

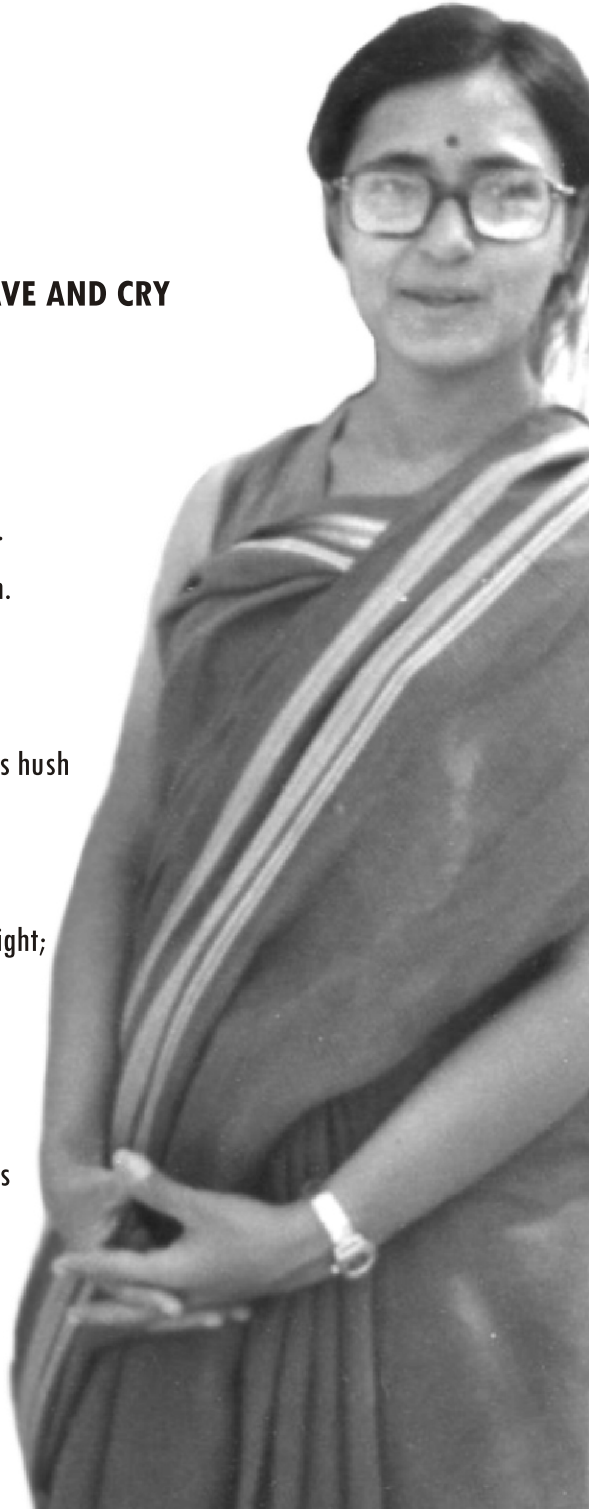
Remembering Comrade Anuradha! Remembering a Beautiful Life!

DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND CRY

Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints that glow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night;
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there, I did not die.

—Anonymous



**Remembering Comrade Anuradha !
Remembering a Beautiful Life!**

A collection of Memoirs

Copies: 1000

5 August 2008

Suggested Contribution: Rs. 25/-

Graphics by Mohan



Published on behalf of Comrade Anuradha Memorial Committee by:
H.S.Shiva Prakash
Professor, School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU

96, New Transit House
JNU, New Delhi - 110 067.

Printed at J K Offset Printers, 315, Garaiya Street,
Jama Masjid, Delhi -6

Introduction

Dear friends,

This is a small effort to bring together a collection of memoirs on late Comrade Anuradha. We never pretend that this is an exhaustive collection. But at the same time it is important to get together whatever that has been written on her in a single collection with the humble intention that more and more people should come to know of such a visionary Marxist revolutionary who always dared to flow against the tide. It is important to document the life of such a multifaceted personality whose life has left an indelible mark on many; a life of such high moral, ethical, political and ideological standards that her death has left void in the revolutionary, progressive movement in India. Especially, for the revolutionary women's movement of the subcontinent.

The Anuradha we know is the dynamic trade unionist; one of the pioneers of civil rights movement particularly in Maharashtra as well as the whole country ever since the days of emergency. We also know her as a bright academic, a devout teacher and one of the leading theoreticians of the revolutionary people's movement in India. At the time of her untimely death we are told that she breathed her last while being one of the tallest leaders of the revolutionary movement in India. She remained a song dedicated to the cause of the most oppressed and exploited people of this subcontinent.

This memorial committee has come together with a task of taking the message of the life of Anuradha to the present and the future with the same principles that she cherished for fighting throughout her life. This collection of memoirs is a humble step in this direction.

In Solidarity,

Chairperson,
Comrade Anuradha Memorial Committee
HS Shiva Prakash,
Professor, School of Arts and Aesthetics,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
01.08.08

Comrade Anuradha Memorial Committee

Chairperson

H.S. Shiva Prakash

Professor, School of the Arts and Aesthetics,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Members

Ajay Prakash, Journalist, Delhi

Anil Chamaria, Freelance journalist, Delhi

Anita Bharati, Dalit Lekhak Sangh

Bajrang Bihari Tiwari, Reader, Deshbandhu, Delhi University

Karen Gabriel, Reader, St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi

Madan Kashyap, Editor, Samyik Vimarsh

Neshat Quaiser, Professor in Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia

Pankaj Bisht, Editor, Samayantar

Ramakrishna Pandey, Journalist, Univartha & Hindi Poet

Rona Wilson, Research Scholar, JNU

Sadhana Saxena, Reader, Department of Education, University of Delhi

Sapna Chamaria, Lecturer, Delhi University

Thomas Mathew, Social Justice Activist, Delhi

Vijay Kumar Yadavendu, Public Health Professional, Delhi

Remembering Comrade Anuradha ! Remembering a Beautiful Life!

*If you fall
one evening twilight,
you should fall like a sun,
and behind you thousands of shooting stars.*

They say how you are born is not remarkable. But how you have been, how you have become and at the end of the day how you cease to be certainly is. Com. Anuradha Gandhi's life has left an indelible mark on many; it was a life of such high moral, ethical, political and ideological standards that her death has left a void in the revolutionary movement of India.

It was a hope that was suddenly broken, when on the morning of April 12 2008, Anuradha breathed her last, at the relatively young age of 54. The revolutionary movement in India and the oppressed masses in general would remember her martyrdom with a clutch of grief and pain. But it certainly is not the time for despair. The revolutionary movement always waits for the new day...

Com. Anuradha had just returned after spending a week in Jharkhand taking classes amongst the tribals on the question of women's oppression. Little did she suspect, on April 6, that the high fever that had gripped her would kill. The local pathologist could not trace any malarial infection in the blood. Instead, a local doctor treated her for stomach upset. Little did she know that it was the killer falciparum malaria, griping her entire being, already weakened by systemic sclerosis, an auto-immune disease that had affected her hands and been slowly eating into her heart and lungs. Little did she speak of that incurable disease, the systemic sclerosis that had been with her for over five years. The exigencies of the revolutionary movement, the difficulties of life on the edges of our society, in the thin margin that separates life and death, had given her few options for proper medical care. Yet her waning health never deterred Anuradha from what she wanted to be, what she wanted to do. It was the commitment to the masses and revolution that got





transformed into labour -- and labour with the same ardour as before.

As the poet in the guerrilla says:
*No, she did not laugh at death.
It was just that she was not afraid to die
Of Malaria, tuberculosis, sclerosis ...*

But another blood test on the 11th had confirmed the presence of falciparum malaria. On that morning, she appeared fine, though inside, the dreaded falciparum bacteria had already started the dance of death affecting her lungs, heart and kidney. She was put on oxygen and later life-support systems in the hospital, but barely within an hour her systems began failing. While on oxygen, she was conscious, with her eyes wide open. The same soft eyes, deep as the ocean, though in acute pain, with the probable knowledge that she was sinking. As usual Anuradha was right. The end came the next morning.

*I remain a song dedicated
to the revolution
This thirst will end
only with my life*
—Cherabandaraju

Anuradha Gandhi's commitment to the cause of revolution was unshakeable, no matter what the ups and downs. She was with the incipient revolutionary movement right from her college days in the early 1970s; giving up a career as a brilliant student and teacher for the revolution. At the time of her martyrdom, as per press reports, Com. Anuradha Gandhi had risen to become a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Maoist). It is reported that in the 9th Congress-Unity Congress, she was the single woman comrade to be elected to its Central Committee.

A supreme labour that spanned about three decades and a half, Com. Anuradha contributed much to the ideological, political and organisational development of the revolutionary movement in the country. She was a founder-member of the CPI (ML) Party in Maharashtra.

A revolutionary is born

Anuradha Shanbag was fondly called Anu by everyone who knew her as a brilliant student, civil rights activist, passionate teacher, militant trade unionist and a visionary theoretician in her early days in Mumbai and Nagpur. Born on March 28 1954, to a Gujarati mother and Kannadiga father—both one time CPI members along with all her maternal aunts—who had themselves got married in the CPI office in Mumbai in the 1940s, she grew up in an atmosphere of rational and progressive thinking. Her father was a well known lawyer in the Bombay High Court and her mother continues to work as a social activist at a Women's Resource Centre in Mumbai. She was the elder of the two children, her brother being a noted stage artist and script writer in Mumbai. Compassion for the poor was very much tempered in an atmosphere of serious study, intellectual creativity and rational thinking right from her childhood. In this atmosphere she excelled academically in both school and college.

Com. Anuradha started her political life at Elphinstone College, Mumbai in 1972. Those days, in 1971, urban Mumbai was not oblivious to the bitter realities of people struggling, facing one of the worst famines that had struck rural Maharashtra. The young Anuradha was deeply affected by the horrors of famine that had ravaged the lives of the rural poor. The beauty of the indomitable spirit of the wretched to stay alive, even in such miserable man-eat-man conditions, not to lose hope in a bottomless pit had stirred her entire being as she along with a group of students witnessed the beastly face of the famine. This had left a deep impression on her about the hard realities of everyday life in rural India. It was this concern for the well-being of the poverty stricken masses that drew her to revolutionary politics. Unable to tolerate the poverty and humiliation that the poor faced, she sought answers.

Her sensitive nature and intellectual curiosity drew her towards the worldwide communist upsurge of the times. The anti-US movement in support of the heroic resistance of Vietnam revolution and the whirl wind of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) had roused the imagination of the youth throughout the world. Reading the accounts of the Chinese revolution and the GPCR by western authors had inspired Anu and many of her generation. It was the same time *when the single spark had set the prairie on fire* at Naxalbari in West Bengal. Thousands of students had given up their career and education to leave for the countryside to be with the masses in their daring dream to carve out a new world free from all forms of exploitation. This was further churning for young Anu who was already overwhelmed by the famine stricken people she had seen. She was humbled by the tall sacrifices of the first generation naxalites, many of whom were killed in the prime of their youth.

Soon Anuradha began taking part in college activities and social work among the poor. While active amongst students, she came in touch with the student organisation PROYOM—Progressive Youth Movement—which was inspired by the then Naxalite movement. She became one of its active members, and later one of its leaders. Work in the slums helped her interact with the dalit movement. The horrors of untouchability, the agony of dalit oppression led her to seek answers to it. It was at the same time that she read voraciously digging deeper into the warp and

weft of Marxism as a touchstone to understand the basis of the oppressive and exploitative caste system and all the other ills of society.

She went on to do her MA in sociology and later M.Phil. In the meantime she also taught, first in Wilson College (Chowpatti) and then at the Jhunjhunwalla College (Ghatkopar). Her fervour and diligence made her a very popular and effective lecturer, a favourite amongst her students. In November 1977 she married a fellow comrade at a small function involving only the families on both sides.

The post-Emergency period saw her becoming one of the leading figures of the civil liberties movement in the country. Com. Anuradha was one of the initiators of the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) in Maharashtra. She played a prominent role in the famous Civil Liberties Conference held in 1977 at Delhi, demanding the release of political prisoners, which included such leading lights as V.M.Tarkunde, Govinda Mukhoty, Subba Rao, Sudesh Vaid and even some ruling class elements as George Fernandez and Arun Shourie. She was one of the leading persons in the civil liberties movement in the country till she left for Nagpur from Mumbai in 1982.

While teaching at the Nagpur University she actively participated in, and played a leading role in the trade union and dalit movements in the region. As the movement grew militant, several times she was put behind the bars. Later, at the call of the revolutionary movement, she went to Bastar, and on returning she took up the responsibility once again of building the revolutionary movement of the most oppressed masses in Maharashtra. For the last 15 years, she has been working among the most downtrodden, braving state repression, until her sudden and untimely demise.

At the time of her death, Com. Anuradha was studying the problems facing the women comrades in the revolutionary movement. She was deeply involved in the enquiry of the varied forms/shades of patriarchy that women had to face every day, so as to devise a way, a method to enable the women comrades to grow to greater leadership responsibilities. Her very last task was taking a class of the leading women activists from Jharkhand, mostly from tribal backgrounds, to explain the decisive role of women in revolutionary social transformation. Her untimely, premature death will have an impact on the revolutionary movement in

the country, particularly on women's work in the revolutionary movement as also the development of work in Maharashtra.

A Renowned Leader of the Downtrodden

Com. Anuradha was in the forefront of the countrywide civil liberties movement in the late 1970s. Her magnetic and persuasive personality made many well-known intellectuals and prominent citizens come forward to endorse statements and campaigns condemning draconian laws and violations of democratic rights. In the early 1980s, with the clarion call of the revolutionary movement in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, there was the need to spread the message of revolution from Mumbai to Vidarbha. As already mentioned, it was Com. Anuradha who shifted to Nagpur, a place totally unknown to her. With her record as a good lecturer, she soon landed a job of teaching sociology to post-graduate students in Nagpur University. She divided her time working in Vidarbha primarily among the trade unions and the dalit community.

In trade union work, she focused on the construction workers and led many a militant struggle. Most notable was the protracted strike at the Khaparkheda thermal power plant (30 km from Nagpur) being constructed by about 5,000 workers. The police resorted to firing and imposed curfew in the region. She also organised the *molkarins* (household labour) of Nagpur, workers in the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) companies at Hingna (Nagpur), railway workers, *beedi* workers in Bhandara, powerloom workers at Kamptee (15 km from Nagpur) and other workers in the unorganised sector. Later she shifted to Chandrapur to help organise the coal-mine and construction workers there. Most of these workers in the unorganised sector had no basic trade union rights, totally ignored by traditional unions. She also developed links for joint activities with other progressive trade union leaders of the region, from Nagpur, Chandrapur, Amravati, Jabalpur, Yeotmal and other surrounding centres.

In the course of these struggles, she was arrested and put behind bars several times in Nagpur jail. In spite of her job as a lecturer at the Nagpur University, she became a renowned revolutionary trade union leader of the region.

Unlike the traditional Marxists, she fully identified with dalits and in fact moved her Nagpur residence

Her work among the dalit community, organising and awakening them against caste oppression, for liberation from this oppressive system was an ideal example for any revolutionary Marxist. It had the stamp of a pioneering revolutionary Marxist to have addressed the issue of dalit oppression and caste discrimination at a very early stage. The terrible humiliation that dalits faced due to untouchability and other forms of inhuman discrimination drew her to study deeply the caste question in India as well as the writings of Ambedkar. Com. Anuradha owned the cause of the dalits from a very early period, at a time when dalit issues were not in vogue as in the present, and was anathema in most Marxist circles.

to one of the largest dalit *bastis* of Maharashtra, Indora. Though this was a stronghold of most of the dalit leaders, her incisive knowledge of Ambedkar and other sociological writings on the caste question seen in the light of Marxism drew large sections of the youth to the Naxalite movement. The cultural troupes, in particular, had enormous impact. She grew to become the open face of the Maoists in the dalit movement and one of the major public speakers at most dalit functions in Vidarbha.

Com. Anuradha wrote profusely on the topic in both English and Marathi, presenting a class view-point of the issue countering not only the numerous post-modernist trends on this count but the wrong Marxist interpretations of the dalit and caste questions as well. The most elaborate article on the issue was a 25-page piece in Marathi that appeared in *Satyashodhak Marxvad* (the organ of Sharad Patil from Dhule) explaining the Marxist standpoint on the dalit question linking dalit liberation with the task of the New Democratic Revolution (NDR) in the country. Till date, this article is quoted by many.

Besides these two fields of work in Nagpur, there were many notable events in which she played a pioneering role. Below we mention only two such examples, which left an indelible revolutionary impact on the consciousness of the people of Vidarbha. The first was the Kamlapur Conference of 1984; the second was the proposed cultural programme of Gaddar in 1992. Both these events had a major impact on spreading revolutionary views widely all over Vidarbha.

It was when the message of the revolutionary movement had spread like wild fire, throughout the Gadchiroli region, in a relatively short span of time, after the squads of the erstwhile CPI (ML) (People's War) had crossed over from the state of Andhra to Maharashtra. The most oppressed masses of the region were looking for a revolutionary alternative. The Kamlapur Conference was being organised at this opportune moment. The conference venue was decided to be deep in the forests of Gadchiroli by the incipient Naxalite movement. Though the conference was deep in the verdant forests of Gadchiroli, the news of the conference was thick with the masses, intellectuals and every progressive, democratic mind of the region. And how? A massive campaign, led by Anuradha, was carried out all over Vidarbha. Meanwhile the

armed squads did a huge mobilisation within the forests. Despite the conference being ruthlessly crushed by the police, hundreds and thousands of people began flocking towards Kamlapur—a tiny hamlet deep in the forests. Kamlapur, the nondescript hamlet had soon become the bugle of revolution, of the right to rebel, reverberating throughout the region, for months.

The very proposal of a cultural programme of the revolutionary balladeer Gaddar in Nagpur had ignited the expectations of the masses from various strata of the society. This too could not ignore the attention of the ruling class as the police ruthlessly prevented the programme from taking place. Every one knew that the state would leave no stone unturned to ensure that the programme will not happen. But Com. Anuradha was not the one to give up.

She had approached the best lawyer in town to move court for the permission to organise the programme. On that day, the court handed the order to let the programme happen. Before hand, defying the court order, the lawless police who got scared of the people being witness to such a programme had assembled at every corner of the area where it was supposed to be organised. People still recollect the diminutive Anuradha climbing onto a motorcycle to address the large crowd gathered on the streets outside the college hall which had been sealed by the police, inspite of a High Court order allowing the programme. Thousands of police had surrounded the hall and occupied all approach roads to it. The big gathering that defied the police presence included a large number of journalists, lecturers, writers, lawyers, and even senior faculty members of Nagpur University.

The police had plans to prevent Gaddar from reaching the venue. But they miserably failed. Gaddar appeared in disguise to the consternation of the police. The frustrated police lathi-charged everyone as they saw Gaddar amidst the applauding people. The programme did not take place. But this remained head-line news for nearly two months. It became the talk of the town with every important journalist, writer, artist or intellectual demanding the state to let the programme happen. The message of revolution had gone deep into the masses all over Vidharbha. It was none other than Com. Anuradha who saw to it that the programme become ingrained in the revolutionary consciousness of the masses of

Many years later, it was based on her original draft that the erstwhile CPI (ML) (PW) prepared the first ever caste policy paper within the revolutionary Marxist movement in India. This draft had categorically outlined that in India the democratisation of society is inconceivable without smashing the elitist caste system and fighting all forms of caste oppressions, most particularly, its crudest form ? untouchability. Many of the views expressed by her then in the mid-90s have become the core of the understanding of the present revolutionary movement.

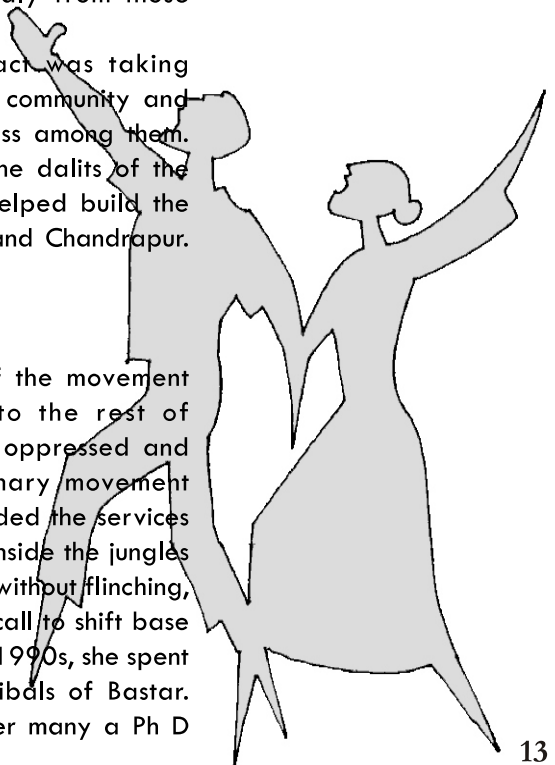
Vidarbha through her imaginative and dynamic leadership.

Fifteen years in the Vidarbha region, Com. Anuradha had made an enormous impact in carrying revolutionary politics from Gadchiroli to the entire region. Together with others, she had built a revolutionary working class movement along with a powerful revolutionary movement among dalits. Anuradha also played a major role in building the revolutionary student movement and in attracting a vast cross-section of intellectuals, including senior professors, journalists, noted playwrights and top lawyers of the region. Soon after coming to Nagpur, on the martyrdom of Cherabandaraju, she got his poems translated into Marathi, which was released at a function by the most renowned Marathi poet of the region. The Marathi translation of the poems had a huge impact and sold extensively in all Maharashtra. She also played a role in the formation of the All India League of Revolutionary Culture (AILRC) in 1983. In 1985, as one of the main speakers at the Sindri (near Dhanbad) Conference of the AILRC, together with KVR, Gaddar and others, till date, she is much remembered by the comrades of Bihar and Jharkhand (many in the leadership of the revolutionary movement) who were attracted to the revolutionary movement by the impact of that Conference and the cultural performances. Many in the region remember her fondly from those days.

Yet, her most effective impact was taking revolutionary politics to the dalit community and arousing revolutionary consciousness among them. She lived and worked amongst the dalits of the region day-and-night. She also helped build the women's organisations in Nagpur and Chandrapur.

The Call of Bastar

The revolutionary message of the movement in Dandakaranya was taken to the rest of Vidarbha, to the most deprived, oppressed and exploited masses. The revolutionary movement was looking for a new day. It needed the services of comrades like Anuradha deep inside the jungles in Bastar. As usual, true to her self, without flinching, Com. Anuradha responded to the call to shift base to Bastar. In the second half of the 1990s, she spent three years living amongst the tribals of Bastar. She went out of her way to gather many a Ph D



study on the Gond tribals for the revolutionary movement of Dandakaranya. One would always recall her saying with utmost conviction that these three years were one of the most fulfilling in her life where she learned about the lives and struggles of the Gond tribals of Bastar. She keenly studied their lives, the painstaking ways in which the movement was built, particularly focusing on the lives of the women, their organisations, the KAMS (Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghathan) and the women in the detachments.

All this was happening amidst heavy state repression, at a time when the armed contingents of the mercenary paramilitary forces were tracking every inch of the Bastar forests. Yes, living life on the edge was the norm for the revolutionary. Com. Anuradha had once a narrow escape after coming under the cross-hairs of the gun of the repressive police. But this is the hard reality of India today. To be with the masses, to understand them and be like them is also to place yourself in risk of being killed. As today, the forests, hills and valleys of India have become the hunting ground of the predators in the form of Multi-National Corporations, Comprador bureaucrat capital, the greedy politician ready to take any crumbs thrown at them. To be with the poorest of the poor in the richest of the forests, valleys and hills is at your own peril. All these valleys, rivers, forests and hills are being sold off for a pittance to fill the coffers of the politicians, and other greedy hucksters.

Com. Anuradha spent most of her time in the Byramgadh area, which has been in the limelight for facing the brunt of the Salwa Judum attacks. Though, during her stay, she contracted malaria a number of times, it was never the dangerous falciparum kind; besides, she was in the good care of the local tribal people who showed great concern for her. Her tenacity to stay in such difficult conditions astounded and impressed even the local tribals who would time and again remark on how, at her age, she had managed to come and stay there.

But, as the revolutionary poet in the Guerrilla says:

*No she never laughed at death.
It's just that she was not afraid
to die among birds and trees.*

In spite of her busy schedule as an activist, Com. Anuradha never missed a single lecture and was a very popular teacher amongst her students. Her thorough and conscientious approach was much loved by her students, and respected by her colleagues.

During this period she also spent much time in taking classes, mainly for the growing leadership among the tribal women. She took classes on women's health issues, women's oppression and the New Democratic Revolution, on imparting general knowledge, on the rudiments of Marxism, etc. She helped draft handbills and wrote numerous articles for the local revolutionary movement.

Towards the last part of her stay she was responsible for the West Bastar area covering what is known as the National Park region. This too is a region which is affected by the onslaught of the Salwa Judum.

During the peak of the famine in 1997, Com. Anuradha was there in Bastar, which saw hundreds of people perish of starvation in other areas. The revolutionary movement had resorted to seizing grains from the hoarders and distributing it among the masses, thus preventing a major calamity. During this period, intermittent attacks of malaria, the terrible dry heat of summer, coupled with the famine conditions took a toll on her health, and she lost about 10 kgs. of weight. It was only her enormous commitment to the cause of the people, and tremendous will-power that kept her going even under these terrible conditions. She never made a show of her own sufferings, always bearing pain, whether physical or mental, with dignity, without complaining or letting others know.

After returning from Bastar she contributed immensely to developing the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra. She was also deeply involved in developing a perspective of the role of a revolutionary women's movement and the need to organise the most oppressed women in realising New Democratic Revolution free from all forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination.

The Writings of Anuradha

Anuradha played many roles in the long span of her revolutionary life from being a mass leader to an organiser. She was associated with the formation of Vidyarthi Pragati Sanghathana (VPS), Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR), All-India League for Revolutionary Culture (AILRC), Stree Chetna, Akhil Maharashtra Kamgar Union (AMKU) and numerous other mass organisations, primarily in Maharashtra.

But whatever her role, she was a consistent and prolific writer. She was closely associated with the revolutionary student magazine, *KALAM*, which achieved a countrywide image. This magazine was brought out in both English and Marathi. She was the main architect behind the revolutionary Hindi magazine, *Jan Sangram*, brought out from Nagpur. She contributed regular articles, under various pseudonyms, to the revolutionary magazine, *Vanguard*, *People's March*, and others. She wrote for the local Marathi magazine *Jahirnama* and for some time was in charge of its publication.

Com. Anuradha also wrote many theoretical and ideological pieces, both in English and Marathi, particularly associated with the dalit and women's question. Besides, she conducted many a polemic on this question both with those taking a dalit/post-modernist view on the question and with Marxists who took a hostile view.

As already mentioned, it was she who wrote the basic draft for the policy paper on the caste question in India which was later adopted by the erstwhile CPI (ML) (PW). This was the first such policy paper by a revolutionary communist party. More recently, she wrote a polemical/analytical piece on bourgeois feminism, bringing out its various manifestations. She was also instrumental in the preparation of the *Women's Perspective* for the revolutionary movement in the country. Many would recall the numerous statements that Com. Anuradha drafted on Women's Day (8th March) celebrations for the revolutionary movement.

There was not even a short time when she was not writing something linked with the movement. She was a regular contributor to many magazines in English, Hindi and Marathi. Many of her articles and writings have also been translated into other languages.

An Exemplary Communist

*Closing the tear
of your wound with your two hands,
you are carrying a star in your breast,
but that star will fall.*

Pretence, falsehood, intrigue, ego, all these traits were alien to Com. Anuradha. Her disdain to such traits only grew in strength through all the ebb and flow of her revolutionary life. That extremely high

level of honesty towards oneself and others had attracted all genuine people, even those who disagreed, with Com. Anuradha. She had a natural ability to connect and integrate in any environment, with various people, be it tribals, dalits, construction workers, or the sophisticated academia or intellectuals, with her happy smile, her child-like simple demeanour, a face that mirrored every ebb and flow of emotion. If revolution was the struggle for a society with the finest sensibilities of humanity, then Com. Anuradha was the embodiment of that struggle. Her simplicity, child-like innocence, together with an infectious liveliness made her a most endearing person. One who would cry as easily as would laugh, stirred by a situation.

Her indefatigable, selfless hard work with an insatiable concern, a strong sense of discipline and responsibility towards people, uncaring about one's own comforts — she was the one who would take any task to ensure that it would get done. This was reflected in her teaching work, attitude towards students, colleagues, comrades, political work; anything she took up.

A person of high principles, standing up for what she believed in, Com. Anuradha had the modesty to be a willing learner. Yet, she was willing to acknowledge the positive in others, even with those she differed, no matter what her differences. While being creative and not stereotyped in her thinking, she was always firm on the proletarian line and Marxist ideology. It was this steadfastness that allowed her to uphold the correct revolutionary line till the very end.

*Never did she let the precious stone
under her left breast grow dull.*

She had hatred for fear even in the face of death.

She was the steadfast anchor, like a rock, for the revolutionary movement, through all its ups and downs, particularly in Maharashtra. The most arduous and dangerous tasks at very critical junctures in her political life came to her naturally without any sense of doubt or self-belief — her readiness without a hitch to give up the high-profile public life in Mumbai and shift overnight to Nagpur where not a soul knew her; to give up the university job and the image of being one of the most popular leaders of Nagpur particularly amongst dalits, construction workers and progressive intellectuals

of the region so as to be with the struggling masses in Bastar as one among them.

*The most beautiful thing
for those who have fought a whole life
is to come to the end and say;
we believed in people and life,
and life and the people
never let us down.*

Com. Anuradha will always be remembered. By all those who met her, at least once. By all those who lived with her. Her sincerity, honesty, her child-like simplicity, vivacious, unwavering commitment, acute sense of responsibility, total selflessness in spite of her poor health, made a deep impression on anyone she came across. She could relate at ease equally with the poor, young, old, the revolutionary, progressive, the intellectual... anyone human. She was indeed a communist. Significantly, her life is an inspiration for all women activists, where she could go well beyond the patriarchal limitations of this society and blossom into a revolutionary communist. Yes, Com. Anuradha will live for ever in our hearts; in the precious stone beneath our left breast.

*In her death have,
...men become men,
women become women,
fighting day and night
for people and for life.*

And it should be noted that

*Only in this way do men become men,
women become women,
fighting day and night
for people and for life.*

—Otto Rene Castillo

Even in her very last days, when the revolutionary movement in the urban belts of Maharashtra was facing a crisis due to heavy state repression and arrests of senior comrades, it was Com. Anuradha who held the organisation together. All these qualities shone through her personality even as a woman activist in this highly patriarchal and feudal atmosphere in the country.



Memories of a Naxalite Friend

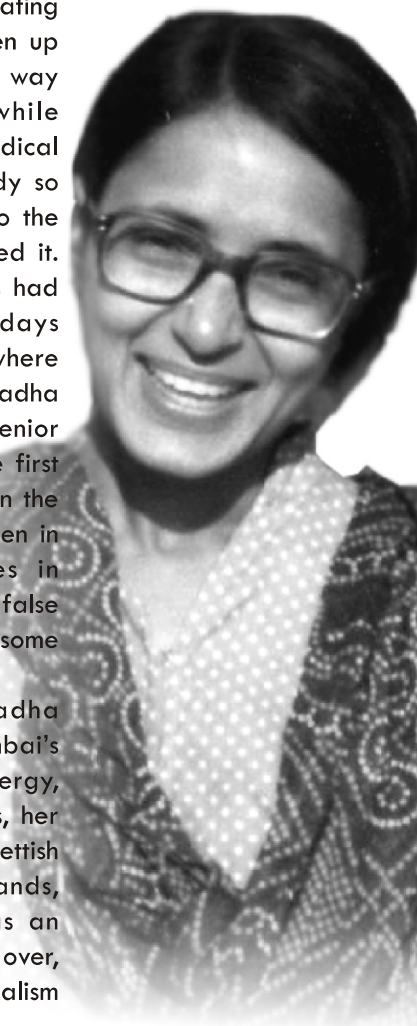
-- Jyoti Punwani

Jyoti Punwani remembers a pretty girl who suddenly left the good life of urban communists to fight the government

Cerebral malaria can be fatal, but people have been known to recover from it. Anuradha Ghandy, however, didn't stand a chance. Already weakened by the sclerosis when she walked into the hospital, it was too late. Within 24 hours, she was gone. By the time her vast circle of friends was informed on the evening of April 12, the 54-year-old had already been cremated. Better this than death by 'encounter', after prolonged torture. For that was the fate we feared this Naxalite could not escape.

That Anu managed to evade arrest for so long, was an indicator of the ruthlessness with which she effaced her identity. This, of course, meant isolating herself from all those who would have given up everything to nurse her. There was another way she could have recovered, even while underground. Anu could have followed medical advice and given herself the break her body so badly needed. For someone so important to the Party (CPI-Maoist), it might well have allowed it. But that wasn't her style. Just climbing stairs had become an ordeal five years ago. Yet, days before her death, she was in some jungle where malaria was probably an inevitability. Anuradha Ghandy, I learnt after her death, was a senior Maoist leader. Her political career spans the first radical student outfit in Mumbai (PROYOM) in the '70s, and the armed *dalams* of Adivasi women in Bastar. Certain that like her comrades in Chandrapur, she too would be implicated in false cases and arrested, Anu went underground some years ago.

When I first met her in 1970, Anuradha Shanbag was the belle of the ball in Mumbai's Elphinstone College. A petite bundle of energy, bright eyes sparkling behind square glasses, her ready laughter, nearbackless cholis and coquettish ways had everyone eating out of her hands, professors included. Elphinstone then was an intellectual hub. The Bangladesh war was just over, drought and famine stalked Maharashtra. Naxalism



had come to Mumbai, at that time the industrial capital of the country. Anu, majoring in Sociology, was everywhere – inviting Mumbai’s leading radicals to talk about the reasons for the drought, putting up posters that proclaimed ‘Beyond Pity’ and urging students to get involved with the crisis in the countryside, defending this stand against those who felt a student’s role must be limited to the academics and at the most, ‘social work’.

Anu was also the one to question celebrity guest speakers such as Girish Karnad whose path-breaking plays had just hit the stage, on the link between theatre and society. And it was Anu who introduced us to that feminist bible, Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*. Those were the days of ‘parallel’ cinema. Marathi amateur theatre was blossoming at Dadar’s Chhabildas Hall. The Dalit Panthers had exploded into Marathi literary scene. Adil Jusswala’s *New Writing in India* was still making waves. Forum Against Rape, Mumbai’s first feminist group, had just been founded. Anu, by then a lecturer at Wilson College, was immersed in all this. With her wide range of interests, she succeeded in linking the human rights organization she and few others founded after Emergency with the city’s intellectual ferment. Among other things, the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) demanded that the state stop acting lawlessly with Naxalites even though they rejected its laws.

Thanks to Anu’s ability to talk as intelligently with George Fernandes as with Satyadev Dubey, her brother Sunil Shanbag’s mentor, the cream of Mumbai’s intellectuals supported this demand. Playwright Vijay Tendulkar and reformist Asghar Ali Engineer were CPDR’s president and vice-president.

It was time for Anu to grow into a successful academic, the type who writes books and attends international seminars. Instead, in 1982, she left the life she loved to work in Nagpur. The wretched conditions of contract workers in the new industrial areas near Nagpur and of Adivasis in the forests of Chandrapur had to be challenged. Committed cadres were needed. In her subsequent trips to Mumbai, Anu never complained about the drastic change in her life: cycling to work under the relentless Nagpur sun; living in the city’s Dalit area, the mention of which drew shudders from Nagpur’s elite; then moving to backward Chandrapur. In Marxist study circles, ‘declassing oneself’ is quite a buzzword. From Mumbai’s Leftists, only Anu and her husband Kobad, both lovers of the good life, actually did so.

Kobad's family home had been a sprawling Worli Sea Face flat; he was a Doon School product. Anu's lawyer-father may have left his family estate in Coorg to defend communists in court in the '50s, but she had never seen deprivation. Despite her own rough life, neither did Anu make us feel guilty for our bourgeois luxuries nor did she patronise us. On the few occasions she would suddenly land up over these 25 years, it was as if she had never left. She had the same capacity to laugh, even at herself, the same ability to connect, even with management types, the same readiness to indulge in women's talk. But with those closest to her, she seemed unnaturally detached. Her parents doted on her, yet she didn't take every opportunity she could to meet them. I realize why now.

Rushing to meet them whenever she came to Mumbai would have been worse than an indulgence. It would not only have eaten into the time she had for Party work, it would have also made it impossible for her family to have accepted what she saw as inevitable – an underground future. In order not to endanger her family, Anu simply disappeared from their horizon. When her father died, she couldn't go home. That was also the reason for her harsh decision never to have children, though her parents would have willingly brought them up. That was one bond she knew would draw her away from the life she had chosen.

The 'Naxalite menace', says Manmohan Singh, is the biggest threat to the country. But I remember a girl who was always laughing and who gave up a life rich in every way to change the lives of others.

(From *The Times of India*, Crossings on 20th April, 2008)

Mumbai's Rebels

Those Who Couldn't Remain Unmoved

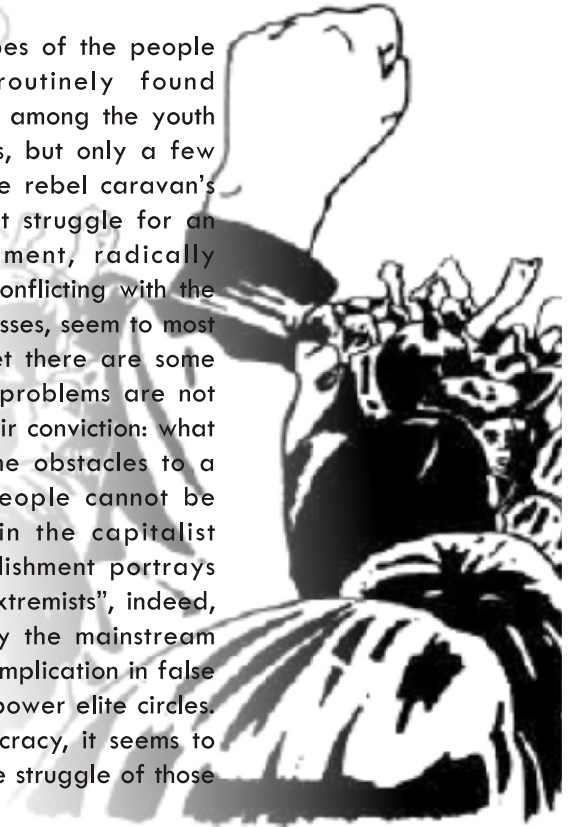
-- Bernard D'Mello

The risks of a militant struggle for an alternative path of development that is radically different from the one followed by India's ruling classes seem to most dissidents far too dangerous. Yet there are some who stand firm in their conviction: what should be, can be. An outline of a few of Mumbai's rebels who chose this arduous path.

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 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 while the villainous prosper; where justice is the exception and injustice is the rule; and where the total physical and mental energy of millions of people is spent on the struggle for mere survival.

– Mary Tyler, *My Years in an Indian Prison*, Penguin, 1978, pp. 213-14.

The hugely disappointed hopes of the people after independence have routinely found expression in political dissidence among the youth and intellectuals of India's cities, but only a few among them have dared join the rebel caravan's long march. The risks of militant struggle for an alternative path of development, radically different from, indeed, deeply conflicting with the one followed by India's ruling classes, seem to most dissidents far too dangerous. Yet there are some who not only insist that all our problems are not intractable, they stand firm in their conviction: what should be, can be. For them, the obstacles to a better future for the Indian people cannot be meaningfully addressed within the capitalist framework. The political establishment portrays them as a bunch of "left-wing extremists", indeed, as "terrorists", a tag echoed by the mainstream media. Their arrest, torture, and implication in false cases are deemed legitimate in power elite circles. In this, the world's largest democracy, it seems to have become a "crime" to join the struggle of those



without power, wealth and privilege against the possessors of power, wealth and privilege – to take the side of the persecuted in the class struggle.

The instances of a few of Mumbai's rebels – those who chose/have chosen the long march – might be illuminating, possibly even throw light on their distinctive brand of politics. Anuradha Ghandy (1954-2008), founder-member of the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR), Mumbai, went on to embrace the vanguard party; in the last phase of her personal trajectory, she was one of the front runners of the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

Arun Ferreira, influenced by liberation theology when he was a student of St Xavier's College in the early 1990s, but expressing a clear preference for liberation over theology, adopted radical politics as a course of action, was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004 (UAPA) in Nagpur on May 8 last year, falsely implicated in a host of cases, tortured and forced to undergo narco-analysis, and is now on a hunger strike along with his comrades in Nagpur jail.

Vernon Gonsalves gave up an executive's career in Siemens to engage in, alongside the unorganised workers of Chandrapur, the class struggles to win rights promised in the Constitution and the law, was arrested under the UAPA in Mumbai on August 19 last year by the anti-terrorist squad, falsely accused of being found with explosives, tortured, and is now in the Arthur Road jail. Shridhar Shrinivasan, prominent in the much-celebrated August 8, 1978 student-takeover of the University of Bombay and the hoisting of the mutineer's flag on the Rajabhai clock tower, of his own accord prematurely gave up his studies to join the rebel caravan in rural Maharashtra, was arrested under the UAPA on August 19 last year outside his residence in Govandi, tortured and implicated in a host of cases similar to the ones foisted on Vernon, and is now in the Arthur Road gaol.



In the Vanguard

Going on a fact-finding trip out-of-town is always one of the high points in the life of a democratic rights activist. It was, I think, in the late 1980s, I was preparing to go to Nagpur, en route to Chandrapur, to investigate a police firing on contract workers at a construction site of the Chandrapur thermal power station. I was then in my first stint at the *EPW* and Krishna Raj, the editor had joined in my excitement. "It will be a great pleasure meeting Anuradha Ghandy", he said, "Anu's so charming, a magnetic personality". Anu met us, Gayatri Singh and me, at the Nagpur station. We got into a cycle rickshaw, while she led us on her bicycle, on our way to the dalit basti where she lived. I had heard so much about her, the personal from Jyoti Punwani, editor of *Adhikar Raksha*, the magazine the CPDR published, and the political from P A Sebastian, the general secretary of the organisation – how Anu burst on the scene in the early 1970s at Elphinstone College, invigorating the progressive youth movement (PROYOM) on campus, inviting celebrities from the world of art, cinema and theatre, more than supplementing the heat and light in the Hamill sabha, and so on. In the early years of the CPDR, again, I was told, Anu's magnetism attracted new members and persuaded celebrities and well-known intellectuals to endorse statements and campaigns condemning state institution of "black laws" and violations of democratic rights.

In 1982, Anu and Kobad, her husband and close comrade, moved to Nagpur, choosing to live in a dalit basti, engaging in an intense personal struggle to change themselves, both culturally and politically, identifying with the most exploited, the most oppressed and the most dominated – unorganised workers, poor peasants and landless labourers, tribals and dalits, and women from these sections. When I came to Nagpur once again, in the early 1990s, as part of a two-member CPDR team, to investigate a case of three "missing" tribal youth in Bhandara district, this time I got the feeling that Anu and her comrades were not unscarred from state repression.

When we (the two-member CPDR team) came back to Nagpur from the hinterland of Bhandara after having investigated the disappearance of the three tribal youth, I had to face a well-attended press conference alone, without the other member of the team, the lawyer, Suresh Rajeshwar, who had

to urgently get back to Bombay to attend to another matter. I was nervous. There was, as was to be expected, a volley of very legitimate questions about violence, about a land mine that the Naxalites had planted that had killed a number of police personnel combing the area in a vehicle. The journalists present wanted to know the CPDR's position on these matters. I hesitated, gathered myself and emphatically stated, "We hate violence", and then to buy a little more time, "we abhor violence".

Anu, who had made it to the press conference, was looking at me, apprehensive, uneasy at what I might say next. I gathered myself and asserted, "It is important to understand the context. The violence of the oppressed is always preceded and provoked by the violence of the oppressors. The point is to first put an end to the latter. How? To preach non-violence is, in effect, to strengthen established violence, the violence of the oppressors."

It was clear that I was not a Gandhian, but to my surprise the journalists did not object to what I had said. Neither did Anu, later on. The rebels have however been uneasy with democratic rights activists reminding them of the imperative need to refrain from resorting to "terror" (senseless violence) in countering state and state-sponsored terror, impressing upon the rebels to continue to embrace humane values even in the wake of thousands of lives (of their mass base) being utterly shattered as a consequence of established terror, for instance, more recently, the state-backed Salwa Judum in Dantewada in Chhattisgarh and the Gaon Bandhi in Gadchiroli in Maharashtra. But I did not do that then, for there was certainly no need to remind a person like Anu of this.

The vanguard party's belief in the necessity of armed struggle, "revolutionary violence", aimed at destroying the violence of the oppressors in order to move forward on the path to a new society free from exploitation, misery and inequality, and hence, increasingly free from violence of any kind, inevitably led Anu towards the life of a guerrilla. It was the Maoist guerrillas that had won the hearts and minds of the people in Gadchiroli, Chandrapur and Bhandara districts in Maharashtra, in places such as undivided Bastar, now Bastar, Kanker and Dantewada districts in Chhattisgarh, Koraput and Malkangiri districts in Orissa, and so on, for they had, beginning in the early 1980s, been in the forefront of the struggle for the people's rights there. They had taken up the issues that affected

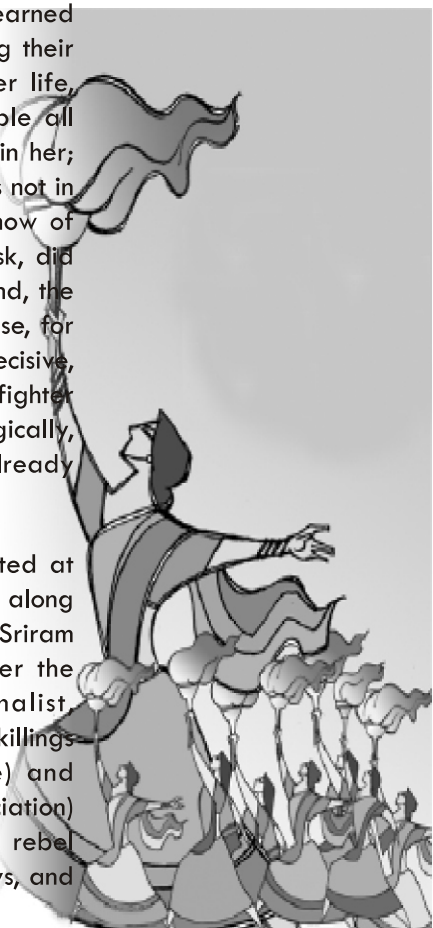
the people's lives the most – winning forest rights, carrying out militant actions for higher rates for tendu leaf picking and bamboo cutting, taking over and redistributing landlords' land, and so on. And in periods when there was some respite from state repression, and with the meagre resources at their command, they had mobilised the people in constructing minor irrigation and potable water facilities (including wells for drinking water) through voluntary labour, initiated the cultivation of vegetables and the planting of fruits, introduced diesel pump sets and rice mills, formed cooperatives, mutual aid teams, and credit societies, and helped spread literacy and provide elementary healthcare, all of these, keeping class politics in command.

But these activities, essential as they are, could not go very far because of the bitter contention for political power in the area and the unleashing of state and state-sponsored terror by successive governments.

In such circumstances, defensive armed struggle assumed centre stage. Despite the confines of patriarchy, women had entered the armed squads in almost equal numbers; some of them had even risen to become leaders. Anu joined them, learned the Gondi language, bonded with them, sang their songs and recited their poems, enriching her life, and, in turn, elevated the lives of the people all around her. She had that venturesome spirit in her; she must have been in her late 40s, but it was not in her to remain on the sidelines. The little I know of her, she probably worked from dawn to dusk, did not sleep enough and did not eat enough. And, the vanguard needed her more than anybody else, for she could be at once bold, courageous, and decisive, yet kind, gentle and considerate – a valiant fighter for the emancipation of humankind. But tragically, cerebral malaria took her life, her body already considerably impaired due to sclerosis.

Liberation Theology to Marx

Arun Ferreira, in his late 30s, was arrested at Dikshabhoomi in Nagpur on May 8 last year along with Murli (Ashok Satya Reddy), Dhanendra Sriram Bhurule and Naresh Babulal Bansode under the UAPA. Arun, Bhurule (a freelance journalist recognised for his writings on extrajudicial killings and rape of tribal women by the police) and Bansode (an activist of the Rationalist Association) had gone to meet Murli, an associate of the rebel caravan from Warangal since his student days, and



an activist among the coal miners of Singareni, who was on a visit to Nagpur. The police were tracking Murli's movements.

He has been subjected to some of the worst forms of torture that is meted out to political prisoners who are deemed to be "left-wing extremists" – at a remote police station in Gondia district in Vidarbha, 30 ml of petrol was pumped into his anus. The police have, through association, put Arun in the same political category as Murli, implicating him in a host of cases, subjecting him to torture, though not as brutal as the ill-treatment of Murli, and to narco-analysis tests. After his arrest, the police raided both Arun's and his wife, Jenifer's residences, in Bandra and Thane respectively, subjecting Jenifer's mother and Arun's parents to trauma.

Arun comes from a socially conscious family. His mother's brother, the late Father Raymond D'Silva, was a liberation theologian, for a while, associated with the All-India Catholic University Students' Association (AICUF, without the S). He helped sensitise a generation of Catholic youth about the impoverishment of millions of human beings as a situation of "social sinfulness" that permanently violates human dignity. If one were to abstract from the biblical and mystical trappings of this theology, Father Raymond can be said to have interpreted the doctrine as a body of ethical theory that poses such questions as: Why is there widespread poverty and misery when the Indian resource base is so abundant? Why is there such an unequal distribution of resources and why are the rich who own and control these resources so irresponsible as to, in effect, render millions of people without sufficient food and shelter, and deny them the right to a proper livelihood?

The aspirations of liberation theology, equality and justice, were deeply ingrained in Arun right from his youth. As a student of St Xavier's College, he played an active role in the social service centre, visiting the Cheshire Home (a home for paraplegics), teaching and reading to blind children and orphans in Don Bosco's shelter, and so on, always in the forefront when it came to such activity among the student body. But, as things would have it, Marx's last thesis on Feuerbach was to ultimately prove decisive: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it".

After graduating in 1993, Arun worked in the right-to-housing struggles of Mumbai's slum-dwellers as a member of the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti –

among other things, he was closely involved in the slum rehabilitation at Dindoshi, which entailed the relocation of slum-dwellers from Colaba to Goregaon. He also continued his involvement with students in the Vidyarthi Pragati Sanghatana (VPS), a student organisation formed in 1977, notable for the active participation of its members in the decision-making process of the organisation, fighting for the democratisation of student councils in the various colleges, cultivating student-worker and student-peasant solidarity, the latter, buttressed by its “go-to-the-village” campaigns.

More recently, Arun was horrified at the brutal killings of four members of a dalit family on September 29, 2006 in Khairlanji village (Bhandara district), the police department’s attempt at a cover-up, the hospital administration trying to conceal facts, the government striving to ensure that the incident be quietly forgotten, the so-called dalit leaders’ endeavour not to rock the boat of the ruling alliance, and the violent repression of the dalit masses who came out into the streets to protest against the casteism that pervaded all of the above and to demand justice. Indeed, the police, apart from violating the right to freedom of speech and assembly, had dealt with the dalit protests in a blatantly casteist manner. And, the home minister had threatened to treat the protestors in the same manner as the ruthless handling of the Naxalites. Arun was active in the post-Khairlanji protests – the rebels’ endeavour was to hasten the emergence of an uncompromising leadership among the dalits, and to find support for the dalit cause among the underprivileged kunbis, marathas and “other backward classes”. He was also organising students in Chandrapur, some of whom (of the Deshbakth Yuva Sanghatan) have since been persecuted by the police.

Politics in Command

Vernon Gonsalves, in his early 50s, was arrested under the UAPA by the anti-terrorist squad on August 19 last year near his house in Andheri (East) in Mumbai on a busy public road while buying provisions and brought to his residence 12 hours later at half past midnight the next day, when the police carried out an unauthorised raid in the presence of his wife, Susan and their 12-year old son. Shridhar Shrinivasan, in his early 50s, was also arrested by the anti-terrorist squad under the UAPA

outside his residence in Govandi on August 19 last year. Both of them have been accused of being found with explosives. Indeed, the police boasted that they had foiled a plot by the two to set off explosions in different parts of the city! They have been tortured – among other things, blindfolded and threatened that they would be shot dead in staged encounters. Shridhar's legs were stretched in opposite directions. Both, he and Vernon were chained to the floor and kept in a sitting position for two days at a stretch. They were subjected to sustained interrogation, sometimes lasting 20 hours at a stretch. They have been implicated in a host of cases, mostly in Vidarbha. Taken there, Vernon had to be hospitalised due to failing health, while Shridhar was paraded in four villages and publicly humiliated.

Vernon comes from a lower middle class background; he undertook tuitions to sustain himself while he was in college, completing a masters in commerce with flying colours. In Burhani College, Mazagaon, he played a leading role in 1978-79 among the students fighting against an authoritarian college management, in the process, realising the importance of maintaining student unity and putting up a leadership that is far-sighted. Upon the completion of his studies, he got a job in Siemens as an accounts executive, but soon gave it up to join the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS), formed in the early 1980s, inspired by Bhagat Singh and his close comrades. He moved to Chandrapur, where, along with Susan (they married in 1984) and other close associates, they started organising the unorganised workers – in the coal mines, the cement and paper factories, and the construction site of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB), forming the Akhil Maharashtra Kamgar Union in 1988. They led a militant struggle of the 5,000 construction workers at the MSEB site, heroic in many ways, especially since they were confronting the combined might of the project authority, the powerful private contractors, and the local administration and the police that allied to deny the workers their legal rights, including minimum wages, and tried to thwart all efforts to organise and unionise the workers. Vernon had by then embraced the rebel caravan and taken on the task of strengthening its vanguard.

Shridhar studied at Elphinstone College, but gave up his studies in the late 1970s to become a full-time activist. The high point of his activism when he was a student was the leading role he played in the historic

August 8, 1978 takeover of the University of Bombay as part of the Students Anti-Fee Rise Action Committee. He was part of the team that conceived of and planned the whole operation. Shridhar was also one of the founder-members of the VPS and was, later on, in the 1980s active in the NBS, which, among other things, took on the arduous task of organising contract workers. In the 1990s Shridhar moved to the rural areas of Vidarbha, organising the tribal people in the struggle to win forest rights and on the question of land to the tiller, as also the rights of coal mine workers.

More recently, he was part of a campaign by the rebel caravan to highlight the root causes of the agrarian crisis in the cotton belt of Vidarbha – a host of neo-liberal policy measures adversely affecting the economics of cotton cultivation, apart from the land question. The rebels had not made inroads into Vidarbha's cotton belt, but they wanted to win the confidence of the peasants there, convince them to refuse to pay amortisation and interest to the banks and the moneylenders, and join the peasants in organising a resistance against the seizure of their property. The struggle would have been difficult but the peasants would have been politically awakened, enthused to strive for a better future.

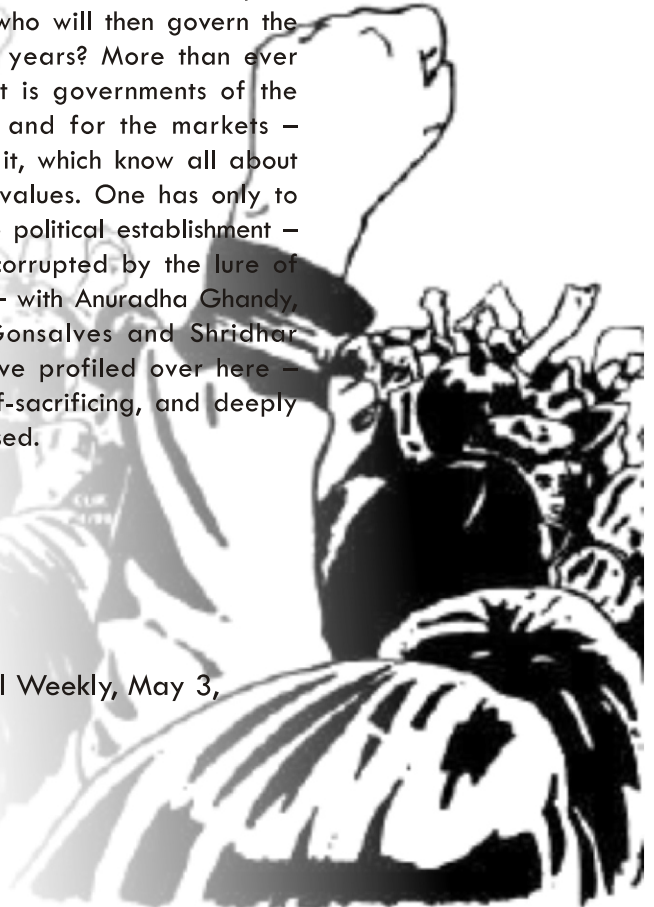
I find this approach of the rebels imbued with historical precedence, something that has eluded most scholars writing on the present agrarian crisis and the phenomena of "farmer suicides". Recall the cotton boom in 1861 when the American Civil War broke out and the supply of raw cotton to the manufacturing centres in Britain and elsewhere in Europe was cut off, and India became an alternative source of raw cotton. As the international price of raw cotton went up, the Indian peasant responded by shifting from food crops to cotton, borrowing from the 'sahukars' (the moneylenders) to make the transition possible. But when the American Civil War came to an end and the international price of cotton crashed, the peasants could not pay the sahkars upon the latter foreclosing the debts. Usurious terms of credit and the mortgaging of land by merchant moneylenders led to the Deccan Riots. On that occasion the peasants had united to take on the sahkars, even burning the moneylenders' records. But why is it that this time around the peasants turned inwards, blaming and punishing themselves by taking their own lives? Could rebel politics have then saved the lives of thousands of peasants who have

committed suicide in the wake of the present agrarian crisis?

Injustice, the Rule

What then of state and state-sponsored terror, masquerading as justice, meted out to those who “cannot remain unmoved and inactive in an India where ... justice is the exception and injustice the rule”? More than 30 years ago, Mary Tyler (quoted in the introduction to this piece) wrote about those who could not remain unmoved, inactive witnesses to the ugly contours of what they saw in independent India. Instead of removing that filth (the myriad wrongs) which conscious and compassionate human beings hate to see, a repressive state tries to pluck out their eyes. These rebels have a point when they constantly reiterate that what we have in this country is a facade of democracy that has disguised (masked) authoritarian governments since independence. How can democracy flourish in a society that is so deeply marked by profound inequalities in the distribution of incomes and wealth? How long are we to continue the periodic charade of choosing members of the political establishment, those financed and co-opted by the dominant classes, who will then govern the country for the next five years? More than ever before, what we now get is governments of the markets, by the markets and for the markets – markets, as one poet put it, which know all about prices but nothing about values. One has only to contrast the leaders of the political establishment – mercenary, self-seeking, corrupted by the lure of office, power and money – with Anuradha Ghandy, Arun Ferreira, Vernon Gonsalves and Shridhar Shrinivasan, whom we have profiled over here – modest, unpretentious, self-sacrificing, and deeply concerned for the oppressed.

(from *Economic & Political Weekly*, May 3, 2008)



In Memoriam

Anuradha Ghandy

-- P A Sebastian

It was a memorable and short life. Anuradha Ghandy was born in 1954 and died in 2008. But the length of life is not the criterion. What matters is the contribution that one makes to what is called human civilisation.

What did she achieve, a sceptic asked. The answer is: A lot. Civilisation is a continuum of demolitions and re-constructions which takes it to higher and higher levels. History calls the people who carry on this process rebels and revolutionaries. They demolish the existing structures which are outdated and unjust and reconstruct new structures which serve human beings better. Anuradha Ghandy was an outstanding rebel and an uncompromising revolutionary.

There are some among rebels who live in mansions and claim that they do that to camouflage their activities. Anuradha could also have done so. However, she chose the jungles as camouflage.

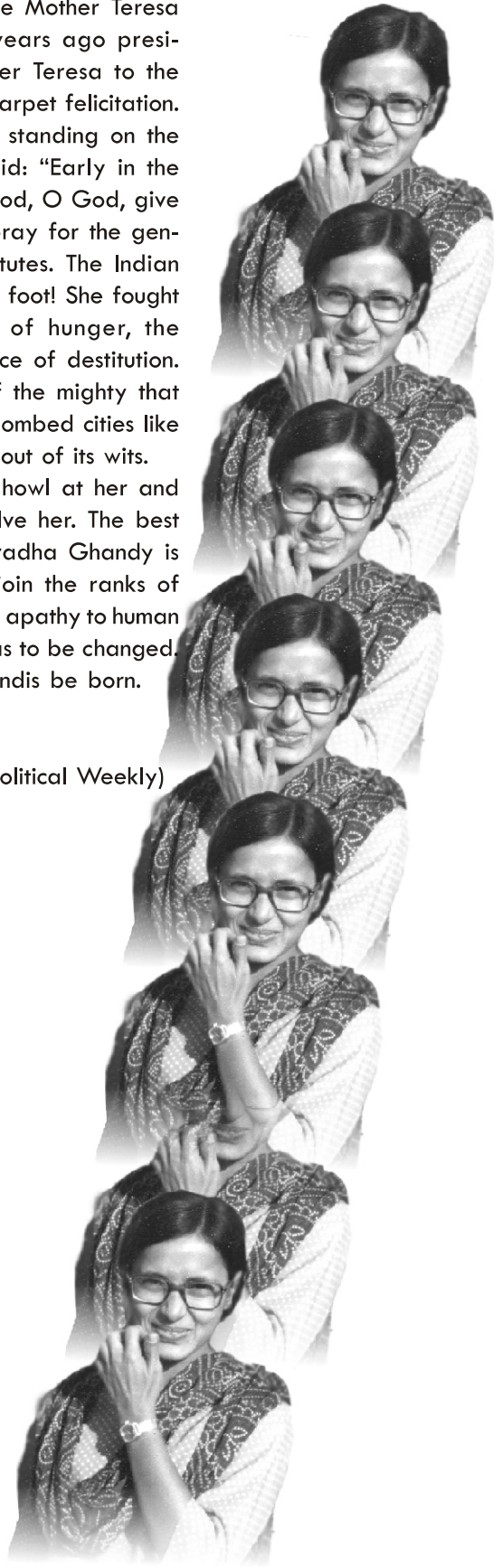
Her life was filled with activities with no respite – activities which posed challenges and raised risks to her life. She studied in the famous Elphinstone College of Mumbai from where she acted as a revolutionary catalyst among the students of the city in the early 1970s. Once she finished her studies she became active in the field of civil liberties and democratic rights. In the wake of the Emergency there was an upsurge of civil liberties and democratic rights in India. Several civil liberties and democratic rights organisations were formed in different parts of the country. One of them was the Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights. Anuradha Ghandy was one of the founders of the organisation. She nursed and nourished it in its early years, but did not stop at that though. She went further, higher and higher. She soared up in the sky like a skylark and communed with the clouds of revolution. She joined the Marxist-Leninist movement which had its first sparkles in Naxalbari. In the last phase of her life, she was one of the prominent leaders of the Communist Party of India (Maoist).



It will be instructive to juxtapose Mother Teresa and Anuradha Ghandy. Several years ago president Ronald Reagan invited Mother Teresa to the White House and gave her a red carpet felicitation. In response to the felicitation and standing on the lawns of the White House, she said: "Early in the morning every day I pray to the God, O God, give me destitutes". Anuradha did not pray for the generation and multiplication of destitutes. The Indian state treated her as a terrorist. My foot! She fought against violence – the violence of hunger, the violence of disease and the violence of destitution. She fought against the violence of the mighty that wielded nuclear weapons, carpet-bombed cities like Baghdad and terrorised the world out of its wits.

There will be jackals who may howl at her and her activities. But history will absolve her. The best tribute which one can give to Anuradha Ghandy is that the people who admire her join the ranks of rebellion and jerk this world out of its apathy to human misery and destitution. This world has to be changed. Let more and more Anuradha Ghandis be born.

(April 26, 2008 EPW Economic & Political Weekly)



A symbol of affection

-- B.S. Ramulu

Her memories bring tears to your eyes. The moments spent with her remind you of affectionate friendliness. She died on April 11th at the age of 54.

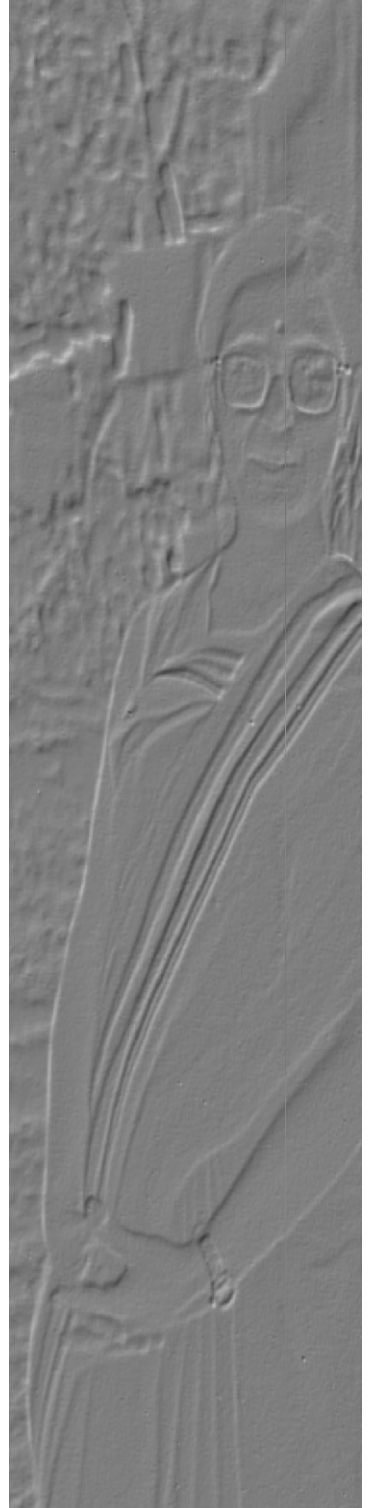
Anuradha Gandhi was a humanist. Her father who was from Coorg in Karnataka was into trade union activities of the then unified Communist Party (CPI). He was a lawyer and had later shifted to Bombay. Anuradha had her education in Bombay.

She played an active role in the civil liberties movement in Maharashtra. She was also the mainstay in the revolutionary student's movement and in building the 'Navjawan Bharat Sabha' as well as Aahwan Natya Mandal.

In the 1970s the new generation which was born and brought up after the independence came forth with new ideas. It yearned to transform this society full of inequalities. Anuradha was the representative of the generation of educated people and youth which joined the various movements of the time. She was one of those who had the means to live comfortably but, had chosen the path of sufferings to those of comforts for the cause of the most deprived and oppressed.

My acquaintance with her who had finished higher studies in Bombay and moved to Nagpur to work as a lecturer was as part of the revolutionary movement. She played an active role in building up the understanding of the All India League for Revolutionary Culture (AILRC) which was formed in 1983. As the EC member of AILRC till 1996 she gave shape to many of its programmes. She used to go around on a cycle fulfilling her tasks. Soon she left Nagpur to work in the adivasi areas as a full time activist.

When the first conference of AILRC was held in Delhi in 1983, some senior VIRASAM (RWA – Revolutionary Writers Association from Andhra Pradesh) members argued that Hindi should be the national language. It was Anuradha who brought clarity to the whole question when she explained about the historical trajectory of development of regional languages and how mother tongue plays



a central role in shaping the comprehension of the human being convincing one and all in the process. In July 1985, as representatives of seven revolutionary organizations, I, Varavara Rao, Gaddar, Sanjeev and dolakist Raju set off from Hyderabad on an all India tour. Our first stop was at Nagpur. It was Anuradha Gandhi who was living in a rented house in the dalit basti Lakshmi Nagar who invited us with open hands. She made arrangements for a big meeting in a hall in Sitabaldi condemning the repression on revolutionary movements in Andhra Pradesh. Well known social reformer Baba Amte participated in the meeting as the chief guest.

Anuradha Gandhi played an active role in the building of the revolutionary movement in the plains of Maharashtra. She organized many writers, cultural artistes, students and youth. Her contribution to the revolutionary movement in the field of culture is worth remembering.

In conducting all India seminars in the revolutionary ranks, especially her suggestions and the discussions she held about aspects in which the revolutionary movement had to broaden its vision regarding nationalities, castes in India, about the women's question and in building students and working class organizations helped in infusing new energy into the revolutionary ranks. Her efforts became an inspiration for the revolutionary women's movement in India. Her efforts also helped build a positive profile of the revolutionary movement abroad. She gave us new insights into what was Ambedkar's contribution in resolving the caste issue. In Maharashtra, she evolved a system where women conduct an exclusive session with women, make special resolutions on their specific problems and formulate guidelines for practice.

She married Kobad Gandhi and showed in practice that we have to declass ourselves. She walked along with the adivasis in the forests. In the forests it is but natural to become a victim to malaria. She also died because chronic malaria reached her brains. She loved her work very much. She loved organizing people for a better tomorrow. She died while she was at it.

(Published in Andhra Jyoti, a Telugu daily on 1-05-08)

Your Story Has Got to be Told

-- Chotu



Dear Anu,

The bars are almost an inch thickYet the sunbeams come dancing in each morning. And now that its summer, they are strong, bold... fiery?

Like that day we walked against the University Bill. You remember? Hot sun beating down, you prancing up and down the length of the morcha. My first morcha, my first impression of you — a sub-five foot bundle of energy, a little jump with every punched fist slogan hitting the sun. Height is hardly a hurdle when you've decided to smite the sky.

First impressions don't necessarily last. But years and decades didn't much alter this first image. Some years later, I would hear you speak at meetings, rattling off facts, figures and ideas at machine-gun speed. I got to know your ideas — and learnt you were one of the better known champions of the thought. But I couldn't picture you in the mould of thinker. Perhaps that was too paani-kam — at least when you've decided to not only interpret the world, but to change it. Thoughts, then, had not only to be formulated and explained, they had to be fought for — on sundry battle-fields.

And what that combatant approach meant to you came home to me one February evening at that room of yours in Laxmi Nagar at Nagpur. Fresh from Mumbai, I wanted the windows to shut out the biting chill and you had that story of the explorer, who conditioned himself for the attack on the South Pole.

Did the conditioning help when, many years later you criss-crossed the Bastar jungles, rifle slung over your shoulder? Must have; or those arthritic knees wouldn't have allowed you conquer those hills. But more than the physical conditioning it must have been the conditioning of sustained warfare on those various fronts — students, slums, civil liberties, trade unions, women, anti-caste, cultural and some more.

As for conquering hearts you hardly had any problem. Fighting people are the same everywhere and you would easily connect through the common idiom of struggle. And where language could have been barrier, you easily leapt across, picking up a new tongue in a matter of weeks. So, besides English, Marathi and Hindi, you covered Gujrati, Gondi and even more than a smattering of Telugu.

And the other day, after going through Krishna Bandyopadhyay's narrative in EPW, I couldn't help wondering how your narrative would read. All your experiences of dealing with those subtle patriarchies of us men comrades. Of those experiences while being activist, leader, organizer, guerrilla, committee member, policy-maker; particularly all those tests and trials unique to the women who have opted to serve the revolution, were also thrust within the onus of its leadership.

I can, of course, only 'know' of those experiences in a most refracted and reflected manner. Like I know how easy it would be for our male minds to do mental arithmetic comparing your performance against the yardstick of the best of the men comrades. And how difficult it was to not consider as reprimand what from a male saathi would be sage advice. How a man's anger can be glorious and female anger merely petulant; male tears so profound while the female variety seems to resemble blackmail. And how the woman has perhaps to struggle not to be force-moulded into those masculine aspirational stereotypes that have gained pre-eminence in the revolutionary psyche.

Anu, I know you would be the first to interpose that things are changing. Rectification campaigns against patriarchy and growing percentages of women in membership and leadership are hewing,



if not hacking at the pillars of male domination, both inside and outside the movement. But also, you, better than others would know how, when things change, there are also the things that insist on remaining the same. And that demands those repeated surges to rectify. And that demands that you and/or other sisters tell the story from your vantage point.

You've seen things not only from your experience but also through the eyes of those thousands of activists you've encountered in every corner of the country. You've participated in formulating policy for women and led its implementation. Your story, then, will have the difference. It's a story that has got to be told.

And that's what I wanted to write to you about in that week of April when Krishna told her story in EPW. To ask you to try to tell the story that would talk across the decades to Krishna's story. A story to tell ten thousand stories ... to talk to Krishnas, Anus and such countless girls and boys of the years to come.

But Anu, before I could even figure out whether it would be possible to reach to you, the newspaper told us that cerebral malaria had martyred you — that very week.

The flood of memories descended in waves and pushed out the occasional tear. And each seems still to scream for telling the story — your story, her story, our story. A story that, without being moralistic, will draw a hundred morals, without being incendiary, could fire up a million minds. An Anu's story that will be told some day by some Anu.

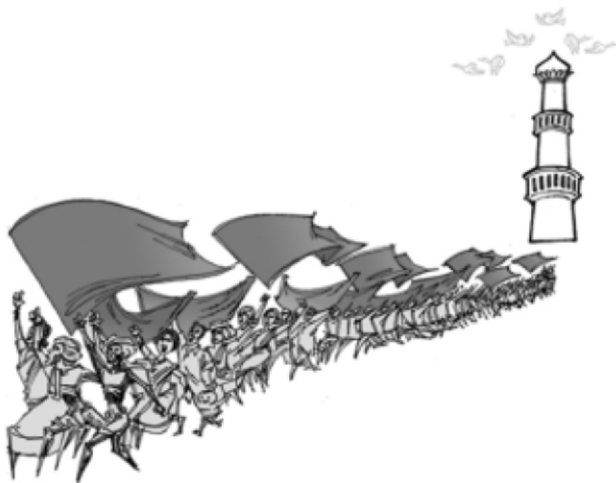
And Anu, the bars are almost an inch thick. But they're not built to withstand the flames from a million minds and a billion souls. As thousands and now lakhs of new activists firmly trace your footsteps, and beyond, to scale new horizons, bars and other barriers, and their keepers, scatter and scurry before them. Around the world, and in India too, imperialism and their agent rulers in crisis are retreating before angry raised fists of peoples, announcing their refusal to be ruled in the old way. In ways we may have not imagined, they're giving birth to the tomorrow we've dreamt of ... and we'll be there.

Yours,
Chotu
from Jail
May 2008

Remembering Anuradha Gandhi

The New Woman

-- Varavara Rao



Consciousness alone keeps one embraced with revolution steadfastly whether it comes out of necessity or idealism. Though Anuradha Gandhi had come to revolution with idealist dreams, and breathed her last as an ideal communist, she stands as an exemplary human being, a perfect one shaped by Marxist consciousness.

Except that she was a woman, there was no other background that brought her into the revolution. She was born into a Brahmin family from Coorg in Karnataka that settled in Bombay. She studied in Elphinstone College. Normally anyone could have expected her to become an elite lady of Bombay's society.

But then the times were different. Particularly, 1966-75 was a period when as the poet's line goes, 'time was pregnant; that begot revolution' a line that was stuffed with gunpowder. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China, the tribal-peasant struggles of Naxalbari and Srikakulam, Calcutta the storm centre that sucked the students, youth and intellectuals into revolution – all were in the offing. Many a student, youth and intellectual embraced the light of revolution and became martyrs.

Many of them tried to plough through the thorny path to turn it into a bed of roses in the background of this light. By this time, the magazine *Śrjana* was started. It was soon shifted to

Warangal. China's Proletarian Cultural Revolution had not only touched the hills of Srikakulam through Naxalbari but also entered the valley of the river Godavari. An entire generation of peasant armed struggle that ensued raised the banner of uncompromising revolt against all the past traditions that came from any age or any background of social differentiation.

Śrjana had established links with the great city of Bombay by the early 1970s. One Ravi, whom we knew as 'Duryodhana' at that time had carried the fire of Srikakulam hills, Kondabaridi to Bombay by then. He put together a Marxist-Leninist study circle there. He passed on Śrjana to the Telugu people in the slums of Bhiwandi and Bombay. As most of them were from Telangana districts, they so instantly become part of the consciousness like the fish in the water. Those who didn't know Telugu also grasped the revolutionary message of Śrjana.

We came into indirect touch with all those—like Kobad Gandhi, Anuradha Gandhi, Gurbir and others along with Duryadhana—who were already immersed in the student movement, or Dalit Panthers' movement by then. Already by 1972, Śrjana welcomed Dalit Panthers by exhorting: 'Three Cheers to Dalit Panthers'. The Marxist-Leninist study circle had brought a booklet called 'Marxism-Leninism: Our Microscope and Telescope' which was translated and circulated widely by Śrjana.

Martyr Peddi Shankar made it possible for the intellectuals who were influenced by Naxalbari and Srikakulam to turn this indirect relationship into one which was more direct and of mutual sharing. Shankar, a son of the parents of Singareni coalmine workers in Bellampalli, as a radical youth went to organize revolutionary movement on the call of the newly formed revolutionary party in the District of Sironcha in Vidarbha. He was killed under the garb of an encounter in the second half of 1977 at Mohammadbin Pet.

By this time Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) was formed in Bombay. Today it is well-known about the role played by Anuradha Gandhi in bringing together the intellectuals and democrats in Bombay to form the CPDR. The renowned playwright, Vijay Tendulkar became the president of CPDR while Asghar Ali Engineer, a Muslim reformist intellectual the vice-president.



The CPDR took the first ever 'encounter' killing in their state as a challenge. With the help of Revolutionary Writers Association (RWA) and Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), the CPDR held a fact-finding on the 'encounter'. Allam Rajaiah and I from RWA went through Chandrapur and Chennur crossing over the river Pranahitha and came into direct contact for the first time with Kobad Gandhi and Shoma Sen. By this time we had read the articles of Kobad Gandhi in the *Frontier*.

The CPDR had sent a fact-finding team to Nalgonda District in Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of Asghar Ali Engineer to study the situation of state repression.

With this direct contact, we called Kobad Gandhi to inaugurate the 4th Conference of the Radical Students' Union in Guntur town of Andhra Pradesh. By then, the CPI (ML) (People's War) was formed. These developments came in handy to expand it to Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. At around the same time Navjawan Bharat Sabha and Ahwan Natya Manch were formed in Bombay. These two organizations played creative and historical role in the 1981 Bombay textile industry strike. Along with Kobad Gandhi, Anuradha, Gurbir and Neelan and others came to the Guntur Conference of the Radical Students' Union. I accompanied them from Kazipet in Konark Express to Bezawada and from there to Guntur by bus.

It was my first meeting with Anuradha. Perhaps she was 25 or 26 then. Highly educated, she was with her sparkling eyes and lips always enthusiastic to say something, seemed to be carrying a kind of glow that always moved from her eyes to lips.

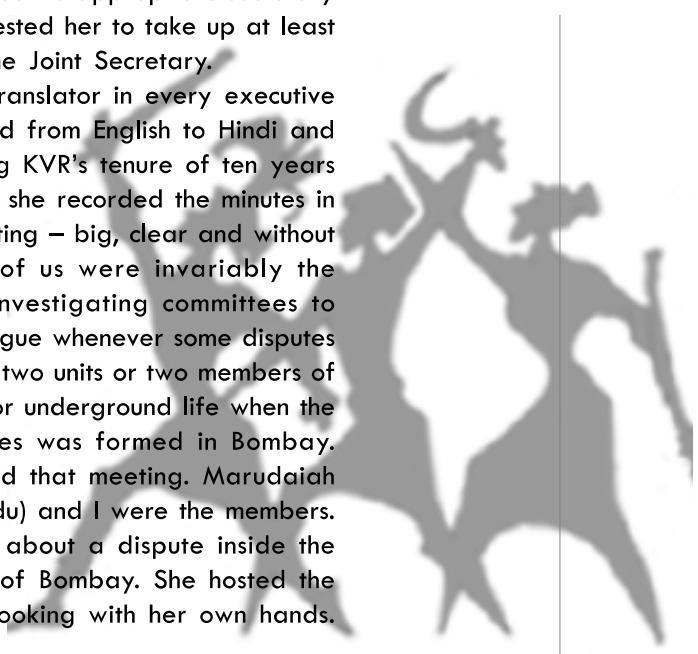
She was brimmed with sensitivity, dedication and an enthusiasm that was contagious. After the inaugural session of the Conference, when everyone was relaxing, someone came with a message of K.S. (Kondapalli Seetharamaiah) expressing his desire to meet Kobad Gandhi. Kobad was not found around the Conference venue. I enquired with Anuradha Gandhi. He didn't inform her either before going out.

At that moment one could see her anxiety, anger and pain. Her anxiety was quite visible for Kobad being not present at a time when a great opportunity came in search of them. There were no cell phones at that time. Her lips were shivering, face reddened; eyes were filled with tears about to drop. She apologised several times. Meanwhile Kobad turned up. She bounced on him with anger like a

child. Tears rolled down her eyes. Perplexed with joy and anger, she shouted at him, revealing her love, friendship and intimacy towards him.

The meeting of K.S. and Kobad must have taken place without any hindrance. It is not necessary to recount here that that meeting must have led to the formation of CPI (ML) (Peoples War) in Maharashtra based on the initiative of their combined efforts. From then onwards, I got many occasions to work with Anuradha Gandhi in various people's movements. Particularly in 1982, her role was crucial in the efforts to form the All India League for Revolutionary Culture (AILRC) at Macherla in Andhra Pradesh along with KVR (KV Ramana Reddy) and Kanchan Kumar. When AILRC was formed in Delhi, Aswin Tambat of Ahwan Natya Manch became the Joint Secretary. Afterwards, though Vilas Ghogre, Sanobar, Shambhaji Bhagat, Robert and others played pivotal role in Ahwan Natya Manch and AILRC's executive committee, Anuradha continued in the Executive giving direction and orientation like a political Commissar in her personal capacity from 1983 to 1995. Her field of activity seemed to have changed by 1993. Along with this, unfortunately a split occurred in Ahwan Natya Manch and Shambhaji and others had left. At this point of time, Anuradha expressed that she no longer would continue in the Executive. But KVR (Founding Secretary of AILRC who was elected secretary for a decade) didn't agree. KVR used to feel that it was impossible for him to hold the executive committee meetings without her presence. In fact he had considered her as the appropriate secretary of the AILRC. He requested her to take up at least the responsibility of the Joint Secretary.

She acted as the translator in every executive meeting. She translated from English to Hindi and Hindi to English. During KVR's tenure of ten years as secretary, all along she recorded the minutes in her beautiful hand writing – big, clear and without any mistakes. Both of us were invariably the members of all the investigating committees to report back to the League whenever some disputes came up between any two units or two members of the League. She left for underground life when the last of such committees was formed in Bombay. However, she arranged that meeting. Marudaiah (from PALA, Tamil Naidu) and I were the members. The investigation was about a dispute inside the Ahwan Natya Manch of Bombay. She hosted the meeting and fed us cooking with her own hands.



After the meeting she took me to some of her personal literary friends. After that it was only during MR - 2004 that I could see her and participated in some meetings along with her.

She was the main speaker in all the Conferences of AILRC as long as she continued in the League. But I must recount here one special occasion in which everyone appreciated her talent. In 1985 AILRC's second Conference was held at Sindhri. We decided to amend the manifesto of AILRC and strengthen it particularly on the questions of language and gender. We elected Anuradha to write the section on gender and there was no dispute in accepting her proposal without any debate. Probably Anuradha and Sanobar were the only women members of the executive at that time. Perhaps we might have also felt that those who came from Bombay would have proper understanding on the question compared to members from other regions. Though the AILRC had strong units in Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab, members coming from these regions could be termed as 'traditionalists' compared to the members of Ahwan Natya Manch.

Anuradha's expertise was revealed resolving the language question. A hot debate took place on the issue of link language throughout the night. I would remember the Sindhri Conference debate on the question of language forever. At that time KVR and the representatives from Tamil Nadu and Kerala were on the side of English. Chalasani, Dani, and the representatives from Bihar and Punjab and I stood for Hindi. When Anuradha realised that the debate was turning into a big confusion, she intervened by saying, 'you are all debating like the proverbial horse being tied at the back of the cart'. She explained the executive by saying: 'All Indian languages are national languages; first of all, all mother tongues should be allowed to develop as official national languages in their own home states in the Universities, Secretariats, and Higher courts of law; then all these official national languages would recognise a language as a link language and for intercommunication. Her words remained as the final judgement for then and till now in the manifesto of the AILRC. Since then I have been reflecting the same ideas in all my essays on the issue of language or on Telangana. Such was the deep impact of her Sindhri speech on me that day.

Nevertheless, even before the Sindhri Conference of AILRC (October 85), an unfortunate

development took place. Perhaps it started in 1982 with the arrest of K.S. and continued like the fire under the cinders till 1984 inside the Party. This emerged on the surface in 1984 when K.S. escaped in a jail break incident. The Party suffered a split. The Maharashtra unit of the CPI (ML) (People's War) along with that of Tamil Nadu got split away and supported KG Sathyamurthy.

At this juncture, AILRC decided to take up a country-wide cultural protest tour against state repression and violence in Andhra Pradesh. At that time the then NT Ramarao government started unleashing brutal repression by clamping down unbridled restrictions on all freedoms – freedom to sing or speak or dance. NT Ramarao had conveniently forgotten his own government's removal by the then Governor and his subsequent reinstatement with help of a massive people's movement—right from Naxalites to the RSS. One would remember his own words in 1983: 'johars to Naxalites, I will raise the red flag on the Red Fort along with the Naxalites'. His government resorted to 'encounter' killings and missing cases in a big way.

We began our all-India cultural tour on 27th July 1985. I accompanied B. S Ramulu, the then Secretary of Radical Youth League (RYL) Gaddar, Sanjiv, Padma, Dayanand and others of Jana Natya Mandali. Our first stay over was naturally in Indora in Nagpur at Anuradha Gandhi's residence. By then, she had shifted to a dalit basti in Nagpur and was working as a part-time lecturer in Sociology. She was involved in building the revolutionary movement among the dalits and workers in Vidarbha, yet her involvement among the intellectuals and democratic rights activities in Bombay continued unabatedly. We only informed that we had started our tour. We arrived at her place. It was not just to play the host; we gave her the burden of organising meetings, press conferences and contact programmes in Nagpur and all over Maharashtra. It was a quite challenging task that we entrusted on her.

On the one hand the split-away party, in which she was a responsible member now (probably she was a member of the regional committee then) could not entrust her with this work, on the other we were expecting her assistance and responsibility in our tour as a member of the AILRC. She made all arrangements for a meeting in a big hall at the heart of Nagpur city for the

very next evening and had invited people like Baba Amte. On another day, she arranged a cultural programme in Indora in a dalit basti. She shared her mental agony separately with me on the day we arrived. She told me that only as a responsible activist of a mass front like AILRC she was doing all that was possible for her. Those two meetings were quite successful. I met Baba Amte for the first time. At that time Ichhampadu project on the river Godavari had become a bone of contention between the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and the controversy crept into the revolutionary camp for debate. Baba Amte who was working among the adivasis was already seriously opposing the project. The revolutionary movement developed from the Districts of Adilabad and Karimnagar in Sirisilla and Gadchiroli. The entire region was the tribal belt. As a result, the project was also a big challenge to the revolutionary movement. Anuradha Gandhi had gone to Warangal and met K. Seetharamarao who was working in Kakatiya University and made a survey of the entire area along with him. Based on her survey, she wrote an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* arguing that the Ichhampadu project was against the interests of adivasis and it should not be built as it will cause submersion of the entire belt. When Baba Amte questioned me as per why our Andhra Party didn't oppose the project till then, I was saved by Anuradha Gandhi.

The 1985-89 split and crisis didn't last long. I came back from our all-India tour at the end of August. Dr. Ramanadham was murdered by the state on 3rd September. After that I couldn't join back the touring cultural team. I could only meet Anuradha in Sindhri after that. I cancelled my bail in December and went to jail and remained imprisoned till 1989. When I was released in 1990, and the RWA had its Conference, once again the revolutionary and cultural movements gained strength and rejuvenated into a full spring. Those were the moments when the revolutionary parties in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra were coming together after the differences, prejudices and feeling of mistrust being cleared. The AILRC held an all-India convention on Communalism in Bombay. Ahwan Natya Manch and Anuradha Gandhi took the responsibility for organising this convention. She introduced her parents to me on this occasion. Her father had settled down in Bombay as an advocate arguing cases of

the trade union of the United Communist Party. This was the first time that I went to Bombay. Thereafter, I frequently visited Bombay and Nagpur for the work of AILRC.

When Dr. Karuna died in Bezawada on 3rd November 1989 I said in her condolence meeting, 'at the time of adversity I remembered one Anuradha Gandhi in Nagpur and one Karuna in Bezawada'. Perhaps I felt so at that time as I was taken in by Anuradha's hospitality in July 1985. Did that too much of intimacy indicate bad portent in days to come?

In 1993 I became the secretary of AILRC, but she only remained nominally in the executive. The reason was that I stayed back in my own limitations while she had moved far forward. Actually from the beginning I have had close and intimate association with all mass organisations whereas she had organic and organisational lead with her mass fronts. In Maharashtra, all students', women, civil rights or intellectual and cultural organisations started their structures with her at the centre. Even the alternate cinema! She went and began the trade unions, Dalit movement, or the movement of the landless peasants in Nagpur and Chandrapur. She congregated intellectuals. In this whole period she was a part-time lecturer only for as a cover but in fact she was a whole-time revolutionary activist. She reached a stage wherein the responsibilities she had taken up, the tasks she had performed, and the organisations she built up had absorbed her into them completely. The last time she participated in AILRC was at a beautiful and serene place near Bangalore where a workshop was conducted on the issues of women. She told me then that it would be the last AILRC meeting that she will be participating.

Perhaps she might have already gone into underground life by then. Of late, I kept hearing about her and met those who used to meet her. I could imagine the process in which how a short, thin enthusiast in her youthful days, when I met in Konark Express, could grow into a gigantic *Sal* tree in Dandakaranya as I understood her nature.

I could never talk to anyone who works for women's movement without referring to Anuradha Gandhi. I couldn't imagine that there could be anyone in the revolutionary women's movement who did not know her. This could be my own prejudice.

I was in Mumbai between October 2003 and January 2004 for the preparations of Mumbai Resistance-2004 (MR-2004) which was organised as an alternative to the World Social Forum. During those three months, I met her every now and then. At that time, she was deep into the revolutionary party work. Nevertheless, whenever a rare opportune moment could be grabbed, I could breathe the fragrance of the revolutionary movement that was in her vicinity of work as she shared with me. Those experiences might be abounding with tragedies, victories or defeats or differences in opinion. All those vanish in a matured understanding of the revolutionary cultural movement.

By this time, her health had gone down considerably. She was suffering from rheumatic pains and her body was getting shrunk. She became very thin and pale and her hair grey. But she never lost her rays of youthfulness. The smiles on her lips didn't lose their infancy. The smoothness in her words reflected the maturity of human essence.

She became one among our family through direct and indirect interactions. She came to our home in Kumarpelli in Hanumakonda when she had gone to study the Ichhampalli project in 1985. Again in 1993, when she came to attend the AILRC Conference in Hyderabad, she visited our Malakpet house. In no time, she became close to my life-partner and my three daughters. Dandakaranya Movement brought her close to Anala and Women's movement to Pavana. Through them, I could understand her in many more ways.



Because of all this, on 12th April, Shoma Sen informed Pavana (Banny) the thunder-bolt-like news, instead of me, that 'Anuradha Gandhi is no more amidst us'.

When I came back to Hyderabad from Bangalore, after hearing from Anuradha Gandhi that the Women's workshop of the AIRLC was due to be her last in AIRLC activities, Kumari of Jana Natya Mandali died of cerebral Malaria for lack of proper, timely treatment after her return from the forest. Kumari's partner Ramesh could be saved from the deadly fest as he was also attacked at the same time. A decade passed. Anuradha Gandhi also met with the same tragedy.

It is difficult to imagine the revolutionary movement without her. It is hard to visualise women's role in the revolution without her leadership. 'The modern woman writes tomorrow's history', says the first modern Telugu poet Gurajada Appa Rao. From the aspirations of Naxalbari Adivasi women martyrs to their counterparts in Dandakaranya, in the history of the building of new democratic revolution, this new woman's flesh and blood, her breath and dreams and her practice will stand aloft forever.

8 July 2008

