CHAPTER SIX
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THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' MOVEMENT

Having dealt with the peasant movements in the previous three chapters we shall study in this chapter the agricultural labourers' movement in Andhra. The exploited class of agricultural labourers is the most militant and numerous than any other class of the agrarian population. Their movement had been centred around the issue of wages, land and dignified living. The organisation of labourers began much later than the growth of the peasant movement. In this chapter we see how different trends in the agricultural labourers' movement existed during 1920s and 1930s and how the Communists sought to organise them on the class basis. We shall also review the struggles waged for more wages, for land (mainly distribution of banjers), and some agitations on other issues. We also examine the state of organisational affairs leading to the decline of the agricultural labourers movement.
I. **Initial Stages of the Organisation and the Different Trends**

The organisation and the growth of social awareness among the agricultural labourers can be traced back to the harijan welfare movement in early 1920s of the present century. Some associations were started to organise the depressed castes people to remove the social disabilities imposed on these sections. Among these organisations were – Adi Andhra Welfare Association, Depressed Castes League, Arundethi Association, etc. By 1927, Adi Andhra Associations were formed at district level in Cuntur, Krishna, West and East Godavari districts and agricultural labourers strikes took place in some places (Mypadu in Nellore district). Formation and spread of such an organisation was resented by the ryot leaders. The Zamin Ryotu which was publicising the grievances of the occupancy tenants in the zamindari areas, carried an editorial criticising the strikes led by Adi Andhra Association as only creating conflicts between the ryots and labourers or 'reducing the conflicts by crushing down the strong ryots through strikes!'. It also said that they were creating disturbances
when they did not have many problems or hardships and that such associations would not help the Adi Andhras.  

Ranga also claimed that his attempts to organise the agricultural workers in 1923 did not bear any fruitful results 'because of the active opposition of the Justice Party...the cold indifference and non-cooperation of the local Congress and the pro-British and job-hunting Christian teachers and pastors.' The landlords and rich peasants of his area admonished the England-returned, socialist-minded Ranga that they did not send him to London to come back to organise these labourers against them. He was also advised by Unnava Lakshminarayana, an important Congress leader in Guntur district and the author of the first social novel in Telugu, Malapalli, 'to wait for a while before he proceeded in the direction of organising the agricultural workers, since the forces opposed to him were too many and too strong.' 3 But by 1935 Ranga wrote that the agricultural workers started 'knocking at the doors of peasants and demanded justice for themselves. In Nellore district, they have succeeded in 1935 in some villages in obliging the peasants to use proper
and authorized measures in paying out their wages. Anticipating such and even more expensive conflicts between peasants and agricultural labourers, the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Workers (founded in April 1935) formulated a charter of demands for workers which peasants are willing to concede. 4 The formulation of these demands, it was claimed, was a 'proof of his (Ranga's) anxiety for the agricultural workers'. Even the liberals also came out with support to the agricultural workers. At the Andhra Provincial Ryot Debt Relief Conference held at Vijayawada (on May 12, 1935), presided over by V. Ramesh Pantulu, two of their demands were stressed; that the interest rate on the debts of agricultural workers should not be more than three per cent and that the Namu or Nagu5 should be prohibited.

Already by this time some of the Communists were also active among the agricultural labourers. P. Sundarayya, who had been working among them in Nellore district from 1931, started in 1934 an agriculture workers association in his native village Alaganipadu (Nellore district). It can be regarded
as the first agricultural workers organisation formed on class lines. Its main aims were: (i) to work for fixing the daily or yearly minimum wages through legislation which should be adequate to maintain a happy life for the workers; (ii) for banning employment of boys below 14 years of age; (iii) for fixing working hours as 42 hours per hour and 35 in case of night work; (iv) one month holiday with pay for the employees on the yearly basis; (v) to establish cooperative societies so as to provide low interest loans, (vi) to start night schools for adults, (vii) pension facility for the old, etc.\(^6\) In 1933-34 Karmika Prachuranalu started coming out from Anantavaram (Tennali taluk) depicting the life and problems of agricultural labourers.\(^7\) Since the Communists were not free to function openly, Labour Protection Leagues were formed to carry the fight on the demand of the agricultural workers.

The Congress leaders also took initiative in the organisation of agricultural labourers. The Nellore Agricultural Workers Association was formed on 8 March, 1936 at the sixth Harijan conference held at Nellore. The membership fee was one anna to be paid after every
three years. A Working Committee was elected with V. Raghavaiah, a Congress leader, as the President. Its declared aims were the elimination of false measures and to obtain fair daily and monthly wages for the agricultural workers. It would strive to achieve these aims through peaceful means and participating in the elections. The first Andhra Provincial Agricultural Workers' Association's Conference was held on August 1, 1937. M.N. Roy presided.

V. Raghavaiah and Duvuri Balarami Reddi were elected as Secretaries and a Standing Committee with nineteen members, including several Communists like Sundarayya, Jonnalagadda Ramalingayya, Kambhampati Satyanarayana, Kamaratam Shanmugham and Kollah Venkiah, was formed. Then onwards agricultural workers associations were formed rapidly in several districts at various levels, mainly due to the efforts of the Communists, and these associations consisted of members from different castes mainly from Malas and Madigas, the two depressed castes forming the bulk of the exploited and ill-treated rural population in Andhra.

In the background of the harmful fights during this period between the Malas and Madigas at Peda Maddali (Krishna), Vadapalli (East Godavari District)
and in several other villages, the Communists propagated that the class position of every agricultural workers, irrespective of one's caste, was the same. The Communists thus separated themselves from the earlier missionary or reformist trends (including the Harijan Seva Sanghams founded by Gandhi in 1932 for the eradication of untouchability and harijan upliftment) which based themselves on the narrow lines of caste, sect or region. The fight against social evils and injurious traditions was also conducted. The union leaders in some villages played the role of the head of the harijan hamlets. Adult education was given in the night schools. The main issues for organising labourers in the beginning were ending landlords' atrocities over the labourers, against bonded labour, for definite working hours, increase in the wages and to do away with the false measures used in payment. Between 1935-37, class-based agricultural labourers' organisations were formed at taluka level in Repalle and Tenali in Guntur district, Gudivada and Divi in Krishna, Eluru and Narasapur in West Godavari and Razole in East Godavari district. The first Guntur District Agricultural Labourers' Conference was held on 1937 at Pallekona. Likewise the
the Krishna, East Godavari, West Godavari and Nellore districts unions were formed in 1941. The demands of the union during this time were: (i) the wage rate should be as many annas as the rupees a bag of paddy was sold; (ii) a seven hour working day; and (iii) the wages of a farm servant (Jeethagadu) should be 25 bags of paddy with 15 days leave facility. These demands were popularised widely among the agricultural labourers. With such a programme it became the only organisation representing the agricultural labourers. Caste and community based associations like Depressed Castes Associations, Adi Andhra Associations, Christian Federation, Harijan Seva Sanghams etc. failed to disrupt the unity of the labourers and finally got themselves separated from the labouring classes.

One point to be answered here is why the separate organisation for agricultural workers came into existence in Andhra for the first time in the country? One factor was the growth of irrigation and the widespread paddy growing in these five districts of Nellore, Cuntur, Krishna and the two Godavari districts, which needed more labourers especially at certain periods. In these districts of Andhra and esp. in the two Godavaris,
Krishna and Guntur districts, the two socially homogeneous groups – Nolas and Madigas – existed in formidable numbers. The overwhelming mass of agricultural labourers came from these two castes in these districts. There was also a to-and-fro movement during the 19th and 20th centuries to Burma from these castes in the above districts and those who returned with some money purchased lands. These people played an important role in the beginning in the organisation of the labourers in standing against the landlords' atrocities. Also the conversions to Christianity, its missionary facilities, and the favours given by the Justice government, which it made to weaken the Congress strength, could have possibly contributed to the changes in their social positions though at individual levels and the general growth of social awareness. Together with this, the other factors which were prevailing in some other provinces also, like the swelling of the army of labourers from the artisan sections, who were rendered jobless, the growth of commercial crops, the land transfers and concentration and the adverse impact of Depression on the whole agrarian population paved the way for an independent organisation of the labourers. By the time the Communists began to work
on the agrarian front the agricultural labourers were already in the process of developing political consciousness and going on strikes to compel the landlords to give some concessions. It was only in such a situation the Communists helped them to understand issues more clearly and to organise themselves on political and ideological basis.

Interestingly during this period (1930s) a Congress leader like V. Raghavaiah appears to be more concerned with and radically articulating the demands of the agricultural workers than the Communists. He worked for the upliftment and the social rights of the Yanadis, an agricultural tribe numerically large in parts of the Nellore district. He took active part in the formation of agricultural workers' associations. It was mentioned in the fourth chapter that when the Maramtorium Bill came for discussion in the Madras Legislature in 1938 he wanted that it should be applicable only to those who earn three-fourths of their incomes as wages from agriculture. Andhra Provincial Agricultural Workers' Union under his leadership also demanded Rs.15/-
as monthly wage for agricultural workers. This was regarded unfair by the Communists, who said that it should not be more than ten rupees.\textsuperscript{10}

Raghavaiah also stressed the antagonism between the land owning peasant, who hired in the labour, and the wage labourer. He also wrote that the agricultural workers belonging to the Sudra castes (caste Hindus like Kamma, Reddi, etc.) mostly betrayed the strikes; that in the midst of the struggle they used to join the ryots side. 'Small ryots' of this caste also supported the big ryots' actions against the strike.\textsuperscript{11} He urged that the 'agricultural labourers should stand up to the harassing peasants without any fear... They have to put down the aggression of the rich peasants in the villages... Then only their sufferings would go.'\textsuperscript{12}

But the Communists and the peasant leaders like Ranga stressed the need for peasant-agricultural worker unity. Their definition of the peasant was more or less the same. Ranga said that 'the ryots are those who physically participate in the agricultural operations, irrespective of the fact whether they own or lease in the land';\textsuperscript{13} He also said that 'ryots are those who earn their livelihood by working on the
land, whether they own it or not. Such a definition obviously covered a very broad range of the rural population and only it shadows the reality of the existence of the wage-labourers and the landowning peasants and blurs the distinction between the two. They often reiterated that the agricultural workers movement was not and should not be opposed to the ryots. At the first conference of the East Godavari District Agricultural Labourers' Union (Korrapati Pattabhiramaiah, a Communist leader, was the General Secretary) the peasant-labourers unity was stressed. At the first meeting of the Guntur District Agricultural Labourers' Union (Jonnalagadda Ramalingaiah, another Communist leader, was the President) held at Pallekona (Repalle taluka) Ranga spoke of the necessity of cooperation between the peasants and labourers. When the strikes were widespread against false measures Ranga made a statement on 'Ryotu Dharmam' in June 1938, saying that it was immoral for the ryots to use wrong measures and the wage demand of the labourers was a just one. He asked them not to be aggressive against the labourers but bargain with them: e.g., if the ryots felt that 8 hours working a day was not sufficient they should bargain with the workers for some more time. The *Zamin Ryotu* in its editorial in the issue of 19 August 1938 appealed to the ryots to concede the minimum demands of the agricul-
tural labourers and that they should not object to giving away of porambokes to the landless and poor peasants. It said: 'The ryots should try to put down the revolting spirit among the agricultural workers by meeting their hunger and giving them some land.' The 7th APRA Conference urged the ryots and agricultural labourers to resolve their disputes through accommodation and arbitration.17

II. **Struggle for More wages:**

The issue which is of utmost importance for the property-less class of wage workers on land is wages. Though it may be true to say that the ultimate aim of the working class is to end monopoly on land and to make it the property of all, the immediate problem the worker faced was excessive work load, humiliating and inhuman conditions of living and less wages. That is why we witness in the beginning of the agricultural workers' movement a series of strikes on the issue of wages.

The first organised strike took place in Mypadu village of Nellore taluka in August 1929. Here the farm servants went on a strike and it soon spread to
harijan labourers. It was led by one Kakuturu Seshu Reddi and nearly 200 labourers took part in the strike. The causes of the strike were false measures, low wages and Namu. As a result of the struggle the landlords had to accept to use authorised measures, to raise grain advances and wages and not to charge interest upto 20 rupees or the grain worth of it. Agricultural workers were given certain concessions regarding the grazing fields, village tanks etc.18 Another strike was held on similar demands at Potlapudi in 1930.19 This was led by the Adi Andhra Welfare Association. Such conflicts between the rich ryots and landlords, who were mostly caste Hindus, and the agricultural workers, who mostly came from the 'untouchable' castes, also took the form of conflicts between the harijans and caste Hindus. The Congress leaders tried to play a mediatory role between the conflicting classes (for example in Ananatavaram village of Tenali taluka)20 and a few Congress landlords accepted to pay slightly higher wages (for example during strikes in Nellore).

When Labour Protection League gave a call to end the wrong measures, demanded for increase in the wages and propagated against social evils, the agricultural
workers strikes took place in Veguru, Vidavaluru, Nedegunta, Kakupalli, Pudiparthi, etc., in Nellore District. In Pudiparthi nearly 3000 farm servants from all castes went on a strike in April 1935. It continued for six months. The Nellore District Congress Committee met on July 15, 1935, presided over by V. Raghavaiah, and passed resolutions supporting the minimum demands of the agricultural workers.

Finally an agreement was arrived at in September and the agricultural workers won substantial gains increasing their wages by more than 100 per cent and other small benefits.

Once again during the period of the Congress Ministry (1937-39) a series of agricultural workers' struggles broke out in Nellore, Cuntur, Krishna and Godavari districts under the leadership of the communities and some Congressmen resulting in substantial gains. In Nellore district an Agricultural Workers March, on the lines of Peasant Protection March, was taken out in 18 villages of Nellore and Kovuru talukas from July 7 to 14 of 1938. Zamin Ryotu of this period was full with reports about the agricultural workers' strikes and their success in many places. One notices that wherever the Communists were strong the movement grew rapidly.
As a mark of the growing strength of the agricultural workers' movement the first Andhra Provincial Agricultural Workers' Union Conference which was completely under the leadership of the communists, was held successfully at Jaggannapeta (E.C dt) in June 1947. Delegates from the two Godavari Districts, Krishna, Guntur, and Nellore attended the Conference. It passed a resolution demanding the abolition of feudal landlordism. It stated that the problems of agricultural labourers would be solved when the land was given to the tiller. It also demanded that the minimum daily wage should be between Rs.1.4.0 to Rs.1.8.0 and that the banjar and lanka lands should be given free to the agricultural labourers. Thus it stressed both the wage and land questions.

After independence strikes were held in hundreds of villages in 1948 in all the districts demanding a daily wage of 8 seers of grain (1 seer is a little more than a kilogram) or Rs.1.8.0, and the annual wage of a Paleru or farm servant to be 30 bags of grain (each bag of 75 kilos). This time the strikes were not only organised in wet areas, but were spread also to the dry regions. They were organised despite the repressive policy of the government and large scale arrests.
on the one hand and the threats held out by the landlords on the other. Landlords also organised themselves and collected huge funds in several villages to bring labourers from outside to break the strikes. In a procession taken out by Pelerla in Jupudi village (Guntur district) an activist of the organisation (Jatti Subba Rao) was shot dead. In 1949 September the Andhra Provincial Agricultural Agricultural Labourers' Union was banned by the Congress Government. Under the Police raj the leaders of the union were pushed behind the bars and several activists were killed. After the ban was lifted in 1952, the Union was reorganised and agitations were launched to secure minimum daily wage of 6.1.8.0.

During the pre-independence period the agricultural workers also participated in most of the anti-zaminderi struggles. We have noted earlier that the agricultural labourers went on a strike at Hedigudem in Munagala Zaminderi for the payment of proper wages. In Challapelli estate also they were active in the struggle to occupy the land. They were also active in the agitations against black-marketing and hoarding during the Second World War period. During these days of scarcity and famine, the Union collected money for a 'famine fund' in 500 villages, where the movement was
strong, from which the labourers borrowed without becoming the victims of money lenders and Nama system.

This period was marked, however by more stress on peasant-worker unity. The leaders were for wage increase through negotiations and compromise with the ryots than through strikes and struggles. As we have discussed in the earlier chapter that the understanding of this peasant worker alliance was such that the agrarian movement was increasingly got based itself among largely the middle peasants and to some extent the rich peasants. That was why we also notice that the organisation and mobilisation of agricultural labourers was more and more tend to be based on the question of distribution of banjar and waste lands of the government under the plea that it was easy to mobilise the labourers for the distribution of land than on the question of wages. The strikes of the agricultural labourers also failed due to the government repression and the threats of the landlords and as the organisation generally became weak.

III. Struggles for Banjar Land:

The struggle for retaining the rights on the banjar lands and for their distribution was the only
state-wide movement of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers/the post-independence period. During the war period the Madras Government decided to bring banjars into cultivation to grow more food. The Union also took up the slogan of 'grow more food', and it was active in getting pattas to the agricultural labourers, who put all their efforts to bring the banjars under cultivation. They also propagated and demanded that the waste lands under the big zamindars and landlords should also be distributed to the agricultural workers. The first provincial conference of the Union demanded that all the banjar lands should be given gratis to the labourers. When they pursued the decision to occupy the banjar lands the pettandars and big landlords resisted. In Kovuru (Nellore), Repalle (Cuntur), Keikaluru (Krishna), and Razole (E.C.) talukas the landlords' resistance was intensive, who wanted to control all the banjar lands apart from the banjars already in their name.

In 1952 the Congress government issued a Government Order proposing to sell, through auction, the banjar lands in the State, which was already under cultivation by the poor peasants and agricultural
labourers, at market prices. The government also wanted to give away the banjar lands to the Congressmen under the name of political sufferers, to reward their participation in the national movement. Both the Agricultural Labour Union (ALU) and the APRA gave a call to foil such attempts and to concentrate on the problems of distribution of banjar lands as a first step in the struggle to end feudal landlordism. A tremendous resistance movement was developed in all the districts to defend the labourers' right on banjar lands.

Romperu banjar Satyagraha: Romperu (Cuntur district) banjar struggle was prominent among such struggles. The agricultural labourers from the surrounding villages of Romperu occupied nearly 18 thousand acres of banjar lands in 1943 and cultivating since then. But the government gave away these lands to political sufferers and issued notices prohibiting the entry of cultivators into their own lands. Police forces were deployed throughout Romperu to evict the cultivators. The villagers unitedly resisted and several of them were arrested on framed up charges. When the Government came to know that it was not possible
to grant these lands to Congressmen, it proposed to auction the lands at market prices. The cultivators formed peasant squads with 100 men and women. They marched from Chinaganjam on March 15, 1953 to tour all the villages of Romperu banjar and memorandum with 2000 signatures was presented to the Legislature.29

In Nellore district also the struggles for banjar lands were intensive. In Kodavaluru the agricultural labourers were given notices to vacate the lands and section 144 Cr.P.C. was imposed in the area. The labourers resorted to satyagraha, several persons, including women were arrested. The Nellore district peasant leaders Baswareddi Sankaraiah and Mangalagiri Nanadasu were also arrested. However, as a result of these struggles the Rajagopalachari Ministry withdrew its orders. It announced that it would cancel the orders to evict the labourers and issue pattas to those who were cultivating these lands.30

The struggle was spread to forest banjars also. Thousands of acres were given to the landless labourers under the 'grow more food' programme. But the government tried to evict these cultivators from these lands.
in the name of forest protection. As a result of the struggle against this, the government was forced to distribute nearly 2000 acres in Jaggayappeta area (Krishna district) for cultivation (2½ acres each to family). At Tumrukodu inPalnadu taluka the poor peasants entered nearly 500 acres of forest banjar and cultivated it.

There was then a statewide agitation for granting of pattas to the banjar lands. A ryot-coolie march was taken out from various places to the newly formed Andhra capital of Kurnool on March 15, 1954 coinciding with the budget session. The demands were abolition of inams, moratorium on debts and issue of pattas for the cultivators on banjar lands. A memorandum with these demands signed by more than 30,000 ryots and labourers was submitted to the Ministry. The struggle for banjar land was widely conducted in Guntur district. Nearly five hundred delegates were present at the Guntur zilla Banjar Conference organised by the ryot and agricultural labourers' organisations at Guntur in February 1954. A memorandum with 25,000 signatures collected from 100 villages was submitted to the District Collector. Also banjar cultivators' conferences
were held at Chirala and Piduguralla in August 1954. Government responded to it with setting up police camps at Ganapavaram, Karamchedu, Narasayapalem, Kenkatsapalem, Kodavukuduru, Vetapalem, etc. To conduct the struggle an Action Committee was formed with Kolla Venkaiah, Koratla Satyanarayana, Madala Narayana Swamy, Turimella Govindiah, Dona Moshe, Mandepati Nagi Reddi, etc. The Committee selected some centres in Bapatla, Repalle, Ongole, Sattenpalle, and Palnad talukas to launch satyagraha struggles for banjar lands. Satyagraha squads were formed, which included women. During the course of the struggle nearly 900 satyagrahis were arrested throughout the district.32

As a result of the struggles and agitations by the ALU and the APRA and the efforts in the legislature by the representatives of peasants and labourers, the Government accepted a resolution to grant pattas to all the cultivators of the banjar lands fixing a limit that no family should have more than 2.5 acres of wet or 5 acres of dry land. Such an agitation gave some strength to the ryot and agricultural labourers' movement in Andhra.
State-wide agitations for protecting the peasants in banjar lands and for the distribution of other unoccupied banjar lands continued for several years. Benjar Landa Day was celebrated throughout Andhra on August 1, 1961 with meetings of the banjar cultivators. Afterwards in 1964 a State-wide satyagraha was conducted from 3rd February by the all-Party Action Committee for the abolition of additional tax and distribution of banjar lands. Satyagrahas were held in most of the taluka centres and the agricultural labourers were involved in large numbers.  

Thus it was one of the important statewide agitations conducted in the post-Independence period by the ryot and the agricultural workers' organisations, led by the Communist Party. This agitation was mostly confined to organising meetings, processions, collecting signatures and submitting memoranda, and resorting to satyagrahas. It was only strong in some areas, especially in Guntur district. But it showed the problem the Communists faced in the organisation of agricultural labourers. Firstly they proceeded with a wrong premise that all the agricultural labourers were only
pauperised peasants deprived of their land; also
that the landless labourers and poor peasants were
lend hungry and any agitation with the hope of
getting a little bit of land would attract these
sections to the ryot and agricultural labour associa-
tions. In the process they found that it was easy to
mobilise the landless labourers on the issue of dis-
tribution of land. But enough care was taken to
focus the attention of the labourers and poor pes-
sants on the waste lands of the Government, without
any time demanding that the land belonged to the
landlords should also be occupied by the labourers.
Apparenty this was to maintain kisan-labourer unity.
It was difficult for them to organise labourers
mainly on wage-question because they found that Indian
land system did not include large capitalist farms and
a mass of wage workers, but it consists of a large
section of middle and rich peasants controlling con-
siderable portions of land. But they were also very
much aware that the struggles for the distribution of
land had their own limitations because it could not
be possible to procure land in any meaningful propor-
tion and size, to all the landless labourers. The
kind of satyagrahas, parliamentary work, petitions
and memoranda, delegations to and negotiations with the Chief Ministers, signature campaigns, would not certainly go in this direction. They might give a reformist orientation to the organisation and divert the attention and blunt the consciousness of the toiling masses. Instead of relying on their capacity to struggle and win their rights, they tend to rely upon the goodness of the ruling classes. Also looking up at the ruling parties and appealing to their senses became a recurrent feature of the communist agrarian movement, instead of turning its face to the toiling masses in the countryside. Though the aim of the Indian Communists might not seem to make as many owner-cultivators as possible out of the agricultural labourers under this bourgeois framework of social relations because such a process would definitely undermines the strength working class movement, the objective result of these campaigns, propaganda and 'forcing' the government to give some concessions would theoretically and actually lead to some more joining the ranks of the peasants, who would in normal case, guard themselves against any change that aims at ending of private property. In fact, the peasant consciousness of the
Communists was one reason for launching militant agitations for banjar lands, because it did not allow them to think of taking away all the land of all the landlords and ultimately ending the private ownership on land. It is true to say that the agrarian problem is primarily a land question (which should not be understood in a mechanical and reformist manner either to stand for immediate socialisation of land or to get some plots of land to the landless and poor peasants by pressurising the government to implement the land reforms more effectively), meaning that it stands for ultimate abolition of every type of monopoly on land, but in concrete terms it expresses itself in wage problem, that is to fight against all kinds of labour exploitation.

Some agitations on other problems: Another important agitation in which the agricultural labourers were involved was the agitation for land reforms, which we briefly reviewed in the previous chapter. The ALU, along with the APRA, launched a series of campaigns and agitations demanding that thelenka lands should be distributed to the agricultural labourers and pottas be given; that a Kouldari Act should be brought
protecting the tenants and fixing one-fourth of the gross produce as rent and that the surplus land above the ceiling should be distributed to the labourers free of cost. Agitations also took place on the issue of allotment of house sites to the labourers and poor peasants.

When the prices of food grains shot up in 1959 and were not available to the poor people at fair prices, the ALU mobilised the people in August on the demands that the prices should be controlled and the rice should be sold through fair price depots. The ALU took out hunger marches from East Godavari district to Nellore in which nearly one-and-a-half lakh people took part. Once again in August 1964 hunger marches were conducted demanding that a kilo of rice should be sold at 56 paise. Satyagrahas were organised in front of the taluka offices, rice mills and godowns. By this time a strong agricultural workers organisation was being built in the tribal tracts of Srikakulam district, which we shall deal separately in the next chapter.

IV. The State of Organisation:

The unity of the organisation was affected with the split in the Communist Party. By the time of the
seventh conference held in November 1963, at Chirala, the differences among the activists came to the open. From 1965, the minority in the State Committee of the ALU (Members of CPI) began to organise rival unions and conferences at different levels. The eighth conference of the ALU was organised separately by the Unions led by the CPI and the CPI(M). One of the leaders of the agricultural labourers movements in Andhra observes that 'the split was not due to the different approaches in dealing with the problems of agricultural labourers'. He says that one reason for the weakness of the agricultural labourers' movement and organisation was that its leadership did not come from that class itself. With this the movement was weakened in the areas in which the union was strong earlier. The labourers lost some of their previous gains as the landlords had taken advantage of a weak organisation not properly functioning. The membership details show that the two splits in the Communist movement (1964 and 1968) had a telling effect on the strength of the agricultural labourers' movement. The membership had drastically gone down from 108,962 in 1966 to 27,620 in 1969. The movement was more weakened in the coastal Andhra region than in the Telangana region.
District and taluka level meetings were not regularly and properly conducted. The formation of the Committees at the village level was ignored. Recruitment of membership was not done seriously, but only was hurried up on the eve of the Conferences. It also becomes clear that the organisational functioning and the movement was not consistent in the same areas at different times. The movement which was strong in Nellore, Guntur, Krishna, East and West Godavari districts in early 60s was considerably weakened towards the end of the decade. After the exit of the Naxalites, who refused to recognise the necessity of organising working class unions, the CPI(M) affiliated APALU was organisationally removed from the scene in areas like Srikakulam district.

Thus, we see in this chapter separate organisations for agricultural labourers were being formed in late 20s and early 30s as a result of the growing social awareness among them which reflected in the strikes for a better wage, proper payment and against landlords' atrocities and humiliating social conditions of life. Communists were the first to organise district and state wide unions, though Congress leaders like V. Raghavaiah sought to organise the labourers
to avert the danger of confrontation between them and the peasantry. The basis of the organisation of agricultural labourers by the Communists was the class question contrary to social welfarism (of casteist or Gandhian varieties) and bourgeois reformism.

Though the formation of the ALU in Andhra was first of its kind in India, long before the Communist Party of India resolved to organise the agricultural labourers into separate unions, we find a shift in emphasis upon the activities of the Ryots’ Association and conducting struggles essentially on the issues concerning landowning peasants and occupancy tenants. The trend not only was continued after independence, but it was perpetuated, despite the repeated self-critical observations and warnings that the Party woefully neglected the demands of agricultural labourers and that it was opportunism not to organise and lead the agricultural workers struggles for better wages and service conditions with the fear that it might disrupt the peasant unity and especially alienate the rich peasants.

The Communist failed to organise the agricultural workers and poor peasants with a new orientation and
outlook to build a strong agrarian movement in Andhra. In the coastal Andhra districts, the agricultural workers alone constitute more than 40 per cent of the total working population in these districts. The agrarian movement has been immediately understood in Andhra essentially as ryots movement, not as the movement of the agricultural workers. The agrarian movement also failed to identify itself with the depressed castes' people who constitute large percentage of the agricultural workers. Only when the agricultural labourers organisations do not exist for name sake without much drive but become active and militant, the activists and leaders of the agrarian movement would come up from these classes.
REFERENCES


2. *ZR, April 13, 1930.*


4. Ranga, 'All India Kisan Movement', *Annual Register,* 1936, p.267. Important of these demands were: (i) Compulsory labour exchanges were to be established by the Government to equalise and regulate the demand for labour in different agricultural seasons and areas; to extend Factory Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Payment of Wages Act, to agricultural workers with suitable alterations; to establish employment and health insurance; and to declare unlawful the various methods of lending credit to agricultural workers with interest more than six per cent; (ii) Establishment of Trade Boards, (iii) 'All the unoccupied but cultivable lands of Government and similar lands and homefarms of the zamindars over 200 acres of wet land or 500 acres of dry land must be reserved for the agricultural labourers and small peasants and the process of distributing these lands among the landless workers peasants having less than 5 acres of dry land or two-and-a-half acres of wet land collectively and through their cooperative agricultural societies, without any individual right of alienation, must be started'; and (iv) Compulsory Arbitration Boards had to be established to settle the wage and other disputes concerning the conditions of employment which may arise between the peasants and workers. Ranga, 1936, p.66.

5. Under this, the landlords lend grain to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants during the lean period of the year (October-November) and collect during the harvesting time (January-February) double or one-and-a-half times to the quantity originally lent and deduct from the wages. This system is called *Nama* or *Nagu.*


8. ZR, January 28, 1938.


10. ZR, September 9, 1938.

11. Ibid.

12. ZR, June 10, 1938.


15. ZR, May 6, 1938.

16. ZR, June 24, 1938.

17. ZR, September 23, 1938.

18. ZR, December 27, 1935.


20. T. Venkataramaiah.


22. Some of them were that (i) grain should be given with stamped and authorised measures, (ii) a minimum wage for the well-maintenance of workers' life should be fixed, (iii) twenty paid holidays to the workers, (iv) determined efforts had to be made to end bonded and forced labour, (v) the lands which were brought under cultivation newly under the irrigation projects should be reserved to the landless labourers and government should finance their cultivation. These lands as far as possible should be handed over to the agricultural workers cooperative societies, (vi) agricultural workers organisations should be set up throughout the country etc., ZR, July 12, 1935.
23. ZR, December 27, 1935.

24. ZR issues of September 3, 1937; September 17, 1937; October 15, 1937; May 27, 1938, July 8, 1938 and so on.

25. Kebotu Ramaswamy and Gunturu Bapanaiah were elected as the President and General Secretary respectively. Kandikatla Nagabushanam was the Vice-President; Nekenti Narasimha Rao and Kelesha were joint secretaries.


27. Ibid., p.14.


According to the figures given by the Government in 1963, the banjar and pasture lands in the coastal Andhra districts were (district wise):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Banjar (in acres)</th>
<th>Pastures (in acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Srikakulam</td>
<td>108,655</td>
<td>54,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>79,710</td>
<td>24,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Godavari Dist.</td>
<td>404,084</td>
<td>111,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Godavari</td>
<td>114,882</td>
<td>52,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>149,455</td>
<td>59,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>123,197</td>
<td>139,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>439,512</td>
<td>448,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,416,395</strong></td>
<td><strong>880,930</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Whole State: 3,516,740  2,789,295

Andhra Pradesh AL Union, 8th Conference, Secretary's Report, p.8.


30. Ibid., p.27.

32. T. Govindaiah, p.18.


34. T. Govindaiah, p.27.

35. Ibid., p.29. The CC of the CPI(M) in its resolution on the Tasks on the Kisan Front (1966) observed that re-organising the work on agrarian front with a correct class orientation was not an easy task because the bulk of our leading kisan activists come from rich and middle peasant origin, rather than from agricultural labourers and poor peasants. Their class origin, social links and the long training given to them give a reformist ideological political orientation which is alien to the proletarian class point and prevent them from actively working among the agricultural labourers, poor and middle peasants with the zeal and crusading spirit demanded of the Communists', p.16.

36. Membership figures of the AFOLU and later the ALU affiliated to the CPI(M), as were given in the Secretary's Reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>04,620</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunturu</td>
<td>18,883</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>6,825</td>
<td>5,045</td>
<td>4,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>19,500</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>5,723</td>
<td>4,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Godavari</td>
<td>18,309</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>3,625</td>
<td>5,575</td>
<td>2,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Godavari</td>
<td>02,550</td>
<td>0,400</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>3,125</td>
<td>0,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>02,000</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srikakulam</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Coastal Andhra districts

|      | 81,862 | 11,720 | 17,860 | 21,218 | 14,225 |

For the Whole State

|      | 108,962 | 27,620 | 43,434 | 59,689 | 31,490 |

Source: a) APALU, 8th Conference, Secretary's Report, p.31.

b) APALU, 9th Conference, Resolutions, p.3.
c) APALU, 10th Conference, Secretary's Report, p.24.
d) APALU, 11th Conference, p. p.27.
e) APALU, 12th Conference, p. 18.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total Main Workers</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Agricultural workers as % of total main workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Godavari</td>
<td>1,407,725</td>
<td>303,748</td>
<td>603,961</td>
<td>42.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Godavari</td>
<td>1,184,104</td>
<td>255,821</td>
<td>587,803</td>
<td>49.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna</td>
<td>1,221,530</td>
<td>250,268</td>
<td>534,924</td>
<td>43.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>1,500,725</td>
<td>383,743</td>
<td>674,042</td>
<td>44.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prakasam</td>
<td>1,037,683</td>
<td>324,458</td>
<td>451,586</td>
<td>43.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>860,928</td>
<td>233,271</td>
<td>377,490</td>
<td>43.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>