

# People's Revolutionary Movements and Students - An Experience from India

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# Outline

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- A Brief History of Indian people's movements
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- Parliamentary Left student movement before Naxalbari
- Students' role in Naxalbari Upsurge
- Revolutionary Students' Organisations
- Essential Aspects of Revolutionary Student Movement
- Repression, Globalisation, Fascism
- Identity Movements and Students
- Present Status
- What does the history teach?
- Q&A

# Introduction

- Context
- Revolutionary potential of youth
- Historical role of youth in social movements
- Ruling class attempts to depoliticise students / youth
- Careerism, elitism, pro-establishment, casualness, addictions....
- Challenges to student activism
- Social necessity of student activism
- 1960s – angry youth - 2020s – Where is millennial youth?
- Experience of Indian student movement

# A Brief History of Indian People's Movements

- Movements against feudalism
- Movements against colonialism
- Transfer of power, 1947
- Continuation of status quo - 1947 - till now
- Various struggles of people against the status quo – class struggles, various sections of working class, peasantry, women, adivasis, depressed castes, religious minorities, nationalities, regional / linguistic struggles, anti-displacement, environment, etc.

# Naxalbari upsurge and revolutionary movements

- Second decade after transfer of power
- Widespread discontent
- Parliamentary opposition
- Parliamentary Left
- Influence of Angry 1960s and GPCR
- Naxalbari spark spreading like wildfire all over India
- Characterisation, New Democratic Revolution, No to parliamentary path, armed struggle, seizure of state power, initial mistakes, setback, review and continuation, various formations

# Parliamentary Left Student movement before Naxalbari

- All India Student Federation (1936), Student Federation of India (1964)
- Tailing Congress in anti-colonial struggle
- Confining students to campus
- Faulty perspective of the party as well as the student movement
- Exceptions – Telangana, Tebhaga, Malabar
- Post-1947 split, continuation of the faulty perspective

# Students' role in Naxalbari Upsurge

- Students' enthusiasm to join the struggle
- Students' participation, but unorganised
- Intellectual as well as rank and file inputs
- Noble sacrifices
- Significance of bringing back revolution on to the agenda
- "Relinquish Bourgeois education"
- "No mass organisations"
- Failure to be inclusive and pluralistic about forms of struggle

# Revolutionary Students' Organisations

- Setback of the movement and rethinking
- Beginning of organised groups of students – 1972
- Progressive Democratic Students Union 1974, Radical Students Union 1974 in Andhra Pradesh, similar experiments all over India
- Emergency
- Going to villages, organising peasants, agrarian labour, workers, studying rural socio economic structure, identifying exploitation and oppression
- RSU 1978 conference 'Go to Villages' call
- 1978-85 – Deluge of people's struggles
- Consolidation of student formations at all India level - AIRSF



# Essential Aspects of Revolutionary Student Movement

- Back to politicisation – politics in command
- Militant struggles on student issues
- Not confining to campus alone
- Initiative in almost all social issues
- Leading and guiding other sections
- Integration with revolutionary movement
- Providing ranks and leadership to the revolutionary movement

# Repression, Globalisation, Fascism

- Three-pronged attack of state violence, globalisation ideology and Fascist tendencies
- 1985-89 repression, student union elections ban
- 1990-91 reprieve
- 1992 ban
- Globalisation – privatisation of educational institutes, removal of politics from campuses, middle classes drifting away
- 1992 Babri Masjid demolition – Hindutva Fascism's trajectory till 2014 and gaining power

# Identity Movements and Students

- Atrocities on Dalits and rise of Ambedkar student organisations
- Dalit Bahujan assertion and student organisations
- Post-Babri Masjid mobilisation of Muslim students
- Movements of regional aspirations and students
- Student activism of marginal sections gaining strength
- Positive and negative aspects

# Present Status

- Growing onslaught of ruling classes
- Economic, social and political problems
- Ever increasing unrest
- Rising need to take up struggles
- Fragmentation among the people
- Absence of all inclusive leadership and direction
- Future

What does the history teach?

- Lessons for India and other countries also
- Student power for social analysis
- Student power to spread the message of change
- Student power to help bring all the struggling forces together
- Student power to become an agent of change
- With more resources and exposure at hand as well as relatively lesser risk, students in US can take up....

# Further reading

- Lots and lots... But for the present...
- Amit Bhattacharyya - Storming the Gates of Heaven, Setu Prakashani, Kolkatta, 2016
- Bernard D'Mello – India after Naxalbari, Akar Books, New Delhi, 2018
- Sumanta Bannerjee - In the Wake of Naxalbari – Sahitya Samsad, Kolkatta, 2009
- Venugopal N – Understanding Maoists, Setu Prakashani, Kolkatta, 2013
- Yang Mo - Song of Youth, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1978
- -- APRSU: A Glorious Saga of Students' Struggle, Virasam Publications, 2012



# Q&A