

Yet Another Encounter

S Mohan Rao

Another encounter in police euphemism! Near Gummalakshmipuram and Kedaripuram-L N Peta Crossing two naxalites or in the new parlance, Maoists were brought down by police bullets in an alleged encounter. This is the same old story since 1969 when the nascent naxalite movement began to make headlines. 40 years on and the phenomenon of encounter continues to huant the civil society.

Over the years, the movement has taken many a course. The party CPI(ML), splintered into many groups, some have adopted parlia-mentary path, some semi-parlia-mentary path and some still continuing their armed campaign against the enemy but not the same path as advocated in the beginning. In the innitial stage of the movement, naxalite prisoners refused bails and did not fight their cases in courts. They even did not attend the courts and hated government machinery. Later on, they adopted some course of using legal means to get bail and came out to continue further struggle. Thus, much water has flown in the Ganges since then. Nearly forty years and the Prime Minister of India had to accept that 'naxalite threat is the most dangerous the country is facing at the moment'.

Most of these encounters are fake and fabricated. By and large people know it because of relentless exposure given by human rights activists. But, the real irony is that, people are not responding against this phenomenon the way they should do. They have become too insensitive to treat it as a routine affair. Apathy in general! They are not realising why some people, even some intellectuals have lost faith in this democratic system and joining this movement. Some leaving their brilliant careers and joining this struggle!

And for these two recent encoun-ter deaths the people of two different localities reacted in two different ways.

Chokkala Gangaram alias 'Jago-bandhu', 'Prasad', 'Shankar' and 'Vijay' was a member of Andhra Orissa Border (AOB) Special Zonal Commi-ttee as well as a Divisional Secretary of three districts, a leader of high order with 18-19 years of under-ground revolutionery life. A very inportant activist in the line of Sammireddi, Bhaskar, Dushyant (since surrendered), all organisers of Uddanam Area. This communist revolutionery was the main link between AOB and Uddanam area. He was only of 42 years of age, was from Palaspuram of Sompeta Mandalam. He studied upto graduation in a college of Srikakulam and even in his student life used to help others. He was a good cultural performer and participated in village dramas. During his college days he joined student politics and naxalite faction of student union i.e., RSU (Radical Students Union) and fought for many students' causes and finally joined the movement as a full time member of the then People's War Group (PWG) of CPI(ML). He married his elder sister's daughter, which is a pratice and custom here by name *Neelaveni* who also joined the party and is still under ground. He started as a member of Dalam (squad) in 'KONDABAREDI DALAM' and rose in the echelon to a member in

AOB special zonal committee and as a prominent leader in Uddanam Area till he lost his life on 10th March, 2008 in police custody and in torture chamber at Etcherla (ETCHERLA), headquarters of Anti-naxalite Special Police Squad under direct supervision of S P, Sri Kulam (AP), where for a day he was subjected to inhuman torture which was confirmed by blood oozing out from his mouth and nose showing internal haemorrhage. And according to police version it was an encounter death!

Along with him, another unmarried young boy of 20-21 years of age, a sympathiser, was also killed. Police removed him for not having witness as well as to create panic and white-terror so that in future nobody would give any lift on bicycle or in any other conveyance to revolutionary activists. They wanted to set an example to isolate revolutionaries or naxalites from people but created the opposite as most people refused to co-operate with the police. After killing them in cold blood in torture chamber and then to show this as an encounter, the men in uniform threw their bodies at the crossing of Gummalakshmi-puram and KEDARIPURAM–L N Peta Crossing, not far away from the border of Orissa and in Vizianagaram district, to show their vicinity and proximity to AOB Committee and Orissa state.

The bodies were lying on their backs, a few metres away from each other, byke was also quite at a distance. According to police statement which the press eagerly devoured. they were going towards Orissa border and when challenged, tried to flee away also firing at the police and the police in self-defence fired and killed them without any bullet wounds on their backs. But the bullets were pumped in from the front and at the point blank range. The symptoms on the bodies, on the face of Ganga showed severe torture, their limbs broken, blood oozing from mouth and nostrils fully corroborated the facts and situations.

As soon as the news of encounter deaths appeared in the media on 12 March morning, this correspondent confirmed it with the honorary chairman of 'AMARULA BANDHU MITRULA COMMITTEE' (The Committee of Martyrs' Friends & Relatives) who advised the concerned people to reach Palasapuram where the body of Gangaram would be brought. At the entrance of the village, on the main road itself there was a contingent police in mufti. Soon Press arrived. They interviewed G Madhava Rao, district President of the committee, albeit not about the encounter. When this writer pointed out to the press about the fake encounter, and the description on the basis of police version they said that 'no, we had also expressed our doubts.' That's all! In Andhra Press is playing a role of second fiddle to police and govt in regard to this type of incidents. Maybe some press people are on the pay role of police! So said the locals.

For the first time, in the history of village Palasapuram, breaking the traditions and norms and customs, the women folk on a large scale entered the 'Shnashanam' (cremation place) to pay their last respects & homage to the valiant son of their village. The presence of plain clothes policemen confirms the adage that a dead revolutionary is more dangerous to the ruling classes than the living one.

There in the village of Manudi-patti, Ganapati's body was taken in procession and brought to the "Martyrs' Hall" at Boddapodu to pay last respects & homage by a huge crowd, then taken to his own village to be given to the flames amidst

thundering slogans, though he was apolitical but the touch of the revolutionary had given him such respect like 'Touch Stone', making him also shining and grading him to high respect. Sacrifice never goes in vain.

Since 1969 for the last 40 years or so, killings in fake encounters are continuing and thousands laid down their lives. They sacrificed their 'todays' for better 'tomorrows' of the future generations. □□□