

COMRADE DEVULAPALLY VENKATESHWARA RAO AND HIS REVOLUTIONARY PATH IN TELANGANA ARMED STRUGGLE

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Abstract

Comrade Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao was a prominent Revolutionary communist leader, writer, scholar and person who lead the revolutionary path for the historic Telangana Armed struggle and Indian Communist Movement. Particularly Telangana peasant Armed Struggle was started against the tyrannical, repressive and anti-people rule of Nizam's Government, and also against the suppressive feudal land lordism in Hyderabad state. This movement was organized by the prominent communist leaders like, Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao, Arutla Ramachandra Reddy and Bheemreddy Narasimha Reddy with the support of the peasants, under the banner of Andhra Maha Sabha which was one of the frontal organization of the communist party of India.

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Early Life and Activities of Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao 1917-1940

Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao belongs to the village Bandameedi Chandapatla of Suryapeta Taluka of Nalgonda District. Actually, he was born on 1st June, 1917 at Inugurthi Village of Manukota (Mahaboobabad) Taluka of Warangal District, in a Deshmukh Family. His parents, Devulapalli Varada Rao and Gopemma. He had his primary and middle school education in Thirumalagiri, Namavaram and Suryapeta. He pursued his high school education at Khammam. During this period he attended the 3rd Conference of the Andhra Maha Sabha at Khammam. And he had his Intermediate studies at Warangal. Finally, he joined in B.A. Course for his education at Osmania University. During, the same period he participated in the famous Vandemataram strike of 1938 of the University students, for which he was expelled from the University along with many others. Along with many others, he refused to oblige the university authorities, who demanded an apology from the students for re-admitting them. After moving from Pillar to post in search of a Nagpur University which would admit them comrades, Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao and along with others joined the Jabalpur Arts College of Nagpur University. and completed his graduation. During this period he had an occasion to know about the Indian National Movement and also meet, though briefly, some of its leading figures. He also came into contact with socialist and communist literature. After his graduation, he returned to his native village chandupatla in 1939¹.

Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao was contacted by the communist party of India in 1939, among other things the implication of joining the party and carrying on communist activities in the Hyderabad state were made clear to him. As a part of these, it was made clear that one should be prepared to sacrifice his life. There was a ban on the communist party according to the then-existing laws. He thought over all the problems of joining the party, and with a full knowledge of its implications agreed to join the party as a full-time worker. From then on he stuck to communist convictions in thought, word and to the last movement of his life².

As A Communist and Organiser of the Peasant Movement 1940-46

Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao went around all the villages along with his communist colleagues in Suryapet and Jangaon Talukas of Nalgonda District, to know the problems of people and peasants. Then, he united all the farmers and organized peaceful peasant movements against local landlords. Later he formed village committees of Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist party, under the guidance of Raavi Narayana Reddy, who has the President of Andhra Maha Sabha. At the same time, the Nalgonda District Andhra Maha Sabha committee was formed under the Presidentship of Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao.

Nalgonda District Andhra Maha Sabha Committee 1942-44³.

- President : Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao
Secretary : Arutla Ramachandra Reddy
Members : Raja Reddy (Suryapeta Area)
Katkuri Ramachandra Reddy (Organiser Devaruppula)
P. Ramachandra Reddy (Organizer Mondrai)
Arutla Laxmi Narsimha Reddy (Wakeel-Bhongir Area)
C. Yadagiri Rao (Organiser Palakurthy Area)
P. Venkateshwara Rao (Organiser Ramavaram Area)
Bheemireddy Narsimha Reddy (Organiser Palakurthy Area)
Nallu Prathapa Reddy (Organiser Palakurthy Area)

Note : Palakurthy area was under the control of Visnooru Deshmukh and was mostly intensified for the people and peasant issues.

Between 1942-46, many peaceful peasant movements were launched under the leadership of comrade Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao, against the feudal landlords and their atrocities in the Nalgonda district. The important movements are, the revolt of Lambadas at Dharmapuram and Mondrai, Errabadu, PathaSuryapeta, Bethavolu, Bakkavanthulagudem, Mallareddy gudem Mellacheruvu, Ananthagiri, Palakurthy, Kadavendi, Akunuru and Machireddypalli. Particularly, the revolting spirit of Tribal Lambadas of Dharmapuram and Mondrai, the farmers commitment of Errabadu, and the courage of Chityala Ailamma of Palakurthy incidents proved the organizing qualities of Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao.

Beginning and Expansion of Telangana Armed Struggle 1946-51

The martyrdom of Doddi Komaraiah in Kadavendi village of Jangaon Taluq on 4th July, 1946 was an important reason for the origin of the Telangana Armed Struggle against the local deshmukh Rapaka Venkata Ramachandra Reddy. When, we observe the world's people movements, the severe and serious conditions, which appeared under the tyrannical rule of Nizam were more terrific than the conditions of the Russian Society before the "Communist Revolution in 1917. So, we have to understand the movement as the brave struggle of the communists and their leadership like, Comrade Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao and others, which was organized in the compulsory conditions to pull up the roots of the feudalistic rule of Nizam. It is also the considerable things as the main aspect that, because of the conflicts, which were taken part in the Indian social and economic system, there were originated so many peasant movements in the various areas of the country. The Telangana Armed struggle also belongs to the same path. In this context, Devulapalli Venkateshwara

Rao laid the “Revolutionary Path” to the “Indian Revolution” through the Telangana Armed Struggle.

By the observing, the enthusiasm of the war of the people, which was raised with the martyrdom of Doddi Komaraiah, the leaders of the communist party and Andhra Maha Sabha decided to take the movement forward with some specific objectives by the formation of Guerilla Squads against the suppression of Nizam’s police force and razakars. Then, immediately many of the Guerilla Squads are formatted and the struggle was continued.

At the time, India got Independence on 15th August 1947 and the government was formed with the congress ministry, Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister. But, the Nizam did not agree to join in Indian Union and he declared his Hyderabad state as the Independent State. Along with this Nizam Indirectly encouraged the Razakars and their attacks on the villages. Then, against the brutal attacks of Razakars, inefficient Nizam’s rule and the abolition of feudal landlordism, the communists once again gave the official call for the peasant armed struggle on 11th September, 1947 in Telangana. The farmers, women and all the people immediately reacted to the all and joined the movement. Under the guidance of communist leadership, they continued the movement successfully until 1948. Meanwhile, the Indian union Government has started the “Police Action” on Nizam’s Hyderabad state, on the other hand, it also imposed serious suppression on the communists during the period of 1948-50. In this movement, about 4000 communists sacrificed their valuable lives. Consequently, the people got a great result through the movement, nearly 10 lakh acres of land were distributed to the poor by the communists⁵ and nearly 3000 villages were liberated from the iron clutches of Nizam’s Government.

Withdrawal of the Telangana Armed Struggle-The Line of Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao

However, as the pressure and suppression increased from the government and the people began to withdraw their support, it become impossible for the communists to continue the armed struggle. At this stage, Pucchalapalli Sundaraiah, Makineni Basava Punnaiah, Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao and others who extremely differed with the prominent leaders of the communist party like, Raavi Narayana Reddy, Baddam Yella Reddy, Chandra Rajeshwara Rao, Artual Ramachandra Reddy and others on the topic of the continuation of the armed struggle, the nature of the struggles and tactics followed and the other issues. Along with that, so many of the rich peasants left the armed movement after the Police Action. The communists had to continue the movement only with a small number of poor

farmers, laborers, tribals and the middle-class people. And also there was a division among the Telangana leaders. So, the prominent leader Raavi Narayana Reddy stopped aside from the revolutionary armed struggle and criticized the great people's armed struggle of Telangana. Because of all the reasons said above, the communist party has voluntarily but reluctantly withdrawn from the historical revolutionary Telangana peasant Armed Struggle on 21st October, 1951. The communist party has participated in the general elections of 1952 and got majority seats in the both areas of Andhra and Telangana. Raavi Narayana Reddy achieved more votes than Nehru in the elections. That can be inferred as the grand victory of the Armed struggle of the communist party.

Comrade Devulapally Venkateshwara Rao was one of the persons, who differed with the decision to the withdraw from the Telangana Armed struggle, has prepared a document on the wrong decision of withdrawal of the Telangana Armed struggle by the Raavi Narayana Reddy and others of the police bureau.

“In fact, the polit bureau itself was a victim of desperation. This is manifested in its attitude towards Telangana Armed struggle in the following manner. It is no doubt true that Telangana is in danger and it has to bear the brunt. That it is more or less isolated. Yet we must fight to the last. Because by not resisting you are not only not going to save anything but completely demoralized the people. Whether you resist or not, repression is going to be brutal. Prolonged and protracted resistance, if possible, however, might even retrieve the situation if we keep it prolonged for a time.

Here the Polit Bureau, after three months of police action, sees that there is a danger of the Telangana Armed Struggle being crushed because it did not evaporate immediately after it, as was perhaps anticipated by it. Therefore it only could see the danger of having no confidence that a deep-rooted agrarian revolutionary movement, with a program of land distribution, could not only sustain armed struggle against the onslaught of the Union armies, but could advance it also, because we had taken up guerrilla war-fare and not a positional warfare as our form of struggle. It should be noted that the Polit Bureau was silent about guerrilla warfare as our form of struggle.

It should be noted that the Polit Bureau was also silent about guerrilla warfare as its strategy and tactics as enunciated by Mao-tsetung because it was opposed to Mao as such. Not only that it was waiting for the insurrection which it thought was around the corner. Polit Bureau realizes that the armed struggle was more or less isolated, which was a fact. But such an isolation of the pilot bureau itself, because having the sufficient time of more than nine months ever since it came into existence in February 1948 (The police action took place after six months – September 1948

– and the above formulation was made three and half months after the police action i.e., the end of the December, 1948) it could not prepare the organization and the mass movement in various states either to take up the issue of Telangana and campaign for its solidarity or to re-organize the mass movement so as to take it to higher levels. It advanced the existence of reformism as the whole reason for it. It did nothing to overcome it⁶.

The document has a distinct feature in posing the question of the path of the Indian revolution as shown by the Telangana armed struggle, though it was forced to link it with the insurrection in accordance with the then Polit Bureau line. This is how it puts it.

The experiences that we had in Telangana Armed Struggle have shown a new path for New Democratic Revolution in India. Here the class struggle has reached a higher level in the countryside even before the working class was prepared for insurrection. By creating a people's army and overthrowing Nizam's rule through the armed struggle on the basis of the slogans of "Land to the Tiller" and "Gram Rajyas" - we could commence and advance the revolution. Through after military action, the armed struggle suffered major setbacks because of weakness in the movement, the Congress-Nizam set of ruling classes failed to suppress it through their armed forces. On the other hand, it is again spreading in the struggle areas and extending to newer areas. Thus, Telangana Armed Struggle was not confined to overthrowing the Indian Bourgeoisie also from power. The experience of Telangana proves clearly that, even in India, it is possible to overthrow Bourgeois – Zamindari rule in the countryside by developing guerrilla struggles based on the land question, and that such struggles will be of utmost help to the proletariat's struggle to seize power through insurrection⁷.

Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao Positions and Contributions

Comrade Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao held leading positions in the party, he was the secretary of the Nalgonda district communist committee to start with and continued in this capacity even later in the united Communist Party of India. He represented the Nalgonda in the state committee. He was taken into the secretariat of the state committee in March 1948. As a member of the secretariat, he was in charge of conducting the Telangana Armed Struggle. It was a part of discharging these responsibilities that he wrote the document (1949) "Refutation of wrong trends advocating withdrawal of the Telangana Armed Struggle". He was taken into the central committee which was formed after the resignation of B.T. Ranadive based on the line represented by the Andhra Thesis. Later he continued either as a member of the National Council or central committee till he

left the CPM Party in June 1968. He served as a member of parliament (Loksabha) representing the Nalgaonda double-member –constituency winning by a massive majority. In the 1969 convention of Andhra Communist Revolutionaries, he was elected as the secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee. He continued in this responsibility till April 1975. When he, along with his comrade. Tharimela Nagireddy, formed the UCCRI(ML). He was elected as the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the UCCRI(ML) at the Unity conference held for this purpose. He continued in this responsibility till he breathed his last on the 12th of July 1984. His last major work, The History of the people’s armed struggle of Telangana (1946-51) Volume-1, in Telugu version was published in 1988 July, four years after his death⁸.

Conclusion

Comrade Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao was not only a communist revolutionarist, writer, scholar, historian, and orator but also a good parliamentarian. He is one of the founders of Marxist–Leninist and Maoist thought parties in India. He was the General Secretary of the UCCRI (ML) party until his last breath. If he is alive today he would have ruled the entire Maoist revolutionary politics in India.

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