

Paper: "The Cultural-Creative Dimension of the Naxalite Movement" Subharanjan Dasgupta

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The commentator began by specifying that his comments stem in response to the abstract but could also be more generally applicable to the world of cultural production spurred by the Naxalite movement. Thus he marked out the specific impact of the Naxalite movement as being more pronouncedly cultural than political. Two prime instances of the movement's influence on the ideational/cultural world were described as the generation of a fundamental critique of the so-called Bengal Renaissance and an efflorescence of literature in response to the movement. The literary aspect was given special emphasis as being a 'bold' or even an 'audacious' attempt at creating a new language of protest, though this was something that the commentator also kept open to debate. The literary proliferation spurred by the movement was also marked by the fact that this was not only headed by direct participants/supporters of the movement like Murari Mukhopadhyay, Saroj Dutta or Raghav Bandyopadhyay, but also reproduced through the work of writers not directly part of or conforming to Naxalite ideology/politics like Mahasweta Debi, Asim Roy, Birendra Chattopadhyay, Nabarun Bhattacharya and similar other figures. The latter category of writers, as the commentator described, were often writing to protest or critique direct state oppression and often lauded the courage and sacrifice of the participating youth in the movement. Here the commentator asked us to consider how the terror of the state actually far overshadowed the 'mindless violence' of the youth to understand why it became a cause of concern for writers. One of the things apart from these themes that found place in literature borne off or born after the movement was according to the commentator, a form of social paranoia, a kind of interpersonal distrust in civil society that was generated by the general chaos of the times that produced its own forms of social angst. Apart from these themes, the commentator also raised the question of exactly how did the subjects of liberation that were the downtrodden tribals, lower classes or peasants become present in literary/cultural production. Here the commentator mentioned the works of Mahasweta Debi and a few others that attempted a representation of such downtrodden sections. However in his opinion, most of this literature 'used downtrodden people as a mouthpiece of the author' or other political lines rather than them becoming present in the concerned texts in their own right. In fact, the commentator disagreed with the abstract as far as it mentioned Mahasweta Debi as best chronicler of the Naxalite movement. The commentator presented a further critique as to how we hear almost nothing about the experiences of Naxalite youth in the countryside in most of the literature, of how they interacted or socialised with the downtrodden they were concerned with liberating; similarly, little is written about how the downtrodden reacted to the presence and activities of the Naxalite youth in the countryside. A last point that the commentator highlighted was that amongst all the glorification of the movement, the literature that it spawned, has remained shy of reflecting upon the violence that the movement created – thus the uncomfortable question as to whether Naxalite politics was all about annihilation, has not come through in the literary production of those times or even the contemporary which according to the commentator has actually seen a series of extremely 'shallow' representations of the Naxalite movement.