

Report of First Consultative Meeting  
***Popular Movements in Bihar and Bengal***

March 6, 2017

**Paper: Popular Politics, Upsurge and the Revolt in the Sixties and Seventies of the Last Century**

**Ranabir Samaddar and Sucharita Sengupta**

**Discussant: Mallarika Sinha Roy (Assistant Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University)**

The consultative meet on popular movements coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Naxalbari movement. The segment on the Naxalbari movement highlighted the popular protests and popular politics of the sixties and seventies of the last century, which became unique as a popular revolt and shaped the politics of West Bengal. Since 1967, peasants' struggles in Naxalbari, Debra, Gopiballabhpur and other areas in West Bengal started to take shape inspired by the ideal of the peasant revolution in China. It also included the wave of students' movement which, inspired by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) of China, launched a movement against the (prevailing) education system and the icons of the established culture. A section of these students also went to villages to organise/strengthen peasants' struggle in different pockets of the state. These mobilizations were countered by the state machinery. The remarkable feature of these mobilizations was the overwhelming response from people of different social, political and cultural backgrounds ranging from silent support and sympathy to active participation in militant struggle. Undoubtedly, through these movements a notion of people came into being. And hence, the question that was asked was: What constitutes the *people* in popular movements. This question was the focus of the discussions.

**Paper: The Cultural-Creative Dimension of the Naxalite Movement**

**Subharanjan Dasgupta**

**Discussant: Sandip Bandhyopadhyay (Activist and Researcher)**

The Naxalbari Movement inspired multifaceted creativity; from propagandist poetry to reflective verse; from novels or prose narratives hailing the movement to stories and novels severely criticizing the theoretical ballast and its related activism; from revelatory plays transcreating the most decisive moments of the movement on the stage to cut and dried one act plays serving as slices of the experiential truth; from gripping films like *Hajar Churasir Ma* and *Herbert* to full-throated songs which exhilarated hundreds. The discussions gave special

emphasis to the world of literature, films and art that were inspired or were produced as a critique of the Naxalite Movement. The works of poets such as Dhurjyoti Chattopadhyay, Dronacharya Ghosh, Srijan Sen, Monoranjan Biswas and Murari Mukhopadhyay were the focus of the discussions. Of particular significance were theatre activities of the time as this was one site where Naxalbari emerged as a major theme. Utpal Dutta's *Teer*, Anal Gupta's *Rakter Rang* or Amal Roy's *Aat Jora Khola Chokh* are examples of the theatres of the time that found reference in the presentations. Mahasweta Devi's novels such as *Basai Tudu* and *Hazaar Churasir Ma* were also the subject of discussions at the meet. Raghab Bandyopadhyay's novel *Communis* and his autobiography found special mention in the discussions.

**Paper: Left Mobilisation in Three Districts of West Bengal, 1947-1977**

**Nadia, Midnapore, Birbhum**

**Anwasha Sengupta & Atig Ghosh**

**Discussant: Kumar Rana (Commentator and Associated with Pratichi)**

Calcutta was the major site of the refugee movement or tram and teachers' movement in the fifties, sixties and seventies. However with the food movement and the Naxalite movement, the suburbs and districts of West Bengal became major epicentres of protest. There were other intense and popular mass movements outside Calcutta during this period. The nature and trajectory of the left movements in the three post-independence/partition districts of Nadia, Midnapore and Birbhum were discussed at the consultative meet to understand the nature and extent of popular politics beyond the metropolis and to bring forth the rich dimensions and varied mobilities of left-mobilisation in post-1947 West Bengal. The discussions aimed at comprehending the chequered career of left activism, both parliamentary and non-parliamentary and their wide ranging political geographies. What constituted 'people' in these protests, did it go beyond the groups of labourers/ peasants/refugees to draw a wider section of the society, which movement drew attention of the city elite and what remained invisible to them, were the student groups, left sympathizers and city intellectuals equally quick in responding to these movements?, are some of questions that were debated in the meet.

**Paper: Long March or Garden Path?**

**The Left Front's First Term in West Bengal (1971-1982)**

**Atig Ghosh**

**Discussant: Dwaipayan Bhattacharya (Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University)**

Finally, Left Front's coming to power in West Bengal (1977) was the subject of discussion as the possible moment of culmination of the decades of popular movements in this province. How did the new government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu address the demands that had been raised through such movements, how did it cater to the needs and expectations of the "peoples" that were created in the course of such movements and what spaces for new protest movements were created were some of the questions which were explored in the discussions.

While the new government implemented radical land reforms and freed the political prisoners immediately after coming to the power, there were elements of state oppression as well. Examining the early years of Left Front government - popular measures that they took as well as state oppression that they unleashed - is important in order to understand the history of the popular politics in West Bengal in the decades after independence and this formed the basis of the discussions at the consultative meet. Land reform, local self-government, the attempts to cope with the refugee situation created by the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 and the severe floods during that period were some of the the key issues that were discussed and deliberated upon at the meet.

**Paper: Contentious Politics and Popular Movement: Enigma of Karpoori Thakur**

**Manish K Jha**

**Discussant: Puspendra Kumar Singh**(Professor and In-Charge, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Patna)

**Paper: Making of a populist government: A study of Karpoori Thakur's regime**

**Mithilesh Kumar**

**Discussant: Amit Prakash**(Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Coming to Bihar, the discussions centred around the backward classes movement led by Karpoori Thakur, a close aide of Jayprakash Narayan. Popularly known as 'jana-nayak' (peoples' leader), Thakur had been chief minister of Bihar twice (between 1970-1971 and 1977-1979). The Karpoori Thakur government introduced reservation in government jobs for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in 1978. A year later, B P Mandal submitted his recommendations on OBCs and affirmative action to the central government under Morarji Desai. This twin move brought in its wake seismic changes in the politics of Bihar as well as India. One of the objectives of this research project is to study the implications of these moves on the popular politics and mass movement of Bihar. The project also seeks to investigate the entire process of defining caste, the debates around the parameters and political maneuver of inclusion and exclusion. The question of social justice also emerged in the background of the contingent defeat of the Left movement in general and the Naxalite Movement in particular. This meant that the issue of *izzat* (dignity) and land for the Dalits were also relegated into the background. The research project attempts to investigate if the rise of politics of social justice in Bihar meant a suppression of radical and revolutionary politics and a premature end to Dalit politics as well as how the government played a decisive role in the suppression of these alternative politics and the debates in the consultative meet centred around these core issues.

**Roundtable discussion**

The discussion was chaired by Prof Puspendra Kumar Singh, faculty at the *Centre for Community Organization and Development Practice, School of Social Work* at TISS Patna. All the three discussants were faculty members from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Prof Amit Prakash is a faculty at the *Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, JNU*; Prof. Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya is a faculty at the *Centre for Political Studies* and Dr. Mallarika Sinha

Roy teaches as an Assistant Professor at the *School of Women's' Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU*. The following are brief reports of their arguments, views and suggestions.

### **Amit Prakash**

Professor Prakash began his discussion musing about why social or popular movements occur at all in a nation/state. This led him to mention, albeit fleetingly, certain parameters of social movements. He argued that these arise because established processes of government are unable to address the political demand of certain sections of the population. He urged that social movements are often thought of in such terms where there are a number of demands arising from the grassroots which do not find reflection in the political system, which are to be catered to or preserved. He discussed that in the whole country there might be a few dozen of such movements and he wondered in what other ways one can characterize the movement that is occurring in Manipur against taxation if not as a social movement or for instance a movement which breaks out not over some critical political issue, say in the Coorg region. Prof Prakash noted that if we try to conceptualize social movement in such terms, certain paradoxes arise. In the course of his talk, he elaborated on three paradoxes.

1) The first paradox that he talked about is all states, i.e. provinces are conscious of the notion of federalism which is basically how to share power with the centre. The common perception is that the federalistic design concern itself with questions like how to share power, where to stop from paying homage to the authority etc i.e the question was whether federalism takes care of the questions of politics. Prakash held that it actually doesn't. He noted that the issue of politics is about autonomy, how autonomy is to be characterized, how it is to be practiced and how it is to be concentrated. He stressed that in this whole idea of autonomy, the situation is where a host of social movements demand autonomy and in the course of this discussion, he formulated such autonomy thematically in two ways. One was design-oriented autonomy that federalism offers through the government and the other was political processes reflected through the social movements that made a demand for autonomy. The latter mainly embraced the autonomy of social/tribal/local political groups. Couched within a binary of legitimate-illegitimate, the former, according to Prof. Prakash was seen as legitimate and the other illegitimate. Prof Prakash emphatically said in the course of the discussion that he feels that there is no way one could reconcile the two demands—the demand for autonomy as expressed in federalism and that raised by local/tribal socio-political groups and he reflected on how to embrace this paradox and to address this.

2) The second paradox he drew attention to was that of social justice. In social sciences it is thought of as an issue of somehow finding the mechanism for distributing or re-distributing resources and the politics being changed in terms of people's initiative and access to these, which as he argued could be economic, political, social or cultural resources. Prof. Prakash pointed out that the problem is that reduced demands for social justice mean the inability of the government to handle the variety of demands that come up which are loosely about identity; how to reconcile demands for identity etc. For eg when a caste group in Bihar demands a share in the exercise of sovereign power of the country invested in the autonomous state of Bihar. Prof Prakash states that what is done is, to often split such demands into more

valid, legitimate demands. The principal concern was how to reconcile with these, the demands of inclusion/identity/recognition. Prof. Prakash argued that this can be interpreted through other forms of social justice that were also at play like multiculturalism and in this connection he talked of processes by which minorities of all kinds should be integrated with the mainstream, whatever mainstream was there, at terms which do not disadvantage those groups. He emphatically stressed that behind everything, the goal remained 'integration'. Here Amit Prakash raised a very significant question as to whether integration solves the paradox that he had talked about and tried to draw our attention to his argument that in choosing 'integration' as the goal, there always exists a tension, which, he stated, was perhaps one of the root problems behind the state's inability to resolve the tension between the two kinds of autonomy.

He also outlined the politics around identity stating that sections of people state that they are poor and different. So they cannot only be listed as the 'poor' section of the society, but their 'difference' also needs to be taken account of and more importantly, he noted that those who are poor now, in the next thirty-forty years might be well-off. So their demands cannot be brushed aside. Then he talked of the third paradox.

3) The paradox of legitimacy-democracy and governance was the third paradox which Prof Prakash highlighted in the course of the discussion. In this context he raised certain pertinent questions--What does legitimacy mean for the government and all the states that come to power-- do they form legitimate government or do they derive their power legitimately from popular mandate as a theory. Here he pointed out that the smaller the state, the stronger the state is and more sovereign too.

Given the first two paradoxes, Prakash noted that the states have been increasingly marginalized by the needs of the society. And he urged the audience and the scholars assembled to find a means to solve the paradoxes.

### **Dwaipayana Bhattacharyya**

He began by admitting that he was not aware of the roundtable and would therefore invite all present to just throw issues and seek their own questions as that would help him discuss. Assuming that everyone present at the venue was interested in the idea of popular protest and movement in general and about movement in different formats, he felt that there was need to interrogate the term 'popular'. While thinking about the term 'popular', Bhattacharyya pointed out that Lenin himself was skeptical about the term 'popular'. He notes how we hardly think of class or how does class movement change into a popular movement and it would thereby be interesting to note the tension between 'class' and the 'popular'.

As his second argument, he tried to explore the connections between popular movements and democracy. The second caveat that Prof. Bhattacharyya introduced in the discussion was his contention that all forms of popular movements cannot lead to democracy. To explicate, he cited the example of the Babari Masjid demonstration or for that matter the movement for Muslim brotherhood and raised a very pertinent question that if and to what extent did the movements that took shape around those issues, contribute to an understanding of democracy. His question laid bare the correlation between liberalism and democracy as he quite rightly pointed out that most of our understanding of democracy was couched in the liberal ideas of democracy. Citing the Babri Masjid incident or the movement for Muslim Brotherhood, Bhattacharyya actually made the audience contemplate whether it was at all possible to conceive democracy without the trappings of liberalism. These were areas, which he admitted were extremely challenging for undertaking any kind of research. Incidentally, he discussed the specific case of India where he felt the state existed before democracy could take over. From colonial times actually, the state was much structured right from the colonial times in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and democracy was something that we kept to ourselves. Then there was another problem when we had democracy much before India had formally achieved democracy and there was quite a disjuncture from the classical model of development where democracy was reserved only for a very narrow range of classes. That is why, Prof Bhattacharyya argued, Marx somewhere in the 1880s pointed out that perhaps universal suffrage would not be possible for the working classes or for a socialist economy to get established. That dream of a socialist state did not materialize but as Prof Bhattacharya, argued, they atleast had the optimism to think of expansion of the government as part of the popular initiative in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain which had inherited a so-called liberal-casted democracy.

Bhattacharyya also raised a very interesting question that whether all popular movements were social or not. At this juncture he stressed the urgency to view the gender dimension in every popular movement. Thus Prof Bhattacharyya posited how we lose out if we fail to use the gender perspective in the Naxalbari Movement. That is why, he posited, how important it was to read and re-read the cultural literature of the movement as the prevalent social science academic journals fail to arm us with a comprehensive understanding of the role of women in the Naxalbari Movement. Dabbling with the terms 'social' and 'popular', he observed that it was possible for a popular movement to have social deficiencies.

3) He expressed how he was intrigued by the question of governmental responsibility; possibly more so, because he had researched on the Left and he pointed out that Left had to pay a huge price for that though initially it was not that evident in the Left rhetoric. From the Bihar panel, he mentioned, had come a comment that the anti-emergency had triggered the popular movements when the formation of the government was in question. In West Bengal, he said, throughout the 1960s and even before that, "Land to the tiller" was one such important slogan for the movement. In fact, he argued that Operation *Barga* itself was a testimony to the fact that private property was created or the government was heading towards that direction.

4) A fourth and final point that Bhattacharyya made in course of the discussion revolved round the very idea of movement and mobilization. The general perception, he noted, was to refer to both as dynamic processes that required churning of ideas, involvement of the population, the

people, demands, slogans, ideologies, instabilities, uncertainties, flexibilities and so. These also certainly require some degree of organization which had to be included in the autonomy part of the movement that had already been discussed. Thinking of alternate forms of mobilization, Prof Bhattacharyya noted that mobilization and here among many other things, he talked of silent protests that go on in all forms of subversion. On this, Bhattacharyya's question was whether there was a tension between the quotidian, the everyday and the episodic and the visible.

These were the four major issues or paradoxes Prof. Bhattacharyya outlined and addressed in the Roundtable.

### **Mallarika Sinha Roy**

She began her intervention in the Roundtable with a holistic observation. Sinha Roy observed that in some ways the structure of the project titled *Popular Movements in Bihar and Bengal* as she could make sense of by listening to the various abstracts and comments, provided a classic opportunity to bring in various kinds of disciplines by breaking their boundaries and create a new way of doing social movement research. Dr. Sinha Roy chose 3 specific themes to emphasize on and to offer her critical suggestions.

The first concerned itself with how to do such research. Research Techniques or methodology would be decided on the basis of the kinds of the project which again would be determined by the thematic questions that were raised. Thus for example if it was a documentation, she argued that there was need to think what kinds of documents one was going to look at. To elucidate, she made specific mention of Subhoranjan Dasgupta's paper and in this context argued how should one look at cultural and historical documents, which were both documents but very different in essence. The point to see was, she pointed out, was how to bring them together in conversation with each other. Dr Sinha Roy noted how there were suggestions of doing oral history and ethnography and was sure that researchers were going to look at police records, films etc and on the basis of these wondered how would all these different kinds of documents, were coming into a dialogue with each other if the way this project shapes up in way of opening out into 'silenced areas'. She pointed out that it was probably better to be aware that giving voice was something that had attracted a lot of critical attention in the past thirty years.

In the same manner, giving voice to the popular was a problem as, if the idea of the popular, she argued, referred to visibilizing those areas which hitherto had already existed but people did not look at them, the way one was going to shape the ways of seeing was something that needed exploration. To explain, she shared with the audience how 'I' and 'Eye' often get confused as the stories of ethnographic writings have unfolded.

According to Dr. Sinha Roy, what is also quite often absent, in the way projects have come together is the ethicality of the research project. There is no problem with the way of giving voice to the popular but inconsistencies arise as somewhere ethnographic writings assume a

difference between a researcher and the people, as if it is the job of the researcher to make the people visible and make the people voice a thought that as if a researcher is not part of the people. Mallarika Sinha Roy very emphatically stressed on the need to rethink this theoretical positioning. Here she pointed out that when we are thinking of the people and the popular, it is very necessary to think how the researcher is positioning himself/herself in relation to that.

In this context, Sinha Roy explicated the third theme in her discussion as she aired her belief that the other part of doing such a research project was to see how space and time interacted with each other because periodization, she argued, was a very tricky aspect of deciding on the ways in which a research question gets expanded over. Spatial categories of enquiry refer to more of given boundaries and given units of studies and try to find structural relations or homologies as if balancing right or left. So, she pointed out, that is how a researcher decides what comes under Medinipore or what would fall under Nadia etc; or what happened in Nadia but not in Midnapore or Birbhum etc. With regard to this, she wondered how one actually brings a comparative framework into play in the idea of spatializing such a research area. Referring to the research project, Dr Sinha Roy noted that since it was Bengal and Bihar together and since it meant going back to the 1940s, it was perhaps pertinent to look at how different kinds of boundaries are drawn, redrawn, crosses over, transgressed. She suggested that it was probably a good idea to go back and think that how space is intersected by the popular idea of time because, she argued, the way 1960s and 70s have emerged as the important decades for studying social movements,(and there is no dearth of study for that) what remains absent is the way they are selected. To elucidate, she states that in terms of Naxalbari, Birbhum remains one of the tricky spaces to study as there were districts which remained outside the Naxalite fold. Important thing in such research is to see how such district histories were different from that of districts which had joined the Naxalbari movement.

She strongly argued that such a project as the one under discussion, requires clarification of the terms used like social movement, legitimacy, crisis of legitimacy, governmentality, governance, mobilization, movement and such clarification would probably also require, she stated, an effort to critically consider the way feminists have thought of the idea of the 'political'. In this context, Dr Sinha Roy mentions that there interesting studies that talk of politics of the present and ideas of giving voice, making people visible, putting silence into speech or making speech silent etc. Therefore, she points out that it would be of a good idea to look at those intellectual ideas and debates that have dealt with the idea of the people from a very long time.

Dr Mallarika Sinha Roy concluded her caveats in the Roundtable by commenting on Atig Ghosh and Anwasha Sengupta's paper on Birbhum, Nadia and Midnapore. With reference to Atig's comment in his paper that when going for investigation in the villages, the common themes of enquiry were share cropping status of the people and not about caste and gender; Dr Sinha Roy found this to be natural and understandable. She wondered aloud whether the academia was interpolating its contemporary concepts into that time when it was insisting that while investigating if researchers were *not* asking certain questions that meant that they were not actually doing its politics. To conclude, she pointed out that *time* as a category needs to be thought of as what is present and what is contemporary.

### **Questions & Answers at the Roundtable**



1. One comment was what is popular is subjective. Popular has a dual meaning. It might refer to an ideology of the majority or that offered by the grassroots population.

2. Max Weber was discussed as lot of the presentations focused on caste—she pointed out that there is a huge dichotomy of what is caste –whether caste is *jati* or *varna*—so plea was to unproblematize caste in the context of this discussion and identify the core concept of caste as operationalized in India.

3. Two observations of Iman Mitra-a) tension between continuity and break with and from the earlier events/forms of mobilization and the recent ones in respect of social movement and in this respect referred to Ranabir Samaddar’s constant reference to the ‘other’.

b) He questioned the nature of popular movement itself as some movements are random, sporadic, some organized—how to characterize those and bring them under the common thematic umbrella of popular movement or whether there is any need to bring them under a common framework. He also raised the question as to how to reconceptualize this multiplicity of frameworks.

c) He also asked that whether it is possible to do a longitudinal history of popular movement based on a singular framework that would negotiate the tension between the continuity and break.

4) How we are dealing with historical sources in looking at popular movement? What are the variations in dealing with different regional and sub-regional histories?

5) Mithilesh Kumar asked what is the time of the popular movement? What is it in the mechanism of a government that allows or doesn’t allow to operate on the demand of a popular movement like say “land to the tiller”?

6) Another question was how to decide on the methodology of doing social research before going to the field.

## Answers

Amit Prakash answered the caste question explaining that the meaning and import of caste differs from context to context. Prof Bhattacharyya tried to problematize caste and he explained how social scientists also speak of caste as a governmental category among many other things. He also problematized popular movement by trying to establish its relation with democracy. Popular movement necessarily does not have to be democratic and there are no standard norms for deciding the difference. He referred to how he believed that the idea of democracy is symbolic. In answering the questions on nature of popular movement, Prof Bhattacharyya pointed out how the question contained bipolar categories like spontaneous-organized etc. In answering the questions of doing *longue duree* research on popular

movement, he explained that all social scientists are wary of doing such *longue duree* research. Academicians, as he argued, are more interested in the study of the present through a selection of the past, rather than studying the past for past's sake. He also pointed that in asking such questions, one needs to properly define *longue duree*. Sinha Roy answered Iman Mitra's question on continuity and break suggesting that we might look at those in a different way. Instead of searching for continuity or break, she argued, we might perhaps try to see whether certain features recur or stop recurring in time; what are the causes that accompany the recurrence or non-recurrence of such features etc. While answering the question on caste, Dr. Sinha Roy acknowledged that caste is a very important component in studying diversity but pointed out that more importantly one needs to decide how to study diversity. Homogenization is a process by which diversity is studied—she argued whether that process should be accepted unilaterally. Bhattacharyya agreed with Mithilesh Kumar's point that whenever a government assumes power, it cannot act like when it was in opposition and there is therefore always a gap between what was promised and is delivered. Dr. Sinha Roy said that there are many books which tell us how to do social research but maintained that personally she always let the field decide her research framework and not the other way round.

## **General Questions and Answers at the Consultative Meeting**

### **Session I**

**Q: Moumita Bhattacharjee** – Could you shed some light on the role of women in the revolts of the 1960s-1970s, their involvement in the popular upsurge? In line with this, do you think it is significant to highlight the extent to which the history of popular upsurge was embedded in the feminine realm, to better comprehend modern history?

**Q. Arup Sen** – You mentioned the participation of the lower class in your presentation. Do you not think that the time has come to revisit the Communist party structure which is based on the Leninist concept, and instead, adopt a Gramscian approach?

**Q. Nirmallyo Banerjee** – You spoke about the influence of the Naxalbari movement on students and universities. How far was this influence a reaction to the fervor of the Naxalbari movement?

### **Answers:**

**Ranabir Samaddar** – The Naxalbari movement was a historical movement which started in 3 villages, spread over 3 police stations. What attracted the students to this movement? How did it spread to match the interests of the other people? Interests of people are not (pre)configured but formed.

Referring to two documents of Sanyal, one in 1969 and the other in 1973, which mention that the Naxalbari popular movement did not emerge suddenly. It also agrees that by 1969, the Naxalbari movement had exhausted itself. Multi-temporality deals with several concentrated movements; popular roots of the movement, what is its scientific nature, etc.

About students, I really have nothing to add. However, I can speak from memory, which maybe contrary to many assumptions of popular movements. On a visit to Poland, I found that the

Americans had packed up the pieces of the “ghetto wall” for American museums. Germany did the same for museums in Berlin. But the Russians cleaned up the place and built workers’ quarters there. Thus, the nature of power decides the nature of memorial exercise.

**Mallarika Sinha Roy** – Gender is intertwined in the popular movements, also in the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. One way to grasp that could be to read the creative literature of that time. Academics must mention people but more often than not they are male. If you are keen, it is a good idea to interrogate the implicit masculinity that makes history “his’-tory.”

### **General Discussion**

Q: **Dolna Ray** – My question is to Dwaipayana sir. You made two points that what exactly is defined as a popular movement, that popular movement will not necessarily lead to democracy and in the Marxist discourse there have been several people who have expressed skepticism regarding its popularity. So, based on the argument put forward by you, this is the conclusion that I have drawn: the definition of what is popular is subjective, and ‘popular’ can have dual meanings. It can refer to an ideology, or a movement, of the majority or one which is followed by the grass-root population. Can you comment on this?

Q: **Moumita Bhattacharjee** – I don’t really have a question but would like to put forward an urge from the academic side. Clarification of terms was talked about and on that light I would like to specify certain things. A lot of discussion here reminded me of Max Weber as caste was mentioned several times. There are a lot of dichotomies regarding ‘caste’, what do we understand by ‘caste’. Is it M.N. Srinivas’ “jati”, or are we confusing it with the “varna” or four-fold occupational system, or are we satisfying ourselves with the occidental perceptions of caste in India? When it comes to an academic or research oriented discussion like the one we had today, speaking from the perspective of a scholar I think it becomes extremely important to operationalize core concepts of ‘caste’. The core image of India is not “embedded or circumscribed in caste alone”. Caste as a concept has evolved differently in different regions of India. But if we are picking up certain sectors of any geographical or cultural area, it becomes very important to define what we fundamentally understand by ‘caste’.

Q: **Iman Mitra** – I have a few observations, on which I would like to ask the opinion of not only the members of the panel but also of the house. Firstly, I sensed a tension between continuity and break in the presentations of this morning. Continuity and break with and from earlier forms of mobilizations and I was thinking whether and how this tension could be used productively. I remember Ranabir da’s constant reference to the earlier peasant rebellions, and how there was, and at the same time there was not a shift but a continuity with the previous movements. The second point that I’d like to raise is about the form and nature of popular movements itself. While going through some of the abstracts I was encountering words like “spontaneous”, “impulsive”, “random”, “plural”, “multiple” – such categories in my opinion forecloses to some extent analysis of a concept like hybridity of let’s say, in postcolonial studies. So, how do we deal with such categories, bring them together under one single framework or do we need one single framework while dealing with them? If we don’t, how do we

conceptualize this multiplicity of frameworks? The third point is that I get a sense that the only way to study popular movements are to historicize them. Going back to this nature of eventual movements, can we do a longitudinal mode of popular history then? Based on a sort of a single framework which will encounter and negotiate with the tension between the continuity and the break?

Q: **Anup Shekhar Chakravarty** – My question is regarding how we are dealing – because it is actually a historical process in a way. We are trying to look at an event within a timeframe and trying to grasp what are those connecting points and trying to make sense of them after so many years, that we may be leaking from that timeframe altogether. I am interested to know that whether we can look at those districts which are picked and chosen, whether those districts were homogenous? What were the variations? Were there any sub-districts? If you could bring forth those issues, I think the work would look much better.

### **Answers**

**Amit Prakash** – Regarding defining social categories. If you would look at the head-notes of the census, they try to classify Indian population into castes. But the point is while doing social analysis, we need to have socially relevant categories. One has to decide what are the socially relevant categories. We don't necessarily need scientific categories.

**On history to Iman Mitra** – where do you find the source material to write those kinds of histories? There are handicaps in even social movements, because of the materiality of the region where they function. There's no way of going back in history and trying to capture what happened in those movements. This is really a part of the nature of the discipline.

**Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya** – on the caste question. For social science research it is often profitable not to go into the etymology of a category. When we talk of 'caste', we talk of the governmentalization of caste, how for instance 'caste' is a governmental category as emerged in the discourse. We keep our focus narrow without making ethnographic or historical distinctions with which the 'caste' is adorned.

Popular movement does have majoritarian tendencies. Popular movement doesn't have to be democratic. One has to make a distinction between what is popular and what is not. Now, there is no standard set of answers, no standard set of accepted norms, by which this distinction can be made. Democracy as an ideology evolves with time, for instance what we understood as democracy in the 1970s in this country is not what we understand now. It is a slippery domain, and one has to be agile to really reflect on what we are talking about. That is why this distinction is very important.

To **Iman Mitra** – this use of bipolar categories that you pointed out, what is spontaneous/organized or what is random/logical, you put forth that this in some way undermines the possibility of hybridity. Yes it does, no doubt about that. But at the same time, not defending any writing proposal, you need to use certain finite categories in order to mark out the distinction. Without that, being scared of binaries, we might end up not making any

distinction at all. That is another possibility, although I am not discouraging your acknowledgement of hybridities. Secondly, we are all skeptical with the longitudinal kind of analysis, as we have seen that Marxism was one such analysis and it ran into all kinds of trouble. Maybe because we are more interested to get a sense of the present from the study of the past and making a kind of selection of the past as it suits our analysis of the present. Rather than studying the past for the past's sake. This is sort of a political intervention which I observe which is why politics of the present has become so important.

**Mallarika Sinha Roy** – answering Moumita's question. Can't we think the other way round? Why do we need to operationalize the concept condition? Can we pre-decide what the concept is going to be like? This maybe one way of thinking.

To **Iman Mitra** – using the tension between continuity and break productively is very interesting. It depends on how an event is marked, and it would imply that an event starts somewhere and ends somewhere and then again continues in some form or the other. Probably to think about that can be the idea of recursivity? How certain features of an event finds recurrence in following sets of events or certain things do not? If we are trying to look at it comparatively at certain sets of events, perhaps this tension can be used productively to see which are the features which recur and which do not, and which form they recur or remain absent.

On diversity of spaces – if we are making the units of our study smaller, do we study homogenized spaces or first study how is diversity conceptualized? That can be one way of looking at it. Does diversity suffer due to a homogenization process? That will help you to think how the boundaries are drawn and redrawn.

### **Questions:**

Q: **Suhit Sen** – response to Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya. In the Indian case, there is an affliction which is original. We did not give ourselves democracy, the Constituent Assembly gave us democracy. Sometimes I find it bizarre that we should be surprised that “the people” who constitute the polity should not fit into the straightjackets of the Constitution. I don't know why that expectation is considered logical.

Q: **Dolna Ray to Mallarika Sinha Roy** – Ma'am you have made this point that how social movement research needs to be exposed to much more inter-disciplinary elements to make it much more flexible and inclusive. Though modern South Asian history has attempted to uncover many types of popular movements, there has been a tendency to focus on the perspectives and the ideologies of the leaders, those who had been at the forefront of the revolution. So most of the popular movements have been a leadership rhetoric. In order to make the social movement research much more inclusive and “democratic”, here if we include multiple disciplines then can we also include the perspectives and experiences of the cadres?

Q. **Mithilesh Kumar to Dwaipayan Bhattacharya**– It was very interesting what you said about the time of popular movements. A popular movement starts, gets representation in the government – what then happens to the demand which gets inside the governance? What is it in fact, the mechanism of the government, which allows or does not allow to operate that

demand on the ground? What is it in the mechanism of the government that the demand which the popular movement poses can only be partially fulfilled or if not fulfilled has a sign of the government, and then it informs other set of popular movements to come.

**Q. Nayanne Bam** – why aren't we talking of routinization of charisma as most of the questions asked are centering around routinization of spontaneous, charismatic action which turns into something very different. Why are avoiding it if we are avoiding it at all?

### Answers

**Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya** – when I was referring to democracy I was making a distinction between struggles of democracy and the democracy which is given to us by the Constitution. Sociologically speaking I present the “we.”

To **Mithilesh Kumar** – I had asked Benoy Chowdhury once that why did he not give land to the *Bargadars*. He said that if he would have, it would have passed on to the nearest landowner. The tenant wouldn't have retained that land. When you are in the government your calculus is different to that of when you are in the opposition. The government is in charge of implementing policies, the opposition is not. And government itself does a balancing act, in contrast to a movement.

**Mallarika Sinha Roy**– I don't know whether there are any available prescriptions of how to do it. Regarding the leadership rhetoric, is the motivation to replace one set of leaders with another set of leaders? Doing social movement research, it is important to look at the everyday-ness and the extraordinariness of a movement. A movement has its everyday realities. To look beyond the spectacular leadership-centric approach, one way could be to look at the quotidian nature of a movement.

### Other Sessions

**Ranabir Samaddar to Subharanjan Dasgupta** – Your abstract doesn't mention anything about the entire debate about enlightenment, defeating of statues, etc. The question which I want to put forward is that do you think that, one, the cultural problem that the Naxalite movement raised had anything to do with the impact it has on cultural movement? It could be that both are separate – the Naxalites wanted to articulate a sense of culture which had no influence on the way in which the cultural space of Bengal received it. The second question, which is related to the first is (which was published in a journal called *Chorcha*), do you think keeping in mind all that you mentioned this could be called a second Bengal Renaissance?

**Subharanjan Dasgupta** – To answer to the first part of your question, I didn't get time to read out the cultural part as I was concentrating on the creative part of my essay. But I would certainly include it. Coming to the second part of your question, what really happened as the

aftereffect of the Naxalbari movement is the creative efflorescence. It is also a cultural efflorescence. No other socio-political movement after 1947 has caused an effect so broad, so wide and so deep. But at the same time, I wouldn't call it a Renaissance, I would limit myself to the word efflorescence. Renaissance has two aspects: first is the novelty, second is the impact. I don't disagree on the novelty of the Naxalite culture, there was something very novel in it. I wouldn't call this movement a Renaissance as a Renaissance has a greater impact on the people as such, and it continues and circulates. Whereas, in the case of Naxalite creativity, it somehow didn't reach the masses. Naxalite novels were popular in those times and yet they remained at the margins of literature, in spite of its efflorescence. But I would like to delve into its literature and hope to capture this cultural efflorescence in my book.

**Q. Ranabir Samaddar** – One may ask, who in those days read *Akhay Tatra*, apart from a few people in Calcutta or a few educated Hindus and Brahmins? If you look at impact on language, particularly journals and essay writing, or group theatre (later term), if you scientifically analyze its impact – it was short-lived. But think of the journals that came out in the smaller towns or the Mofusil areas, think of the new ways in which things were being discussed – some of the new issues, whether of gender or caste – of what happened in provinces, the question of land that came up in discussion. So, the point I'm trying to make here is that apart from describing or cataloguing how the literati of Bengal received the movement, whether the movement had in some way restructured the Bengal literacy. It is in that sense that I am asking that, do you think that this whole mode of Naxalism – in one sense which is very anti-enlightenment and anti-literacy – but this whole mode of looking at literature, do you not think that its impact was very deep?

**Ans. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – The influence and impact of the movement and its culture on the general literati did not begin with Naxalism, it began in the late 1940s with the grand debate on Marxism. But quite a few of the poets were moved by the Naxalbari movement. Compared to the impact left by the footprints of the Bengal Renaissance, the Naxalbari movement – in spite of its efflorescence – did not have that much of an influence. But it did have an influence, no doubt about that.

**Q. Shyamalendu Majumder** – Somehow I think the Naxal movement and the associated cultural movement couldn't create a real local language. The language of theatre became so stereotyped that ultimately the pseudo-left have virtually appropriated that. Ultimately it got reduced to some kind of rhetoric. Virtually it created the much cherished Leftist tradition. It was the particular weakness of the radical wing who could not communicate with the people the value of the Leftist radical movement. It remained some sort of an elitist configuration.

**Ans. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – The language of Naxalbari literature can be broadly divided into two sections, evident in the writings of novels and in the writings of dramas. For example a novel, or a play, would have two sets of languages. One is the language of the zamindars, the jyotdars, the exploiters, the policemen. On the other hand, is the language of the rural peasantry, the exploited. Often it led to some difficulty in understanding because the urban reader could not go into the depth of the rural language although it is perfectly understandable.

I read around 20 novels during the last five days and what struck me was the communion of two styles of conversation, merging together at several intense points in the drama. So I would say that the people or the readers could respond to this double-edged use of language. But my question is: why is it so that Utpal Dutta, as a theatre personality, would go about his plays with that language and cast an influence for a longer time when there were some very powerful plays but still it could not have a similar influence and impact. One reason could be that the movement itself created a flash – like a lightening it went up and came down like a falling meteor.

**Q. Sandip Bandopadhyay** – I simply don't understand what Ranabir da means by student revolt. What appears to me is that what passed as student revolt during the days of the Naxalite movement often ended up in sheer vandalism. This is my experience. And the critique of the Bengal Renaissance, or the celebrated personalities like Vidyasagar or Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray or Ashutosh Mukherjee – this critique was not at all based on serious rethinking. They do not actually constitute a serious critique of the Bengal Renaissance. I agree with Subharanjan Dasgupta that compared to the debate raised in the 1940s, the Naxalite movement couldn't attain its height. Look at the body of literature on cultural issues, contrary to the 1940s, they pale into insignificance.

**Q. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – What paled into insignificance, the 1940s debate or the 1960s debate?

**Ans. Sandip Bandopadhyay** – The 1960s and 1970s debate. There was a sincere attempt to question the existing notions of art and literature in the 1940s. This was almost absent in the 1960s or 1970s.

**Subharanjan Dasgupta** – I agree with you completely. During the 1940s there was a sharp dichotomy of views, people were aware of what they were saying, there was a vast terrain of debate and dispute which was not exactly the case in the 1960s-1970s.

**Ans. Ranabir Samaddar** – Take Andhra Pradesh or Bihar for example. I genuinely feel we are unnecessarily (exalting) the 1940s. All the limitations that you cite of the cultural self of the 1960s, all those limitations can be mentioned when you consider 1940s. But on the other hand, all those that you mention of the 1940s you can always say the positive things happened in the 1960s. So I don't think comparison wise, it will be a good way to judge. Take Binay Ghosh' re-evaluation of Vidyasagar, take some of the cultural debates that happened between the Andhra Pradesh intellectuals, take some of the writings that took place in Bihar. I think, in all these cases, one has to admit that what Sandip is saying as vandalism has less to do with the impact that it had on culture. You see iconoclast can have much more impact on ideology. In fact, what we call as social awakening in terms of thinking and all that give but to what you call sociology. Similarly, take the ferment of ideas in the 1960s, and think of them in depth and again you will see, that academically they all result in certain sociological discussions. But I did not want to go along that line. All I am trying to say is that we have still not started thinking deeply and properly about what was the cultural self of the time. In that question, it does not matter that they were vandals – they might have been, they might not have been, I will not argue on that with Sandip. But what I am trying to say is that, the impact it has on contemporary culture is



something that one has to discuss much more deeply. We can begin with cataloguing but that is hardly the way to consider things much more deeply.

**Q. Sandip Bandopadhyay** – The effect of vandalism was negative. And about the language my argument is that the Naxalite language spread a sort of hate culture. Which in a sense, made vicious the whole socio-cultural scenario. You see, there were days when a young boy would consider his friend, who does not agree with him would be branded as a class enemy, and he could be killed anytime. I myself passed through those horrible experiences and I cannot afford to forget them.

**Q. Iman Mitra**– Are you also looking at Naxalite literature of other parts of the country?

**Ans. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – No. I'm only concentrating on Bengal.

**Q. Iman Mitra** – Will you be interested in also literary criticism done by some of the magazines?

**Ans. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – There is no harm at all. One could be interested in Satya Chattopadhyay's poetry and Naxalbari poetry; they could read them together or read them separately. Here I do not find any contradiction. But, the basic evaluation and role of the poets of that time, were known for the accurate ideas of the Naxalbari movement – their aspirations, their ambitions, and their hopes. But we could not accept the message and movement, the type of the movement they launched, in order to attain this goal. So that was the basic meeting ground, and on that basis one can easily trace the impact of Naxalite poetry on the poetry which followed. But again, we should not read too much into it, because I have to admit that the efflorescence of the Naxalite literature did not last long.

**Q. Pushendra Kumar to Manish Jha**– This is related to how the state responds to different claim-making. Now take the example of Karpoori Thakur and his reservation policy. He gave reservation to the most backward caste and this could not even be reversed by successive governments. Now how to understand this in terms of nature of the state? What we see increasingly and particularly after the liberalization process that on certain social and political matters the government is willing to make concessions, or accept the claims. But otherwise, simple claims by those same communities are not accepted. So the earlier understanding of the political equality of one-person-one-vote, equality in economic and social sphere, but here on social issues the state is willing to give more concessions. So how do we understand the nature of the state, in the light of these experiences?

**Ans. Manish Jha** – Thank you for your question on Bihar. About this claim-making, there are 2-3 ways of understanding the vernacular organic way of Bihar's politics and it is important to look at them. In that claim-making, the first major decision that he took – from day one he knew that any day he could be ousted – was during the time when the unemployed engineers were demanding jobs. So in all the government contracts, he gave all these unemployed engineers priority. Many of those unemployed engineers were from Other Backward Castes. So he set the ball rolling in a particular direction. The mechanism and calculation of this reservation policy was extremely threatening for the upper castes. At that time, the understanding of the backward caste was that any reservation that would come along would be as a whole. That's where Karpoori Thakur could think much ahead of his time. He very well realized the limits of

such reservation. Now, in the claim making, that was the time when the government was formed where the upper caste lobby of 1977 was very strong. So it was very clear that the land reforms, or any such thing which was fundamental for raising the backward communities was not possible. This was at one level, an extremely bold step by Karpoori Thakur and on another level, it was also a compromise. He also wanted to avoid certain incentives as till that time, the state generated employment was the source of any kind of upward mobility. But that claim-making has its limits, in the sense that all subsequent governments allowed it to get implemented. So we have very clear instances that though he got it implemented, nobody could reverse it, but in the period from 1980 to 1990 the mechanism of this implementation had really slowed down. Therefore, the communities' assertion of certain claims, expanding the horizon of that, or getting more in other arenas was very limited, which was accentuated when Lalu Prasad came into power. The second important thing which he had done and was blamed for it, was undermining or removing English. He knew as long as English would be the mode of examinations, it would be a disadvantage for the backward communities. If you see, this was also a bone of contention – vis-à-vis between the 60% reservation and removing English, the party was a little ambivalent. Much of the party's leadership was elitist and they were thinking though in principle they were with it, but in closed room discussions they did not want to push it.

**Ans. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – With due reference to the point Ranabir and Sandip raised, I would like to mention that a very good book on Naxalite drama was published two years ago by Bimal Krishna Bandyopadhyay, where there are two plays by Amal Ray and a graphic detailed account of the entire theatre movement of the Naxalites during that period. Second, there is an excellent collection of short stories and poems edited by Dipankar Chakraborty. Third, a very remarkable anthology of poems, written by Naxalites and “non-Naxalites” which record with brilliant precision the days and nights of the 1960s and early 1970s.

**Ans. Mithilesh Kumar**— since none of the questions were directed at me, all I can do is respond to the observation you made on my paper. I take all the suggestions. When Amit Prakash was giving his comments I was taken back to when I was a teenager and reading a detective novel – can you try and prosecute a criminal before he has committed a crime? If you are planning something and just because of that you can be tried and prosecuted. The upside of it is that if you know you can be tried and prosecuted, you can commit perfect crimes. What I really like is that why things happen the way it happens and not any other way, and that is something which is really important in the case of Karpoori Thakur. I remember once Prof. Ranabir Samaddar and I were having a conversation and he said that you know there is something in the government, giving the example of Jan Sunwai. He said that the whole concept of Jan Sunwai was asked by the activists. The government then allows the Jan Sunwai to happen before any other development. But once, this Jan Sunwai becomes a governmental intervention it turns on itself and becomes something else. So to me yes, it's alright that a caste becomes one of the elements of governmental intervention. But my question is precisely, why caste. The morality question I would like to end with, which was at the heart of the socialist movement as well as the JP politics. This entire rhetoric, or political mobilization, was based on I guess understanding of what is moral and what is not.

**Q. Pushendra Kumar to Mithilesh Kumar** – you have written that social justice brought in property relations into Bihar. I would like you to elaborate on this. My understanding is, social justice came because it was preceded by change in property relations in the countryside, particularly because of the zamindari abolition. So the Yadavs and Kurmis, particularly the Kurmis, they got land after the zamindari abolition. Zamindari abolition actually changed the property relations.

**Ans. Mithilesh Kumar** – I totally agree. When I wrote I also meant it in a way that as though social justice comes as a change in property relations. But the politics of social justice did not allow a radical reconstruction of politics and economy in the rural areas. Some ways it was used, not to give land to the tiller sort of a way. In some ways, as I mentioned in the abstract, any attempt of radical redistribution of land in the countryside, and social justice – we have to problematize as you pointed out. Also problematize it in comparison to the other radical movement – Naxalbari movement – which was happening during that time.

**Q. Anup Shekhar Chakraborty** – I was a little curious about the two papers from Bihar. When we are talking of certain select kind of articulation of culture in representation, here a specific caste group, and that caste group trying to impose their sense of morality or rationality and controlling some form of society – in that context you spoke about prohibition, stopping drinking as such. How would that kind of intervention be received by tribal groups, for whom drinking might be a part of their everyday lives? Also, I am interested in finding out if you could elaborate, how did those kind of impositions come into conversation with the tribal societies – such as the Santhals, the Pahariyas – tribal societies which were clubbed as being primitive and within that primitive group also each of those tribal societies were competing for, or having stereotyped pictures of the other group being more primitive. For example, the Santhals refer to the Pahariyas as “the ultimate primitive”.

**Q. Pushendra Kumar**– Just one point. Karpoori raised this issue of “saumya sat,” but where were the Muslims in this “saumya sat?” If you look at all the debates of that time, some important leaders were denied from this socialist party. I remember one case in Gaya when this issue was raised in the party, then they had said they had given a ticket to someone. But why were the Muslims excluded – because the socialist movement had some connection with the Jan Sang, or because of some other compulsions that in this “saumya sat” the Muslims weren’t included in proportion to their population. So why “saumya sat?”

**Q. Ranabir Samaddar** – Amit I have one question related to Bihar. This is to Mithilesh but related to the Bihar papers. Now, it seems to me that the issue of social justice and the whole historical trajectory of the movement then problematizes what we call as popular movements. Since Mithilesh raised this question in the morning also – I think inasmuch as when we see the notion of class, remnants can be found in history has a dynamics to it, so it’s not that a very abstract idea of justice will conjure up a period. Particularly I was reminded of Lenin’s writings. Now, when the debate was taking place among the Russian Marxists and the Russian populists about the capacity of the Russian village system, to bypass capitalism and to realize communist

ideals etc. Marx was hesitant in giving an answer. Marx in fact did not give an answer but wrote long drafts, yet finally gave only a two page answer saying that in spite of having all the village system, that Russia already had capitalistic distributions. So how can you say that the village system will be able to bypass capitalism? Now, early Lenin's response was to obviously take up the debate. But if you see Lenin's writings in 1911 and 1913, Lenin is actually much more sympathetic to the Russian populace. Some of the closed accounts of his life actually mention that Lenin never forgot that his elder brother was an important member of the populace was hanged when he tried to kill the Czar. And finally, on the eve of the revolution, Lenin actually took hold of one of the fundamentals of the Communist program and made it into his own program. So, the whole question of social justice – in what social justice, the idea of social justice – functions in politics or functioned in later politics in the making of a particular constellation that we call people, in what way it relates to several classes is something that according to me that cannot be discussed on any kind of moral ideals, any kind of ideological terms. But this has to be seen in much more historical trajectories and historical dynamics. And there one has to learn much more from how Lenin handled the whole situation. Lenin was in that sense, neither anti-populist nor pro-populist. He certainly was not a populist. But the same Lenin from 1907 onwards actually tells the Bolsheviks again and again look at how the populists are increasingly representing the interests of a large section of people and look what we can learn from them. So I think, you know inasmuch as the problem for Lenin was what to do with this village system or this whole idea of Russian commune, and Lenin dealt with it dialectically, similarly issues like social justice – one has to see not in any kind of moral terms. So we cannot be hypnotized by the fact that it uses the word 'justice'. But on the other hand, it also true that this whole idea of social justice, while historically it is concretized in one particular manner which I think both of your papers bring out so clearly – but for me the most interesting point is, how is it and how come that this idea of social justice actually becomes the instrument in conjuring up what you might call people.

**Q. Sandip Bandopadhyay** – Can any of you kindly explain to me the meaning of revolt?

**Ans. Manish Jha** – Two extremely important and complex questions around the prohibition of Karpoori and that kind of politics, also with Adivasis and Muslims. This is certainly very important to investigate further. I can tell you for sure that the literature is limited as far as the socialist relations with these two groups are concerned. But at the same time, first about the Muslims. As I was telling you that the socialist relation, in the right wing context started to impact the Muslims culturally quite a bit and even though at such a point in time when they wanted to align, they did not. As early as in 1963, three socialist stalwarts contesting bi-elections and in all three constituencies, Jan Sang supported them. So there were enough indications and we know that with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Jan Sang had a tough time to come back to mainstream politics. Therefore, these spaces provided them to get into the mainstream politics and thus, the relationship was really complex. Had the internal emergency not created a difficult kind of havoc for the minority communities, it would've taken anti-Congressism for very long to get the votes of minority Muslims. The relationship with Muslims was always ambivalent. The 1977 elections was an exception for such regions. The Adivasi issue, even by and large during its bad phases in most of the parts in the Adivasi areas,

the Congress continued its vote. So even though they were in a bad state in other areas, they continued their hold over the Adivasi areas for a long time. On their own, having some kind of a coalition with the regional groups, they somehow tried to manage. The Adivasi question in a substantive way never came into the discussion of socialist politics. So socialist politics within Bihar was mostly also the Maidani area politics because it had a caste configuration of a particular kind. So, in that context what is important is that, Prof. Samaddar had talked about, the problematique of representational politics. Representational politics was highlighted in various junctures of Bihar, and the limits of it was also quite obvious, because the 1974 movement – what it did to institutions, what it did to universities, what it did to the body politic of Bihar is not unknown to all of us. So at that point in time, here and now, compromises with ideologies in the name of anti-Congressism resulted in overthrowing the Congress. One aspect which even in our discourse and presentation we undermine, the way I was listening to the presentation from Bengal, similarly there were food crisis, there were draught issues around which localized moments were happening which ultimately gave a kind of foundation to the student movement of 1974. Unfortunately in the movement literature, you find very limited indication or information about that. But the dominant discourse of the popular movement and the politics, some of these issues were certainly undermined.

**Ans. Mithilesh Jha**– During the JP movement, they wrote a series of letters to associates in Jharkhand, saying why is it that the movement is not gaining as much popularity as it should have. Also what one must realize is that the Jharkhand mukti morcha, which was just beginning at the same time, had more organic links to the railway strikes and the coal-field strikes happening at that point of time in the then Chota Nagpur plateau and today Jharkhand. Also, we have a colleague at TISS whose research is about caste and Muslims in Bihar. We had a wonderful session in the symposium which showed the complexity of looking at certain social formations in terms of caste and in this case, it was the Muslims. And how utterly complex it was to come up with an understanding of caste within the Muslims. When you start making claims in terms of caste that is what happens and one of the agendas would be to perceive this in my research project – whereby Muslims are looking at themselves in terms of caste and how to make claims to the government.

**Ans. Subharanjan Dasgupta** – I just want to make one point clear that the concept and practice of Naxalite culture – of course didn't fall from heaven – it has its history, it has its past, just as the movement itself encourages us to recall Telengana and Tebhaga. The cultural dimension also leads that directive into the debates of the 1940s where a certain section debunked Bengal Renaissance and called Vidyasagar and Rammohan and all the rest as "dalal". The Naxalites took one step forward to demolish these statues. But there is one difference – while the leaders of the 1940s who were against Bengal Renaissance, most of them confessed that they liked the poetry of certain so-called complex poets. In the case of the Naxalite movement, I might be wrong here, there wasn't the same level of regard. There is no question of making a mistake here because Marx's dictum is very clear – approach the past, analyze the past, evaluate the past, link the past with the present and accept what we can, and reject what we should.