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"RAHUL PANDITA HAD DONE SOMETHING UNUSUAL- HE HAD STUDIED THE MAOIST MOVEMENT AT GROUND LEVEL FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, GROWING EVER MORE INTERESTED IN THE WAY IT FUNCTIONED, TRAVELLING THROUGH THE REMOTER JUNGLES OF CENTRAL INDIA FOR WEEKS ON END AND SPENDING TIME WITH THE TRIBAL PEOPLE..."
- FROM 'INDIA: A PORTRAIT' BY PATRICK FRENCH

# HELLO, BASTAR

## THE UNTOLD STORY OF INDIA'S MAOIST MOVEMENT

RAHUL PANDITA

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HELLO, BASTAR

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# Author's Note

For the convenience of readers, the terms 'Naxal' and 'Maoist' are used interchangeably throughout this book. This is common practice in the media and even the police. In fact, the Maoists too use both terms to define themselves. But the fact is that the current Maoist movement is bigger than the original Naxal movement in terms of its reach and strength. The Maoists have moved leaps ahead of their predecessors who were a part of the Naxalbari movement from where the word 'Naxalite' was coined. In that sense, the current 'Naxalites' are more 'Maoist' than Naxal.

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# I

# GIVE ME RED

*To be radical is to grasp things by the root.*

—Karl Marx

*Inside us there is something that has no name, that something is what we are.*

—Jose Saramago

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The spasms had been troubling him again. In fact, amoebic dysentery had been his constant companion, a result of a harsh life of more than three decades. And an enlarged prostate too. He was more comfortable with the pain these afflictions caused than the feel of the cold metal of a gun in his hands whenever he had had to hold it. But that was on very rare occasions, deep inside the forest along the Eastern Ghats: memorial meetings for fallen comrades, ceremonial parades or military drills. Presently, though, he was hundreds of miles away from the jungles of central India.

He was in Delhi.

The Molarband Extension colony of south Delhi's Badarpur area was a different kind of jungle. Early in the morning, thousands of men swarmed through the narrow, sewage-ridden roads, locust-like, on their ramshackle bicycles. They worked in factories as fitters or cutters or as daily wage labourers at construction sites or as private security guards. Life was tough. In recent times, it had become more difficult to survive, with the prices of food and daily necessities going through the roof. Many men stayed alone, leaving their families behind in small towns or villages. Fathers waiting for a little money to come by for a cataract operation. Widowed mothers. Unmarried sisters. Impoverished wives hoping to save enough for the

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education of children. Out of their meagre incomes, the men struggled to send as much money as possible to their families.

For years, the poor workers took solace from an old film song: *Dal roti khao, prabhu ke gunn gao* (Have dal-roti, sing paeans to the Almighty). But now with dal costing almost Rs 100 a kilo, the poor didn't know what to eat and in the cruel city, who to sing paeans to.

The city ran on a very complex arithmetic. It was a city drunk on power, a city from where a handful of people decided the fate of over a billion others, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, as messages painted on highways by the Border Roads Organisation would remind one. These few people were India's political leaders. Their abode was the Parliament in the heart of New Delhi, a place referred to as 'pigsty' by the man and his comrades.

On Sundays, the city's middle class would come out in hordes, in their small and big cars, enjoy ice cream at India Gate and then watch a movie at one of the multiplexes. This would cost a family of four at least Rs 1500, more than what 74 million households or 37.2 per cent of India's population earned in two months. The city was a paradox. People would come out to rally for the rights of pet animals, and others would brand their underage maidservants with a hot iron. It was a city where the malnutrition rate was 35 per cent,[1] far worse than sub-Sahara. In the same city, surveys[2] revealed that 40 per cent

[1]*The Hindu*, 7 May 2010.

[2]A survey conducted by AIIMS.



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of schoolkids were overweight. For the Commonwealth Games, the homes of the poor were being dismantled. Leviathan billboards were being put up to eclipse slums so that foreign athletes would only be able to see glitzy shopping malls and departmental stores selling soy milk and broccoli.

There were two things Delhi didn't want: monkeys and poor people. Thousands of beggars were being bundled into municipal vans and there were negotiations with other states to take their beggars back. A few years earlier, the capital city had tried, in a similar manner, sending its monkeys to the wilderness of other states. And now, for the Games, hundreds of thousands of people would be displaced in all. In 2001, the sealing of small-scale factories in residential areas had rendered thousands of workers jobless. It was the ensuing unrest that the comrades wanted to take up as a cause, and motivate young labourers and workers to channel their anger into something 'meaningful'. To be close to such workers and win them over, the man had been living in the Molarband Extension colony.

Over the past few weeks, the man had also been getting treated for his ailments at a city hospital. He was using a voter identity card, bearing the name of Dilip Patel, for all official purposes. His contacts in the city had made these arrangements.

For purposes of communication, he shunned modern devices such as the mobile phone. Most of the communication was done through a human courier. He had one trusted courier who had been with him for about five years.



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Oblivious of what his trusted lieutenant had been up to, the man went about doing his work. On 20 September 2009, he arrived at the Bhikaji Cama office complex, next to Delhi's diplomatic enclave.

Unknown to him, a few men sat in a car, waiting for him.

It was a Sunday, and the regular crowd of office executives who otherwise would be out at this hour for a quick smoke or lunch was missing. The handicapped man who sold soft drinks and cigarettes on his special cycle had no customers to attend to—he passed his time reading a Hindi newspaper. The passport office where thousands of ambitious youth would come every day to try their luck at foreign shores was also shut.

Inside the car, a deputy superintendent of the Special Intelligence Branch of the Andhra Pradesh Police was getting restless. It was hot inside the car and, as he wiped the sweat from his brow, he looked at the man sandwiched between him and his colleague. 'Are you sure he will come?' the officer asked him. The man nodded quickly. He looked at his watch and then looked outside. He was the only one who could identify the man they waited for, the man he had served as courier for years.

At about one p.m., the tall, thin-moustached man appeared and stopped at the bus stop next to the complex. A jute bag was slung across his shoulder. The courier now signalled. In a minute or two, the operation was over. The man was bundled inside the car and taken to the Special Cell Branch of the Delhi Police, near Delhi's famous cultural hub, India Habitat Centre.

Two days later, the police made an announcement.



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They had arrested Kobad Ghandy, they said, one of the seniormost leaders of the Maoist movement in India. The leader of a large mass of men and women, which had recently been declared India's gravest internal security threat by none other than Prime Minister Manmohan Singh himself. The men and women known more popularly as the Naxalites. Or simply Naxals.

A day later as he was being produced in court, Kobad Ghandy raised slogans as feverishly as he could while struggling to overcome the exhaustion of sustained interrogation. 'Bhagat Singh zindabad' and 'Anuradha Ghandy amar rahe'. The onlookers who were used to seeing ordinary criminals or terrorists being produced in the court were surprised at these slogans. After all, never before had they heard someone in the court premises or even elsewhere shout praises in favour of India's most popular revolutionary.

And, Anuradha Ghandy . . . who was Anuradha Ghandy?

(Note: This scenario is based on inputs from intelligence sources. However, there still is confusion on whether the courier actually led the police to Kobad Ghandy. A day after his disappearance, the courier is believed to have contacted a Maoist sympathiser in Punjab, who used to work with Kobad, and informed him that Kobad had turned incommunicado.)



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On 6 April 2010, in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, a group of soldiers belonging to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was returning after an area-domination exercise. In the early hours of that morning, they were ambushed by a collective squad of Maoists who divided themselves into smaller groups and encircled the CRPF men. Some of the soldiers fought back but they were no match for the Maoists. In no time, 75 CRPF men and a local policeman accompanying them lay dead. Within hours, the images of the encounter, first shot by a local television channel, were flashed across national television.

It was perhaps the deadliest attack so far in any insurgency that India had faced ever since she became independent. In two decades of militancy in Kashmir, aided and abetted by a neighbouring country, never had so many soldiers died in a single attack. Kashmir and India's north-east no longer matched the Maoist insurgency in its ferocity and ability to grab headlines.

Till a few years ago, Maoists were off the news radar. Kashmir was what sold well. But now, India's heartland had become the new Kashmir. It was a very complex situation. Within a few years, the Maoist insurgency had moved from strength to strength and was now spread across almost half of India: Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh. The Maoist leaders were everywhere. In West Bengal's Lalgarh, one of the seniormost Maoist leaders, Mallojula Koteshwara Rao alias Kishenji had almost turned into a mythical figure. Appearing every now and then on



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television, his back towards the camera and an AK-56 assault rifle slung upside down on his shoulder, in his demeanour he was more like a retired professor than a dreaded rebel. He spoke in a feeble voice. But Kishenji was anything but ordinary. He had personally supervised an armed rebellion led by tribals against the state of West Bengal for months now, at one point of time turning the entire Lalgarh area in West Midnapore district into a 'liberated zone'—an area where the Maoists ran a virtual government with no state authority in sight. The local police stations were taken over by Red rebels who ruthlessly killed cadres of the ruling CPM government.

Troops had been deployed but still the armed insurgency continued, and scores of people were killed every day. In one such deadly attack, 24 soldiers of the Eastern Frontier Rifles were killed by a group of Maoists led by a woman commander. Across India's heartland, a war was on. Though the home ministry kept on denying it, the fact remained that a massive military operation had been mounted across the Maoist-affected areas, involving about 100,000 troops of the CRPF and other paramilitary forces. But it was proving to be of little help. The Maoists carried on their operations with impunity. In Chhattisgarh, they had carved out a guerilla zone which the local police referred to as 'Pakistan'. In Maharashtra's Gadchiroli, their writ ran large. In some districts in Orissa, the police would not dare venture out in uniform. In Jharkhand, the Maoists collected taxes, meting out severe punishment to those who did not follow their diktat. In the Naxal-dominated areas, there was no sign of state authority. No forest



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official, no policeman, no district collector ever visited there.

In Chhattisgarh, the guerilla zone of the Maoists was called the Maad division. For outsiders, it was Abujhmaad. This area had remained out of national consciousness for decades now. In fact, it was never in the thoughts of those chosen by the people to take India to newer heights. The name of this area itself signified what it meant to India: *Abujh* in Hindi means something that cannot be figured out. It was only after the Maoist insurgency had started hitting the headlines that people heard about Abujhmaad for the first time.

In the womb of the land now referred to as India's Red Corridor lay hidden mineral resources worth thousands of billions of dollars. And this was also the land where India's poorest of the poor lived. And now, it was where perhaps India's bloodiest battle would be fought.

The government had sent in its forces. But they had not been able to do much. What could they possibly do? Inside the villages how were they supposed to distinguish between a Maoist and a tribal villager? In a number of cases, they didn't bother to do so. So innocent tribals were picked up, brutally tortured, accused of being Maoists and then put in jail. Or just shot dead after being branded as Maoists. Instead of solving the problem it lent further fuel to the insurgency, more manpower to the Maoists.

On national television, the Maoist insurgency was being discussed threadbare. Is it a socio-economic problem or a mere law and order problem? Can it be resolved militarily? Are we ready for the costs? How far are the Maoists from



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our cities—from seizing power from the State? Is development the only solution to the Maoist problem? Or should military action and development go hand in hand? In television studios, a horde of politicians, retired military, paramilitary and police officers and civil rights activists sweated it out almost daily since every day some incident would occur. A CRPF group ambushed. A police van blown up in an IED blast. A politician killed. A train derailed. Alleged Maoists killed—most of whom later turned out to be innocent tribals. Tribal women raped by Special Police Officers. A Maoist camp dismantled.

Till a few years ago, India's homeland security was in the hands of Shivraj Patil, a Congress loyalist who was known for his devotion to a godman and his penchant for changing his clothes frequently. After intense pressure in the wake of intelligence failure leading to the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, Patil was now being replaced by another senior politician who had steadily risen through the Congress ranks. From being the Tamil interpreter of the English speeches of Indira Gandhi, the suave lawyer from Tamil Nadu, who was better known for his stints as the country's finance minister was now in charge of the home ministry. And sure enough, Palaniappan Chidambaram made enough news from day one to show that he meant business.

He said that the Naxals were 'simply bandits'. He snubbed those who called for development in this area instead of sending in military forces, branding them Maoist sympathisers. In a Parliament address he called them people 'who write 33-page articles', a reference to writer-



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activist Arundhati Roy who had spent a few days with the Maoist guerillas and written a long essay in *Outlook* magazine. It would seem that instead of fighting Maoists, the home minister's whole energy and that of his aides was directed at hurling diatribes at members of the civil society. Those who went as a part of fact-finding missions to Naxal areas would be targeted and branded as Maoists. That was not all. The government issued a decree that those found to be aiding the Maoists would be dealt with severely and charged under the anti-terror law UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act). It was like the cowboy doctrine propagated by the former American President George Bush after the 11 September 2001 attack: Either you are with us or against us.

Many saw it as a repeat of the infamous 1975 Emergency. After all, it was not very long ago that Binayak Sen, a doctor and an activist working in Chhattisgarh had been incarcerated for eighteen months on charges of being a Maoist. Scores of other people had been put behind bars on similar charges. Many others were wary that they would meet the same fate. And subsequently, towards the end of 2010, a local court in Chhattisgarh found Binayak Sen guilty of sedition and sentenced him to life imprisonment. These were indeed dark times. Across the world, personalities like the political activist-philosopher Noam Chomsky and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen had condemned Sen's arrest and subsequent sentencing. But it would not move the government. On the other hand, the tribals suffered terribly, caught as they were, between the Maoists and the State. In many pockets, though, the tribals



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supported the Maoists. In their areas of influence, the local population acted as the eyes and ears of the Maoists. As a senior police officer who had served in the Naxal-affected Chandauli district of eastern Uttar Pradesh said: 'The line between a Maoist and a tribal has blurred. So, the Adivasi you saw plucking dead tree branches during the day might turn into a gun-toting Naxal in the night.'

The void created by the State had been filled by the Maoists.



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could be brought about by the formation of underground organisations that would then wage a war against the State and bring it to its knees. He remained dismissive about 'open' organisations such as trade unions or farmers' associations. Backing him were two other prominent leaders of that area: Kanu Sanyal, who had very strong organisational skills and was very popular among the tea workers in the area, and Jangal Santhal, a popular tribal leader who unsuccessfully contested the 1967 election, coming second only to the winning Congress candidate.

With their backing, three cultivators supported by a few CPI (M) party workers armed with crude weapons lifted the entire stock of paddy from a landlord's granary, without leaving a single grain for him.

In the next few months the Communist cadres forcibly occupied land, seized granaries and burnt land records. Any resistance was brutally put down.

The landlords acted swiftly, getting rid of those who worked on their fields. In some cases the landlords took the help of the police. This would be another constant recurrence in the history of independent India: the police mostly acted and worked for the influential and rich or their political masters.

This is what the men and women who had hidden themselves in the bushes realised. A few days earlier, some peasants had gone to work in the fields. In the evening they did not return. A day later, other men went to the fields and they also failed to return home. So, some men and women hid in the nearby bushes to see what was happening. No sooner had another lot of men begun to till



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In Midnapore, the guerillas were led by a Dalit leader, Santosh Rana, who had a Master's degree from Kolkata University and was actively involved in deep Red politics. He was helped by another student leader Asim Chatterjee popularly known as Kaka, who had a huge following in Kolkata colleges, and like most of the Naxalbari leaders had been expelled from the CPI (M).

Under the guidance of Santosh Rana, who only worked upon strategies laid down by Charu Mazumdar, a large number of squad actions were planned and executed. The first one against a landlord Khagen Senapati was led by Santosh Rana himself on 21 September 1969. The most spectacular action took place on 1 October 1969 at a village where thousands of armed tribals attacked a landlord's house. He made good his escape but his house was ransacked.

But even this could not be sustained for long. The losses among the guerilla cadre were too many, far more than those sustained by the class they were seeking to annihilate. This led to frustration among the leadership. In a letter to Charu Mazumdar, published in the CPI (ML)'s Bengali mouthpiece *Deshabrati*, Asim Chatterjee expresses it clearly. It so happened that a few comrades were returning after a squad action. On their way, they were killed by militant goons hired by a powerful landlord. 'The comrades gave their lives. It is unbearable asking comrades to lay down their lives like this. I want to know where we are making mistakes.' Later another prominent leader, Satyanarayana was to say in an interview given to the *Hindustan Standard* on 20 May 1974, 'We now hold that annihilation of individual



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villagers or initial refusal to pay heed to the guerillas—were let off with a warning or after they paid a fine to the party. But when the police finally launched a major offensive against the Red rebels, they showed no such distinction. Most of the rebels who were caught were shot in cold blood. Panchadi Krishnamurthy, a young rebel leader, about 20 years old, was caught with a few other rebels by the police on 27 May 1969, taken to a forest area and shot dead. This trend continues even now. In various cases, the police have arrested top leaders of the CPI (Maoist) in urban areas, taken them to a jungle, and killed them. Those thus allegedly eliminated like this include Maoist leaders like Cherukuri Rajkumar alias Azad, Patel Sudhakar Reddy, Sande Rajamouli and many others. Later, a statement would be issued that these leaders were killed in encounters with the police.

The death blow to the Srikakulam movement was finally dealt on 10 July 1970 when the police killed both Satyam and Kailasam in an encounter. In the Andhra state assembly, some leaders hailed it as Diwali, the slaying of demons by Rama. Afterwards, the movement just faded away. But while the Naxalbari movement had shown what arming peasants could achieve, the events in Srikakulam paved the way for what could be achieved through guerilla warfare.

Two years later, Charu Mazumdar would be caught after one of his associates gave in to police torture and revealed his commander's secret hideout. Mazumdar had been evading the police for some time. But now, he was arrested from a house in Entally, Kolkata. He died twelve days after his arrest. The harsh underground life had taken



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stayed around the periphery so that they would have no contact with the landlords most of the time. Buoyed by the stories of revolution, Rajam organised this play in the Dalit area in 1977. It was around this time that the Dalits and other landless people began to assert themselves and took over tracts of government land either illegally occupied by the landlords or just left unexploited. The first Dalit to occupy such land was a man called Poshetty. Both Lakshmi Rajam and Poshetty were killed by the angry landlords.

But by then it was too late. By June 1978, the heat had become unbearable for the landlords. The student rebels had sowed a seed of rebellion among the peasants. The Maoist leadership decided to concentrate on the wage issues of agricultural labourers, the abolition of free labour which the landlords forced the Dalits to do, and taking possession of land. Agricultural labourers called various strikes.

There was a sea of landless poor who now wanted a share of the land. All these people, interestingly, made applications addressed to one Mukku Subba Reddy, the secretary of the CPI (ML) saying that they had occupied such and such an area of land and that a patta be issued to them. A senior Maoist rebel, who is now a Central Committee member of the CPI (Maoist) recalls[7] how one of the comrades in-charge, Sai Prabhakar got two full gunny bags of such applications.

On 7 September 1978, over one lakh agricultural

[7]Interview to the author in Dandakaranya.



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Washing clothes like his father, grandfather and great-grandfather did not interest Ram Pravesh Baitha. He wanted to do a little better in life. But he knew his limitations as well. There was no point dreaming about bigger things. Smaller, manageable dreams would do for him, or so he thought. A pucca house, a proper kitchen for his mother, a scooter for himself. For this, Baitha had realised much earlier in his life, he would have to somehow complete his education. And he did. In Bihar's Madhuban district, however, that a washerman's son would flaunt his graduation didn't go well with the upper-caste pride. So, Baitha was summoned and beaten up badly for possessing a Bachelor's degree. He swallowed that insult. His whole focus was on his dream of a better life. He shifted to another university and completed his Master's as well. And now, his dream was not far from being realised.

Baitha applied for various jobs like most of his friends did. But while his friends secured jobs, Baitha did not find employment. And he realised soon enough why. Apparently he had got a job and had even been sent an appointment letter. But the upper-caste staff at his village post office did not want him to get that job. They tore the appointment letter and threw it away. Baitha joined the Naxal fold. He rose to become the commander of the north Bihar cadre and was later arrested in May 2008.

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Their crying children? Their wrath against a government that offered them speeches instead of food?' she asks.

Defending the actions of her Naxalite husband and others, she writes:

'Amalendu's crime, Kalpana's crime, is the crime of all those who cannot remain unmoved and inactive in an India where a child crawls in the dust with a begging bowl; where a poor girl can be sold as a rich man's plaything; where an old woman must half-starve herself in order to buy social acceptance from the powers-that-be in her village; where countless people die of sheer neglect; where many are hungry while food is hoarded for profit; where usurers and tricksters extort the fruits of labour from those who do the work; where the honest suffer whilst the villainous prosper; where justice is the exception and injustice the rule; and where the total physical and mental energy of millions of people is spent on the struggle for mere survival.'

In Bihar and later in Jharkhand (carved out of Bihar), it was the MCC that kept the Naxal movement alive along with another Naxal faction called the CPI-ML (Party Unity) or simply Party Unity. But as compared to the PWG, the MCC was considered to be a less disciplined party. In caste-ridden Bihar, the MCC organised massacres of upper-caste men to counter massacres done by upper-caste militant organisations like the Ranvir Sena (formed in 1994 by the upper-caste Bhumihar community). It would also brutally punish 'class enemies' by ordering that they be shortened by six inches—which meant beheading. According to testimonies from Jharkhand, a squad of



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vision, he would break into long sessions of poetry,' he says.[14]

Finally, it was decided that KS had to be freed from prison. On 4 January 1984, KS made good his escape from the Osmania Hospital in Hyderabad after killing a duty constable. The same year, NTR had gone to America, and in his absence, with the aid of the governor, the Congress managed to topple his government on Independence Day. This time KS supported him and wrote about his 'unconstitutional exit' in the party's mouthpiece *Kranti*. This made the young blood in the party very angry. The Warangal secretary of the Maoists, Pulanjaya alias Sagar is believed to have been so furious about what KS wrote that he asked his men to burn the entire bundle of the magazine.

NTR came back to power only after a month. After the People's War Group began targeting state symbols like the police, the NTR government went full-swing against them. A special task force was created to tackle the Naxalites. In some of the worst-affected areas, a number of armed outposts came up. A number of youth were picked up on suspicion and put into jail or killed in staged encounters. In 1987, six IAS officers were kidnapped by the PWG, and a demand for the release of some of their comrades was put forward. A journalist who interviewed KS at the time was told that if need be the PWG would even kidnap Rajiv Gandhi (who was then prime minister). The government bowed this time, but afterwards, NTR toughened his stance once again against the Naxalites.

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[14]Interview to the author.



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1993, the Maoists managed to kill Vyas in Hyderabad while he was on his morning jog. In a strange twist, the main accused in the Vyas murder case, Maoist hit man Nayeemuddin later turned into a renegade, helping the police eliminate several Maoist leaders as well as some of their sympathisers. He was arrested in 2000 for the murder of a civil liberties activist and later acquitted in 2003 for lack of evidence. In 2007 he made good his escape from a court hearing in the Vyas murder case. He is now somewhere in Hyderabad with his hit squad, allegedly enjoying full police protection.

While the Greyhounds were quite successful in their operations against Maoists, the fact remains that there were a number of human rights violations as well, including fake encounters and custodial deaths. According to the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), there have been 1,800 encounter deaths in the state between 1997 and 2007. The police tried to build anti-Maoist militias not only in Andhra Pradesh but in other states as well. In the '90s, a group called Kranthi Sena was forged together in Andhra with the active support of the police. In Maharashtra another such group called Shanti Sena was formed that succeeded in killing a number of senior Maoist guerillas. In Jharkhand, the anti-Maoist group called NASUS (Nagrik Suraksha Samiti) enjoyed the patronage of the police and several politicians. In at least two incidents, the group managed to entrap and poison to death several Maoist guerillas. In retaliation, the Maoists killed politician and Member of Parliament Sunil Mahto near Jamshedpur on 4 March 2007 and NASUS leader



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This is the reason why the reactionary rulers are unable to suppress our revolutionary war, which is now raging in several states in the country.

'We had taken appropriate lessons from the setback suffered by our party in Andhra Pradesh and, based on these lessons, drew up tactics in other states. Hence we are able to fight back the cruel all-round offensive of the enemy effectively, inflict significant losses on the enemy, preserve our subjective forces, consolidate our party, develop a people's liberation guerilla army, establish embryonic forms of new democratic people's governments in some pockets, and take the people's war to a higher stage. Hence we have an advantageous situation, overall, for reviving the movement in Andhra Pradesh,' he told me.

What Ganapathi said about objective conditions is not far from the truth. In Andhra Pradesh, over 20,000 farmers committed suicide between 1998 and 2008. Most of them were tenant farmers (those who take land owned by the landlords on lease). The total number of tenant farmers in Andhra is believed to be as high as 50 lakh. In 2009, there were 2,414 farmer suicides in Andhra. In December 2010, over 50 farmers committed suicide in the state's Krishna district alone.

Veteran police officer and former Director-General of the Border Security Force E.N. Rammohan, who was also appointed by the home ministry to probe the 6 April Dantewada Maoist ambush says that the primary reason why Maoism has flourished in states like Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is because of land ownership patterns



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- To provide military services
- To pay taxes

The PWG document provides an assurance that the State (the Maoist state) shall not discriminate towards anyone in terms of tribe, caste, religion, nationality, gender, language, region, education, post and status. It shall deal with all as equals. It shall give equal opportunities to all. Citizens will have the right to believe or disbelieve religion and the state shall oppose all kinds of religious fundamentalism.

The document says that the party will confiscate the lands of landlords and religious organisations and distribute them to the poor, landless peasants and agricultural labourers on the basis of 'land to the tiller'. It shall strive for the development of agriculture.

The document further goes on to say that the party will confiscate all the industries, banks and other organisations of the 'imperialist and comprador bureaucratic bourgeois classes' and that it will dissolve the 'unequal financial agreements that the exploiting government made with the imperialists'.

The document envisages implementing an eight-hour working day for all the workers. It says that the contract work system will be dissolved and child labour abolished. It promises to provide equal wages for women and men and also provide social security and protective working conditions to all the workers.

The document also declares that women will be liberated from household drudgery to make them part of social production, political, military, government administration and other such activities. Prostitution, the document says,



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at the stage of strategic defence where in some areas they have been able to shift from guerilla warfare to mobile warfare.

In the 2007 Unity Congress, held in Bheembandh area of Bihar, the party gave a call for getting into the mobile warfare phase. However, Ganapathi believes that in most of the areas, the strategic defence phase will last for some more time. 'It is difficult to predict how long it will take to pass this stage and go to the stage of strategic equilibrium or strategic stalemate. It depends on the transformation of our guerilla zones into base areas, creation of more guerilla zones and Red resistance areas across the country, the development of our PLGA,' he said.

Who can be a member of the CPI (Maoist)? The Maoist document says that any resident of India who has reached 16 years of age, who belongs to the worker, peasant or toiling masses or the petty-bourgeoisie, accepts Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as his/her guiding ideology, accepts the party programme and constitution, actively participates in party activities under any of the party units and observes the unit's discipline, prepares to face the dangers encountered in the course and agrees to pay regularly membership fees and levies that are decided by the party unit, may become a party member. (The membership fee is Rs 10 per annum). Every applicant must be recommended by two party members. It also says that proven renegades, enemy agents, careerists, individuals of bad character, degenerates and such alien class-elements will not be admitted into the party.



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camp in Bastar: 'Would you like to know what we eat here? Fish, rice, wild fruits, etc., appear sumptuous, and from a distance, one might imagine jungle life to be ideal, where there is no dearth of food. But, if you go out of this camp and look around in the villages, you won't find many elderly men or women—our people rarely reach the age of 50, as far as I know. Death begins chasing us right from birth and seizes us as we approach 50 years of age.'

In the early part of this decade, efforts to establish complete guerilla bases were sharpened by the constitution of Revolutionary People's Committees (RPCs). The base is an area where the police or other organs of the state cannot enter at all. It serves as the basic organ of the liberated zone. In Dandakaranya, the most prominent liberated base is Abujhmaad that the Maoists call the Central Guerilla Base.

## The Party's Organisational Structure

In February 2007, the CPI (Maoist) held its ninth Party Congress called the Unity Congress (the highest body of the Maoists is the Party Congress). It was held in high secrecy in the jungles of Bihar's Bheembandh area. The Congress was held in a huge area with a number of facilities available for those who attended it. Almost every senior Maoist leader, including its top brass attended the Congress. The area had a parade ground and a huge hall where strategies were discussed and debates held. It had a



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young age, when as a college student he was drawn to the Telangana movement. He was believed to have been seriously wounded in an encounter in Lalgarh in 2010. But Maoist sources say he is safe but lying low to evade arrest. He is married to a Maoist commander.

- Prashant Bose alias Kishan alias Nirbhay da was the chief of MCC before the party merged with the PWG to form the CPI (Maoist). He is aged nearly 72. Not much is known about him.
- Kobad Ghandy, arrested in Delhi in September 2009. (*See* 'The Rebel' p. 135)
- Sushil Roy, aged 72 is the senior-most Maoist leader in jail, arrested in May 2005 from Kolkata. He is the nephew of the legendary revolutionary of Bengal, Dinesh Gupta.
- Venugopal Rao alias Sonu is Kishenji's younger brother and is one of the first few Maoist cadres to have entered Bastar.
- Amitabha Bagchi, arrested in Jharkhand on 24 August 2009. The Maoists had named him along with Sushil Roy and Kobad Ghandy to talk with the government on behalf of the CPI (Maoist).
- Bansidhar Singh alias Chintan da arrested from Kanpur in February 2010 (*See* 'The Urban Agenda' p. 153.)
- Sabyasachi Panda, aged about 42, believed to be the mastermind behind the Nayagarh raid of 2007 and the attack on Greyhound commandos in Balimela reservoir, resulting in the death of 38 of them. Both



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'Why are you crying?' Maoist squad leader Samayya asked him in Gondi.

'I feel like crying,' he replied.

When the Maoists establish camps like these, villagers from around keep on trickling into its fringes. Here as well, a few villagers have arrived from the nearby village. Some of them have connections with the Maoists. An old man's daughter was a part of the Chetna Natya Manch—the Maoists' cultural troupe, and was killed in police action elsewhere a few months ago. Three other men from this village are also Maoist guerillas.

Vanessa, a French journalist who is with us, tries speaking to them in broken Hindi that a senior Maoist leader translates into Gondi. Vanessa is keen to know whether there is a school nearby and if a teacher ever takes classes there.

The leader translates it for them. There is silence for a few seconds. Then the one whose name is Dolu, laughs. His laughter doesn't stop for almost a minute. And when it does, it is almost as if he has applied brakes to it. 'Guruji!' he speaks with the same wonder with which he utters the word 'Dilli'. 'Guruji, he comes every year on 15 August, *jhanda phehraate hain* (unfurls the flag), and that is it. We never see him again,' he says, astonished that anybody should ask him about the schoolteacher, as if this is what schoolteachers are supposed to do. A young woman—a child suckling at her breast—walks over to the small group and kicks a mongrel. It runs away, whimpering, taking refuge beside two Maoists who sit on their haunches on one side.



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Pavarvel, led by a notorious commander Munna Thakur. The C-60 is a special anti-Naxal force mostly of policemen from the Adivasi regions (the police party ambushed in Laheri was also from this force). Reports suggest that the group saw a man running with a tribal water-flask made out of dried pumpkin. The police fired at him but he got away. It was the misfortune of the Potawe family that the man ran away towards the forest behind their house. In a minute, the police party entered their house and beat Kaju Potawe, who had just returned from the jungle after collecting wild berries. 'They kept asking me about Naxal whereabouts. When I said I didn't know they beat me more,' he says.

It was then that the police party saw Kaju's sister-in-law, the teenage girl. 'They dragged her by her hair and accused her of being a Naxal,' recalls Kaju. Later they asked another villager Dayaram Jangi and his family to vacate their house. Dayaram Jangi had also let the teacher of a nearby government school stay with him for free. He was also asked to leave. The girl was kept in Jangi's house along with a few men of the village who the police suspected of being Naxals. The next morning, the girl was taken to a nearby field, blindfolded, her hands tied, and raped several times.

A fact-finding team which visited her after the incident was told by the girl that the police did 'badmaash kaam' with her. She told them that the first person who raped her was Munna Thakur. 'He said I must have heard his name as he pushed himself over me,' the girl told the team. The girl said she fainted several times during her ordeal.



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In Lalgarh, hundreds of CPM workers have been killed either by slitting their throats or by just putting a bullet in their heads. In Jharkhand, a policeman, Francis Induwar was kidnapped by Maoists, and after the government refused to negotiate, he was beheaded.

But why is it that the Maoists end up killing people in such a gruesome fashion? A senior Maoist leader cites a story popular during the Chinese revolution as an explanation. A bonded labourer who is ill-treated by his landlord feels that the latter has no heart. So, when the peasants attack the landlord's house, the labourer says that he would like to kill his master himself and check whether he has a heart underneath his ribcage. It also serves a psychological purpose, say the Maoists. When a tribal guerilla kills the 'class enemy' in this fashion, it gives him immense satisfaction. His pent-up anger caused by suffering humiliation and exploitation, generation after generation, makes him act like this.



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vivacious among them. She was very attractive as well and had many admirers. She was the natural leader of the group that consisted mostly of college students like herself. Among her admirers was a tall, lanky bespectacled man, who had returned from London, after serving a two-month sentence in a prison there. Kobad Ghandy had gone to London to pursue chartered accountancy, but had instead found himself one day in the thick of a violent attack on an anti-racism meeting. The meeting, held by left-leaning students and activists, to protest against the racism faced by Indians in the UK was attacked by a white fascist gang. The police had encouraged them and ultimately arrested three of the protestors including Kobad and a pregnant white woman. Inside the police station, Kobad was further beaten up.

After his release, Kobad happened to see a picture in a newspaper of Naxal rebels marching in single file through a vast field in Singhbhum in east India. He decided to return to India, wearing an overcoat that had 24 secret pockets, all stuffed with Maoist literature. He returned to Bombay (as it was then known), hoping to establish contact with Naxal rebels. In Bombay Kobad first got in touch with J.P. Dixit, his Hindi professor at St Xavier's college where he had studied. Dixit had been arrested briefly on charges of being a Naxalite. But Dixit was unable to help since he had no contact with the Naxal rebels. It was then that Kobad came in contact with PROYOM (Progressive Youth Movement), a student organisation inspired by the Naxal movement. PROYOM ran an 'alternative university', essentially a series of lectures that offered an alternate view (Marxist) of the subjects



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first lecture at 9 a.m., cycling part of the way and then taking a bus to the university which was 15 km away from her house. At 11.30 a.m., she had left for central Nagpur to attend a meeting on the reservation issue. At 4 p.m., she had to reach Kamptee, a handloom township, mostly inhabited by Muslim weavers, about 20 km from Nagpur. She had first made a detour to leave her cycle at home and had then taken a bus to Kamptee without even stopping for a glass of water. She returned late in the night and began to cry. She could not bear the plight of the poor weavers who were struggling hard to survive after the government stopped their quota of thread, which had enabled them to weave cloth. Many had not eaten for days, she said, and some women had to resort to prostitution to fend for themselves and their families.

In 1994, a Dalit woman, Manorama Kamble, who worked as a maid in an influential lawyer's house, was found dead. The lawyer's family claimed that she had accidently electrocuted herself. But the activists feared that she had been raped and then killed by the lawyer. Anuradha led an agitation, and it was due to her efforts that the case created ripples in the state assembly and in Parliament.

In Indora, one of Anuradha's trusted lieutenants was Biwaji Badke, a four-foot-tall Dalit activist. 'Every morning Badke would come to her house and share all the news with Anuradha over tea,' recall friends. Later, when he was diagnosed with throat cancer, Anuradha brought him to her house and nursed him for months. Another associate, Shoma Sen remembers her being very sensitive to the concerns of others. 'Her house in Indora was open to



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movement relations Gurgaons and Giridihs are not two unconnected islands as such. They both are influencing each other. This is creating a strong base for our extension. If Giridih is liberated first, then basing on its strength and on the struggles of the working class in Gurgaon, Gurgaon would be liberated later.'

That may be a far cry, but not as far as it may sound to the government.



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