

IN ANDHRA PRADESH, A STRING OF JOLTS FOR THE MAOISTS

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CPI (Maoist) leader Akkirajuaju Hargopal alias Ramakrishna alias RK in 2004. | Photo Credit: [The Hindu](#)

The banned [Communist Party of India \(Maoist\)](#) would probably like to forget 2021. It not only suffered setbacks in the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region in Visakhapatnam district, which the left-wing extremists consider as their strongest fortress after the Dandakaranya region, but also received strong jolts in its self-proclaimed 'red corridor' region.

The chief of the Andhra Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee, [Akkiraju Haragopal alias Ramakrishna alias R.K., died](#) after a prolonged illness in October, six top leaders were killed by the Greyhounds in June in Koyyuru mandal in the Visakhapatnam Agency, and 26 cadres including Central Committee (CC) member Milind Teltumbde were killed during a gun battle by the C-60 force of Maharashtra in Gadchiroli. Other setbacks included the arrest of Polit Buro and CC member Prashant Bose alias Kishan da and his wife Sheela Marandi, also a CC member, and the expulsion of another senior CC and Polit Buro member Kobad Ghandy, for anti-party activities.

But the major issue that came to the fore after the surrender of some key tribal leaders in the AOB region was the growing rift between the tribal leaders and non-tribal leaders and cadres within the Maoist set-up. Surrendering before the police, Sudheer, Naveen and Swarna, who had led many major operations for the Maoists in the AOB region, had said that though the tribal people form the major fighting force both in the AOB region and in Chhattisgarh, the leadership rests with the non-tribal people who are mainly from the upper castes and come from the plains of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Speaking to *The Hindu*, Sudheer had said that the tribal people are treated like "cannon fodder". Since the time the Maoists made their way into the AOB area from Telangana in the early 1980s, the leadership has stayed with the non-tribal people despite their dependence on the tribal people for all their needs, Sudheer had said. He had also mentioned being upset when non-tribal leaders gave the order for killing four tribal people last year after branding them as police informers.

At present, the movement in AOB is led by Aruna, wife of CC member Chalapathi, and Gajarla Ravi alias Uday, both of whom are non-tribal people. Despite being a woman, Aruna ill-treats women cadres, Swarna had said. Almost all the tribal leaders in the AOB region such as Kudumula Venkata Rao alias Ravi and Gemmeli Narayan Rao alias Jambri have died. Many have also surrendered.

To make matters worse, recruitment in this region has reduced and so, the Maoists are busy importing cadres from Chhattisgarh, who are mainly from the Koya tribes. This is resulting in cultural differences between the people of the region and the new recruits.

CPI (Maoist) expels politburo member Kobad Ghandy

As there are no new recruits from the region, senior leaders who are ageing are being forced to hand over the lower and mid-level leadership to the tribal people. This is resulting in cultural differences between the various levels of leadership. This was also pointed out by Kundan Pahan, a tribal leader who had surrendered in Jharkhand, and Jambri (who was killed in action

in 2017) in AOB. They had expressed displeasure at the 'high-handedness' and 'non-acceptance' of non-tribal leaders.

Though this has been refuted by the Maoists, who say differentiating people along the lines of caste, ethnicity and religion is against their ethos, a document penned by the former General Secretary of the party, Muppalla Lakshmana Rao alias Ganapathi, also mentioned this issue. He had warned that non-tribal leaders must change their approach and set things right with the tribal leaders if they want the movement to stay alive.

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There are questions that need to be raised and allegations that must be countered about the vaccine strategy

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