

OBITUARY

Red Salute to Comrades Rangta Murmu and Sufiyan

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Red Salute to Comrade Rangta Murmu

Comrade Rangta Murmu, a member of the [CPIML Liberation] Party's Darjeeling district committee and leader of the Kharibari block committee, breathed his last in Uttarbanga Medical College Hospital, Siliguri, on 5 January. On January 1 while returning home after leading a resistance struggle against eviction of agrarian workers at Bhatajot by the land mafia, he suddenly had a cerebral attack. After struggling with death for four long days, the people's hero departed from his comrades and the masses of Naxalbari. Survived by his life partner Comrade Bamni and two daughters and one son, he was only 48.

It was in 1975-76 i.e., during the period of Party's re-organisation, that Comrade Rangta along with others like Comrade Patal Singh joined the party as a young peasant militant. A number of women fighters also joined the movement at this time. They were all wholetime organisers of the revolutionary movement who left their homes and hearths and depended fully on the masses. That was a period of intense state repression and Comrades Rangta and Patal used to lead the night marches from one village to another. Thanks to the vanguard role played by such comrades, we were able to spread the party's work in a number of villages in Fansideoa, Naxalbari and Kharibari areas. A regeneration of the revolutionary movement was soon witnessed among Rajbanshi, Sadri, Oraon and other sections of adivasi and downtrodden masses.

Armed with the vision of seizure of state power, Comrade Rangta led the attack on the Ghoshpukur police outpost in 1978. On 2 January 1979, he along with Comrade Nimu Singh conducted a heroic night-long struggle against police encirclement in Barapathujote and risked their own lives to escort an injured, bullet-hit Comrade Vinod Mishra to safety. Comrade Amal who accompanied comrade VM died a martyr in the exchange of fire.

In later years Comrade Rangta took up open mass work and played a major role in expanding the Party among tea plantation workers in particular. He contested assembly elections twice and gradually emerged as a popular speaker as well. He never had the opportunity to receive formal education, but learned to read and write in course of Party work and while in jail. In addition to his mother tongue, he could speak Bengali, Sadri and Nepali languages fluently.

When Comrade Rangta's body was brought to the Siliguri Party office, state and district leaders including Comrade Basudev Bose, member of the Party's West Bengal state committee and veterans like Comrades Nimu paid him their last tributes. So did a large number of activists, party

sympathisers, leaders from other organisations including CPI (ML) ND, eminent citizens and members of the public.

In Comrade Rangta the Party has lost a symbolic figure of a historic period in our movement. On 18 January, a memorial meeting was held at Siliguri where State Secretary Comrade Kartick Pal and Party CC Member and Darjeeling District Secretary Abhijit Majumdar, along with his bereaved relatives, close comrades and fighting masses of Naxalbari, paid tribute to Comrade Rangta. Let us all learn from his robust class consciousness, political resoluteness and death-defying revolutionary spirit; let us take the pledge of carrying the mission he fought for to consummation!

Long Live Comrade Sufiyan's Memory!

Comrade Sufiyan, a prominent workers' leader and anti-communal activist in Ara, was killed on January 13 by a criminal gang which has received protection and encouragement from the nexus of politicians and administrative machinery. Comrade Sufiyan, who joined the party at a young age in 1983, began his political life as a leading organiser of tailoring workers, and later, as a leader of the organisation of footpath vendors, led many militant struggles. He was a member of the party's town committee. He was also a member of the district convening committee of the Inquilabi Muslim Conference. On every occasion when communal forces of the Sangh Parivar would try to fan up communal violence in Ara, Comrade Sufiyan would most energetically mobilise people for communal harmony to resist the communal forces. On 19 December 2006 he had organised a cultural programme in memory of Bhagat Singh, Ashfaqulla and Ramprasad Bismil. Comrade Sufiyan was a fearless voice against criminal gangs in the area, and played a leading role in contending with the Naushad gang in Ara; it is members of the same gang who took his life. He is survived by his wife Fehmida Khatun who is a Ward Member from Abarpul ward, as well as his three young daughters and two sons.

The heinous killing of Comrade Sufiyan is a huge blow not just to CPI(ML) but to the entire democratic movement in Ara. The whole of Ara stood by his bereaved family and the party. On January 14, in the funeral procession held for Comrade Sufiyan, around 5000 people from all sections of Ara society and nearby areas gathered to take part in his final journey. Veteran CC member and leader of the party's Bihar Legislative Group Comrade Ram Naresh Ram, Poliburo member Comrade Amar, senior State Committee members Comrade Manohar, Santosh Sahar, and Sudama Prasad, MLA Arun Singh, AIALA National President and party CCM Comrade Rameshwar Prasad paid their last tributes to Comrade Sufiyan. In spontaneous protest against his killing, Ara town observed a bandh on January 14, and the bandh called by the CPI(ML) on January 15 too was a complete success.

Red Salute to Comrade Sufiyan!

P.S.

* "Liberation" (from CPIML), February 2008.