

## A TOUR OF NAXALBARI

**M R Rajagopalan**

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK in Hindi edited by Vir Bharat Talwar and published by Anamika Publishers, New Delhi as 'Naxalbari Ke Daur Me—A Tour of Naxalbari'—is a collection of essays published in the Hindi Journal FILHAL between 5th January 1972 and April 74. Filhal ceased publication after this date.

From every point of view NAXALBARI movement was a landmark in Indian History. Started in the year 1967 by Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal in the Terai region of Naxalbari in West Bengal the movement exhorted the youth of India to take up arms and overthrow the semi-colonial semi-feudal governments at state and central levels. That the movement attracted the cream of graduates and college students as well as some teachers and research scholars is a fact of History. The rulers of the country were shaken and came down heavily on these young persons. The police especially in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh killed thousands of these youngsters in a manner most brutal and barbaric. Hundreds of them were beaten to death inside jails without any charge being framed against them on a mere suspicion of their being naxalites. Hundreds were killed in fake encounters for which police from all parts of India are famous. Many young boys and girls had their limbs broken literally due to police beatings. Insertion of rods inside the private parts of girls after sexually assaulting them was a common practice for the police.

Nevertheless, the movement had some chinks in its armour. Charu Majumdar acted like a Fuehrer. His word was law. He believed in the dictum "shoot when I command and ask no questions". There was nothing like an internal democracy or a healthy debate on various issues within the party.

Secondly Charu's slogan "China's Chairman is our Chairman" and "China's path is our path" gave a short shrift to finding an ideology suitable for Indian situation. At some point even the Communist Party of China cautioned Majumdar against such declarations.

The net result was that many dissenters within the CPML left Charu's company and started their own groups. Talwar and his friends were one of those breakaway groups called themselves National Liberation and Democratic Front.

This group looked up to the collected works of Lenin for inspiration and decided to start a journal. FRONTIER—edited by Samar Sen, its founder, those days provided them an excellent model. But these young boys wanted to address the proletariat—real factory workers and rural youth. Hence they decided on Hindi language understood in all the North Indian states and in most parts of South India. The name chosen was FILHAL, a fortnightly journal with Vir Bharat Talwar as its Editor. The Contributors include famous persons like Pradhan Hari Shankar Prasad, A K Roy, Pramod Sen Gupta, Nirmal Sengupta, N K Singh and others. There are letters from factory workers giving graphic details of the conditions of Bokaro, Bhilai, Durgapur etc.

The author has stated that he has made painstaking efforts to avoid the Pandit-style of writing a flowery prose difficult to understand. He has chosen the language and expressions of common man's spoken Hindi. Almost every article is written in simple and easily understandable Hindi.

This book is a collection of some of the best articles totalling 112 in 648 pages. Talwar has divided this volume into sixteen sections. First section consists of essays - 21 in number. Topics cover Agrarian Problems and conflicts, Nationalisation of Banks, Flood situation, Peshawar Rebellion, Atrocities on Dalits, White Revolution, \ Green Revolution etc. Articles such as Marx and Trade Unions, Stalin and Trade Unions, Mao-Tse-Tung and Trade Unions in China and Charu Majumdar and Trade Unions. Each essay is well written and gives a good background and useful information on the subject matter. All the essays together constitute a good document both for reference and refreshing of knowledge about those days when Naxalbari movement was peaking.

The second section is captioned May Day and there are six papers on Factory workers' agitations-problems etc. Section three is titled Massacres and Agitations. There are essays on the massacres of Dalits in Venmani-Tamil Nadu, Selibali, Chauri etc. PAC agitation in UP, Students agitation in Patna, Factory workers' agitation in Chennai and Farmers' agitation in Coimbatore are covered.

In the fourth section there are five essays on Vietnam—about the communist party—how America entered the war on a false pretext and some statistics about the Vietnam war.

Fifth section deals with the issues in the Third World - problems created by Colonialism and Imperialism. Sixth section is devoted for labour class and their agitations. There are eleven essays. Perhaps this section is most important since one can workers' get a picture of the exploitative machinery from the perspective of the Factory workers themselves. One could see the living conditions of workers in Bokaro—it was horrible without proper housing, sanitation, remuneration etc. Bhilai and Durgapur are no better. A handful of senior officers and contractors loot these factories and make money even as workers' conditions were like Dantes' Inferno. Seventh section has six essays on Coal fields of Bihar. The points made are similar to the previous section.

The three articles in section eight are devoted to agitations of Adivasis of Tundi, Jharkand. Ninth section is exclusive for Telengana - the Armed struggle of Telengana farmers - 1946-51. This is an excellent piece by Mohan Ram and it brings out how the CPI on the advice of Moscow let down the farmers even as they were succeeding.

The tenth section is titled "Documents of Naxalbari Revolution". There are five papers. One is the will and testament of Nagbhusan Patnaik others are plaints given by Kanu Sanyal and Ashim Chatterjee in the courts.

The eleventh section contains articles on peoples' struggle for Democratic Rights from Association for Protection of Democratic Rights and individuals. There are letters to the editor—four—in section 12; section 13 has three papers—homages paid to Edgar Snow, Emile Burns and Norman Bethune.

Section 14 is titled literature—contains some poetry, write up condemning the breaking up of Rabindranath Tagore's statue by Utpal Dutt and a rejoinder by AK Sengupta. The role of writers in society by Nikhileswar (Andhra) is a good piece.

There are write ups on the topic by Lushun, Nikoloi Pogodin and others. In section 15 some selected editorials on US imperialism, the Hypocrisy of Silver Jubilee of India's Independence (1972), Peace in Vietnam etc. find a place.

In the last section there are two papers—First one is a letter by Vir Bharat Talwar to his Teacher written at the end of his college days—why he would like to choose Naxalite line and reject Gandhian approach. The other piece is by Vijayendra—Why Naxalite Movement will remain Alive (translation of his paper published in *Frontier*, autumn issue 2005). The rural agrarian situation has not changed. What with Nandigram, farmers' suicides in Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka and brutal repression of the people's movements in the tribal belts of Jharkand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra etc. with a heavy hand by the unthinking ruling class has only nurtured the naxalite groups. As a result they have spread over 17 districts in 15 states covering one fourth the area of the nation with a population of Ten crores.

On the whole this publication is an absolutely brilliant document of the Must Read category for all those who want to get a feel of the nation at the height of Naxalite movement in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh Bihar and other places in the early 1970s. □□□