

Book Reviews

Manoranjan Mohanty, *Red and Green: Five Decades of the Indian Maoist Movement* (Kolkata, Setu Prakashani, 2015), Pages: viii+498, Price: Rs. 950.00.

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Individuals, groups and regions who feel oppressed are engaged in a variety of struggles today in their quest for dignity, equality and justice in various parts of the world.

The book under review examines the evolution of the Naxalite Movement in India from pre-organisational in the first decade of its existence to the current stage of the CPI (Maoist) as an organised movement that has been described by the former Indian Prime Minister as the “greatest internal security threat faced by the country.” This book contains in part one, an in-depth analysis of the peasant uprising in Naxalbari and Srikakulam within a four-dimensional theoretical framework of revolutionary environment, ideology, organisation and strategy and examining its parallels with the Chinese revolution.

Part two carries essays on issues related to the more recent phases of the Maoist Movement. Some of them are responses to the developments in the movement or government policy from time to time. Some deal with theoretical issues relating to violence or revolutionary strategy. Some attempt comprehensive assessment of the movement and the state policy. All of them reflected by the author’s own views arising out of his direct involvement in the Democratic Rights Movement in the country during the past four decades. Mohanty also reveals that his participation in fact-finding missions to different parts of the country as a member of People’s Union for Democratic Rights and sometimes with other organisations to enquire into cases of repression

was a great source of gathering data and scientifically analysing with great interest.

As Mohanty was part of the human rights campaigns in solidarity with people's movements against mega mining projects that caused displacement and loss of livelihood and standing together with struggling groups in defence of civil liberties provides a perspective for looking at socio-political issues and study of society in a certain way and that is reflected in this book.

This account brings out the strategic differences among the various streams of the Naxalite Movement and shows how the CPI (Maoist) emerged as the most powerful challenge to the Indian state and its neo-liberal development strategy during the past decades. The author points out that the Maoists have expanded their support base by raising the issues of displacement of *adivasis* and farmers and violation of civil liberties of *adivasis* and other common people in the movement areas. He argues that Indian government's policy to counter the Maoist challenge would continue to fail as long as the state does not address these basic issues and instead relies on liquidating the Maoists and their alleged supporters by deploying securing forces.

As they complete five decades of revolutionary experience, the Naxalite Movement in general and the Indian Maoist in particular face three challenges. One is the theoretical challenge of rearticulating the theory of people's democratic revolution. The two others relate to pursuing the strategy of political action in India's paramilitary democracy. As discussed in the book, all three challenges are confronted not only by the CPI (Maoist) but also to various degrees by the many other Naxalite parties and groups including CPI (ML-Liberation), CPI (ML-New Democracy), CPI (ML-Mass Line), CPI (ML) and many other formations who are active in different parts of India.

Mohanty continues to bring out the interesting fact since 1977 that the structural issues of Indian political economy, especially the agrarian relations must be addressed to meet the challenge of the Maoist Movement in India. He also reiterates the contradiction in the context of globalised capitalism. These contradictions cannot be handled successfully by an approach that can be called one of 'techno-capitalist governance' which is advanced by the Indian elite as well as the global elite as the main solution to the problem of violence.

In fact, it has only accentuated the tensions and made the operations more costly in terms of human lives and material investment.

The book analyses the people's movements within the context of rising assertion of self-hood and equitable and mutual development all over the world where individuals, groups and regions seek to fulfil their creative potentiality, by struggling against class, caste, race, ethnic and gender domination. These interconnected struggles are deeply grounded in the way they use and protect natural resources. At the centre of this, as Mohanty critically assesses, the struggle is a debate as to whether their approach to nature is one of conquest and exploitation of nature or one of harmony with an exploration of nature for the benefit of all species at present and in future.

Mohanty also tries to justify the title of the book to a great extent, as he analyses that every people's movement in the contemporary world is faced with the challenge of combining red – the issues of justice and equality – with green – the issues of sustainability. He also depicts that the notion of 'green' has been appropriated earlier by votaries of 'Green Revolution' which while increasing grain production by intensive inputs turned out to be highly destructive of natural capacity of soil and its environs. The so-called 'Green Hunt' operations of the Indian state has been in many ways an armed drive to liquidate rebels and their support base in the green habitat in the forest. Another aspect of his analysis shows that the Green Peace, Green Party, and Green Socialists have captured the values underlying the philosophy of 'Green'. He also stresses on the 'green movement' how issues of equality and justice are integrally connected with the ecological issues. He highlights one of the pertinent issues in contemporary world that is how class society, especially capitalism, has been thoroughly exploitive in nature for economic growth and profit.

The striking features of Mohanty's book show how social forces of people's democracy have gathered strength to propose sustainable alternatives. The Maoist Movement has evolved over decades to cope with that task in the tribal region of central India and advocate development paths that defend the local people's 'right to earth'. Thus the theory of people's democratic revolution has assumed many creative dimensions with 'red and green' symbolising the nature of the contemporary agrarian revolution. Mohanty's inquiry into these intricate issues is sensitive and persuasive. However, the

author has overlooked the women perspective within the Maoist organisation, in his analysis; it is expected that gender justice could have been brought out by the democratic revolution within the social reality.

Nevertheless, the book is an essential reading for scholars, policy-makers, and students of Politics, Sociology and Anthropology and would also be of interest to the general readers.