

Summary of comments on Marxist Literary Debates (SubhoranjanDasgupta)

The decision to keep the poet BishnuDey in focus is welcome because Dey represented a typical dilemma at the heart of progressive arts in the period (1930s-50s). He became more committedly Marxist in the late 1930s. The change of themes and tone in his third book of poetry (Purbalekha, 1941) shows that. He became more politically topical, and introduced images and references from Indian epics and mythology – a shift from the Western classical references in the first two books (1933 and 1937). He was an active organizer of the Anti- Fascist Writers and Artists Association and the Progressive Writers' Association. But this commitment soon put him in conflict with his peers in the *Parichay* group, the foremost writers of his times. By 1946, he was also being attacked by his leftwing peers, among them such stalwarts as ManikBandyopadhyay, for being too elite and removed from politics. The irony is, ManikBandyopadhyay himself suffered inwardly from a similar isolation in the 1950s. BishnuDey's decision to launch a new literary journal, *Sahityapatra*, in 1948 was a response to his 'solitude' in the currents of progressive art. One could study the elements of his poetry, which again took a seemingly esoteric turn in his sixth book of poetry *Sandwiper char*, published in 1950. A useful perspective on the question of progressive arts can be developed if one studied Dey's biography as symptomatic of the struggle of the artist to find the right mode of commitment to the political cause, and the formal and thematic evolution of his poetry in the period, which would reflect the complex relationship between artistic production and the dynamics of history.

Summary of Comments on Naxal Creativity (SubhoranjanDasgupta)

I would like to draw attention to a particular process through which the Naxalbari movement as well as other political movements of the period have left their trace in the arts. One can read novels and films in terms of their representation of Naxalbari movement or Naxalite characters. Such instances would be many; and some have been discussed in the proposal. But I was thinking of the way in which the most sensitive responses to the movement were focused on characters who are placed at a distance from the movement itself. These are characters caught up in the turmoil, but are not fully identified with it. In Satyajit Ray's *Pratidwandi* (1970), the protagonist's younger brother is the revolutionary, while he himself, through his hesitant, ambiguous position provides the point of entry into the turmoil. MrinalSen, the most political of the

filmmakers, creates a point of reflection on the revolution by putting his hero in *Padatik* (1973) in a position of inaction. He is riven with doubt about the means adopted by his organization. His younger comrade, Dhiman, is fully identified with the cause, and cannot be, therefore, a vehicle of reflection. In Ritwik Ghatak's *Jukti Takkoar Gappo* (1974), the protagonist is in sympathy with the revolutionaries, but is himself self-admittedly 'confused'. He dies in crossfire in an encounter between the rebels and the police. We see this logic of displaced, parallel reflection on the revolution developing on a different plane as the 1970s recede. Akhtarujjamli's novel *Chilekothar Sepai* (1987), and Nabarun Bhattacharya's novel *Harbart* (1992) have protagonists who are not only removed from the action, but are insane. They provide an optic on the political upheaval through a rupture of reason. Sudhir Misra's film *Hazaron Khowaishe Aisi* (2005) is focused on the Naxalbari movement. However, as we come to the end, we realize that the main character from the parallel, apolitical track of the narrative is retrospectively configured as the real protagonist. It is difficult to create valid artistic expressions through certitude. The latter emerges through a point of alignment/distance.

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