this must be discussed ruthlessly and without succumbing to emotion. But discussion does not mean unrestrained verbosity. Any discussion must rest on certain minimum historical, ideological, and rational foundations.

In the discussion that must take place today, people, people's problems, people's aspirations, and people's interests must be the first foundation. Anyone may hold any opinion about a struggle or the path it should take. But the fundamental discussion must be whether people in the present society have problems or not, and whether struggles are necessary to resolve those problems. If one accepts that struggle is necessary, then the question is whether there is a basic acceptance that such struggle is for protecting people's interests and fulfilling their aspirations. There is also a middle class that believes, "People have no problems at all. Even if problems exist, people are not ready for struggles. The present time is not a time for struggle." There are also those who believe, especially regarding the revolutionary movement, that "it is not a people's struggle at all." Such people too are now enthusiastically expressing their opinions and making comments, speaking as if Adivasis are not people, and as if working among Adivasis is not working among the people.

As a continuation of the discussion about the people, if the discussion is about the revolutionary movement, then class struggle and the diverse, varied expressions of class struggle must form the second foundation. If one accepts that this is a class society, one must also recognise that in a class society the ruling classes can never resolve the problems of the ruled, and in fact continually create new problems. Whether one accepts it or not, class struggle takes place daily in a class society, manifesting itself in myriad direct and indirect forms. Organisations arise to conduct class struggle more sharply, scientifically, and with fewer losses. Systemic

change—that is, the transfer of state power from one class to another—is neither easy nor peaceful. History teaches that such attempts at systemic change are inevitably armed. At a particular juncture, changes in the balance of class forces may create obstacles to sustained armed struggle by the oppressed classes. That does not constitute proof that armed struggle has failed in practice, nor does it alter the law of history.

Recognising the present crisis of the revolutionary movement as one turn, one milestone, in a historical sequence of developments, discussion must proceed with the progressive movement of history as another foundation. No matter how intense the discussion, it must take place on these foundations. Debate must be confined to historical, political, philosophical, and ideological issues; gratuitous verbal excess and character assassination of opponents, from any side, are not acceptable.

This discussion will inevitably also involve issues related to organisational structure, institutional functioning, and principles of discipline. It is best to leave these to the participants of those structures and organisations. For those who are not participants to raise such issues is a futile exercise.

Overall, despite how many false arguments and distortions arise, how much uproar erupts, and how much scum accumulates on the surface of this flow, these developments have demonstrated the dynamism of our society. They have shown how much importance Maoist revolutionaries' arguments, struggles, and even their withdrawal from struggle carry in our society. They have shown how many people are eager to talk about them, criticise them, and throw stones at them.

However, this is not merely an internal problem of Maoist revolutionaries. It is, in its entirety, a problem of oppressed people's movements. It is our social problem. It is a problem of Indian history. All these years, they have fought as a solution to social problems, as people who sought genuine systemic transformation in this society, and as those prepared to give even their lives to achieve that transformation. Some among them may have withdrawn from the struggle; some may continue; it may be that no one remains to continue it. But these developments have shown that middle-class intellectuals—those who consider themselves thinkers and display their bravado on free platforms called social media—are terrified that any concern for the people, people's problems, and genuine struggles to resolve those problems might disturb their own comfort.

These developments will not resolve people's problems. People's struggles will not stop. If not one person, then another will continue those struggles. But when another wave of people's struggles arises, when class struggle sharpens once again, and when before every individual the question stands—this side or that, the oppressors' side or the oppressed's side—these developments have served as a dress rehearsal, showing where these middle-class intellectuals are likely to stand. In that sense too, this is not an internal problem of Maoist revolutionaries. It is a people's problem. A social problem. A problem of class struggle. A problem of history.

(A translation from the Telugu original published in *Veekshanam*, monthly journal of society and political economy, November 2025)

Once Again on the Relations of Production

N. Venugopal

Arguments have reappeared in recent times claiming it is wrong to call the relations of production in India semi-feudal, semi-colonial; they say the mode of production in India has become capitalist. Those who have been raising doubts about the 58-year-long Naxalbari revolutionary line and even proposing that the line be abandoned are once again raising this argument. Naxalbari line defined our society as semi-feudal, semi-colonial and asserted that what must take place here is a New Democratic Revolution, and the same objections have been raised against the line again and again over decades. Similar arguments are again heard now, especially after certain senior Maoist leaders — who had been firmly committed to that line and its practices for decades — themselves began to criticise it recently, the need for and the urgency of this discussion have further increased.

Even before the start of Naxalbari this debate existed at theoretical and academic level among social scientists and social activists (especially within communist parties); after Naxalbari it expanded to the level of practice and became a political question. Forces that intended to critique and rewrite the Naxalbari's characterisation arose almost from within the Naxalite movement itself, notably since the collapse and death of Charu Mazumdar. Some parties, groups and individuals that emerged this way began to argue that the characterisation should be changed because the country had entered capitalist relations of production. A political debate also arose claiming that, since the character of society has changed, the line of struggle that was required here should be different; some parties revised the basic Naxalbari line and continued their practice. While accepting that some formulations and slogans of the Naxalbari line needed revision

and review, some parties nonetheless proceeded while maintaining the basic Naxalbari line.

Among revolutionary movement structures that continued the basic Naxalbari line — while conducting self-criticism, reviewing old methods, and making many changes and additions — the Communist Party of India (Maoist) became the principal one. Now, some who were in the top leadership said they had been conducting internal discussion about the line for some years; now, since conditions are not conducive to armed struggle, they came out openly, announced a temporary suspension of armed struggle, and declared that the path is to struggle peacefully and legally among the “people.” In the same process they also said that many changes have occurred in the country’s relations of production and that there is a need to change the line accordingly. In this course of debate some have publicly and plainly abandoned the semi-feudal, semi-colonial formulation and stated that a capitalist mode has arrived. Even where this has not been said explicitly, the suggestion has been made. In this background the debate on relations of production has become more necessary.

However, this is not just a debate on relations of production; it is also a political debate. The actual crisis that has arisen in the Maoist movement or in its organisational structure must also be taken into account here. Over the past five decades the Naxalite movement in the country has faced many crises. It changed into many streams. Some streams overcame crises and stood firm; others became weak or disappeared.

The present crisis pertains to a structure called CPI (Maoist), so it should be compared with earlier crises in its history. In its overall fifty-six year history (though under different names — CPI(ML) (1969–74), CPI(ML) COC (1974–77), CPI(ML) Andhra Pradesh State Committee (1977–80), CPI(ML) (Peoples War) (1980–2004), and CPI (Maoist) (2004–) there have been some seven or eight crises and losses, large and small. The structure experienced theoretical debates, controversies, terrible repression, fake encounter killings of many popular fighters including senior leaders, loss of leaders and cadres, mass desertions and surrenders from central committee level down to cadre levels, betrayals and many other problems. The state and the media repeatedly issued death certificates saying

the movement had been wiped out. The movement itself sometimes withdrew from certain combat areas because of repression or other considerations. Despite many difficulties, the movement and its structures advanced by overcoming them. So even looking at just this one structure, the revolutionary movement in India has had heights and troughs, peaks and failures, misunderstandings and corrections. Like many revolutionary movements in the world, the Indian revolutionary movement also experienced a number of crises.

Yet the present crisis is not the same as those earlier ones, nor readily comparable to them. We must recognise the particularities of this crisis. As in the past, some leaders and cadres have left the movement and gone over to ordinary life. But here differences must be noticed. In the past people left due to health, family, mental or theoretical differences; later, considering the issues that would follow, some declared themselves reconciled to the state, and at those press conferences held by police — sometimes under pressure, sometimes voluntarily — they spoke against the movement. Whether they arrived with arms or surrendered them was not the main issue. After coming out some joined political parties, some settled in professions, business or employment. Many lived committed to the values they learned in the movement. A small number became anti-revolutionaries, state agents, or forces hostile to collective struggles.

Now those who left the movement and the structure have had an experience different from past history. This deserves special attention. They have themselves struck at the personalities they had built up for decades; they have expressed oppositional, guilty, hateful feelings towards the revolution they themselves constructed. They tried to destroy the revolutionary structure and refute its necessity. They have every right, as individuals, to wipe out or wipe away the trust people gave them for so long. But to attempt to terminate the trust people had reposed in the path they pursued, to betray confidence, to start making unprecedented formulations and declarations such as “We have moved away from the people,” “Now we leave the line and will work among the people peacefully” — this is not merely self-destruction of their own history but also an attempt to spread disbelief about social history, about the history of class struggle, and about the wonderful history of popular struggle people have

long built on this land. Anyone can leave a movement or a structure and criticise it. But it is not right to diminish respect for historical understanding and basic scientific-theoretical ideas, to create disbelief, to belittle the necessity of revolution, to deride the value of revolutionary history and those who affirm revolutionary tradition.

Although the current leaders do not use exact words, they speak in the same spirit as Nikita Khrushchev who, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, suggested class struggle was no longer necessary and as Francis Fukuyama who spoke of End of History after the fall of Soviet Union and East Europe. Saying “the people are not ready for struggle,” “conditions for struggle do not exist” — in a way they talk as if people are ready to bear the status quo, believing in karma-like fatalism and denying human agency and collective action in social transformation. Even if such a phenomenon appears, analysing its essence is the responsibility of progressives, Marxists and revolutionaries. Failing to do so, and acting entirely contra to that responsibility, is called counter-revolutionary in political parlance. The basis chosen by those who proclaimed these counter-revolutionary ideas was, to date, that the line followed by the revolutionary movement was wrong. They brought the debate back to fundamental relations of production and the question of defining social character by saying that production relations have changed and, without understanding them, fighting with old methods is useless. In that background it is necessary to examine the main arguments in the ongoing debate on relations of production.

2

Class struggle is the driving force of society; historical materialism teaches that social transformation has occurred and occurs through the process of class struggle. Recognising that social transformations do not take place randomly, haphazardly, or unpredictably but follow laws of historical development — that is the great achievement of Marx and Engels as social scientists. Communists, acting as leaders, must recognise these laws of motion and conduct class struggle in order to achieve social transformation. Hence it is the responsibility of Marxists to clearly, precisely and specifically determine questions such as “What is the present condition of society?”, “Where can it move from here?”, and “How should that

course be guided?" — and in this process to identify the current social relations and the production relations that underlie them; if these are changed so as to resolve properly the contradictions between productive forces and relations of production, the inevitable social transformation becomes possible.

This recognition is not merely theoretical; it is also practical. In fact theory and practice proceed together, each tugging and refining the other. If the current relations of production in Indian society are feudal-based, that means the society is in the stage of bourgeois-democratic revolution. If these relations are capitalist, then the society is in the stage of socialist revolution. But in the twentieth century many changes occurred in the transformations proposed by traditional Marxist historical materialism from feudal to capitalist relations.

Primarily, the earliest form of capitalist development behaved progressively — because the very need of capitalist investment to free labour-power from bonds required it — and thus acted against feudalism. It abolished monarchy and landlordism. But over time that progressive, anti-feudal nature gradually vanished. From mercantile capital to industrial capital to colonialism and on to finance capital and imperialism, the character of capital itself changed. When it reached the phase of colonialism, capital began not to attack and overthrow the old, backward feudal relations but to use them for its own purposes, to provide itself social base within such countries, to collude and breed compradors. To restrain the growth of indigenous capitalists in colonies, who might as independent capital enter into competition with the imperialist capital, the latter scuttled its growth. The old free competition turned into monopoly. Development of capital in colonies was redirected into comprador paths. Thus, by the early decades of the twentieth century, the opportunity for capitalist relations to fully establish and for feudal relations to be overthrown in colonies vanished. Capital entered, but its character and direction were different. The task of overthrowing feudalism under the leadership of bourgeoisie had been left unfulfilled.

These societies and countries, in their stride from feudal to capitalist stages, were stopped midway by historical processes — colonialism, finance capital, imperialism. Capital entered here and there, so the societies were

neither left in old feudalism nor evolved into full capitalist relations. This intermediate stage is called the semi-feudal stage.

Until the Second World War many countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia were colonies of some or other European country or of the US or Japan. After the Second World War, particularly with Bretton Woods arrangements and the establishment of international financial and monetary institutions to continue economic dominance, imperialist countries felt they no longer needed direct military-political presence in colonies and began to decolonise; yet these old colonies continued as markets for raw materials, industrial products and investment for imperialist countries through the support of international financial institutions and multinational corporations. Thus they are called semi-colonies. Some Marxist political economists, mainly in African and Latin American contexts, called this condition “neo-colonialism”.

It would be better if popular peddling questions like “feudalism means a hundred acres, semi-feudalism means half of it - fifty acres” did not intrude into theoretical debate. Setting aside such facile contentions, there are matters for serious discussion for those who genuinely ask: Haven't the relations of production really changed in the country? Are the visible changes to be interpreted in what way?

Lenin, already in the early decades of the twentieth century, recognised that where the bourgeoisie renounced the revolutionary tasks of a democratic revolution, those tasks must be carried out by the proletarian leadership with peasant support. These seeds of thought appeared in rudimentary form in his 1905 ‘Two Tactics of Social Democracy’ and matured by his 1920 ‘Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions’. In colonies the local bourgeoisie had reconciled with imperialism and become comprador; thus bourgeois democratic revolution would be a misnomer there, Lenin argued. The tasks which a bourgeois democratic revolution must accomplish would be carried out by revolutionary forces under proletarian leadership supported by the peasantry. Defining imperialism as the highest stage of capitalist development, and asserting that the finance capital era transforms capitalism into a degenerate, moribund form that will reconcile with pre-capitalist forms and thus lose its progressive character, Lenin argued that the

bourgeois-democratic revolutions achieved by the bourgeoisie historically were ended by the ascendancy of finance capital. In this background the tasks of anti-feudalism remain. The old bourgeois democratic revolution is no longer adequate; instead a New Democratic Revolution under proletarian leadership is required. Mao Zedong and others put this idea into practice and developed it; by 1942 Mao had comprehensively formulated the New Democratic Revolution.

Although the New Democratic Revolution concept developed in the Chinese revolutionary process, calling it simply “the Chinese road” would be a half-truth. No two societies are identical. The society that gave rise to the New Democratic Revolution in pre-revolutionary China and present-day India are different in many respects; there are also some resemblances. The principal resemblance is that democratic revolutionary tasks were not completed. Since a democratic revolution did not occur in India, those democratic tasks were not achieved in even minimal terms; therefore the need for a New Democratic Revolution exists.

3

The instant one says “New Democratic Revolution” it should not be assumed that the semi-colonial, semi-feudal system Mao defined in China nearly ninety years ago exists in exactly the same form in another society requiring a New Democratic Revolution. Nor should one assume that the semi-feudal, semi-colonial system defined by Naxalbari six decades ago exists today in precisely that form. No society remains static in that way; it is in continual motion. Numerous changes and modifications occur and have occurred.

However, how production relations and changes within them are to be seen and studied is a scientific and political debate rooted in history, political-economic developments, and social movement.

Before moving further in this debate, a crucial clarification is necessary. We must take into account a mistake committed by most intellectuals who have discussed mode of production for many decades in Telugu and other languages. Customarily everyone says simply “relations of production.” But Marx never used “relations of production” in isolation; he always said “social relations of production.” In the materialist conception

of history, production necessarily occupies a foundational place in society; hence the word “production” must be present. But production is not merely an economic indicator. It refers to an understanding of the relationships embedded within the socio-economic structure. Those who participated in the debate on the mode of production removed the qualifier “social” from it, reduced it to “relations of production,” and transformed it into something that appeared to be purely economic. Not stopping there, they further narrowed the phrase “relations of production” to mere means of production and numerical indicators, virtually abandoning the idea of social relations altogether. In a sense, they ended up validating the critics’ charge of economic determinism. In reality, in a society like India, where caste-based feudalism exists, it is impossible — and irrational — to separate production from the social dimension and view it in isolation.

Some intellectuals believed, and continue to believe, that relations of production are only those related to “production”, confined to the economic sphere, and that too only those that can be expressed in numbers. How much land must one possess to be called a landlord; to what extent does one depend on the market for agricultural inputs and for the sale of produce; how many seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tractors, pump sets, electricity connections, combines, harvesters, threshers are used; how much bank credit is taken; how much of the harvested crop is sold in the market and how much is used for self-consumption; how many commodities are purchased, and which commodities are purchased — all these are numbers. Human beings are absent; relationships between people are absent. The fundamental Marxist understanding that “a commodity is not merely a material object but a relation between people” seems to have gone astray somewhere.

Certainly, all these aspects must be taken into account. All these are means of production. They contribute to production and thereby to social relations. However, the mere expansion and proliferation of means of production does not by itself constitute capitalism. Commodity production is only an indicator of capitalist relations; to declare something capitalist simply because commodities are visible is a superficial assessment. For that matter, a factory or warehouse filled with commodities may contain no human beings at all. That alone does not make it capitalist.

Only by examining the people who produce those commodities, the relations among those people, the owners of the means used to produce those commodities, the relations between those owners and the workers, the totality of social relations built upon that foundation, and the changes and dynamics within those relations, can one determine whether these are capitalist relations or pre-capitalist relations.

4

Haven't the relations of production changed in India? If innumerable changes are visible before our eyes, no one can deny that changes have indeed taken place. Certainly changes have occurred. But to call every change an advance of capitalist relations without analysing the nature, character and direction of those changes is wrong. The main changes in relations of production are essentially qualitative. We have so far no measures to count qualitative aspects; we have measures only for quantity. Therefore researchers, to describe changes in relations of production, report alterations in means of production available to measure statistically. Some attempt to study changes in productive forces too, but measuring everything that makes up productive forces — means, technology, workers, their consciousness — is not possible. Compared to the attempts made to identify and measure some basic foundational changes, there has been practically no attempt to explain whether changes in superstructure have actually occurred. Moreover, social relations — and in India the most important caste prominence — receive very little attention in debates on relations of production.

Extreme changes are occurring in means of production — no one denies that. Changes in technology, part of productive forces, are also proceeding at an astonishing speed. But the key aspect that must be investigated is what changes are occurring in the working class — in workers' working conditions, in workers' consciousness, in relations between owners of means of production and workers. That investigation is not taking place. Also, to study superstructural changes we lack techniques other than repeating experiences, anecdotes and examples — comparing a point in the past with a point in the present; we lack more rigorous methods of study and analysis.

Even though changes seem massive, and even though ready-made lists of changes exist, the attempt to analyse what the nature, direction and consequences of these changes are is very limited. Most discussion stops at describing the forms of change and illustrating experiences about them; it does not get to analysing their essence. If such analysis were done, it would certainly show that the changes underway are not necessarily advancing capitalist relations but rather strengthening old traditional, feudal and hierarchical relations.

5

The discussion on changes in relations of production must comprehensively take into account the changes taking place in all three basic economic spheres — agriculture, industry, and services — as well as in the superstructural elements, and only on the basis of the nature of those changes can one determine whether the social character itself is changing.

However, a large part of the discussion remains confined to demonstrating that capitalist relations of production have entered and expanded in agriculture. Developments in the industrial and service sectors are, without any independent discussion of their own, simply assumed to be capitalist, by themselves. Superstructural elements are not brought into this discussion at all. Detaching one or another sector from the overall social totality and discussing it in isolation is not the Marxist method of analysis. Even if separation is done for the sake of detailed understanding and analysis, the Marxist method insists that these must be brought back together and examined in an integrated holistic manner.

From the 1960s till today, many social scientists have written on how capital entered Indian agriculture and why it is no longer possible to describe it as feudal or semi-feudal. They argue that since the size of landlords' holdings has reduced — either due to land ceiling laws or otherwise — and since wage labour, commercial crops, use of machinery, and production for the market have increased, feudalism has disappeared and agriculture has transformed into a capitalist mode of production.

However, as mentioned earlier, most of these observers reduce social relations of production merely to relations of production, and further

reduce them to instruments of production and numerical data alone. Since the hundreds and thousands of acres held by landlords in earlier feudal societies, bonded labourers tied to them, forms of tenancy, and extra-economic coercion are no longer visibly present anywhere today, they conclude that feudalism has been abolished. They rely on landholding statistics — that too government-published statistics which are hardly reliable. Even when land ceiling laws are not properly implemented, landholdings cannot be shown on paper as exceeding the legal ceiling; therefore large holdings will not appear in government statistics. Existing large holdings survive by availing legal exemptions. Many are held benami (names of others). Even when land is shown on paper as being used for non-agricultural purposes, it remains under the control of landlords. Changes that have taken place in tenancy and extra-economic exploitation cannot be taken as evidence of capitalism. Ignoring these actual conditions, they look at landholding sizes on paper, present them as evidence, and keep writing that feudalism has disappeared.

In fact, in one of the earliest essays written when such propositions first began to appear, Charu Mazumdar (in the fourth of the Eight Documents) warned: “A very frequent mistake is made in determining the class position of peasants. Reliance is placed solely on land title documents. This is a very dangerous mistake.” While the extent of land as an instrument of production must certainly be taken into account, it is not correct to determine the social relations in which an individual or a family is placed purely on the basis of numerical data, without considering income, lifestyle, position in superstructural spheres, role in class struggle, and several other factors together.

Similarly, figures relating to tractors, pump sets, electricity usage, market intervention, combines, harvesters, and so on — are these really figures of equipment actually being used in agricultural production, or are they machines pushed into the market by manufacturing companies to increase sales, using bank credit? One can know this only by going to villages and seeing the reality. A significant portion of the machinery said to have entered villages on a massive scale lies idle, is underutilised, or is owned by non-cultivators who purchase it on bank loans and rent it out. If one calculates how much cultivable land exists in a village and how

many machines are actually required for real and optimal utilisation, it will become clear whether even half or a quarter of the agricultural machinery claimed to be in use is actually being used. Making determinations about social conditions on the basis of such unreliable figures is meaningless and unscientific.

Another crucial criterion for determining social relations is whether surplus production is being reinvested into reproduction, continuously generating surplus value, or whether it is being diverted into ostentation, wasteful expenditure, or hoarding. In capitalist relations, reproduction and continuous investment are central. In Indian agriculture, the portion of surplus entering reproduction is very small. Due to caste, family, ritual, and traditional value frameworks, and due to imitative culture, a large part of surplus is converted into ostentatious, familial, and wasteful expenditure.

One of the tasks of the democratic revolution is to liberate surplus labourers trapped in rural, agricultural, and traditional bonds and transform them into industrial workers — thereby enabling greater production of surplus value in society and ensuring its uninterrupted use by the machinery of capital. But in our rural society, while massive outward migration from villages is visible (push), there is no corresponding attraction of labour by industry from outside (pull). That is, rural surplus labourers migrate to towns and cities only to remain surplus labourers. They join the reserve army of the unemployed. They end up as casual labourers, in unproductive service sectors, or in low-wage employment. In other words, there is expulsion from agriculture, but no industrial absorption. This is not a capitalist reproduction process. One of the laws of capitalism is the maximum utilisation of productive forces.

When workers leave agriculture and rural sectors, becoming free wage labourers is a law of capitalist relations. Marx explains that the term “free” has two meanings: freedom from pre-capitalist bonds, and freedom to sell one’s labour power to anyone for wages. In our society, those pushed out of villages do not attain freedom from villages — more precisely, from castes, families, and the remaining half-acre or quarter-acre of land back home. Nor do they attain the freedom to sell their labour to anyone in cities. They remain in a state of waiting, desperation, wondering whether

anyone will buy their labour. That is, they fall into deeper bondage. This is in no way the free wage labour of capitalist relations.

Another key aspect is that capitalist relations transform specific, concrete labour of pre-capitalist relations into abstract, undifferentiated labour, limiting it to the measure of “socially necessary labour.” In Indian society as a whole — even in the industrial sector to some extent — the transition from concrete, specific labour to abstract labour has not been completed. Even today, caste-based specific and specialised labour systems persist. For instance, the labour of sanitation workers — including the inhuman task of manual scavenging — which is extremely necessary for society, still remains specific labour restricted to a single caste, rather than becoming abstract labour that anyone can be employed for.

Even if we set agriculture aside and look at industry, there is still no domestic capitalist class that says, “This home market belongs to us,” and competes with imperialism, finance capital, and multinational corporations, or even seriously attempts to do so. There is neither an anti-feudal stance that seeks to release domestic productive forces, nor an anti-imperialist stance that seeks to establish control over the domestic market. At best, there is an attempt to gain some market share and accumulate wealth by using the technology, collusion, services, and brokerage of multinational corporations. A few big capitalists may have climbed from the position of agents of multinational corporations to that of junior partners, but they do not question imperialism by saying, “This country is ours, this market is ours — who are you to enter?” It is true that some internationally wealthy individuals have emerged and are investing abroad, but these are activities carried out as subordinate partners in international finance capital, not efforts to establish capitalist relations within this society.

When the situation in the commodity market is such, neither the government nor domestic capitalist firms have any objection to handing over mineral resources and raw materials for capitalist industries to multinational corporations. Instead of capital accumulation through surplus value, accumulation through plunder continues, and the accumulated wealth is channelled into the international circuit.

To argue that capitalism has arrived, after agriculture and industry

— or even more than them — the expansion of the service sector is highlighted. Indeed, in our cities, towns, and even villages, the expansion of the service sector and entry of service-sector capital are abundantly visible. Since service sector expansion is very high in capitalist societies, some believe that the presence of service sector expansion alone is sufficient to declare a society capitalist. But when we examine the nature of our service sector expansion, the fact that a very large part of it continuously collapses, its character, and the destinations to which surplus flows from it, it becomes clear that this is not the service sector of capitalist societies. Rather, it is a service sector that fills the coffers of finance capital, rooted in the values and relations of a semi-feudal society. Top of Form

6

Marxists, Marxist groups, and parties who argue that “capitalism has already arrived in the country, capitalist relations have been established, and therefore what is required now is a socialist revolution; the very idea of a New Democratic Revolution is meaningless” have existed for the past six decades after Naxalbari — and even before that, from the time of the Socialist Unity Centre of India formed in 1948. After Naxalbari as well, many parties and numerous individuals have been proclaiming this theoretical position. Even some of those who have recently broken away from the Maoist party have expressed the same views.

However, in the seven decades of history, those who argue that capitalism has arrived and that only a socialist revolution is necessary have not, in practice, undertaken efforts that proceed in that direction. Their principal understanding is that a socialist revolution would take the form of a general strike, abruptly overthrow the system, and seize state power; that socialist consciousness must be raised among the people in that direction; and that people — especially the working class — must be organised accordingly. In later periods, the idea was also added that parliamentary elections could serve as a path either to the development of that consciousness or even to the attainment of state power. Yet, even today, those making these arguments have nothing of significance to show in terms of work carried out in that direction. Their theory has no relation to social reality. Their practice has no relation even to their own theory.

Determining the nature of a society is not a simple or straightforward matter. Whatever may be the case with other societies, in a vast, complex, plural, diverse, heterogeneous society marked by sharp disparities such as India, it is possible for anyone to arrive at almost any conclusion regarding social character. Evidence supporting that conclusion can also be found somewhere or the other in such a vast country. In particular, because capital has greater visibility and quantifiability, it becomes easier to perceive. Since it can more readily be expressed in numbers and tables, arguments that justify and persuade in its favour can also be constructed.

By contrast, feudal, caste-based feudal, reactionary, and pre-capitalist relations that continue extensively within social relations — especially in the superstructure — are primarily qualitative in nature. They can be described through examples, but cannot be reduced to numbers or tables.

Taking into account the various methods of studying relations of production that have developed from Lenin's time to the present, in order to understand social relations of production and the nature of society in India, it is necessary to examine closely and in depth a wide range of factors: 1. Ownership of means of production, land concentration, and political power; 2. Class differentiation in rural areas; 3. Forms of extra-economic surplus extraction existing in society; 4. Market relations and the reproduction of labour outside the market; 5. The volume and nature of wage labour; 6. Types and extent of tenancy; 7. Moneylending and merchant capital; 8. Agrarian relations that have not undergone revolutionary transformation; 9. The growth, scale, modes of operation, labour relations, and surplus value production in industries and manufacturing units; 10. Service sector capital and surplus production; 11. Migration, finance capital, and imperialist historical tendencies; 12. The process of capital accumulation and the nature and scale of expanded reproduction; 13. The impact of superstructural factors; and 14. The role of the state.

It is extremely important to have a relative understanding that evidence supporting a particular conclusion found in one region of this vast country may be countered by evidence enabling a completely different

conclusion in another region. As D. D. Kosambi observed, “India is a country of long survivals.” Here, modes of production ranging from food gathering, pastoralism, agriculture, handicrafts, manufacturing industry, to the most advanced industry based on nano-technology coexist simultaneously. Yet, even if different conclusions appear plausible at the regional level, the crucial questions concern the overall character of the ruling classes of the country, their political-economic policies, and the direction in which these ruling classes are driving society.

Viewed from that perspective, six decades have passed since Naxalbari defined Indian society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial, and many changes have occurred, along with extensive debate. The number of sites into which capital has entered has increased. But when we examine the nature of that capital — whether it has fulfilled, or even intends to fulfil, the democratic revolutionary tasks of anti-feudalism and anti-imperialism, or whether it is making any effort in that direction — the situation today appears even clearer than at the time of Naxalbari. The state and capital are jointly striving to promote pre-capitalist relations, caste-based feudal, sanatan values and relations, and Hindu Brahmanical fascism. Behind them stand finance capital and imperialism. In that sense, the definition of Indian society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial is today even more meaningful and appropriate.

(Some aspects of this paper were discussed in a lecture delivered at a seminar held in Hyderabad on December 7 under the auspices of the Former Revolutionary Students' Forum. Those interested may also read, as companion pieces to this paper, the articles “The Subject in Motion — Study in Motion,” presented at the Conference on Agrarian Transformation in India held jointly by Goldsmiths, University of London and University of Oxford on July 13-14, 2011, published in my book ‘Understanding Maoists’ (Setu Prakashani, 2013) and Telugu version in the January 2013 issue of Veekshanam, and “Characterisation of Society — Transformation — Strategies of Struggle,” published in the March–April 2013 issues of Veekshanam. Both articles were reprinted in my collection Samaja Chalanapu Savvadi, published in 2022.)

(A translation from the Telugu original published in Veekshanam, Monthly Journal of Society and Political Economy, January 2026)

PATH OF INDIAN REVOLUTION PRESENT CONTEXT

Has the path of Protracted People's War in India exhausted its historical role? Should the Indian revolution seek an entirely new revolutionary course in the backdrop of profound changes in Indian society? Was the Maoist movement defeated due to unforgivable strategic and political blunders? Is there truly no alternative for a revolutionary party other than laying down arms and surrendering?

These are the central questions addressed by the articles in this book, *The Path of the Indian Revolution – Present Context*. Under the pressure of all-out war in the name of Operation Kagar, sections of the Maoist leadership became demoralised, lost faith in the revolutionary path, and began advocating surrender to the Indian state. They declared that the movement had reached a historical dead end and that there was no alternative except to "temporarily" abandon armed struggle and shift toward open democratic mobilization.

In response to this capitulationist turn, the Former Revolutionary Students Forum (FRSF) organized a symposium titled "The Path of the Indian Revolution – Present Context." This booklet presents selected translations of those contributions in the symposium.

Through sharp theoretical and political critiques, the contributors expose the fallacies of the surrender line, uncover the role of the deep state in fostering internal disintegration, and rebut claims that changes in India's economy or principal contradiction render Protracted People's War obsolete. Published at a decisive moment, this booklet seeks to confront both state repression and ideological betrayal, contributing to the defence and renewal of revolutionary theory and practice. These articles assert that Protracted People's War remains the only viable path for the radical transformation of Indian society.



Rs. 120

Former Revolutionary Students Forum