Biography of a Pseudonym: Suprakash Ray, Bengal (1915-1990)

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Short Abstract

This thesis is a biography of an individual, Suprakash Ray. Born in the Borishal district of eastern Bengal in 1915/1918, he died in a hospital in Calcutta in 1990. Suprakash Ray was the most widely recognised of the many pseudonyms used by Sudhir Bhattacharya: the others were Bijan Sen and Kafi Khan. He was an anti-colonial terrorist as a teenager (1930s), a Communist partisan organiser in the tramworkers' union in Calcutta (1930s and 1940s), and a history-teacher in a Calcutta school who split away from the Communist parties and wrote extensively on history and politics (1950s and 1960s). He had been sparsely mentioned in a few political and intellectual works. Beyond direct reference, his ideas and statements find solidarity in radical Communist partisans and platforms across twentieth century in the territory of the colonial and the Indian state and beyond. The primary thread emerging from this enquiry into his life and works is a largely suppressed truth – that there was a well-developed Communist thought of history and politics in this territory that was separate from Marxist historiography and political economy. This separation was an antagonistic procedure – where the Communist party leadership and centralised bureaucracy ratified Marxism as an evolutionary scheme which stifled subjective initiatives of ordinary partisans for immediate local application of the Communist programme or the egalitarian maxim. History of Communism in this territory is thus split into two. The leadership and party bureaucracy wanted to activate the absolute finitude of the Communist partisan in the face of the inexorable dual forces of history and (the Indian) state. The partisans were forced to embrace the role of conscience-keepers of planned industrial progress and parliamentary representative system initiated by the Indian state. The ordinary partisans affirmed the right to rebel against the colonial and the Indian state and wagered on infinity and immortality in the face of counter-revolutionary power. While the ordinary partisans declared the comprehensive possibility of a prospective metaphysics capable of enveloping present actions and drawing strength, in future, from what those actions would produce; the horizon of the party leadership was a greater technocratic role for Communists in the macroeconomic management of the lives of the citizens of India. The ordinary partisans were punished, excommunicated and criminalized by the leadership and the Indian state in equal measure. The 'ordinary Communist partisan' was a rare and obscure appearance, yet always consistent and self-declarative in broad sequences of time. Through Suprakash Ray – who thoughtfully designated himself as an ordinary Communist partisan rebelling against the

leadership – we attempt to grasp the subjectivity of the ordinary Communist partisan. The extant literature on the history of Communism in the relevant territory pays scant attention to the internal registers, ideas and categories that subjectivated the Communist leadership and the ordinary partisans. A close and interiorised study of the statements and partisan political situations within which Suprakash Ray thought and acted can begin reversing such condescension where inventive subjects are invisibilised under the towering careers of the state, nation, society, culture and economy. Biography here becomes a microhistorical enterprise of apprehending singularity without flinching, without taming it and recombining it with the history of structures. The core contention of this thesis is that a biography can be written in interiority, there can be a thought of subjectivity *in* subjectivity. A basic survey of the philosophy of individuation indicates that a biography need not be an additive, epistemological or critical project. But what follows is also not entirely exegetical. The politics and the thought of history Ray upheld also featured in consistent and collective wagers of armed squads, local governments of liberated zones, partisans, platforms, partisan editorial collectives, thinkers, writers and empathisers in and around the Communist parties in the territory of the colonial and Indian state. The partisan universalism of Ray's thought demands and ekes out for itself evident and difficult solidarity (with statements of ordinary partisans) – and equally evident, non-negotiable antagonism (with the Communist leadership's statements). A specific use of previously unused party documents, letters, programmes, publications, avant garde literary and theoretical tracts and some academic works stabilise, unpack and oppose the stands and decisions of Ray throughout the thesis. A curated genealogy of such documents is presented in the bibliography. This literature is particularly complex. The leadership deserted Communist categories in its discourse with the Indian state and its citizens. But it did indeed retain those categories while dealing with inquisitive or recalcitrant ordinary party members. In other cases – the 'Communist' epithet was used to distinguish the Communist parties from other statist parties committed to the Indian state and its parliamentary elections, while the ordinary partisans were dissuaded by using the language of general history and structures. The attention towards Suprakash Ray's statements and deployed categories leads to a new (in terms of the extant secondary literature on history of Communism in the relevant territory) identification of the variegated layers and truths of Communist documents from the colonial past and nationalist present.

Long Abstract

The key aspects of each of the chapters in this thesis are summarised below.

Introduction: a. A basic survey of the philosophy of individuation is presented which indicates that biography can be a microhistorical protocol of retaining the singularity of the individuated subject under enquiry. b. The complete array of statements on Suprakash Ray is presented to stitch a broad narrative of his life and work, which is identified as the internally emerging context in which Ray's own statements are read and interpreted throughout the following chapters. c. By analysing a representative text from the secondary literature on the history of Communist politics and partisans, the theoretical and practical departures and innovations of this thesis are outlined.

Chapter I (Bijan Sen and his history of Communism): a. Sen's survey of the decisions and programmes that marked the history of organised Communism in Bengal and other areas of the colonial and the Indian state from 1920s till the 1960s is presented. b. In Sen's thought the proposal of a radical supplementation to the ordinary trails of exclusive economism and scalar organisation gradually became an intellectual mode. This supplementation was the 'event' of normality-escaping truth – *in* the situation of colonial and national domination but not *of* it. c. Sen proposes a fecund split between the ordinary Communist partisan and the Communist leadership and this line of thought allows the thesis to formalise the question of revolutionary subjectivity as the salient aspect of Communist thought and politics. d. The ordinary partisans rejected any stricture of pre-given unities like the fables of Indian nationalism, the archimetaphysics of 1947 or parliamentary democracy without shores. The Communist leadership consistently upheld these mythical unities to stifle the (evident) subjective will of the ordinary Communists and rebels to thought, partisanship, infinity, eternity and immortality; it emerged as a successful and powerful modern clinic for curing an astoundingly wide range of 'maladies' and 'perversions' in present or potential Communistic elements (like Suprakash Ray) amongst the people administered by the Indian state: 'daredevilry', 'recklessness', 'hoax-mongering', 'terrorism', 'bragging', 'readiness to become contract-killers', 'antisocial gangsterism', 'sheer madness', 'absurdism', 'intellectual emptiness', 'monstrosity', 'impatience', 'delusion', 'hallucinatory sickness', 'lack of common sense', 'cop-killing tendency'. Though all of this made absolutely no inventive contribution to Communist revolutionary theory, the

Communist leadership's role in maintaining the law and order of Indian state and the psychological-behavioral hygiene of 'Indian' society was massive.

Chapter II (Kafi Khan and Suprakash Ray on Telangana and Tebhaga): a. Two works by Kafi Khan and Suprakash Ray are discussed where the evental status of Telangana people's war and Tebhaga uprising (1940s to early 1950s) against the colonial and the Indian state is argued for – the ordinary partisans had to rebel against the Communist leadership to sustain these struggles. b. The Communist leadership proscribed Mao Tse-tung and his thought because it inevitably led to Tebhaga and Telangana. The latter in turn completely dismantled the tacit yet coercive assertion of the Communist leadership that the Indian state instituted between 1946 and 1951 had enough 'progressive' credential to complete anti-imperialist democratic revolution. Ray's two works on Chinese Communism are discussed where this ban was defied. c. The Tebhaga-Telangana sequence of politics sought to destroy the factory as a site of time (economism, bargaining with the state and capitalists, historical consciousness) and pronounce it as a site of politics. Through rigorous partisan enquiry the method towards this goal was ascertained: every worker-led factory-committee in the areas of the Indian state would call for agrarian revolution in rural areas (whose perpetual 'backwardness' had been ensured by imperialism and the collaborating Indian state) as its disinterested and permanent revolutionary task. d. In the two decades (1951-1970) that these works were interspersed in, Suprakash Ray was also preparing for his historical enquiry into nineteenth and twentieth century colonial Indian territories. The works of contemporary Marxist thinkers/leaders and events from the Communist daily newspaper are mobilised to sketch the partisan world of Ray during those decades. e. In this chapter the radical minimal difference between the ordinary partisans and the Communist leadership emerges in: i. annihilation of caste/landlessness led by vanguard subject-bodies of agricultural workers and women locally mobilising the Communist partisans' inaugural understanding of differentiation within peasantry under colonial capital and ii. self-determination of the plethora of oppressed and mangled nationalities and regions under the colonial and Indian state. The ordinary partisans treated these as core and immediate Communist programme in colonial/national India while the leadership vetoed.

Chapter III (Other tracts and treatises by Suprakash Ray and Bijan Sen): a. A number of works by Ray and Sen - the books 'An Encyclopedia of Terminology: History, Economics, Politics,

Social Theory, Philosophy', 'Capital by Marx', 'The Real Face of Gandhi's Ideology', 'Marxism and the National Question', 'Communist Manifesto: The Route of Struggle', the articles "Hiren Mukhopadhyay's First 'Gentle Colossus': Gandhi", "Second 'Gentle Colossus': Nehru" and "The Irony of Terminology" – are discussed. b. These are sharp and rigorous works which substantiate in new and illuminating ways the intellectual categories that populate Ray's ideas. c. Ray's learned hints at the limits of capital within a colonial-national setting and pitting of communities against colony, nation and capital emerge in this chapter but for Ray this was not a failure of capital to universalise – which would have led him back to the project of statist nationalism (or state-planned capitalism) in colonial/national India in lieu of proletarian internationalism – but rather subjective innovations of insurgent people bearing a clear programme. The complete dissociation of politics from objectal arrangements in Ray was entirely distinct from the statist, bureaucratic and macroeconomic approach taken to resolve political issues in the texts of Communist leadership. d. This chapter brings out explicitly what was an undercurrent in the previous chapters: in terms of seriousness, the 'Indian' nationalism of the Communist leadership was no less intense than the rightwing parties which erroneously claimed its monopoly. Telangana, the many districts of Bengal and many small pockets in different regions were for the Communist leadership too small and too marginal compared to the great and grand territory of 'India'. It was for this reason that unlike Suprakash Ray, the Communist leadership failed (and fails) to propose a Communist task in democratic struggles of Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, of tribal agricultural workers in southern, central and eastern areas of the Indian state's domain – instead they spoke (and speaks) in the language of 'national integration'. Instead of procuring arms for the ordinary local partisans, the leadership sent social scientists and charitable bodies to the places of vanquished struggles. Often, they themselves were actively complicit in crushing these struggles, and in executing the recalcitrant Communist partisans. The leadership not only allowed the national state of Congress dispensation to entrench itself rigidly in the spaces of active struggle relinquished by the Communist leadership, it also let the state assume the role of a powerful arbiter in a deeply complex imperial inheritance it called a 'nation' *in general* – clearing a path to force the legal-illegal dichotomy on the thinking and acting (of) subject-inhabitants. The Communist leadership judged that the elaborate acts and narratives of resistance and insurrections of workers were local disturbances that failed to be effectively 'national', or 'pan-national', and hence insignificant or even hazardous for 'planned' progress. In the ordinary

partisan's political struggle and enquiry – on the other hand – the category of 'national' itself was forming itself reactively in response to the doctrine of politics and freedom that the local Communist partisans assumed in various zones of colonial quasi-abdication (Tebhaga and Telangana). The ordinary partisans had an affirmative doctrine of politics. e. Ray's works on Marx's 'Capital' and Marx-Engels' 'Communist Manifesto' were serious attempts at generating separation between (the leadership's) Marxism and Communism – as also at rescuing Marx from his non-Communist presentation in twentieth century. e. Ray pushed the strain of multiplicity in the project of nationality to its very end – without finessing or identifying the body and language in the elements – from where the insurrectionary event appeared as the only exception to the immanent or conservative order. By establishing what were apparently quasi-nationalisms and sub-nationalisms into the framework of the national question in this work he destabilised both the bourgeois-nationalism of Indian National Congress as also the revisionist ploy to suppress the full range of multiplicity. Yet he foreclosed the endless trail of the arid knowledge of differences and specificities when not geared towards a truth procedure, which was central to his Communist partisan politics. It was a disjunctive synthesis without any hermeneutic crutch.

Chapter IV (Historical enquiries of Suprakash Ray): a. Ray's writing took an exceptionally assured shape when he faced the intractable question of time. Ray's conception of politics was inclined towards the truth of class struggle (insurrections/liberation of zones and new militant subject-bodies like committees, communes and red army reciprocally formalising each other) rather than the vitality of class struggle: a knowledge project could hardly stimulate the complex faculties of his partisan thought, which readily related to the episodic, exceptional supplements of rebellions or insurgencies to a conventional state more piquantly. This chapter discusses three works of Ray where he traverses through eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. b. The politics of democratic revolution against a bourgeois state in colonial/national India demanded that the absence of bourgeois subjectivity from nineteenth century anti-colonialism and the presence of peasant insurgent subjectivity in the same arena be declared as a present revolutionary programme with immediate effect – to avoid hermeneutic resolution of presence altogether (the leadership was already appropriating this agenda and adopting a concept of history which found itself in an impasse of an excess of presence – taming singularities into the regime of policy and recognition). It was this precise task that Suprakash Ray accomplished between 1958 and 1970; only by *writing* the very episodic supplementation and sequential

spatio-temporal dynamics (and not resolving them unlike the leadership) a partisan could carry out radical dis-qualification and unrepresentation that enabled the partisan engage in the analysis of the contemporary episteme, a protocol the Communist leadership invariably failed to undertake). c. Suprakash Ray's thought of history abolished time and delinked history and state, proposing name (democratic revolution), its intellectuality ('idea of Communism') and its places (factory committees, urban settlement committees, sub-district peasant associations, village squads led by agricultural workers and landless peasants, struggle committees with radical redistributive role, areas of people's government, armed partisan units). Given the telluric threat of Maoist thought Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Orissa, Bastar, Dandakaranya, Kashmir among others also emerged as place In this regard, Ray can be read along with historians transitioning out of historicism (Marc Bloch, Mohammad Habib) or non-historicist historians (Moses Finley, D.D.Kosambi). d. While his work on peasant politics was the most rigorous and intense enquiry of communist invariants in local histories of the territories of colonial/Indian state, his work on mass/worker's politics (in its movement from 'democratic struggle' to 'revolutionary struggle') declared that with the proletariat, ideological resistance becomes not only the *repetition* of the invariant but also the mastery of its realization. A new category of 'Communist historiography' becomes evident in this chapter which easily segues into Ray's historical method – quite distinct from 'Marxist historiography'. e. His work on revolutionary anti-colonial terrorism delved into an important aspect of revolutionary nationalism or 'terrorism': bringing into the arena of organized anti-colonial politics one of the most intractable issues in revolutionary theory – the question of violence – to which subsequent politics and thought had to come to terms with. However, this was strictly not lawmaking violence, situating itself against law-preserving violence, but had its expiatory, pure, sovereign moments, where there was no move to preserve itself, to insist or persist; and which became non-relational revolutionary violence. Ray plotted violence in this manner, for he impugned the lawmaking violence of the Communist leadership in the 1950s on behalf of the ordinary Communist partisan. This account of revolutionary anti-colonial terrorism established that revolutionary terrorists and nationalists plotted a complex and thoughtful trajectory for themselves. The primary political innovation of revolutionary nationalism was in spelling out and demonstrating the subjective resources required for political partisanship. They proposed to people the concepts of sacrifice, courage, non-egotistic and dogged work, fidelity to an idea,

indifference to pain and suffering in dispensing political tasks. It was such thought of politics *in subjectivity* that saw the revolutionary terrorists arrive independently at the question of state and a decisive overhaul of colonial order. It was such thought of politics *in subjectivity* that so-called 'terro-communists' like Suprakash Ray brought into the Communist party in 1930s. f. Ray's historical method takes this chapter from nineteenth century radical romanticism to modernist cinema of high twentieth century. The role of Ray's urban location in his method is also meditated upon. The immediate political mobilisation of Ray's historical works is discussed.

Chapter V (Suprakash Ray and Subaltern Studies): a. Opposition to the ideas of Suprakash Ray takes place in this thesis through an exposition of the statements on Suprakash Ray by the academic project Subaltern Studies. b. The opposition is sought to be understood for it helps us excavate Ray's positions further. c. The chapter does not reduce this opposition to the class positions of the two parties involved – Ray and the scholars of Subaltern Studies. Departing from the general tone in academic criticism of Suabltern Studies – which finds in the latter anti-Marxism or social regression or simply canny careerism – this chapter attempts to read the opposition between Subaltern Studies and Ray in conflicting philosophical and political categories specifically active in the institutionalised academy and the ordinary Communist partisans during the twentieth and the twentyfirst century. That the nature of this opposition was very similar to the antagonism between the proscriptive ethical ideology of the Communist leadership or the Indian state and the delinquent militancy of truth of the ordinary Communist partisans provides the grist for thought in this chapter.

Conclusion: a. Theoretically, an attempt is made to bring together the lessons of this particular biography of Suprakash Ray. b. Through an understanding of the treatment meted out to instances of Communist subjectivity – the ordinary Communist partisans – it becomes axiomatic that modern states like the Indian state bring about the destruction of subjectivity in general (and not only Communist subjectivity) as its primary task. c. Ray was a writer committed to the art of writing, and the philosophical mooorings of his life's struggle in that front is interrgoated through a reading of the artist-writer par excellence – Jibanananda Das (1899-1954). d. Ray's contemporaneity and persistence is brought out through an enquiry into a twenty first century Maoist from Karnataka who was neutralised by the Indian state in 2005 – and whose

acquiantance with Gauri Lankesh – an anti-establishment journalist – was partially responsible for Lankesh' murder in the hands of rightwing neoliberal groups. e. Any truthful apprehension of singularity has to pave the way for the saturation of that singularity – for absolute singularity precludes the possibility of a comprehension of the present and immediate empisteme and the inventive forms of intervention. Ordinary Communist partrisans broke theoretically with the protocol of weighing each political act with pan-national or pan-Indian scales that the Communist leadership used to destroy local political innovations. Yet, no Communist partisan (including Suprakash Ray) or platform or party that broke away from the parties controlled by the leadership (Communist party of India and Communist party of India-Marxist) could break formally with the 'India' reference – thus consigning their own local interventions and political work to the categories of 'regional' or 'parochial' or 'marginal' – prohibiting the universal import of their own politics to reveal itself. This insidious weakness stalled other necessary deliberations on party-form or thought of revolutionary subjectivity among the ordinary Communist partisans.

Abbreviations:

Communist Party of India: CPI

Communist Party of India (Marxist): CPI(M)

Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist): CPI(M-L)

Communist Party of India (Maoist): CPI(Maoist)

Subaltern Studies: SS

To Baba, Ma and Dida

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Introduction

"Respect man's nature without wishing it more palpable than it is."[1]

I

Biography as a mode of history-writing is well-established. The narrative genres – similar to biography – that have developed as forms of history-writing are micro-history, life history and intellectual history (especially when intellectual history focuses on a single oeuvre or thinker or theme). There are subtle and substantial differences between each genre. Nature and use of sources, narrative and sequencing strategies, context-building and the importance accorded to the role of structures, collectives and institutions in individuation (or the status of part and whole in any thought) are the aspects where these differences are situated. A statement can be put forth: if the relation (or the lack/abrogation of it) between the subjective and the objective is a key question in history-writing, then these genres labour more in delineating – in form and content – the thought and effect of subject and subjectivity. The varied determinations of this delineation are intentionality or agency and its crisis or limits, embeddedness or complicity or rebellion of an individual or a collective in or with or against general structures (state, life, economy, culture, language, opinion), and the singular or the specific or the universal aspect of an individual or thinker or an oeuvre or an event or a case or a thing or a theme or a sequence.[2]

This is a familiar place. All forms of history-writing – social, political, cultural, economic, intellectual – encounter or mitigate or absorb more or less the same set of issues; perhaps all forms of contemporary history-writing have prosopographic traits. In this biography, an approach in interiority will be discerned. The basic contention of this thesis is that a biography can be written in interiority, there can be a thought of subjectivity *in* subjectivity.[3] The chapters that follow demonstrate that the very denial of this interiority had distorted ordinary, thoughtful Communists like Suprakash Ray into manqué, outmoded figures[4], and turned Communist politics in much of secondary literature into a non-starter to be exclusively comprehended

[1] Bibliography IV.114, P-4.

[2] See Bibliography IV.1.

[3] This method is absorbed from Bibliography IV.48 and IV.50.

[4] See Chapters I, II, III, V, Conclusion.

through combinatory and objectal[5] legitimation of state, history, society, culture, nationalism, economy, psychology, corporeality, life and community.[6] It was this very dereliction of interiority (and subjective protocols of politics) that Suprakash Ray and other rebellious Communists struggled against when they opposed the party leadership and bureaucracy in the territory of the Indian state.[7]

Before moving decisively into the interiority of Ray, however, we have to first attend to the philosophy of individuation that is the basis of biographical practice in history-writing. Or to put it more precisely: why *a* life, *a* case, *a* thing, *a* theme, *a* sequence, *an* event and *an* oeuvre in the first place? It is the unequivocal adoption of the singular qualifier that sets biographical practice in history-writing into a distinct category.

The thought of the problem of individuation is in many ways "coterminous with the history of ontology"[8]. In the most advanced contemporary articulations of the meaning of ontology, we see the crucial role of individuation. For example, Ian Hacking sees the 'old connotation' of ontology as 'what there is' or 'study of the most general kinds that exist in the universe' or 'study of being in general, as opposed to philosophical reflection on individual but ultimate entities such as the soul, the world, and God – facilitating one to "talk about objects in general. Not just things, but whatever we individuate and allow ourselves to talk about. That includes not only 'material' objects but also classes, kinds of people, and, indeed, ideas."[9] Such formulation certainly turns 'being' into exteriorized 'objects of study', but it does not solve the original question: what is the principle of the individuation that precedes epistemology or talking about objects in general, in Hacking's statement? A scholar has identified a common peculiarity: "the problem of individuation is duly noted and then resolved, usually within the confines of a single

[5] An objectal approach is one that 'normalizes thought through science' (see Sylvain Lazarus, *Anthropology of the Name*, Seagull Books, 2015, P-92)

[6] See Bibliography II.125, 113, I.C.62.

[7] See Bibliography I.B and I.C.

[8] Alberto Toscano, *The Theatre of Production: Philosophy and Individuation between Kant and Deleuze*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, P-4. Hereafter *Theatre of Production.*

[9] Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, Harvard University Press, London, 2002, P-2.

sentence."[10] Thus, "what was once a matter of intense debate is now dismissed by appealing to a maxim or received principle not meriting discussion."[11] In contrast, we find that rather than any exclusive logical and epistemological (commencing from individuation) concern that supposedly marks the beginning of 'modern' philosophy in certain scholarly perceptions, Leibniz – one of the most consistent and influential thinkers of individuation – retains the metaphysical core of medieval, scholastic philosophers like Francisco Suarez.[12] There is no compulsory internal opposition to ultimate entities like god, soul or world within ontology and individuation. Leibniz leaves no safe place for a 'thinker' – already individuated – instituting and thinking the problem of individuation from outside, sees individuation as pervasive and provides "an account of the metaphysical foundation of individuality in individuals themselves"[13]. He wants to understand "that which in individuals, ingredient in them, *makes them individual* – quite apart from *our* attempts to identify them over time as the same individual…there must be something internal to and constitutive of individuals, 'in themselves', that accounts for their individuation"[14]. This quest for an intrinsic denomination rejects conjunctive synthesis of the multiplicities thrown forth by individuation, and thus interrupts epistemology. Leibniz demonstrates that everything constitutive of individuals is itself individual, including individual accidents and properties and thus undermines the principles of individuation based on negation, existence and haecceity or thisness. From this thought, it emerges that the principle of individuation in the intension of its instance (or in the interiority of an individual) is what might approximate the meaning and necessity of individuation, not an accumulation or enumeration of formally distinct individuals which only results in knowledge. Nature being already individuated, Leibniz holds that "nothing real, especially nothing formally distinct, must therefore be added to the nature to account for its

[10] Kenneth F. Barber, "Introduction", in Kenneth F. Barber and Jorge J. E. Gracia ed., *Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, P-1. Hereafter, *Barber and Gracia*.

[11] *Ibid*, P-2.

[12] See Laurence B. McCullough, *Leibniz on Individuals and Individuation: The Persistence of Premodern Ideas in Modern Philosophy*, Springer-Science+Business Media, B. V, 1996 (Hereafter *Leibniz on Individuals and Individuation*) and "Leibniz's Principle of Individuation in His *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* of 1663", in *Barber and Gracia*, P-201-212.

[13] Laurence B. McCullough, in *Barber and Gracia*, P-203.

[14] *Ibid*, P-203.

individuation"[15]. This principle of individuation is an affirmative move to find a positive determination of the individual *in* the individual.

The early Leibniz adopts *entitas tota* or whole entity as the principle of individuation: because each individual thing is in virtue of its whole entity, it is one in number by virtue of its entity.[16] Each individual – material or non-material – is an adequate measure of self-individuated natures or forms and self-individuated matters, the 'whole' here emphasizing that nothing need be added to this individuation – especially haecceity – when the weight of its whole entity is meditated upon. The later Leibniz builds on his intermediary work on 'substance', wherein he posited 'minds' as the only subsisting substance. And a substance subsists only when there is a 'principle of action' in it. All finite reality comprises nonmaterial substances that are centers of activity. To systematize this move, Leibniz names these nonmaterial substances 'monads', whose activity is constituted by appetition and perception geared towards relation and externality. Basically, Leibniz' thought of individuation leads to a thinking of subject and subjectivity beyond physical and differential enumeration of individuals, yet retains the singularity of its appearance. Gilles Deleuze sums up Leibniz' thought thus: "every individual, every individual monad expresses the same world in its totality although it only clearly expresses a part of this world, a series or even a finite sequence. The result is that another world appears when the obtained series diverge *in the neighborhood of singularities.*"[17] The Leibnizian revolution is read by Deleuze as the wedding or honeymoon of concept and singularity. As one scholar puts it: "In Leibniz's exemplary terms, singular difference is determined by the divinely assigned degree of a monad's expressive clarity or power, measured by its proximity to pure Creative expression."[18] Yet, the significance of Leibniz' thought on individuation goes beyond pure creativity: "Indeed, it seems that with Leibniz, we are freed from the categorial frame – formulated by Aristotle, canonized by

[15] *Ibid,* P-210.

[16] *Leibniz on Individuals and Individuation,* P-104.

[17] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* The Athlone Press, London, 1993, P-60. Emphasis in original.

[18] Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific,* Angelaki Humanities, 2001, P-4.

Porphyry, and modernized by Kant – that subjugated the ontology of individuation to the epistemic treatment of specification."[19]

Individuation is itself imbricate with the muted quest for (or strong suggestion of) a new metaphysics and it proposes that a biography – deeply entwined in the principle of individuation – can hardly be an additive or epistemological or critical task. It is compelled to begin by determining the affirmation *within* the instance we encounter in its singularity, and then grasp the latter's principle of action, its thoughtful resources, concepts, its unencumbered creativity, decisions, relations and positions. Our relationship with Sudhir Bhattacharya will be built precisely in this manner. This mode of understanding individuation emerges in necessary engagement with (and affirmation of) the intellectuality or thought that we shall receive in the interiority of Sudhir Bhattacharya. We shall call this thought Communism for reasons that shall become obvious in course. In the real process of our research, it was the unambiguous and relentless partisanship of Sudhir Bhattacharya that necessitated an interiorized, biographical mode of history-writing. The metaphysical aspect (which also disturbs the periodisation of philosophy in terms of the concept of narrowly rational, knowledge-gathering, modern individuals which supposedly supplanted pre-modern metaphysics[20]) of individuation that we emphasise here also has much to do with the wagers of philosophy and politics in the phase and place of Communism in the past one and a half century (passim in all the chapters).

Here is an outline of the publications of Sudhir Bhattacharya[21]:

i. *Cheen Biplob O Cheener Krishak* (Chinese Revolution and the Peasantry in China), 1951: hereafter, CBCK. (as Suprakash Ray)

ii. *Bharater Jatiyotabadi Boiplobik Sangram (1893-1947),* [Nationalist Revolutionary Struggle in India], 1955: hereafter, BJBS. (as Suprakash Ray)

[19] *Theatre of Production,* P-160.

[20] See Jorge J.E. Gracia, *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages,* Philosophia Verlag Munchen Wien, 1984 and Laurence B. McCullough , *Leibniz on Individuals and Individuation.*

[21] In this thesis, Sudhir Bhattacharya, Suprakash Ray, Bijan Sen, Kafi Khan refer to the same individual. The last three in this short list of names were pseudonyms; the second became his (mildly) popular identity and – though rarely – his personal signature.

iii. *Paribhasha Kosh: Itihas, Arthaniti, Rajneeti, Samajtattvo, Darshan* (An Encyclopedia of Terminology: History, Economics, Politics, Social Theory, Philosophy), February, 1958: hereafter, PK. (as Suprakash Ray)

iv. *Bharater Krishak-Bidroho O Ganatantrik Sangram* (Peasant Insurgency and Democratic Struggle in India), July 1966: hereafter, BKBGS. (as Suprakash Ray)

v. *Bharoter Boiplobik Songramer Itihash (1901-1918),* (History of Revolutionary Struggle in India), June 1970: hereafter, BBSI. (as Suprakash Ray)

vi. *Bharoter Communist Party-r Itihaser Rooprekha, 1928-1968,* (An outline of a history of Communist party in India, 1928-1968), 1967-1969: hereafter, BCPIR. (as Bijan Sen)

vii. *Hiren Mukhopadhyayer Prothom 'Gentle Colossus': Gandhi* (Hiren Mukhopadhyay's First 'Gentle Colossus': Gandhi), 1967: hereafter, PGC. (as Bijan Sen)

viii. *Dwitiyo 'Gentle Colossus': Nehru*, (Second 'Gentle Colossus': Nehru), 1967: hereafter, DGC. (as Bijan Sen)

ix. *Marx-er Capital* (Capital by Marx), December, 1969: hereafter, MC. (as Suprakash Ray)

x. *Communist Manifesto: Sangramer Disha* (Communist Manifesto: The Route of Struggle), 1968: hereafter, CMSD. (as Suprakash Ray)

xi. *Mao Tse-tung,* 1970: hereafter MST. (as Suprakash Ray)

xii. *Tebhaga Sangram* (Tebhaga Struggle), 1960s: hereafter, TS. (as Suprakash Ray)

xiii. *Telangana Biplab* (The Telangana Revolution), 1969: hereafter, TB. (as Kafi Khan)

xiv. *Jatisamasyay Marxbaad* (Marxism and the National Question), December, 1969: hereafter, JM. (as Suprakash Ray)

xv. *Gandhibaader Swaroop* (The Real Face of Gandhi's Ideology), 1967: hereafter, GS. (as Suprakash Ray)

xvi. *"Paribhashar Parihash"* (The Irony of Terminology), 1969; hereafter PP. (as Bijan Sen)

II

We present edited translations, transcriptions and summaries of personal and impersonal ruminations and reports on Suprakash Ray as nine generative statements[22]:

i. If a painful remembrance nourishes without draining – if it intensifies the intellect – then the act of remembering becomes a necessary quest for that catalytic pain. The horizon of our remembrance today was one on our side. His name was Sudhir Bhattacharya. More familiar as writer Suprakash Ray, he was a Government school teacher by vocation. Here dwells our collective glory. There was no contradiction or wall between Sudhir Bhattacharya the individual and Suprakash Ray the writer. In life, ideology, sensibility and faith he was a relentless leftist. He served this faith by practicing a regime of restraint. That restraint was manifest in his lifestyle, defiance and struggle. He was a deep loner completely averse to popularity and public acknowledgement. In the last phase of his life he was deserted and resourceless. This was caused by bereavements, growing distance with intimate friends and lack of material savings. If anyone asked him the mandatory, ritual question 'how are you?', he used to answer 'why should I ever

[22] Sudhir Bhattacharya was a Communist partisan. The thought of "we" in Communist partisans was not a thought of the party or the party-state. It was "anterior to the institutional apparatus". This "we" was "never integrally captured in representation", it was "not a question of localizable entities, of devices or symbols". Communism for these partisans "designated the effective history of 'us'", confronting the anti-Communist's "determination to exist only within the limits of the propriety of himself – which is always the propriety of some property". (See Bibliography IV.124.c, P-59) The partisans acknowledged that if the thought of 'collective' is political, "it belongs to all": "the universality is intrinsic, and not simply a function of the address". The category of 'we' was a collective of present and possible militants: "In politics, the possibility of the thought that identifies a subject is at every moment available to all. Those that are constituted as subject of a politics are called the *militants* of the procedure. But 'militant' is a category without borders, a subjective determination without identity, or without concept." (Bibliography IV.55.a, P-141-142) Sudhir Bhattacharya was one such militant of twentieth century Communism. The use of plural voice in this dissertation is an acknowledgment of his dogged militancy. One of the most accomplished Communist partisans of twentieth century stated: "There is an old African saying, 'I am we'. If you met an African in ancient times and asked him who he was, he would reply, 'I am we'. This is revolutionary suicide: I, we, all of us are the one and the multitude." (Bibliography IV.71.b, P-760)

be unwell?'. The armour of solitariness he voluntarily wore around himself could have been a ploy to conceal some of the disarray and precariousness that marked his personal and familial life. He was never as tied to the concept of family as he was to revolution. Born probably around 1918, he became a partisan of revolutionary nationalist organization *Jugantar* as a boy. He came to Calcutta as a teenager and built contacts with the Communist movement. While imprisoned by the colonial state from 1934 to 1938, he patterned his own mental space, thought and read rigorously about the path ahead with the unwavering faith of a Communist partisan. The entire internal architecture and anatomy of nationalist struggle revealed itself to him. His intimacy with the Communist party deepened. After coming out from the prison he joined the tramworkers' movement in Calcutta. Because of some real predicaments he dissociated himself from direct role in struggles and movements through the 1950s and 1960s. But due to his active commitment to the concept of the Communist party he continued translating and writing political and historical tracts which rendered leftism of our times radiant and dynamic. As we have already asserted, he was on our side. From 1956-1982, he taught at the Hare School, Calcutta. Behind his serious and solemn public veil, he was a man of tender emotions. After his wife passed away, we discovered how profoundly melancholic and sensitive he was. This man – with no hint of self-preservation and calculativeness – could survive in the household of his fellow-school-teacher wife. Her death pulverised him, and he had great difficulty in running a family with children who suffered from chronic physical and psychological illness. Even his failing health and crushing poverty could not completely stifle his reading, editing and writing. In the last quarter of his life Suprakash Ray indeed was inclined ideologically to left extremism. Without going into that controversy we must state the truth that in totality his oeuvre carries a conscious mark of left ideology. It is a matter of apology that during his life he did not receive any acknowledgement for his intellectual work. His individualistic and chaste prose upheld the gravity of his topics, yet his language was easy, unornamental and non-alienating. Committed to facts and faithful to the subject at hand, his prose became truly rational and minimalistic. It was perfect for political criticism based on history. Thinkers like him had inevitably been misunderstood. The generations following his have forgotten him. This is unjust. His thought is still the solid support that many leftist youth partisans long for. An individual who never compromised in terms of

ideology, never sold his commitment, remained resolute miles away from cheap opportunism in his own space of vanquished desire – he demands rigorous thinking and re-evaluation.[23]

ii. A slender teacher wearing well-washed *dhuti panjabi*[24] could be seen leaving a small room in the school immediately after the bell rang. The teacher returned to this very room right after the end-bell. I learnt it was Sudhir Bhattacharya. Before school started, he emerged out of that room with a gigantic glass, filled it up with water and kept it in the room. He could again be seen in the teachers' room during recess. Tea was prepared in the teachers' room. Sudhir-da used to converse with his colleagues when the preparation went on. Then he collected pure, milkless tea in a glass and went back to his zone. His strict punctuality was a luminous example for everyone in the school. Apart from teaching, the rest of his working hours in the school were spent reading and writing in that small room. Even if he was done teaching for the day, he never left the school before the school hours ended. Naturally, the students and his fellow teachers had deep respect for him. He always walked in resolute steps, he always talked sharply, clearly and minimally. Piercing this restraint, his sense of humor became apparent intermittently. Many of his colleagues might remember his habit of planting abruptly a special kind of peppermint lozenge in their palms amidst serious conversations. I was curious – what was it with all this reading and writing in that small room? I learnt that he was a part of the colony's struggle for freedom. I also discovered that he was the very Suprakash Ray whose works *BBSI* and *BKBGS* I was already deeply acquainted with. The minute descriptions and the skillful presentations of these books posited the sites of complex and unprecedented events elegantly into our minds. The readers could become valid witnesses of the figures and acts of courage. People like me – who bore the indirect brunt of variegated social conflicts accompanying the struggle of freedom – got seriously affected by these books. Sudhir-da[25] possessed no copy of the encyclopedia he wrote in the 1950s, and searched for it with the intention of developing it. When I asked him to write something in my copy of his book, he declined at first. However, due to my persistence, he wrote in the last page of one book, in very small font: 'memory of a colleague, signed as Suprakash

[23] Bibliography II.68.a, P-136-142. Statement (i) and statement (ii) were speeches delivered in Hare School, Calcutta, published subsequently in a school-employee's journal.

[24] A two-piece dress for men.

[25] As in Brother Sudhir.

Ray, 24-09-79'. When I requested our philosophy teacher Sishir-babu to explain dialectics – he advised me to consult Sudhir-da. I entered his small room, his presentation allowed me to form a correct idea about dialectics. After he retired, he came back for official and financial work. We never asked him how he had been. Sudhir-da was irritated by this question. In a country with massive and widespread destitution, any question on the well-being of a middle-class school teacher was completely superfluous for him. (Much later) Sishir-babu informed us that Sudhir-da was ill. Sometime later, due to the efforts of our head-master Nimai Chand Chakraborty, he was admitted to the urology department of a government hospital. I used to frequent him in his new address: Bed number 14, 2nd floor. The daily newspaper always accompanied him, filled with discussions of perestroika and glasnost in Soviet Russia. Hospital was unbearable for him, and he persuaded the doctors to let him go home. After some time, in 1990, we got the news that Sudhir-da was seriously unwell. Sishir-babu and I went to his house in Belghoria/Nimta. His physical condition and the scenes of his domestic life shattered me. I could not locate any trace of the middle-class norms of domestic life that we generally observe. In one of the two small rooms Sudhir-da was lying unconscious in an extremely dirty bed. The walls were covered with racks of books. All books were the same, all varnished black on the covers. Apart from two cots, no furniture could be seen. All objects were in unspeakable disarray. Some ragged earthen utensils could be seen, there was not a single metal object. Every day while walking to our school from Shialdah rail station I had seen on the pavements of Sradhhananda Park the shacks of the poor homeless people. Their utensils, cleanliness and effort were much better than what we found in Sudhir-da's house. His son became amnesiac due to an accident when he was a student. His daughter seemed to suffer from certain unfortunate neuropsychological impairments. His wife was no more. She shared the work to hold everything together when alive. The saintly enquirer failed to sustain it alone and was tormented by the failure. Sudhir-da was a complete introvert and unflinchingly committed to his ideology. His rebellious being was completely opposed to any kind of negotiation or co-existence. This time he was taken to Calcutta Medical College. Bed number MX-3, Ground Floor, Medicine Ward, Emergency Section was his last address. His dead body was brought to Hare school. There was a meeting of West Bengal Government Schoolteachers Association that day in our school. All teachers had to remain there. Hence, I was entrusted with the duty of cremating his body. Three hundred rupees were given to me for this purpose. His students Arun Kumar Dey and Soumendranath Bakshi accompanied.

Sudhir-da being a firm atheist no religious rule or ritual was observed during the cremation. For some reason, I think the account of the three hundred rupees from the schoolteacher's association can facilitate a true evaluation of this excellent individual. I reproduce my diary entry that day: *'An account of the money granted by West Bengal Government Schoolteacher's Association on the occasion of the death of Sudhir Bhattacharya and to cremate the deceased: total amount – 300/-; Electric Furnace – 100/-; Bamboo plank for the dead body – 14/-; Refreshment for people accompanying the body to the crematorium – 37/-; Taxi fare to take Sudhir-da's son and daughter home – 70/-...*His entire strength was concentrated in interrogating knowledge. There was no puritanical grammarian's will to render his statements bookish and figures of expertise. His writing offered no concessions to the academic and institutional elite; his history did not cheer them up. Suprakash Ray had been the successor of the brave, sacrificing and ordinary people who fought for freedom in this country. He was the successor of the concrete hope and faith of these people. Suprakash Ray carried on ceaseless enquiry to leave the axiom of social revolution for the coming generations.[26]

iii. Suprakash Ray was born in 1915 in Goila, Borishal district of the Bengal province in colonial India (now in Bangladesh). He was a student of Goila School and Brajamohan College in Borishal. From 1934 to 1937, he was incarcerated in Hijli Detention Camp and Baharampur Detention Camp by the colonial state. Influenced by other political prisoners of the time, he began his study of Marxism. After he was released, he joined the CPI and also settled in Calcutta. He continued his study of history from the local Bangabashi College. He was an organizer in the Calcutta's tram labour union movement, one of the strongest and most politicized working class movements of the time. In 1945-46, he became a member of the Calcutta District Unit of CPI, and was one of the key decision-makers there. In 1948, when the party was banned by the newly christened independent Indian state for seditious and anti-national political stand, he continued underground work for the party in Calcutta. He dissociated himself from the party in the early 1950s; he opposed the political line of the party leadership. But he remained in touch with leftist and Communist intellectuals and leaders like Gopal Halder, Chinmohan Sehanobish and Saroj Dutta. He was also a consistent participant in the informal assembly of Communist partisan intellectuals in Radical Book Club, College Street, Calcutta. In 1956, he got the job of a

[26] Bibliography II.68.b, P-142-144.

schoolmaster in Hare School, Calcutta. In the 1940s, he married a fellow Communist who also eventually worked as a teacher in another city school. They had a daughter and a son. In 1972, the Indian state presented him with a copper plate recognizing him as a 'freedom fighter'. He died on December 21, 1990. Sudhir-babu[27] was popular among and informal with us. In the late 1960s during Naxalite struggle, when one of our (unidentified) high school students hurled a hand-made bomb outside in the street as a mark of protest, a massive police operation ensued. Along with the headmaster, Sudhir-babu constantly and closely monitored the student-police interface, till the police left. No one was detained. After CPI(M) assumed governmental power in West Bengal following electoral success, they did share governmental dole with what they identified as components of the leftist culture in the region. Colleagues from All Bengal Teacher's Association, one of the bastions of CPI(M)'s electoral-social strength, offered him a comfortable apartment in an upcoming housing estate for teachers in Salt Lake, the newly claimed planned and genteel residential area of Eastern Calcutta. They earnestly wanted him to leave the slum. These were all nice people; my teachers, too. They hesitated in approaching Sudhir-babu, and sent me for persuasion. He rejected the offer, stating he cannot reasonably live with people affiliated or sympathetic to CPI(M). He was not foolhardy. He understood the implications of burning bridges: alienating friends, benefactors, publishers, cultural organisations and the regional government. This removed the thin, informal net of social security that a fragile, precariat family like his needed. These were personal, emotional losses, too. In the last years of his life I often found him devastated, semi-starved and tearful. It was traumatic to see a measured and hardworking individual like him in such condition. But he never went back to any of his estranged friends. With the remission of 'left extremism' – that the offer (of a more liveable apartment) implicitly demanded – never occurring, his leftist friends were bound to lose interest in his daily condition after a while. After his death, we sadly realised that there was no photograph of Sudhir-babu with any one of us.[28]

[27] As in Senior Sudhir.

[28] Radical Impression – a small-scale publishing house in Calcutta – run by Arun Kumar Dey, is the dedicated publisher of the works of Sudhir Bhattacharya. In the past two decades or so, Radical Impression located texts of Suprakash Ray and published them. Most were out-of-print and almost impossible to procure previously in the public space. De was a student of Sudhir Bhattacharya in Hare School and a friend/interlocutor in the later phase of his teacher's life. He wrote a short biographical note on Suprakash Ray in the jackets of the books Radical Impression published (See Bibliography I.A). These blurbs constitute the only accessible description of his life. In

iv. Our life was marked by poverty, pestilence and everyday struggle. A life spent in small rooms in and around Calcutta. We lived in Maniktala, a busy and crowded area in the prominent northern part of Calcutta. The kitchen of the landlord was immediately above our room. My father was not able to concentrate on reading and writing due to the invasive sound of the grinding stone in the busy lurking kitchen. He had severe headaches. When relatives or acquaintances came to our place it was a situation of congestion and claustrophobia. My brother spent long periods in the non-descript terrace when people visited. On one such occasion, he fell from the terrace and lost much of his physical and mental capabilities as a result. Later, he suffered another serious car-accident. Due to high price and rent situation in a central district of Calcutta like Maniktala, the family had to move to the northern suburban area of Nimta-Belghoria. I remember the demographic-atmospheric shock I received after the shift. From a more or less gentrified locality to a locality of refugees, the poor and the so-called unsophisticated multitude. My parents were comfortable about the situation. In the mid-seventies of the previous century, mother died. After her death, my father's reading and writing slowed down radically. He performed the daily chores of our household and nursed my ailing brother; I was also weak and ill consistently. He was committed to this routine till he was himself fatally ill around 1989-1990. From much before, the regular treatment and medicines that we siblings needed had completely sapped the family. Their salary was low; my parents inherited nothing from their respective modest families. The schoolmasters were generally an underpaid professional group in those times. To continue his historical research and political reading he avoided working as private tutor – a staple vocation for educated but unemployed or underpaid people in the city – and thus could not augment his meagre family income. My father never wrote the profitable curriculum-based textbooks or answer-books. He commuted regularly to Park Street and read long hours in Asiatic Society's library. A single generation of unemployment can have devastating effects on a poor lower-middle class family. My brother and I were both unemployed, and seriously unwell. Before his death my father was contemplating writing a biography of Joseph Stalin, but could not begin it. He had a dedicated, but not a large

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this statement, we have combined the content of that leaf with a few statements I noted while conversing with Dey across seven years.

readership – his works had never been awarded. After his death, I sold the copper plate presented to my father by the Indian state to a junk-buyer for ten rupees. I also sold off his entire library and notes to waste-paper buyers. No one was that much into his work, I felt. My brother Chinmay Bhattacharya suffered from bouts of sickness and instability wherein he used to roam naked in the streets of Nimta. I could not look after him properly given the condition of my own health, and we did not have the money for sustained systematic treatment. He died after the year 2000.[29]

v. The tramworkers of Calcutta wrested victory. Five workers were reinstated. They would receive their pending salaries. Other collective demands – a monthly dearness allowance of Rs.5/-; provident fund for all; privilege leave for one month, casual leave amounting to 15 days and sick leave; discussion on salary raise and gradation; more permanent jobs; shelter during air strikes and good housing facilities; uniform and shoe for workers of lower rank; no penalty from salary during strikes – were accepted and their future implementation was promised. This happened at a time when the leadership was dispersed. The secretary of tram-workers' union Md. Ismail was incarcerated without trial. Vice President Somnath Lahiri had been expelled from Calcutta. Other leaders like Gopal Acharya, Purnedu Dutta Roy, *Sudhir Bhattacharya*, Bireswar Ganguly, Naren Sen, Kumud Sarkar, Pulin Banerjee, Sunirmal Sen, Kalpana Dutta, Sudhangshu Dasgupta, Premangshu Dasgupta, Kalachand Chakraborty, and Chatur Ali had either been detained or banned from public life. But worker's victory could not be curbed. The strength lay in the continuity and militant history of Calcutta tramworkers' union. The workers of tram workshop, drivers and conductors were all united.[30]

vi. 1960s was a tumultuous time. Two decades had passed after the transfer of power to the Indian state in 1947. The taste of an 'independence' acquired through a negotiation with imperialism had become completely bland. Food scarcity and inflation stoked discontent among

[29] Fullara Bhattacharya was Sudhir Bhattacharya's daughter. She came periodically to the small Beniatola Lane (Calcutta) office of Radical Impression, to collect a modest sum of royalty from the sale of her father's books. His books cannot really be called best-sellers, but Dey said it was bought more in the districts of West Bengal, while the Calcutta count was abysmal. She presented fragments of recollections of her father and their life – between silences – during her rest in the room. I noted down some of her statements later and present them with her permission. She passed away in August, 2018.

[30] Bibliography III.B, May 22, 1942. Emphasis added.

the masses against the omnipresent Congress regimes. The massive force of this discontent could not be tamed by the Indian state – promoting chauvinistic nationalism during the wars with China and Pakistan in the 1960s did not help. Vietnam was earning victories against US imperialism through people's war; this trail was spreading in Laos, Cambodia, Africa and Latin America. Unprecedented youth revolts exploded in France and Germany. Even in socialist China – to resist the re-establishment of capitalism as had happened in Russia – Red Guards had hit the streets supporting Mao Tse-tung's call to destroy the 'party headquarters'. The Cultural Revolution was spreading. In 1956, the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party started a public destalinisation – a forcing into international communist politics a series of anti-Marxist revisionist theories - the primary feature being an absolute emphasis on 'peaceful transition to socialism through parliamentary path'. An intense ideological struggle ensued in international Communist movement. CPI was also broken under the impact of this debate. In 1964 the CPI toed the line of the Soviet revisionists. A part of the CPI leadership informally disagreed with this line and formed CPI(M). Ordinary militant partisans initially joined this party with great enthusiasm, but they were soon disappointed by the practical revisionism of the CPI(M) leadership. The dissent of these partisans was articulated in various journals and magazines of the period. In 1963 the journal *Nandan* came out to oppose the CPI brand of revisionism. *Aneek* (1964) took concrete anti-revisionist stand from end of 1966. Other important anti-revisionist journals *Dakkhin Desh, Purba desh* and *Kaalpurush* emerged during this time. In March 1967 the Congress was defeated electorally for the first time in West Bengal. A 'United Front' government was established. This front was composed of Congress-breakaway Bangla Congress, CPI, CPI(M) and a number of parties with disparate ideologies. Some believed in CPI(M) leadership's claim that the united front ministry could become an armour for mass struggles against the reactive brutality of state machinery. Even the editorial of *Kaalpurush* welcomed this claim albeit with caveats. But this faint hope was pulverised by police firing on the peasant struggle in Naxalbari – women, children and peasants were murdered. CPI(M) leader Jyoti Basu was the home minister in this government. The editorial board of the *Nandan* supported the peasant insurgency and rebelled against the CPI(M) leadership. The party leadership was compelled to take the reins of the journal forcibly and directly in their hands. Naxalbari forged a new fighting unity in the anti-revisionist space. This was a phase when ordinary partisans left schools and colleges, they withdrew from corrupt trade unions and peasant associations to

commit themselves to core Communist revolutionary goals and methods. Charu Majumdar's statements galvanized them. Such collective abrogation of self-interest was a rare appearance. Rigorous intellectual and political debates (on parliament and its use and on the relationship between mass movements and armed revolution) were also carried out in various journals and publications. *Kaalpurush* was first published in 1967. It came out more or less regularly till 1975. The Emergency declared by Congress government naturally saw the publication of *Kaalpurush* stop. It never really recovered and rolled back completely in 1983. Promode Sengupta, Saroj Dutta, Ashok Guha, Girindra Chakraborty, *Suprakash Ray*, Amiyobhusan Chakraborty, Suniti Kumar Ghosh among others were attached to this journal.[31]

vii. Between 1765 and 1793 (in Bengal) the (English East India) Company took two steps: it used its political power to establish monopolistic control over the production and marketing of commodities in which they were interested, and unleashed continuous experiments in the agrarian sector for the maximisation of surplus appropriation from the land. As a consequence, indigenous traders, artisans and peasants suffered tremendously. The destructive wrath of an alien mercantile capitalism was set in full steam. Realisation of the policy was, however, not easy. The violence unleashed by the State was frequently counteracted by peasant resistance. An example of such resistance was the Fakir, Sanyasi and peasant struggles of 1763-1793. An interesting aspect of this struggle was the connection between an element of spontaneity and an element of organised leadership from outside. It may be recalled that bourgeois historians often argued that the will to resist was generally lacking among the peasants, that they had to be led and guided by an organised social group; the element of spontaneity that was characteristic of peasant political behaviour was ruled out. Earlier, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, a Deputy Magistrate and an esteemed novelist of Bengal, (argued) that the rebellion was a Hindu affair against Muslim tyranny…(and) that British rule and British education were to be accepted as the only alternative to Muslim oppression. J M Ghosh and Brajendranath Banerji, loyal civil servants of the British government, (argued) that the Sanyasis and Fakirs were dacoits without popular support. Suprakash Ray in his monumental study on peasant rebellions had convincingly refuted the above notions. [Attendant footnote: 'See Suprakash Ray's masterpiece, *BKBGS*, Calcutta.

[31] Bibliography I.B.160. Emphasis added.

1966, Vol 1, pp 20-53.'] (Ray demonstrated that) ruined by the oppressive revenue arrangements of the Company government and the consequent pressure of rent forced upon them by the zamindars and izaradars, the peasants spontaneously rose in rebellion and joined hands with the Sannyasis and Fakirs…'The objective is to improve upon Suprakash Ray'.[32]

viii. Arun Ghosh: What are the characteristics of contemporary history-writing in India? Barun De: The period after the end of direct colonial rule is where we should look at. Establishing people's or mass struggle as the motive force of history-writing had been the most significant shift. And in that shift, two historians held foundational influence, and are most relevant to the necessity of our times: Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi and Suprakash Ray. Ray plotted anti-colonial politics in an unprecedented manner. He established in history the peasant tribes and communities, often forest-dwellers; in a radical affirmation of freedom, these settled and nomadic groups repeatedly attempted to dismantle colonial state. It was no less important than the nationalism of Indian National Congress. Indian National Congress had hidden these movements to establish themselves as the sole legitimate successor of colonial state power....It was Suprakash Ray whose enormous effort gave us for the first time a comprehensive list of the armed struggle and movements of the masses. His legacy is nourishing present historians.[33]

[32] Bibliography II.69, PE-2 and PE-10.

[33]Bibliography II.70, P-3, 7, 8, 9. The text of an interview with De (that took place in 1996) was published along with a short commentary he wrote on electoral politics in West Bengal back in 1963. Barun De studied history in Presidency College (Calcutta) and University of Calcutta. He completed his doctoral research in History from University of Oxford. His thesis was "Henry Dundas and the government of India, (1773-1801): a study in constitutional ideas". As a brilliant teacher and astute academic administrator he attained fame and admiration in Calcutta, India and beyond. In an obituary written for him, he was introduced thus: "Professor Barun De was not a Marxist in the strict sense of the term. He was more a leftist in the line of the Annales School of France. He was not only tolerant of other schools of thought – the 'Subaltern school' for example – but encouraged the study of those schools. He published near about hundred articles on late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." (Bibliography II.71) Historian and postcolonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty wrote about De: "He singlehandedly guided, arranged and transformed the working life of multiple generations of students and co-workers, including mine. While teaching the history of industrial revolution and the emergence of modern working class in India, he rendered history vivid and lively. His world-view was Marxist, and he brought out the connections between Mughal, British and post-British eras in India with immense certainty." (Bibliography II.72)

ix. Suprakash Ray was the author of the famous *BKBGS* (1966). This work was a result of his entire life's singular enquiry. It became an indispensable weapon for peasant struggle in the territory of the Indian state. In the long history of Communism in India, bare few had accomplished such a task.[34]

III

A few features of Sudhir Bhattacharya and Suprakash Ray emerge from these statements: a. He was a precocious political militant of revolutionary (non-Congress[35]) anti-colonialism in a town of undivided Bengal. b. He decided – thoughtfully – on becoming a Communist partisan in Calcutta (a city in Bengal or post-1947 West Bengal) adept at trade unionism and underground work. c. He became an identified dissident and deviant individual, ideologically afflicted with 'left extremism' – opposed to the CPI and CPI(M) – posthumously appropriated for 'leftist unity' (a concept we will find him meticulously reject as a partisan Communist) d. He was a Calcutta-based rational government-school employee and affecting history-writer. e. He was a revered colleague and teacher within the school-community – appreciated for a risky intellectual stand that can be called 'anti-establishment' in Calcutta parlance. e. He dealt with intense poverty, accidents and sickness through the entire length of his life, even when he had to 'finish dying'[36]. f. He had a sporadic/inconsistent educational training and entrusted the formative decades of his life to active and collective political work – he literally spent most of his later life reading and writing in measured isolation. g. His works were seen as necessary ammunition for peasant politics and a major event of Communism in the territory of Indian state.[37] h. He was found bracketed with one of the finest historians of twentieth century, Damodar Dharmanand

[34] Bibliography I.B.113, P-101.

[35] Congress is Indian National Congress, founded in 1885.

[36] A phrase borrowed from a novel by Samuel Beckett, Bibliography IV.2.l: "What I'd like now is to speak of the things that are left, say my good-byes, finish dying." P-1. In the year he died, 1990 – with Soviet Russia 'opening up' and unraveling simultaneously – Sudhir Bhattacharya wanted to speak of Joseph Stalin.

[37] The statement ix appeared in a year – 1969 – when in many pockets of 'India' and West Bengal the engagement of Communist partisans with the peasantry was developing revolutionary struggles and liberated zones – insurrectionary and seditious from the vantage of the Indian state. The vanguard and partisan intellectual alacrity of Suprakash Ray was explicit.

Kosambi[38], and combinedly proposed – as late as in 1996[39] – as the most significant factor in radicalising the historiographical programme in post-1947 territory of Indian state. i. He had a politically conscious, economically independent and hard-working romantic partner in life – a woman whose active camaraderie allowed him – only up till her death – his protracted unpaid intellectual enquiry without simply destroying their tottering monogamian family and home.[40] j.

[38] D.D. Kosambi (1907-1966), vocationally an extraordinary mathematician, was engaged with Marxist theory and Communist politics from the 1940s, and in a testimony to his free, partisan intellectual pursuit wrote a number of pioneering works on early history, historical method and historical materialism, including Bibliography II.73. A number of essays by leading historians, economists and theorists - that meditate on the profound innovations of Kosambi – exist: Bibliography II.74.

[39] By 1996, for example, Ranajit Guha and the members of the SS Collective had published – more or less – all their major works on modern Indian history and historiography. Sumit Sarkar, Anil Seal, Christopher Bayly, Bipan Chandra among other well-known historians, too, had already produced their definitive works of history by this time. Barun De was an advanced scholar and teacher of history, acutely aware of the state of the discipline as an influential editor and administrator (who conceptualised and founded important research collectives in West Bengal). His choice of Suprakash Ray as the major innovator in the arena, three decades after Ray published his most important work was then - coded. The simultaneous mention of Kosambi – an intellectual born in Goa, educated in United States of America, who taught in Benares Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University, Fergusson College, Pune and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay – disproved that De was catering to a local Bengali audience.

[40] "Voyage To Cythera" (1984) – one of the most revolutionary instances of cinematic art in the twentieth century – can help us understand the inventive alchemy between two lovers (even in the paralyzing monogamian environ): one of them a fugitive (yet inclined to return to the moment of encounter and risk in love) Communist partisan, indifferent (and thus antagonistic, illegal, deviant, dispossessed) to the existing (modern Greek) state. The cinema ended with the old lovers drifting – literally – towards new uncertain spatio-temporal dynamics together, in active defiance of death, life, history, society and improvement. It was a Greek film by auteur Theo Angelopoulos (1935-2012). The apparently non-partisan partner – a woman – was not a figure of sacrifice or a simple victim, but a key and assuredly opaque catalyst in the autonomous (from politics) aesthetic, amorous and temporal categories operative in the artwork. As Angelopoulos put it: "She is the victim of everything that happened, but she is the only one who remained true to herself all these years. Her almost incredible fidelity to the husband – let me just remind…all this happens in the film within the film – gives her the right *to invent once again true love for herself*." In Bibliography IV.1.i, P-48. We cannot desire improvability and upward social mobility for dead bodies, more difficult to pray so for dead partisans. Sudhir Bhattacharya and his lover remain firmly in the interiority of this

Sudhir Bhattacharya was serious about – or he partially internalised – the pseudonyms he deployed as his authorial name.[41] k. Sudhir Bhattacharya's work of 1966 was publicly declared as 'monumental' and a 'masterpiece' in the pages of a leading progressive journal, in 1984 – and an academic historical research could have as its aim to simply 'improve' on one account in his inaugural enquiry.[42] l. He belonged to the sequence called the 'Soviet Century'[43]. m. He was an element in radical intellectual anti-revisionism that split twentieth century Communism in two. n. His political work was in a field where the ordinary worker-partisans were certainly not mute followers of the union leaders.[44]

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biography, unamenable to external modification through state policies that bestow more money and other life and time-saving assets to the middle classes.

[41] Suprakash Ray the pseudonym could propose itself as Sudhir Bhattacharya the schoolteacher-with-earnest-colleagues. Or Sudhir Bhattacharya itself became a pseudonym intermittently.

[42] Economic and Political Weekly's core progressive agenda has recently come under concentrated attack from big business interests tied to the ruling party of India – Bharatiya Janta Party – after inspecting emerging evidences of massive tax benefits an (aggressively expanding) private company was receiving from the central government of India. See Bibliography II.75.

[43] Bibliography IV.50. "The century begins with the war of 1914-18 (a war that included the revolution of October 1917) and comes to a close with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. This is the short century (seventy-five years), a strongly unified century. In a word, the Soviet century." P-1. Sudhir Bhattacharya's year of birth is not certain – both 1915 and 1918 are proposed. He died in 1990, when Soviet Russia was rapidly withering. In between, Sudhir Bhattacharya was a nationalist terrorist, a Communist trade-union militant and a partisan historian and thinker.

[44] As we shall find gradually, Suprakash Ray pitted the figure of ordinary partisan against the figure of the party leadership in his intellectual plotting of Communist politics. This was no fictive assertion, and derived from his work in the militant (during 1930s and 1940s) tramworker's union of Calcutta. One document shows an anonymous tramworker pointing out that the programme of occupying and destroying state power was precisely the 'politics' that was missing in the central leadership's exclusive economic bargaining. In its vital empiricism in flux, the leadership started ignoring the axiomatic and prescriptive core of Communism, while the ordinary worker-member was demanding its constant retention and reiteration. See "Letter to Comrade Bankim Mukherjee and his reply", Bibliography III.B, June 15, 1942. In Bibliography I.B.44 from 1948, we find an incandescent exception to the leadership's fiat to confine urban and factory trade unionism within the organisational and operational bound of economism and legalism. The tramworkers asserted their will towards a political strike in Calcutta and Howrah directly supporting the Communist insurgent procedures of agrarian revolution in contemporary Kakdweep, Medinipur and Telangana – opposing the Indian state and the party leadership simultaneously.

IV

Our basic resource is: nine disparate statements, fourteen tentative features emerging from the statements, and about sixteen more or less obscure, 'local', 'vernacular' texts. With this resource at our disposal, an attempt can be made to write a biography of this individual. As a Communist, his statements were acutely partisan. Sudhir Bhattacharya – an ordinary (and mostly partyless) Communist partisan – educated himself primarily with Communist party programmes, documents, literature, pamphlets, polemics and journals. The effect of these texts on ordinary, thoughtful partisans cannot be underestimated:

"'Why do you read pamphlets? What kind of sense is there in them?' – the voice of the extremely intelligent V. V. G. sounds right above my ear. 'You want to learn something about Marxism? Get Marx's *Kapital*.' So I got it, got burnt by it, and threw it away: back again to the pamphlets. Och...wasn't my splendid Tenishev mentor playing a trick on me? Marx's *Kapital* is the same as Kraevich's *Physics.* Surely no one can think that Kraevich leads to any new ideas. But a pamphlet plants a little larva—that is just its function. And the larva gives birth to thought. Early, O Erfurt Program, you Marxist propylaea, too early did you train our spirits to a sense of harmoniousness, but to me and to many others you gave a sense of life in those prehistoric years when thought hungered after unity and harmoniousness, when the backbone of the age was becoming erect, when the heart needed more than anything the red blood of the aorta!... That year, in Segewold, on the Courland river Aa, there was a radiant autumn with spiderwebs in the fields of barley. The estates of the barons had just been burned down, and after the pacification there arose out of the charred brick outbuildings a grim cruel silence…And so, in Segewold with the Erfurt Program in my hands, I was able to populate, to socialize the visible world with its barley, dirt roads, castles, and sunlit spiderwebs, breaking it down into diagrams and setting up under the pale blue firmament ladders, far from biblical, upon which not the angels of Jacob but small and large property holders ascended and descended, passing through the stages of capitalist economy. What could be stronger, what could be more organic: I perceived the entire world as an economy, a human economy – and the shuttles of English cottage industry that had fallen silent a hundred years ago sounded once more in the ringing autumn air! Yes, I heard with the sharpness of ears caught by the sound of a distant threshing machine in the field the burgeoning

and increase, not of the barley in its ear, not of the northern apple, but of the world, the capitalist world, that was ripening in order to fall!"[45]

Suprakash Ray was marked precisely by such extraordinary noesis of the ordinary partisan – strictly in the order of the subjective. He was never too far from where 'estates of the barons had just been burned down'. Carlo Ginzburg recommended historians to not exclude the possibility of a 'scholarly apprehension of singularity'[46]. Such understanding of singularity had been dynamically linked to singular narrative or sequencing or composing techniques emerging in risky interaction with the arts. Ginzburg drew from modernist novels and paintings, Raul Hilberg drew from the grammar of classical music.[47] When sources and documents on the life of an individual are scant yet there is a spurt of statements on a single modality of being (in Ray's case the political modality) – a biography or historical narrative on it "could translate itself into an account that fills the gaps in the documentation to form a polished surface"[48]. But Ginzburg had warned against such practice "for reasons that are of a cognitive, ethical, and aesthetic order"[49]. In fact, Ginzburg convinced us that apprehension of singularity and the preservation of the interiority of the subjective steer clear of "relativist positions or skeptical implications of postmodernism…that reduce historiography to a textual dimension, depriving it of any cognitive value."[50] Our identification of Suprakash Ray's subjective protocols and formal interventions is what has us commit to writing his biography, not the unique, organic and (always) inexhaustible details of his life. In this biography, the citation-built narrative mode of Suprakash Ray's own prose – discussed and interpreted across the first four chapters – is adopted to retain the interiority of the subject and avoid an additive approach of epistemological consolidation. Such retention means that interpretive statements in this otherwise descriptive biography are in act speculations on Suprakash Ray's possible stand in a specific case. Such speculation demands in Ray's case an intimate reading of documents, reports and exegeses of politics, art, history, and

[45]See Bibliography IV.2.i, P-99-101. This reminiscence was originally written by poet Osip Mandelstam in 1925.

[46] "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It", in Bibliography IV.1.g, P-142.

[47] See Bibliography IV.2.j and Bibliography IV.1.g, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It", P-139-168.

[48] "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It", in Bibliography IV.1.g,P-153.

[49] *Ibid*, P-154.

[50] *Ibid,* P-162.

philosophy in the twentieth century, of thinkers, scholars and partisans in and outside Bengal.[51] Ray will be seen linked to these statements and individuals in their shared investigations into a similar set of what Sylvain Lazarus termed as "problematical words"[52]: Communism, politics, class, history, revisionism, split, state, revolution – to name the primary few in our case.

This biography – written in English and dealing primarily with Bengali-language sources – is a type of translation work, too.[53] But it is 'translation' in a very limited, technical and legalistic sense. In the real process of research, it was a rational reading of Ray's statements without any prior judgment involved. This obviously meant constructing an archive where the precise and specific vocabulary of Ray exists – antagonistically or affirmatively (See Bibliography: Statements of ordinary Communist partisans and Statements of the Communist leadership). Only a thorough reading of that archive could have us read and translate Ray in a consistent manner.

There is no interest in integrating Sudhir Bhattacharya with the composite and accepted wholes of time (modern), space (nation/region) and life (citizenship and/or creaturality) – this often being the accidental byproduct or self-embellishment of a biography nevertheless. Such accidents are open to criticism from expert historians of the fields and temporal stretches received inadvertently in the intellectual interiority of Sudhir Bhattacharya. Sudhir Bhattacharya was a history-writer enquiring into the ideas of history and politics, his biography attains a generic coincidence with intellectual history. It can be read and critiqued as such.

V

Our method in this biography is geared towards apprehending the singularity of an individual called Suprakash Ray. Ray was a Communist partisan for whom writing and writing history fell inside his well-developed political partisanship. Naturally, the question of the relevance of this

[51] See Bibliography I, II, III and IV. Ray's biography is – in form and content – similar to minutes from long, contentious local meetings of ordinary Communist partisans (see for excellent specimens: Bibliography I.B.32-35, 37, 39-41, 114, 115).

[52] See Bibliography IV.48, p-xii. The 'possible' in any situation arises when these words are decided on.

[53] The art of translation had been a key and well-attended procedure – in the intellectuality of Marxist and Leninist politics – of universalising Communism. See Bibliography IV.136.a-d.

biography in terms of the existing histories of Communism in the territories of the colonial and Indian state in the twentieth century arises. It has already been stated that many academic works[54] that can be argued to fall under that category (histories of Communism) share one common trait. They refuse to enquire Communist politics in terms of its interiority or internal rational consistency. The most explicit measure of this refusal is the usage in these works of 'Marxism' and 'Communism' as unproblematically interchangeable or naturally overlapping terms. Events and texts of Communist politics are used to meditate on the career of the idea of Marxism in a 'non-European' colony/nation-state and vice versa. From Joseph Stalin and Georg Lukacs' tracts on Vladimir Lenin in the early 1920s to the statements of Communist partisans in China and India from the 1920s to 1970s, from Louis Althusser, Lucio Colletti and Etienne Balibar's writings in the 1960s and 1970s to the more recent works of Sylvain Lazarus and Alain

[54] Rajarshi Dasgupta, *Marxism and Middle Class Intelligentsia: Culture and Politics in Bengal, 1920s to 1950s*, DPhil Thesis, The Queen's College, University of Oxford, Hillary Term, 2003; Rabindra Ray, *The Naxalites and their Ideology*, Oxford University Press, 2011 (1988); Vijay Prashad ed., *Communist Histories Volume I*, LeftWord, New Delhi, 2016; Suchetana Chattopadhyay, *An Early Communist: Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta 1913-1929*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2011; Ali Raza, Franziska Roy, and Benjamin Zachariah ed., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views: 1917-39*, Sage Publications India, 2015; Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital*, The University of Chicago Press, 2008; Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943: Dialectics of a Real and Possible History*, Seribaan, Calcutta, 2006; Christopher Bayly, *Recovering liberties: Indian thought in the age of liberalism and empire*, Cambridge University Press, 2012; Ramchandra Guha, *Patriots and Partisans*, Penguin/Allen Lane, 2012; Sumanta Banerjee, *In the Wake of Naxalbari: A History of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1980. Srila Roy, *Remembering Revolution: Gender, Violence, and Subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement*, oxford University Press, 2012; Mallarika Sinha Roy, *Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic Moments of Naxalbari (1967-1975)*, Routledge, 2011; Marcus Franda, *Radical Politics in West Bengal*, M.I.T Press, 1971; Sanjay Seth, *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics: The Case of Colonial India*, Sage, 1995; Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, nationalism and Communism in South India, Malabar (1900-1948)*, Cambridge University Press, 1994; Ross Mallick, *Indian Communism: Opposition, Collaboration and Institutionalization*, Oxford University Press, 1994. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, "From Communism to "Social Democracy": The Rise and Resilience of Communist Parties in India, 1920-1995", in *Science & Society, Vol. 61, No. 1*, 1997; Partha Chatterjee, *The Present History of West Bengal: Essays in Political Criticism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997; Kris Manjapra, M.N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism, Routledge, 2010; Alpa Shah, *In the shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India*, Oxford University Press, 2011; Ania Loomba, Revolutionary Desires: Women, Communism and Feminism in India, Routledge, 2019.

Badiou – the schism between Marxism and Communism has been meditated upon and formalised.[55] Marxism on its own became by high twentieth century – in the words of Paul Mattick – the 'last refuge of the bourgeoisie', a 'science of economics' which 'does not stem from a revived Marxist labour movement but pertains almost exclusively to the academic world'.[56]

In a broad imprint of Communist politics in twentieth century it was iterated that "instead of being subject to the material conditions of existence, consciousness is subject to an antagonism towards existing social order which is itself subject to condition. The antagonism is in itself one of the conditions of the conditional character of consciousness. Being a condition of consciousness, it cannot be regarded as one of its operations or as an object for it. Thus one cannot argue that it is antagonism that constitutes consciousness – it appears instead to be one of its propositions, the end product of a process subject to condition. Therefore, it is not the antagonism that produces consciousness but consciousness that declares it. The objective conditions are not what delimits the space of consciousness. Herein resides the de-historicization. Consciousness is not so much an historical space as a political and prescriptive space. The prescriptive and the question of the possible are given in very different terms than the terms that are operative when the essential element is class. There can no longer be an expressive dialectic between relations of production and forms of consciousness, otherwise this dialectic remains that

[55] Georg Lukacs, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought*, New Left Books, London, 1970 (1923); J.V. Stalin, "The Foundations of Leninism (Lectures Delivered at the Sverdlov University, 1924)", in *Works, Volume VI, 1924,* Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1953; Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New Left Books, 1971; Lucio Colletti, *From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society,* New Left Books, 1972; Etienne Balibar, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, New Left Books, 1977; Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis and Slavoj Žižek ed., *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*, Duke University Press, 2007; Stuart R. Schram, "On the Nature of Mao Tse-tung's 'Deviation' in 1927", *The China Quarterly, No. 18* (Apr. - Jun., 1964); Bibliography I.B: "Statement of ordinary Communist partisans", especially a. Ajit Roy, "Leninism and Revisionism: A critique of CPI's thesis", CPI-1949, P.C. Joshi Archives On Contemporary History, New Delhi. b. Andhra Provincial Committee, CPI, Party Letter (Upto Village Committees), *Present revolutionary Situation And The New Forms of Struggle,* Document Number 1950/175, CPI 1951, P.C. Joshi Archive of Contemporary History, New Delhi. (February, 1950). c. Tracts written by Charu Majumdar.

[56] Paul Mattick, *Marxism: Last Refuge of the Bourgeoisie?*, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., New York, 1983, P-8.

of history, of the State and of the economy, in which case it is no longer prescriptive. Prescriptive designates the intrinsically singular character of politics and of its thought with regard to other thoughts. The prescriptive is what carries its singularity. Since politics is neither a moral system nor a religion, the prescriptive is not a matter of given order, law or rules. This category does not involve a doctrine of the application of thought, or a doctrine of the relationship between means and ends, or a prediction. The work of the prescriptive is the work of separation and the term possible designates the practical and rational character of this separation."[57]

It is this protocol of separation that has escaped the attention and thought of the extant histories of Communism. This thesis elucidates how Suprakash Ray and many other Communist partisans had invented this protocol of separating history and politics, or Marxism and Communism, or description and prescription, or 'what is' and 'what can be'[58] only by staying in the partisan statements, documents, programmes and debates that Suprakash Ray was immersed in and constitutive of. There is a lack precisely of this basic effort in the aforementioned histories. Let us pick out a historian's statements for exemplification.

Even one of the finest readers of Communist texts – Dilip M. Menon – betrayed decisive discomfort with programmatic writing, for 'they manage to convey an overwhelming sense of unreality'[59] to him. Menon in an essay affirmed the Communist leader E.M.S. Namboodiripad (1909-1998) only when the latter could 'stand back from the exigencies of programmatic writing and engage with the problems of the history of Kerala'[60]. He provided a sketch of what he excluded: "The Communist Party of India's line between 1939 and 1948 saw bewildering shifts from opposition to war in 1939, through support for Great Britain during the 'anti-fascist' war from 1942, which invoked notions of class harmony to keep up production, to a turn to agrarian radicalism in 1946, followed by a short-lived programme of agrarian revolution in 1948. Most of

[57] Sylvain Lazarus, *Anthropology of the Name*, Seagull Books, 2015 (1996), P-44-45.

[58] See Bibliography I.B: "Statement of ordinary Communist partisans". The core strands of these documents are passim in the chapters that follow.

[59] Dilip M. Menon, "Being a Brahmin the Marxist Way: EMS Namboodiripad and the Pasts of Kerala", in *The Blindness of Insight: Essays on Caste in Modern India,* Navayana, 2006, (hereafter *Brahmin*), P-34-35.

[60] *Brahmin*, P-38.

EMS' work in this period had been programmatic and was a response to the immediate political situation."[61]

Where he caught his relevant EMS instead was the latter's "purposive history that 'misunderstood' Marxism for the political programme of the Malayali region of Kerala"[62]. These statements – Menon informed – 'stand at the end of a personal trajectory – of his engagement with what it meant to be a nambudiri; and at the beginning of a political one – of the role of the nambudiri, now an unmarked citizen, in the modern world. The past is where the genealogy of a progressive identity is constructed, and history is deployed as the arena in which transformation is wrought'[63]. Menon grasped the underlying tension of these texts in "the attempt to explain the empirical (the intransigent persistence of social forms) in terms of the theoretical (their inevitable supersession and disappearance." [64] The 'misunderstood' Marxism allowed EMS to reconceptualise the idea of caste "in a society like Kerala, riven by caste, as having played a historical role in organising production in such a way that it promoted the development of individual skills as well as a regional culture. (It) also allowed the reinstatement of a role for the brahmins by putting them at the heart of crucial changes in the organisation of the family. Historical materialism (as espoused by caste Hindu Malayali marxists) advocated 'evolutionism' and 'progress' as watchwords of history. The past was merely a stage that would be transcended in the inexorable forward movement of change. Caste and other phenomena were embarrassments located in a particular stage of society that had its day. The evolutionist paradigm had a more insidious effect on the attitude towards the past. Historical materialism consigned traditional values and institutions to the superstructure of society and predicted their 'natural' extinction. Therefore, at one level, there was no need to struggle against an old and dying culture. Determinism allowed detachment. The idea of the inevitable superseding of traditional, moribund structures released EMS and other Marxists from the compulsion to denounce. They could move away from indictment to explanation. The past could truly become a foreign country to be examined dispassionately. Ultimately it was this neutering of the past that vitiated much marxist history. For, in not looking back in anger, EMS and others denied the long

[61] *Ibid,* P-37-38.

[62] *Ibid,* P-66.

[63] *Ibid,* P-39.

[64] *Ibid,* P-38.

shadow of the past in the present. EMS' attempt to leap away from history, by asserting the pastness of caste and matriliny, denied their tangibility in the present and their continuing legacy. The past could be used once it has been transcended and the marxist method allowed for the creation of a usable past."[65]

Menon also warned the readers: "EMS' use of marxism and its concepts is idiosyncratic at best and instrumental at worst. We would be off on a tangent if we read EMS' history as an exposition of marxist historical method."[66] EMS' methodology included the 'putting of the working classes at the heart of the theoretical exercise, but in practice exalting the high culture produced by the brahmins'[67]. In EMS' work, 'the issue of the use of violence in the maintenance of the caste hierarchy does not appear as an issue. This remains the central occluded fact of Indian society – so present, yet so invisible'[68].

We shall return to Menon's straightforward indictment of Namboodiripad. It can be noted first that this indictment was slightly startling given how Menon described his own concerns and ideas employed to study Marxism in a certain social setting. He wanted to "focus on ideology as a dynamic, interactive, ongoing activity rather than as a finished intellectual statement…to look at how individuals make meaning through the translation of ideas in terms of their own concerns, rather than become 'transmitters' of a system that has a coherence independent of a particular individual's understanding….(Only thus) a study of Marxist thought in India becomes less obsessed with a scholastic evaluation of a 'correct' interpretation of Marx, or indeed, with the question in an Indian context (which would involve seeing Marxism as nothing more than a closed body of thought originating from European minds)."[69] Menon went on: "Texts which actually manage to stretch marxism onto an Indian 'reality' in a Procrustean manner become less interesting…These treated marxism as a set of conclusions which could be transposed on to any society and processed on the assumption that India was largely a capitalist society...These texts act as a 'transmitter' rather than a 'translator' of an ideology. Marxist writing should rather be

[65] *Ibid,* P-35-36, 64-68.

[66] *Ibid,* P-65-66.

[67] *Ibid,* P-65.

[68] Dilip M. Menon, "Introduction", *The Blindness of Insight,* 2006, p-xvi.

[69] *Ibid,* P-34.

seen as exposed to what Raphael Samuel calls a 'promiscuous variety of intellectual currents'."[70] Here we must notice Menon's usage of the terms Marxism and Communism: "So what did marxism mean to a generation of Malayalis who became communists?..It was more an organisational move than an ideological one. The discipline that Marxist/Socialist ideology provided allowed the communists to take over the political organisation of Congress by 1939. They became 'communists' first and discovered marxism later…It is possible that a widespread unawareness of marxism was encouraged by the very organisation of the party which maintained a strict division between those engaged with theory and those involved in mass mobilisation…Early perceptions of marxism arose from an amalgam of a heightened ethical awareness and the existence of Soviet Union as a utopian exemplar of equality and achievement."[71]

Menon informed that EMS' was a strong endorser of Soviet development model and Five Year Plans of the Indian state in post-1947 era.[72] Some of Menon's statements on a long term interaction between Communist politics and Marxism in that context were: "The marxism we are dealing with here (was initially) millenarian in character and unaware of central categories on historical trajectories…The transition from this kind of marxism to a more serious engagement was both sharp and mediated by a particular brand of Soviet marxism presided over by Stalin. (This marxism had) two related features. First, the crucial role allotted to productive forces as the most mobile and revolutionary aspect of production and the necessary adjustment of relation of production to the rise of new productive forces. (Second) the idea that 'dialectics' pointed only in one way (forward) and a 'progressivism' that saw civilisation as an advance from a lower stage to higher stages meant that 'survivals' from one stage into a presumably higher stage were to prove difficult to explain. This was to be true of both caste and matriliny in the case of Kerala. The persistence of such traits complicated the deployment of the category of 'progressive' since progressive societies were the ones in which the political and ideological superstructures were in harmony with the potential forces of economic development."[73] He also found that in Kerala "Communism was the highest stage of Gandhism: 'The capitalist would be destroyed and the

[70] *Ibid,* P-34-35.

[71] *Ibid,* P-35.

[72] *Ibid,* P-36.

[73] *Ibid,* P-36-37.

rule of the country will pass on to the daridranarayan.' (P. Krishnapillai, 1934) This ethical, egalitarian and emotive understanding reflected more the aspirations of individuals than the theoretical complexities of marxism."[74]

Since Menon's stated aim was to be permissive to individual differences within a broader intellectual corpus (Marxism), we can say that EMS got a raw deal from him. EMS appears as someone who could never move beyond his caste identity, and as an upper caste Brahmin ensured that anti-casteist politics remain non-threatening. Marxist historicism – an evolutionary scheme of inevitable and detached historical progress – helped EMS to immune himself and Communist politics from any role in a struggle against casteist oppression. Though Menon sternly admonished EMS for being 'instrumental' and 'idiosyncratic' in his deployment of Marxism, and for using 'nambudiri myths along with a scientific approach to history'[75] – based on Menon's own arguments it can be surmised that EMS was 'translating' rather than 'transmitting' Marxist ideology: something Menon seems to endorse vigorously. In fact, he clearly states: "All reading happens within a matrix of ideological and cultural determinations."[76] Yet, he seems to argue that individual aspirations and the complexities of Marxism were ill-suited for eachother. Let us question back as a reader (of Menon's essay) who seeks to understand a Communist leader like EMS, and through him – the general trajectory of twentieth-century Communist politics.

We can begin by saying that the reader gets a highly myopic and inconsistent presentation of Communist politics. EMS was taken to task because he deviated from 'scientific' Marxist methods, while in general such liberties were endorsed. Why would a Communist generate separation from Marxism in any given situation? Was the leader reacting to a groundswell of similar ideological ferment amongst the ordinary party members? Was he ever successful in this task? Was EMS proof enough that Communist politics in his areas of existence and reach never thought through the issue of caste and took a subjective stand? If being a Communist and being a privileged nambudiri brahmin fitted so well together, why designate certain statements 'Communist' or 'Marxist' at all? Why not stick to social and political history of a region and

[74] *Ibid,* P-35-36.

[75] *Ibid,* P-65.

[76] *Ibid,* P-33.

thereafter conveniently historicise Communist politics, like Menon did in his earlier work (while we see here he is clearly aware of the subjectivity-stifling machination of historicism)?[77] Did pragmatism and occasional adventures exhaust the history of Communism? [78] Did all Communists agree that 'India was largely a capitalist country'? Was the mobilisation of a 'utopian exemplar' (be it Soviet Union or China – EMS himself chose both) by Communist leaders and partisans a random and whimsical practice, or was it debated and formalised? Where did EMS stand vis-à-vis the highly contrasting millenarian and Stalinist, ethical and brutally historicist prerogatives that were among the 'promiscuous varieties' of ideas that reframed Marxism in Kerala according to Menon? The focus on 'EMS and other marxists' (in reality, a few statements chosen from a very sizeable oeuvre) while retaining broad predetermined frameworks like 'community', 'modernity', 'Indian society' and 'caste Hindu Malayali marxists' made Menon's generalizations on how Marxism and Communism in Kerala and India worked vague and self-contradictory. His distaste for the so-called programmatic writings became a debilitating intellectual weakness. It is in party literature and publications that the Communist's (leader or ordinary partisan) relationship or split with Marxism – or the leader and the ordinary partisan's antagonistic contestation on these categories – can be read. Precisely in such documents do we find subjective protocols formalised by ordinary party members eliciting the reactive determinism of leaders like EMS. Menon and the secondary literature on Communism in the territory of the colonial and Indian state failed to read or derive from these rich sources. In condemning the violent or self-defeating results of the historicism of a Communist individual and subject, secondary literature had no fairer measure to offer than historicise the individual and subject from an objective, exteriorised location – that of state and history. It is a dead end as far as rational enquiry of the Communist subject qua Communist subject is concerned.

We avoid such paralysis in this thesis. Suprakash Ray – born a few years after EMS, dead a few years before him – read and proposed an irreconcilable schism between the Communist leadership and the ordinary Communist partisans in the territory of the Indian state.[79] Staying

[77] Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, nationalism and Communism in South India, Malabar (1900-1948)*, Cambridge University Press, 1994. (Hereafter *Caste*)

[78] That is the core contention of Menon's earlier work *Caste*.

[79] As enthusiastic and partisan readers of Mao Tse-tung, ordinary partisans like Suprakash Ray absorbed "Mao's maxim: 'in order to have communism there must be a Communist Party'. This means that the Party, which is…the

within his reading – while reading the Communist documents in his area – we find that the politics and the thought of history Ray upheld also featured in consistent and collective wagers of armed squads, local governments of liberated zones, partisans, platforms, partisan editorial collectives, thinkers, writers and empathisers in and around the Communist parties in the territory of the colonial and Indian state. The partisan universalism of Ray's thought demands and ekes out for itself evident and difficult solidarity (with statements of ordinary partisans) – and equally evident, non-negotiable antagonism (with the Communist leadership's statements). A specific curated list of documents and texts from Communists in the territories of the colonial and/or Indian state is presented at the beginning of the bibliographical appendage. The list is split longitudinally into two categories: statements of ordinary partisans and the leadership's statements (Bibliography I.B and I.C). Thus, the weight of Communist thought and the demands of writing a historical biography push us in the same direction: an attention to the internal registers and movements of a specific thought or subjectivity, and persistence thereafter, through and through.

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main agency in the building of socialism, derives its legitimacy only from as complete an exposition as possible of the way it is negated by the action of the masses who rebel against it. The famous formula 'It is right to rebel against reactionaries' obviously means: 'It is right to rebel against the ossified form of negation embodied in the bureaucracy of the Party-State.'" (Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, Verso, 2010, P-272-273) Ray retained the category of negation of negation in dialectics. See *PK*, P-69.

Chapter I: Bijan Sen and his history of Communism

I

We read from a history of the Communist Parties in the territory of colonial and Indian state (from the 1920s till 1969) Bijan Sen wrote in the form of a series of articles for the journal *Kalpurush* (1967-1969). It was later compiled and published as *BCPIR*. Biography of an explicit partisan like Bijan Sen does not demand context. It is not necessary to situate it at all, it is already uniquely situated. The partisan statements of Sen we read and discuss here generate and nourish his life's potentially retrievable context in interiority. We translate and report his statements and deploy single quotation marks for those portions where his strong decisions and partisanships surge explicit (this holds for the first four chapters).

Sen informed: one of the important early leaders of the CPI – Muzaffar Ahmed – referred in his memoir that a letter from Europe - written probably by Communist International - was sent to the central leadership of the CPI (in 1927), which clearly stated that 'agrarian revolution accompanying the bourgeois revolution was the only way forward for the Communists, and that a revolution was the only solution of the agrarian problem'.[80]

In 1928, the Communist International issued a proposal, "The Resolution of the Communist International", adopted on 1st September, for CPI. The programme at that point was: 1) Overthrow the yoke of imperialism, consolidate the joint hegemony of peasants and workers and the leadership of the working class. 2) Strengthen the Communist Party and establish it as the advanced detachment of the toiling masses. 'Whether the bourgeois revolution accomplishes its fundamental tasks depends on the revolutionary struggle of the working class and the peasantry'. 3) Free the mass from bourgeois influence and reformism as these undermine Communist task during bourgeois democratic revolution. 4) Form trade unions with proletarian control...For colonial India in particular, the following tasks were proposed for Communists: 1) Fight British

[80] To verify all references to Muzaffar Ahmed, see Bibliography I.C.4-6.

Imperialism with all might and unite disparate Communist platforms, tendencies and individuals within one centralised and independent party. 2) Purge the reformists from trade unions and replace them with revolutionary proletarian militants. 3) Not refrain from criticising and exposing the reformist and opportunist nature of the popular fronts they might operate within.[81]

Sen reproduced another early document, "Draft Platform of Action of the CPI", 1930.[82] It declared at the time: 1) For the freedom of people in colonial India and to quell the deprivation crushing the peasants and workers, agrarian revolution should be launched. This revolution would free the country from the clutches of both British capitalists and landlordism. 2) That Indian National Congress was nothing but the class-organisation of the Indian capitalists which worked against the fundamental interests of the toiling masses had not been reiterated adequately. 3) The history and class struggle of colonial India demonstrated that the historic task of people's liberation could only be accomplished under proletarian leadership. The proletariat would unfetter the full extent of anti-colonial power, seize the land of exploiters and chart the revolutionary path for a democratic restructuring of the country. 4) Nationalist reformist elements and their conspiracies were to be fought uncompromisingly. The Communist Party would organise the workers and peasants to defeat imperialism and build socialism. Following such a path, the 1930 proposal did set clear goals: 1) Defeat the colonial regime through armed struggle and complete freedom, cancel all debts that the people carried, confiscate all British factories, banks, railway, maritime vessels and nationalise them. 2) Base the regime of workers and peasants on soviets or communes. Ensure the right of minority communities to self-determination and secession. Abolish princely states and commit to a federal structure based on workers and peasant's soviets. 3) Confiscate land belonging to landlords, indigenous ruling

[81] *BCPIR.* P-9-11.

[82] For the full measure of these two inventive documents, see "Draft Platform of Action" (Published in the "International Press Correspondence", "The Daily Worker", London and "Pravda", Moscow in December 1930), in the important compilation: Bibliography II.4.b, P-2-21. The documents in this compilation (along with those listed in Bibliography I.A and I.B) – especially "Message of Greetings between Mao Tse-tung and B.T. Ranadive" (1949), "Tactical Line", "Andhra Thesis" and "Draft Political Resolution" (1953) – are rarely reproduced, singled out or discussed, and have us see Suprakash Ray's account of Communist history in his area as a rationally and empirically defensible plotting.

classes, religious institutions, moneylenders and British administrators (without compensation) for distribution among the peasants. Abrogate peasant's debt to moneylenders and banks. 4) Standardise eight-hour working day 5) Dictatorship of proletariat to bear full responsibility of the unemployed. The key slogan was 'Long Live Revolutionary Insurrection for freedom, land and bread!'[83]

Sen wrote: "The proposal of Communist International was formulated in 1928, i.e., 40 years back; and the draft of the CPI was devised in 1930, i.e., 38 years back. Hence, an appraisal of the Communist Party can simply be made based on how far the Party has advanced in declaring these urgent prescriptions as real. One can observe that the primary outcome of the four decades is that the party is divided into two parts. One is the CPI, the other CPI (Marxist). The remarkable aspect is that this division is not due to ideological antagonism, not for reasons emanating from the course of revolutionary struggle: this split is merely a set of personal aspirations for power within the party leadership."[84]

Sen posited another document, written by P. Sundarayya, a leader of the undivided CPI and then the general secretary of the CPI(M), read and passed during a session of the central committee of CPI (M), 5-9 October, 1968: "Why the Ultra-Left Deviation?"[85] Sen built an astute citational arrangement drawing from the document to bring out the following aspects: 1) After severing ties with the revisionist CPI the class character of CPI(M) was primarily petty bourgeois. About 90% of the party committees and party members were composed of middle peasants and rich peasants. Proletarian and semi-proletarian workers were in absolute minority within both the parties. The main reason for this was the apathy of the Communist party towards building revolutionary mass struggle of the workers and the peasants. The opportunity of economic prosperity that existed for the middle and rich peasants made their overwhelming presence within the party a critical and influential factor. 2) Both in advanced industrial sectors and rural

[83] *Ibid,* P-11-13.

[84] *Ibid,* P-13.

[85] The ingenuity in Sen's reading and use of this document was remarkable. Only an inventive antagonism to the leader's tokenistically self-critical consternation over 'deviants' within the party could construct the latter as a testimony to and corroboration of the 'deviating' ordinary Communist partisan's enquiry into the betrayal of the Communist leadership. See Bibliography I.C.45.xv.

agricultural areas, Communist Parties had failed to deepen their roots within the working class and agrarian proletariat. The industrial working class and their trade unions were controlled by various bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties. The influence of planned capitalist development and the entry of peasants (evicted from land) and the petty bourgeoisie into industrial sector (through 1950s and 1960s) needed careful analysis. The pervasive bourgeois influence on the general movement of the working class increased due to these newcomers. The rapid influx of new entrants within industrial workers patterned a fertile plane for revisionism. The industrial and economic crisis of 1962, unemployment, the suspension of the fourth five-year plan, and growing inequality in real wages had made the middle-class workers cynical and this class was espousing petty bourgeois romantic revolutionism and extreme left-deviation to quell their despair. 3) From 1954-55, the failure of the Communist Parties to organise peasant movements had been absolute. The attempts made by the Party's Central Committee in 1950s to draw peasant movements out of obsolete associational methods and structure them according to the new situations and class relations within the agrarian sector failed due to reluctance from within the party. As a result peasant movements came to a standstill. The little that remained was controlled not by the ever-increasing number of agricultural labourers and poor peasants, but by rich and middle peasants, who were guided by their sectional interests. 4) The task of disseminating revolutionary theory and socialist idea had been ignored by the party which flouted the Leninist maxim of never diluting or veering away from Communist idea. 5) An inexplicable fact in the history of Communist party in the country was that during long periods – especially between 1955 and 1964 – the party was left without any clear programme or theory of action. There were important questions that emerged: the class character of the Indian state, the present stage of the revolution, the primary contradiction of that stage, the class character of the internal and foreign policies of the Indian state, and whether industrial revolution could be completed through bourgeois reformism. All of these aspects were ignored.

Sen brought out the contrast thus: "In short, the Communist Party that appeared 40 years ago with the agenda of agrarian revolution is now a reformist bourgeois-petty bourgeois party; led by a reactionary leadership for 40 years, it is now experiencing pangs of an inglorious and ignominious death."[86] Sen ascribed this failure to the central leadership of the parties, who had

86 *Ibid,* P-17.

always been, in his assertion, anti-politics; they had turned the party into a loyal servant of bourgeois and feudal elements, and betrayed the unfulfilled agenda of the party enshrined in founding documents.

"Now, the question", Sen asked, "is why a present member of the suave and prosperous Communist leadership, Sundarayya, chose to expose the same leadership as the main agent of anti-revolutionary organisation and reactionary activities in the country? It is evident that though Sundarayya vividly describes the degradation of the Communist party and its bourgeois-petty bourgeois character, he never tries to posit the constitutive force of this malady. Why is it that he has to describe the situation? Why has he hinted at the treacherous nature of a leadership he himself is a part of? There must be a reason and a significant one."[87] The increasingly rebellious demeanour of the ordinary partisans towards the party leadership in the 1960s was proposed as the first and main reason. To pacify these disaffected members, Sundarayya assumed a superficially self-critical tone. He kept his description of the protracted treachery of the leadership completely non-partisan and empirical, only occasionally shooting allegations at Dange's group to place the entire unsubstantiated fault on its shoulder. He wanted to cover up for the fact that the entire Communist leadership – divided into two parties since 1964 – was accountable for their serious misdeeds. His insincere approach was clear from his sudden reversal on Telangana. In 1967, on the November Revolution anniversary rally in Calcutta Maidan, he called the Telangana Revolution an 'economic struggle'; in 1969 he zealously accepted that it was a 'revolutionary struggle'. His designs were clear to Sen. Sundarayya wanted the ordinary members of his party - CPI(M) – to believe that the entire fault was with the Dange-controlled party (CPI) and CPI(M) was a pure, revolutionary party. But it became clear that at least on one ground these two parties shared common telos: 'counter-revolution and monomania with parliamentarianism'. The two parties were for all purpose a single undivided entity. The combined leadership of the two parties were uniformly guilty. Sen wrote: "They are siblings acting in episodes of dramatic, mysterious mock fights. In the field of ideology and praxis – which in their case is winning elections – they remain allied; they should conveniently unite their institutional framework too. The history of four decades of betrayal to democratic revolution and revolutionary theory is precisely the history of these two parties. Both are bourgeois parties,

[87] *Ibid,* P-25.

though, superficially, the CPI is more polished and prim, while CPI (M) still publicly exhibit some petty bourgeois 'crudity' and 'lack of sophistication'. During elections, CPI (M) called Dange's party, CPI, the mother party. From siblings we arrive at a maternal metaphor (the offspring, CPI [M], has already surpassed the mother in reactionary activities), which further reinforces the existence of intimate relation and shared lineage. It is this shared lineage of serious misdeeds that we will try to find in different issues of *Kalpurush*."[88]

Bijan Sen wrote about the different phases of Communism in his area. The period between 1918 and 1922 was a time of revolutionary mass upheavals of workers, peasants, and students. There was no comprehensive understanding of the nature of Congress leadership among the worker and peasant masses. Before this phase, though the reactionary 'Home Rule' movement of Annie Besant was conducted with the cooperation of Congress leadership, the real nature of Gandhi and Congress leadership was not unveiled. 'After betraying the mass struggle in Africa, Gandhi returned to colonial India as the servant of imperialism, but this role was not immediately manifest to the workers and peasants.' The working class was a very young force and the experience gathered from class struggle was not expansive. Having intimate connection to the rural bastions of feudal reaction they were enmeshed in and broken by feudal and casteist ideology. With only nascent proletarian consciousness, they were easily confused by the bourgeois influence and propaganda of Congress and the reformist Labour Party of Britain. When Gandhi launched political struggles in 1918-19 and 1920-22, the worker-peasant masses appropriated it as an anti-British freedom struggle, a struggle against the factory-owning and landowning classes, and joined the movements in large numbers. They became the main force of this struggle and their participation breathed revolutionary form into the struggle. Perceiving this threat – Ray informed – the Gandhi-led Congress leadership suspended the movement and betrayed the worker-peasant masses. The conscious section of the working class started comprehending the real nature of Congress leadership and the necessity of an autonomous leadership.[89]

Before the proletarian revolution in Russia, no ideological current emerged within the working

[88] *Ibid*, P-25-27.

[89] *Ibid*, P-28-29.

class in colonial India which could resist the burgeoning bourgeois ideology and build revolutionary consciousness within the working class. After the proletarian revolution in Russia, did the intellectuals in colonial India took to Marxism-Leninism seriously. The mass struggle between 1918 and 1922 and the proletarian revolution in Russia prepared the terrain for Marxism-Leninism in colonial India. The intellectuals came to realise from reading the history of proletarian revolution in Russia and understood that there was an interiorised theory of revolution and proletarian struggle – Marxism-Leninism. This advanced section followed Marxism-Leninism after experiencing the revolutionary form of mass struggle and the betrayal carried out by Gandhi and Congress. The event of 1917 and the revolutionary struggle of workers in colonial India between 1918 and1922 inaugurated Marxism-Leninism.[90]

The Communist circles emerged in the early 1920s with an enormous revolutionary promise and to complete specific tasks: to liberate the working class in colonial India and organise it; to build peasant struggle under the leadership of the working class; to conduct anti-imperialist national struggle and the anti-feudal agrarian revolution; to complete socialist revolution. Initially, such Communist circles were also common in Russia, and these were from the beginning committed to building class struggle within the working class and popularise revolutionary thought. But in colonial India, almost all the circles avoided the working class. Leaving the workers to the influence of bourgeois leadership and influence of Congress, limited their propaganda efforts to the middle-class intellectuals. When Percy Glading, a representative of the Communist party in Britain, visited colonial India in January 1925 to enquire about the state of Communist movement, he could not locate any Communist circle. This was because Glading searched for the existence of these circles within the working class, not the middle classes.[91]

Sen wrote: "Muzaffar Ahmed acknowledges that in 1920s the link between working class and the Communists was extremely feeble. The Communist circles clearly understood that the imperial ruling class will not even tolerate the words 'Communist' and 'Socialist', let alone a full-fledged Communist party. The four massive and consecutive Peshawar Conspiracy Cases (1922-1927) against Communists returning from Soviet Russia made it obvious that without secret

[90] *Ibid,* P-28-30.

[91] *Ibid,* P-33-34.

organisation and secret actions it was impossible to carry on a *political* campaign within the working class. These leaders avoided the path of risk or political campaign and underground organisation."[92] As a result the ruling class could – whenever necessary – arrest the Communist leaders (who were segregated from the working class), start legal cases and stifle Communism easily. These Communist leaders gave this opportunity to the ruling class quite deliberately. In most Communist leaders – from S.A. Dange to P.C. Joshi, even after them – this artifice existed. Only in two phases (during Second World War, 1940-42 and 1948-50) were the party leaders compelled to go underground. In all other times the central leadership kept all organisations and fronts of the party open and exposed to imperialist or nationalist attacks. Despite the passivity of these communist circles, their existence inadvertently triggered the most important phase in the history of colonial India. They ushered in the categories of 'Communism' and 'Communist Party' in the country. Through the conspiracy cases the British ruling class brought against them, the concept of Party and the idea of Communism started to proliferate. These Communists were also the first to declare complete independence from British rule as the goal of the anti-colonial movement.[93]

II

Sen focused on the sequence of revolutionary theory and the idea of Communism rather than offering a neutral, embedded account of the life and social space of the Communist leaders. The imperial ruling class was not so much alarmed by the acts of these circles as by the trickling in of the Communist idea in colonial India. It was this idea that destroyed the empire of the Tsar (a partner of British imperialism) and brought about the proletarian revolution. The British were not prepared to let any contact between Communism and the working class happen. The arrests and conspiracy cases were means towards this end. Despite the considerable incarcerations of Communist leaders, the verdicts made it clear that they had not done anything to pose any threat to the British Empire or any other state. Sen wrote: "Muzaffar Ahmed admits that the Communists organised no movement prior to the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case in 1924 (*Deshahitaishi,* March 21, 1969). Their only crime was that – incidentally – their names got

[92] *Ibid,* P-34.

[93] *Ibid,* P-32-35.

associated with the idea of Communism."[94] The British ruling class merely herded together individuals known as Communists in a courtroom. The ruling class did not feel threatened by any act of these Communist leaders. Their only fear was that through these individuals, the idea of Communism could come into contact with the working class in colonial India. But this fear was baseless. The idea never reached the working class and its struggles. Sen stated: "Even now, forty years after the central committee of the Communist party was formed, the disjuncture remains. Sundarayya's report bears testimony to the fact. It is due to the serious efforts of the Communist leadership that Communism has not seeped into the working class. That these leaders have persistently accompanied the spontaneous economic struggle of the workers and peasants is true, but nowhere were they able to take it – basing themselves on the idea of Communism – to the plane of political struggle. In fact, they suppressed political struggles of workers. Similarly, they suppressed the people's democratic revolution of the Telangana peasants (1946-1951)."[95]

Sen's unambiguous stand against bourgeois nationalism and bourgeois democracy in colonial and national 'India' was both substantiated by and manifest in his study of the first institutional procedures of Communist party-formation. While the British ruling class was trying to repel Communist idea through legal cases and trials, Gandhi and the Congress leadership wanted to distort and harness the ideology. It was a mysterious, spy-like figure called Satyabhakt from Gandhi's Sabarmati hermitage who summoned an open conference of Communist leaders and circles in Kanpur (1925) and it was in this open conference that a Central Committee of Communist party was formed. The aim was to form a Communist party with no relation to the Communist movement and ideology in Russia. Lenin's theory of imperialism had already been linked to anti-colonial thought and the Communist leaders were in intimate touch with the Communist parties of Europe, especially the Soviet and British parties. A few leaders like Muzaffar Ahmed were not entirely convinced by Satyabhakt. Yet it was true that the Communist leaders did not expend any effort to build a Communist Party and adopt a clear anti-colonial Communist programme, and the effort was undertaken by "conman Satyabhakt from the Sabarmati hermitage run by the arch enemy of worker and peasant masses – Gandhi! This

[94] *Ibid,* P-35.

[95] *Ibid,* P-35-36.

Satyabhakt summoned the Communist leaders – quite mysteriously – through a broadsheet advertisement. Even more mysterious is the fact that the Communist leaders responded to this call with naive devotion and discipline and attended the open conference."[96] The very British imperial ruling class which, only a year earlier, in the same Kanpur city, had incarcerated Communists for conspiring to organise an 'armed revolution against the British emperor' – peacefully allowed the formation of the Communist Party. This reminded Sen of the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885 ('at the behest of the suave civilian Alan Octavian Hume') to institutionally suppress revolutionary mass insurrection in colonial India.[97]

There was a complete rejection of any civilisational unity, unicity and otherness ascribed to the term and idea of 'India' in Sen's account. He reported that to avoid the threat of Russian Bolshevism, Satyabhakt proposed the name Indian Communist Party. Though the Communist leaders rejected this name for its anti-internationalist, nationalist orientation, the demand to form the Communist Party as an authentically Indian party was not Satyabhakt's alone. Singaravelu Chettiyar, the most important among contemporary Communist leaders, echoed it. The only difference was that Satyabhakt wanted the Indian imprint on the party's name itself, while Singaravelu wanted the party's ideology to be exclusively Indian. As the President of the open conference, Singaravelu stated in his speech that Indian communism was not the same as Russian Bolshevism. Bolshevism – according to Singaravelu – was a type of socialism suited to Russian people. He emphasised that since India was not Russia, Bolshevism was unnecessary and Indian communists had to remain unrelated to the Bolsheviks. The Communist leaders simply placated the British government and the anti-Communist bourgeois leadership of Indian National Congress. This was precisely why the British Government allowed the open conference to happen. Sen wrote: "The basic track consciously drawn by the early Communist leaders is the one followed by the central leadership of the Communist parties till now. They have carefully kept Bolshevism or true Marxism-Leninism away from the Communist Party and working class. Sundarayya's document from 1968 proves this fact. In line with Satyabhakt and Singaravelu, the Communist leadership today popularises an authentic Indian party. Recently, both CPI. and CPI. (M) have warned the Communist Party of China not to intervene in Indian issues and expressed

[96] *Ibid,* P-38.

[97] *Ibid,* P-36-38.

anger over its interest in the matters of the Communist parties in India. The leaders of this ilk have flouted many programmes of the Communist International on innumerable occasions. Thus the Indian communists – from the inception of the party till now – have retained the pure Indian-ness of the party."[98]

The existence of Communism in Sen's area was placed squarely on the inventive work of rank and file of the party – on the ordinary partisan – by Sen. The early Communist leaders received a lot of flak from fraternal Communist parties for joining an open conference organised, in effect, by Congress. In such a conference, quite naturally, no agenda or programme was written. No clear stand was taken on the credentials of party members. The conference made it clear that a group of liberal petty bourgeoisie founded a Communist Party and captured its leadership – all in the name of the working class. The concepts of partisanship, secret organisation and immediacy of revolutionary politics rigorously practiced by the contemporary revolutionary terrorist groups were completely absent in these Communist leaders.[99] This consciousness was patterned by fidelity towards the revolutionary goal and idea. Revolutionary terrorists were completely committed to their goal and ideology, and they never exhibited any hesitation in retaining these concepts. Devoid of revolutionary consciousness, early Communist leaders were never against open, exposed organisation. "It is this leadership that has retained their grip on the party till now", Sen wrote. That this leadership turned the Communist Party into a full-fledged bourgeois party in the forty years (as Sundarayya observed after much assiduous research) was no real surprise for Sen. "Despite such a leadership – the trust the Communist Party has earned from the masses, the movements against imperialism, feudalism and the bourgeoisie it has participated in, the ways in which it has served the people – is solely because of the ordinary partisan's unflinching commitment to and sacrifices made for the Communist ideology. No one will forget that during the protracted Telangana revolution there were three different sets of central party leadership, and the local party members had to struggle ceaselessly against all three to continue the area's struggle. They sustained the people's democratic revolution only by fighting the feudal Nizam rule and Congress Government on one hand, and the Communist leadership on the other. The Tebhaga struggle of 1946-48 all over Bengal frightened the ruling class, in various places it

[98] *Ibid*, P-39-40.

[99] See more on this below and in Chapter IV.

was the ordinary local partisans who organised and conducted this struggle. The party leadership obstructed the movement from attaining a higher plane – that of people's democratic revolution. Only recently, local partisans in Naxalbari were compelled to rebel against the party leadership to struggle against the landholding classes and retain the sharecroppers' right to till the land. From 1930 till 1969 there are innumerable instances of this situation. We state that the ordinary partisans – not the central leadership –are the authors of mass struggle and the founders and conductors of Communist politics," Sen concluded.[100]

Through the Workers and Peasants Party these Communist leaders continued their sectional, parochial and clique manoeuvrings in the 1920s. According to Sen, this party itself was against communist ideology and organisational principles. In Communism, one political party of workers and peasants was untenable. The working class was the leader of democratic and socialist revolution - the peasants were the main column, politically supported by the working class. In democratic revolution, the entire peasantry could rally, in socialist revolution the agricultural labourers and poor peasants were the main ally of the working class. This theoretical aspect of revolution was undermined by the concept of a single party for two classes. The necessity for another political party of the working class only demonstrated the inertness of the Communist party of 1920s. Staying outside the Congress, which, despite its bourgeois nature, was the only institution with pervasive logistics, the Communists evaded participation in struggles of the workers and peasants who appropriated, entered and subverted the political space of Congress. 'The historic task of the Communist party in the early phase was to liberate the working class from bourgeois influence, and form an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal united front by entering the Congress organisation'. But these early Communist leaders had no such intent and remained alienated from the national movement, at least till 1936 – Sen stated. Other fraternal Communist Parties of the world and the Communist International grew concerned about these trends within the Indian communists and with their help, by 1928-29, trade union activities and interaction with the working class increased among some Communists.[101]

Sen was relentless in bringing out the contours of the treacherous and abysmal work of the

[100] *Ibid*, P-42-43.

[101] *Ibid*, P-43-47.

Communist leadership in revolutionary situations. From 1928, a serious economic recession engulfed colonial India. Taking advantage of the crisis the capitalists decreased wages and increased daily working hours of the workers. Such policies were applied even in government-controlled railways and printing presses. The working class did not accept this violent attack of the factory-owners and the British government passively and there was a flood of spontaneous strikes all over from 1928. The workers of the big industries were at the vanguard of this struggle against the violent attacks of the capitalists and the British Government. The working class sustained long resolute strikes in Tata Iron and Steel industries in Jamshedpur, 'East India', 'G.I.P' and 'South India' railways, textile industries in Bombay-Nagpur-Sholapur and Bengal, jute industries in Bengal. The sweepers and other employees of the Calcutta Corporation joined this strike. In the history of working-class movement, the extent and intensity of the 1928 strikes was unprecedented. About 500,000 workers took part in this struggle. In Bombay twenty two million labour days were lost. The significant feature of the strike struggle of this phase was that it thrived despite facing immense police and military brutality and firing. In Bombay, the strike went on for seven months, in Bauria Jute Mill of Bengal for six months, in Lilua railway factory of Bengal for eight months. As a final response, the British state assured the workers that all their demands will be considered by an enquiry commission. Three days before its report was published, on March 20, 1929, all prominent figures of various trade unions and working class movements were arrested and a conspiracy case began. Though a struggle of exclusively economic demands, the historic strike of 1928 ushered in a new chapter in proletarian class struggle. Sen argued: had the Communists of that phase exhibited commitment to party-formation and a vision of politics, the form of the Communist Party and that of anti-colonial struggle would have been entirely different, the basis of a proletarian political party would have been built, and conducted by that party the working class would have replaced the bourgeois nationalist leadership in the field of anti-colonial struggle. It was due to the lack of politics, partisanship and fidelity to the Communist idea that the opportunity was lost.

Sen wrote: "Muzaffar Ahmed has recently admitted that the situation presented an 'unprecedented opportunity' to create a strong Communist party and have a large number of workers within the party. The workers were becoming conscious of the concept of their own political party. Ahmed says: 'Had we started working, then many workers and toiling people

would have joined the party. The government was preparing to attack us vehemently, we gauged. But we were not in a state to work secretly, from underground.' From this it becomes clear that the Communists quite deliberately let this 'unprecedented opportunity' pass. 'Had we started working then many workers and toiling people would have joined the party'. Why could not the work be started? This work is a fundamental Communist task and has to be accomplished amidst struggle. But this fundamental task was not accomplished during or even after the struggle. By September-October 1928, all strikes were temporarily withdrawn. And the Communist leaders were arrested on March 20, 1929. There were five to six months of time in between. The leaders got some good months on them to absorb working class into the party as members. But as Ahmed says, they just could not."[102] Despite gauging that the government was hell-bent on attacking and arresting Communists, no leader went underground to actually 'start working'. Hence the neutral admission of Ahmed that 'we were not in a state to work secretly' was a cover for the real nature of the Communist leadership, a manner of cheating the ordinary party members curious to know the history of the party. Only one leader – even Ahmed was compelled to mention this – Amir Haider Khan went underground right after the strike was withdrawn, he formed and expanded the Communist party in Madras area from underground. No one else had the basic intent to do so.[103]

In between, Sen's own memory and experience as a member and a close ally of the party kept surfacing: "The readers have to decide for themselves whether the failure to incorporate a huge number of politically conscious workers in the party at this juncture was a result of ignorance or the wilful anti-proletarian and anti-communist disposition of the Communist leadership. Despite this failure, the ordinary members of the party on workers' and peasants' front, through their dogged effort and unflinching commitment to the Communist idea, have been able to welcome many conscious urban and agrarian proletariats into the party. But where are they today, what is their state? Once, an ordinary Communist partisan friend ruefully placed a truth: the internal condition of our party is such that even the revolutionarily conscious and persevering members of the working class become intrinsically petty bourgeois after joining the party. Another worker party member once said: just as a male cat eats up its own offsprings, our Communist party

[102] *Ibid,* P-51-57.

[103] *Ibid,* P-51-57.

devours honest working class members and debases them – another immaculate truth. Most working class members of the party either sit inert outside the party completely disillusioned by the leadership, or by aping the behaviour, body language, sartorial-culinary choices and general hedonism of the leadership they themselves become purely opportunistic petty bourgeois yes-men of the party bosses. The factory workers in the city and the rural share-croppers and poor peasants have sacrificed their lives and led innumerable movements akin to the one of 1928. But as one of the leaders, Sundarayya, admits and proves, the party in 1969 is a bourgeois, petty bourgeois party. The failure of 1928 in incorporating revolutionary workers into the party has continued unabated for 40 years."[104] This was seen as a subjective initiative of the leadership against the working class. The anti-proletarian, anti-revolutionary stand was explicit during the leadership stints of P.C. Joshi, B.T. Ranadive and Ajay Ghosh (1930s to 1950s).

III

Sen was sore about the chances abandoned by the Communist leaders. Even after the Meerut Conspiracy Case (which incarcerated leaders who were quite willing to be arrested) the working class carried on resolute struggle and strikes, countering extreme oppression. In Bombay, Bengal, Nagpur, Kanpur and Sholapur millions of labour days were lost. The state and the capitalists planted 'communal' riots by using some local Pathans as strike-breakers in Bombay, and 7000 workers lost their lives. In the Golmuri tin-plate factory the workers sustained a strike from April to November of 1929. Despite communal fractures, lack of experience and above all the absence of necessary leadership, the working class exhibited great tenacity to struggle. Sen argued: had the Communist leaders been faithful to Marxism-Leninism and prone to sacrifices, and built a Communist Party accordingly, it would not have been impossible to establish proletarian leadership in the anti-colonial struggle of 1930-32, to accomplish an anti-feudal, anti-imperialist democratic revolution with the help of insurgent peasants.[105]

Sen emphasised that the real issue in the state's legal attack on the Communist leaders was the threat of Communist thought, not any action of those leaders. Initially, to brandish the conspiracy

[104] *Ibid,* P-51-53.

[105] *Ibid,* P-53-54.

case as conducted against a very terrible threat of the 'Bolsheviks', the government started quoting the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels profusely to prove that the accused were Bolsheviks. But this 'laughable' attempt to bring up political accusations against the docile arrested leaders was relinquished within a few days. The accused were tried for trade union-related issues, for trying to occupy a few trade unions. These leaders were not arrested for any illegal or political act. The state was clearly aware that these leaders would not pose the threat of politics to the ruling class. The Communist leaders were no threat to British imperialism; it was clear from the proceedings of 1925 in Kanpur. Strikes and trade union activities certainly hampered the profit-robbing British and Indian bourgeoisie; however, the real threat to imperialism – that compelled them to conduct this conspiracy case – was the idea of Communism. This legal process was pure political propaganda and a friendly warning to the upper classes in colonial India and the entire world in general about the mobility of the Communist idea. The real opponent of the government in this case was the Communist International. Fraternal Communists from the International helped organise militant trade unions in the late 1920s. Soviet Union and other Communist Parties of the world supported the cause of the nation-wide strikes of 1928-29. By 1930, the Draft Platform of Action for the CPI was prepared and circulated by the Communist International. This programme set the agenda of democratic revolution against feudalism and imperialism. Sen proposed it as the most important document of Communism in his area, the fundamental text of democratic revolution. To stop the idea of Communism from reaching the working class through this document, the government dragged the baseless Meerut conspiracy case on, spent millions of rupees and ensured exaggerated verdicts (initially). The coerced frame of reference to Communism in colonial India remained an acquiescent central leadership, and never the tasks or innovations of the local, ordinary partisans. The money needed to sustain the process of appealing came from British Communists. Before the arrest, the leaders did not popularise the Communist party among the workers or bring them within the party, there was no political relation between the leaders and the workers. The workers received these leaders as trade union members, not as their political party. The moment the strikes were withdrawn, the leaders abrogated all links with the workers. No monetary help could come from the workers for these distant leaders. On appeal, all sentences were reduced considerably. Sen observed: "Propaganda surrounding the Meerut conspiracy case has been carried on by both the erstwhile British rulers and the Communist

leadership now, especially Muzaffar Ahmed. From right after the case, the Communist leaders have turned it into their capital and kept investing it for forty years, as if their arrest and punishment in this case means half the task of revolution has already been accomplished. Muzaffar Ahmed keeps peddling pointless details of this case. Through this propaganda the Communist leadership seeks to hide its complete betrayal of the working class and Communist programme, of the 1930 Draft Platform of Action. They seek to regain the respect of the rebellious ordinary partisans which they have lost."[106]

Sen reflected on what he ascertained to be a dilapidated state of the Communist Party as the decade of 1930s was beginning. In truth, no Communist Party had been formed. Till 1930, there was no program, no constitution, no grassroot organisation of the party beyond the reclusive central committee conjured in 1925. Even during the strikes of 1928-29, no worker was brought into the party. When workers in Bombay, Nagpur, Kanpur, Sholapur, Calcutta, Madras and other places launched long strike movements against the anti-labour recommendations of a state enquiry commission, most of the leaders who were not incarcerated remained mired in clique politics and lobbying. M.N. Roy, ejected from the Communist International, openly allied with bourgeois parties within the trade union movements to undermine the strikes, and the Bombay strike struggle of 1929 failed as a direct result of Roy's machinations.[107] Inspired by the working class, the peasants, especially the agricultural labourers, started revolutionary struggle in the rural areas against feudal exploitation. It was through the 1928-29 struggles that the working class became more conscious and decoded the real nature of the British ruling class, foreign and indigenous capitalists and the local collaborators of British Government and factory-owners. The global economic downturn induced more workers and peasants into intense struggle. It was in this context that the Communist International devised and circulated the Draft Platform of Action of the CPI (to educate the Communist leaders who were indifferent to Marxism-Leninist theory and indulging in clique politics) which clearly stated that to ensure the victory of revolution, a proletarian Communist Party as the organiser and conductor of the toiling people was absolutely necessary. The immediate establishment of a centralised, disciplined, united and underground Communist Party was the primary and most critical task for the revolutionary anti-colonial

[106] *Ibid*, P-55-59.

[107] For more on M.N.Roy in similar vein: Bibliography.I.B.1, 3, 5-8.

struggle. Yet, no Communist Party was formed. The subsequent great struggles that emerged in 1930-32 in different regions – destabilising the feudal, imperial and capitalist exploitative system locally – remained without a leadership and was brutally suppressed. The Communist leadership willingly submitted to police arrest and saved their skin from revolutionary fire in the safe precincts of Meerut prison, only to deliver some fiery rhetoric.[108]

The errors of the Communist leadership during the mass struggle were glaring. The nation-wide revolutionary movement of the workers, peasants and middle classes of 1930-32 inaugurated a new chapter in the history of anti-colonial struggle on one hand, on the other it exposed the real nature of Communist leadership. The working class – whose party the Communist party should be – assumed a vanguard role in this national struggle and transformed it into a revolutionary struggle with the help of the peasants and the urban poor; the Communist leadership – however – concentrated intellectual attention on the Gandhi-controlled bourgeois leadership. Dubbing the entire struggle 'bourgeois Congress' struggle', they assumed the role of silent spectator. Sen related: when mass pressure compelled Congress to call for complete independence people everywhere joined the struggle and ignored all strictures of Gandhi to device their own protocols of struggle. On January 26, 1930, 100000 textile workers joined a rally for independence in Bombay. They countered the 'non-violent' slogans of Congress volunteers and raised slogans of 'long live revolution' and 'complete independence'. The people of Calcutta, Kanpur, Allahabad, Lahore and Madras celebrated the day with revolutionary fervour. The unflinching struggle of the different classes of ordinary people began to assume a revolutionary character: the revolutionary terrorism of the middle classes, the peasants' struggle against feudal exploitation and its author and defender – imperialism, working class struggle against foreign and indigenous monopoly capital and its defender – imperialism. All these struggles assumed the form of armed conflicts intent on beheading the feudal-capitalist-imperialist edifice of exploitation and oppression. He wrote: "The Communist leadership made fun of this revolutionary struggle by calling it 'a struggle of the bourgeois class', published ultra-revolutionary zeal, and remained intoxicated in clique politics. Their erroneous assessment of the 1930-32 struggles as a reformist movement seriously undermined the cause of the Communist party and militant trade unionism

[108] *Ibid*, P-59-66.

in colonial India."[109]

From a Communist partisan position, Sen re-activated insurrectionary episodes and instituted a radical new sequencing on rebellions against the colonial Indian state to recast the past in unique designs. And this was some time before (1968-1969) academic works of history began rescuing suppressed singularities of anti-colonial politics from the enormous condescension that bourgeois nationalist histories had hoisted on them. For Sen, the united armed struggle of workers and peasants in the city of Peshawar was an unprecedented event in the history of mass struggle. Armed workers, peasants and students were able to liberate the city from British rule for ten days. A Garhwal regiment, led by Chandra Singh, was sent to destroy the Peshawar insurrection. When an English General ordered this regiment to fire on a crowd of workers and peasants, they undermined the order and handed over their rifles to the masses. Subsequently, a large British regiment laid siege on the city, there was a massive deployment and operation using cannons, machine guns and aerial bombing. Only after innumerable people succumbed fighting this disproportionate onslaught was the insurrection defeated. Thereafter the historic insurrection of the working class in Sholapur appeared. "The workers occupied the city for seven days and established a full- fledged workers state in the image of Paris Commune", Sen stated.[110] Just as it was in Peshawar, the peasant masses in the areas adjoining Sholapur stood by the working class in complete solidarity. Though they could not enter the city piercing the draconian military laws and the British army, they destroyed police stations and erased all signs of British rule from a large adjoining rural area. They raised the flag of their working class comrades and sacrificed their lives in large numbers fighting the police and the military. Apart from these two insurrections, 1930-31 encountered the rebellions of the tribal Pathan, Afridi and Mohmand communities in the north western frontier region; the Naga community in Assam and a temporarily liberated Naga zone; the revolutionary struggle of Babar Akalis in Punjab; peasant rebellions in almost all corners of rural areas and a temporary lapse of feudal regime in many corners; the occupation of Calcutta for a day by the people; working class strikes and clashes with the state in various cities. 'These two years make for the pole star of people's democratic

[109] *Ibid*, P-63-64

[110] *Ibid,* P-64.

revolution against imperialism, big bourgeoisie and feudalism in India'.[111] All that the Communist leaders did was to arrange for a few meetings and congregations in a few cities to congratulate the workers and peasants. Initially, commemoration through observing 'Peshawar Day' and 'Sholapur Day' was included in the party's agenda, but it was dropped soon.[112]

Sen delved deeper into the role of the Communist leaders during the struggle: "The Communist leadership here is fundamentally anti-proletarian. They do not find time to bring conscious and struggling workers within the party; they leave the workers and peasants alone to face the attacks of imperialist ruling class, big bourgeoisie and feudal exploiters and submit to the police. They have no faith in the revolutionary power of the working class. Even after directly experiencing revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, they remain busy in internecine jousts. Although they exhibit mawkish devotion towards Lenin, they have no faith on Lenin's prescriptions."[113] As early as 1908, Lenin saw in a political strike of Bombay workers the beginning of a decimation of the British imperialist state. Through their stand during the struggle of 1930-32, these leaders undermined Lenin's thought. They ignored the Draft Platform of Action of 1930 proposed by the Communist International. When the workers of Sholapur were betting their lives in resisting the imperial army during their revolutionary insurrection, two party cliques in Bombay led by S.V. Deshpande and B.T. Ranadive were so engrossed in infighting that they forgot to proclaim the struggle in Sholapur – merely 150 miles away – among the Bombay workers. The Bombay working class could not assist the insurrection of their comrades in Sholapur. Ranadive and Deshpande deprived the workers of Sholapur from valuable support the politically conscious Bombay workers could have offered, and ensured the insurrection did not spread to Bombay. In the case of Peshawar, the Kirti Kisan Party of Punjab (under the Workers and Peasants Party of India) woke up belatedly, and sent a group of 200 Sikh Akalis to help the Peshawar insurrection. It was too late. The British army had already blockaded the city and the Sikh-Akali group was intercepted. That was the beginning and the end of the concern of Communist leadership for Peshawar. Sen believed that if the working class had its own political organisation the task of anti-imperialist people's democratic revolution would have most certainly been completed, and

[111] *Ibid,* P-64-65.

[112] *Ibid,* P-18.

[113] *Ibid,* P-66.

the British Empire would have ceased to exist. Lenin's prediction was supported by the existence of Sholapur's worker's insurrection. Sen contended: a true Communist Party freed from the Communist leadership could have neutralised the bourgeois leadership of Congress and Gandhi. An anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-capitalist people's democratic revolution could have been accomplished in the 1930s.[114]

The early 1930s was described by Sen as a time of heightened clique politics. In different regions of the country, each leader was busy creating circles of power along with their immediate followers and other petty bourgeois intellectuals. The Communist leaders wilfully neglected the task of building an all-India Communist party. There was a full-fledged power struggle to capture the different regional factions of the Workers and Peasants Party to establish personal authority. Though the Communist International asked different factions and circles to dissolve themselves by December, 1929, they were operative through the early 1930s, even among the arrested leaders in Meerut prison. This brought Sen to 'the captain of many a misdeed in the history of communist party, B.T. Ranadive'. This 'decorated university scholar' consistently practiced sectarianism sustained noticeably by a fictive and ultra-radical political path of socialist revolution devoid of any stake in the real. He divided the party in 1931, a fact that was swept under the carpet by Muzaffar Ahmed in the 1960s to save the big leader and primary theoretician of his party, CPI (M). Ranadive never accepted the Draft Platform of Action of 1930. As the primary agenda of the 1930 document was democratic revolution, he defied the program. Meanwhile, only retrospectively appropriating the name of Sholapur and Peshawar insurrection (without any rigorous enquiry into its politics), Ranadive surmised that in colonial India democratic revolution was unnecessary and the situation was ripe for a workers' socialist revolution. Realising all of a sudden that the Workers and Peasants Party was incapable of leading the socialist revolution, he formed his very own Bolshevik Party with his tiny group of followers in 1931. This party reunited with the Communist party again in 1934. Along with pro-Congress M. N. Roy, Subhas Basu and Kandalkar, Ranadive was one of the chief instruments in undermining working class unity in the trade union movement of the early 1930s.[115] Sen concluded: "The revolutionary struggle of 1930-32 established the validity of Communist

[114] *Ibid*, P-66-68.

[115] *Ibid*, P-69-74.

International and the 1930 programme. The Communist leadership undermined the programme primarily due to the power struggle between cliques in every region of the country. Their betrayal of the anti-colonial revolutionary struggle stunned the Communist International and other fraternal communist parties. Only one prior instance of such torrid betrayal can be recounted from the history of international Communist movements. That was the betrayal of the Kautsky-Hilferding group in Germany."[116]

This betrayal was certainly noticed. In May, 1932, the Communist Parties of China, Germany and Great Britain sent an open letter to Communists in colonial India harshly criticising the latter for their anti-struggle position during the contemporary anti-imperialist mass struggle. The letter asserted that the distrust of the Communist intellectuals towards the power and consciousness of the working class was manifest in this position. The will to steer clear of a country's political struggles weakened Communism. By calling the national revolutionary struggle a mere Congress movement, they increased the prestige and power of bourgeois Congress. The tasks of organising and leading the workers, purging the reformists from all mass organisations and building a Communist Party were completely ignored. Projecting proletarian interest as separate from the interest of a country's anti-colonial freedom struggle handed over the toiling masses and the petty bourgeoisie to the mercy of Congress and its so-called leftist fraction. This scathing criticism instilled some good sense into a part of the Communist leadership, but only temporarily. Some success in developing the institutional structure of the party and in the trade union field followed.[117]

IV

Bijan Sen, formerly a member of an underground revolutionary terrorist organisation, joined the Communist Party in the late 1930s. His observations on certain changes in the political canvass as the decade progressed were significant. The Gandhi-led Congress leadership was alarmed by the radical form of the workers' and peasants' revolutionary struggle. It betrayed the struggle first in 1932 and decisively in 1934, and submitted to British imperialism and its statist modulations.

[116] *Ibid*, P-74-75. Also see Bibliography IV.13.b, P-105-120.

[117] *Ibid*, P-76-79.

This caused a great tumult and resentment among member-groups within Congress, middle class and left-nationalist in orientation. From within jail they tried to find a new path for the anti-colonial struggle. They observed a new form of struggle among the workers, peasants and middle class youth emerging opposed to the Congress. The vacillations and capitulations of the bourgeois Congress was in sharp contrast to the unwavering commitment to struggle among the workers, peasants and students. The member-groups decided to bring them into Congress. The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed in 1934 as a result of this quest. Another process was underway among the revolutionary terrorist organisations of the middle class, educated youth. From 1929 to 1934, these middle class terrorists had carried on their struggle with bombs and revolvers. Many bloody attempts later, they failed. This failure made them search for a new way to achieve freedom beyond exclusive terrorism. Inside and outside prison, they delved into Marxism and the revolutionary ideology of the November Revolution in Russia. They ascertained the Communist Party to be the real of that revolutionary concept. After release from prisons and exiles, they joined the Communist party in large numbers and gave a new form to the party. All over colonial India, especially in Punjab, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh the party was strengthened with terrorists joining the party in hundreds. They brought into the Communist party their petty bourgeois character on the one hand; on the other they breathed a new revolutionary fervour into the party with their discipline, perseverance, courage, sacrifice, and dogged fidelity to an idea. Sen recapitulated that Lenin did praise this aspect of the anarchists/terrorists. Though the old Communist leadership failed to educate and inspire these new claimants of Communist subjectivity, the anti-colonial revolutionists tried to garner Marxist knowledge, method of work and ideology on their own, and in the process, built up workers' and peasants' movements in different provinces.[118]

From 1934, the united front approach to revolutionary politics was emerging, where anti-fascist politics of the Communist International and the Communist parties necessitated the formation of popular fronts in European countries and anti-imperialist united fronts in dependent, colonial countries. The Communist International stressed on unity with nationalist revolutionary forces in the colonial countries. The establishment of a close relationship with ordinary petty bourgeois members and leftist forces within Congress – to strengthen anti-imperialism – was prescribed as

[118]*Ibid*, P-79-80.

the urgent task of Communists. Sen appreciated the fact that the Communist leadership immediately responded to this call, and by the end of 1934, the Communist leadership reached out to the newly formed C.S.P. The latter welcomed this new method of politics. Leaders of C.S.P – including Jayprakash Narayan – were already certain about coalescing with the Communists. This front was to take over the reactionary leadership of the rightwing and Gandhi in Congress. Maintaining their autonomous existence, the Communists were to join the Congress and forge an alliance with the true anti-imperialist, leftist consolidations therein. The united front was to be soldered solely through the struggle of the masses under the leadership of the working class. The aim was to turn Congress itself into the united front, and inspire its ordinary members against the bourgeois leadership and towards an unflinchingly revolutionary struggle. Sen pointed out that the task of the united front was to devise a clear program of anti-imperialist struggle for complete decolonisation and establishment of a democratic government - rejecting dogmatic ideas of non-violence and pacifism.[119]

But united frontism failed, Sen argued. By January 1936, the Meerut session of the C.S.P. decided to confirm individual membership of the Communists within the party. For two months thereafter, the Communist leadership failed to reach a decisive response. With the consent of all factions P.C. Joshi was elected the General Secretary of the Communist Party. Joshi focused on the C.S.P. He instructed members from different regions to take membership in C.S.P, and by the same token, they became members of Indian National Congress. The central committee of the Communist Party brought out a secret publication called 'Communist' which was designed to guide the Communist members of the C.S.P in sustaining their factional interest within the C.S.P. A strange united front was forged. This front did not prepare the necessary program of united anti-imperialist struggle. It did not strive to clearly ascertain the enemy and the ally in the anti-imperialist struggle. There was no discussion on the ideology of the struggle. The conditions binding on such front were not decided upon. The Communist leaders merely created a factional interest within the C.S.P and stoked a rift. The internationalist path of struggle-centric unity was rejected. The Communist members of C.S.P were exclusively controlled by the central committee of the Communist Party. They were disallowed from abiding to the C.S.P leadership, while technically – as members of the C.S.P – they were committed to do as such. The central

[119] *Ibid,* P-84.

committee had the Communist members lure C.S.P party members into Communist Party and capturing C.S.P's mass organisations. The organisational aspects of united front suffered gravely as a result of the machinations of the Communist leadership. Instead of building up on partial struggles and democratic upsurges of workers and peasants as the basis of launching an anti-imperialist mass struggle, the Communists began capturing the C.S.P-led trade unions and peasant organisations.[120]

E.M.S Namboodiripad was a joint secretary of the C.S.P and the leader of its Kerala regional committee. He was entrusted with the responsibility of co-ordinating the affairs of the party in the entire southern India. In 1936, Namboodiripad along with his followers joined the Communist party and handed over the organisational structure of the C.S.P in the Tamil Nadu region to the Communists. Gradually, its Andhra organisation and then, the entire organisational structure in Madras province dissolved into the Communist Party. The pattern was repeated in various parts of northern India. The bitter antagonism that ensued fatally undermined the goals of an anti-imperialist united front. The Communist International reiterated these goals in November, 1936. Yet, the Communist leadership remained busy in factional conspiracies, increasing membership figures of the party through such conspiracies and 'capturing office quarters and signboards of other parties'. In this phase, the membership of the Communist Party increased manifold at the cost of the C.S.P. 'A rich jotdar (small landlord) like Namboodiripad' joined the party and donated 100,000 rupees to the party. In addition, 'he donated his bourgeois-leaning politics to the party' and increased the power of Joshi-leadership. "All was fine and neat, only the anti-imperialist united front died a pathetic death."[121]

For Sen, it could only get worse. The primary factor in this decay was P.C. Joshi's leadership. The different factions found a person who was not aligned to any existing faction – a student leader of Uttar Pradesh – P.C. Joshi. He remained the General Secretary of the party for twelve years, from 1936 to 1948. During his tenure the number of party members increased, from 150 to 5000, and the All India Kisan Sabha was founded. "In 1950, Joshi himself revealed his orientation in a letter to the central committee of the Communist Party after his expulsion (June,

[120] *Ibid*, P-88.

[121] *Ibid*, P-89-90.

1950): 'I was a student intellectual who was thrown into the highest post of leadership by a sudden historical development.' Joshi – trained exclusively in student's politics – became the leader of the party. When his leadership reached a ripe stage, he used to brag that he had never participated in working class movements. In sync with this braggadocio, he modelled the party leadership in his own image."[122] In that leadership, working class members never found a place, as they were either illiterate or scantly educated. A leader of Allahabad's student movement initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru, Joshi 'was found to be allergic to such people'. When Nehru was returning to his country from England after completing his education his father 'took him for a stroll in Moscow'. He picked up his 'fad for socialism on vacation'. Immediately after returning to colonial India, he structured a student's movement in Uttar Pradesh and preached his own version of socialism. It was this version that Joshi learnt from Nehru. He was loyal to Nehru, 'a Nehru-brand Communist'. Joshi converted the party into a student's party, and turned Communist politics into student's politics. In party committees, especially in urban areas, the leaders were all completely alien to working class movements and imported from student movements. The students who went to England to study, and returned to colonial India carrying cards from the Communist Party in Britain were indiscriminately absorbed by Joshi into Communist leadership. These barristers and academics formed a highly privileged elite clique within the Communist Party. This clique in turn turned the party leadership into a bureaucratic nexus.[123]

It was with the help of this clique that Joshi obstructed the revolutionary struggles of peasants and workers, and submitted the Communist Party to the will of the Gandhi-Nehru leadership in Congress. Though Joshi was expelled from the party leadership in 1948, 'the clique structured by him exists undiminished in the Communist leadership and runs the Communist party as a counter-revolutionary, bourgeois organ'. P.C. Joshi – 'a devotee of Nehru, a student leader, progeny of a sophisticated family', turned the Communist party into a full-fledged elite organisation by inviting 'sons and daughters of well-to-do families with high academic degrees, superficial gloss and expensive sartorial choices'. In that elite space the workers were not welcome, the peasants were spurned and members from poorer section of the middle class could

[122] *Ibid,* P-84.

[123] *Ibid,* P- 84-85.

not belong. They remained unappreciated and untouchable during the Joshi phase, as during all other times in the party's history. Not only in terms of organisation did Joshi make the party elite, he also was able to 'elevate' the politics of the party to the elite corridor of Nehru. The leadership became a stooge of Nehru's vision. Just as Nehru who (under the cover of his progressive and socialistic rhetoric) put the noose of negotiation on the people and thus entangled the country further into the tentacles of British and American imperialism, his follower Joshi used the rhetoric of Communism to 'sink many revolutionary struggles of workers and peasants mid-voyage'. He turned the Communist party into a vehicle of partitioning the country. In his 'misdeeds' the primary assist was provided by a group of 'degree-waving barristers and academics' and other elite individuals. However, the hardened early leaders of the party encouraged him too. Till 1948, they never raised a single objection to Joshi's acts, and allowed him to turn the Communist party into a protector of bourgeois and feudal interests. Yet by 1948, the tide of Telangana Revolution and the epochal Chinese Revolution swept Joshi's bourgeois leadership away.[124]

Sen returned to the sad fate of united front during Joshi's leadership. The principle of the united front – with space for different oppressed and exploited lower and middle classes – was the cornerstone of the intimately related ideas and practices of agrarian revolution, underground party logistics, area-wise seizure of power, guerrilla warfare, armed insurrection and democratic revolution as envisaged by many local Communist partisans.[125] Bijan Sen was a revolutionary and partisan of that order. The early phase of united front politics raised hope, Sen wrote. The most formidable impediment to anti-imperialist struggle was the big bourgeois and feudal leadership of Congress. Observing the revolutionary upheaval of 1919-22 and 1930-32 during expansive anti-imperialist struggle, Gandhi (in the interest of the bourgeois-feudal classes) shunned the path of struggle for good. He entered a term of permanent negotiation with imperialism. This leadership was resolute in avoiding the path of mass struggle. Hence, the Communist leaders declared through a propaganda pamphlet distributed during the Faizpur Session of Congress that 'the policy of the Communist Party is to liberate the ordinary members of Congress from the maze of Gandhi's reactionary, conservative program' (Sen quoted from

[124] *Ibid*, P-84-87.

[125] See Bibliography I.B.1,2,3, 5-8, 13-22.

Communist, Volume I, February 1937). But when the moment of reckoning – to turn this declaration into concrete action – came, the Communist leadership completely betrayed the principle of united front. By 1938, the influence of the leftists (C.S.P and Communists) on Congress increased manifold. A left-leaning nationalist group led by Subhas Basu took a new pro-struggle stand and joined the Socialists and Communists. Such occurrences within Congress made the promise of anti-imperialist united front politics much brighter and intensely threatened the authority of the anti-struggle and pro-negotiation Gandhi leadership. In 1939, when Subhas Basu was vying for the post of president of Congress for the second time, the Gandhi leadership carried intense propaganda against Subhas Basu. Communists, Socialists and other leftists supported Basu. The ordinary members of Congress and the common people of the country rallied behind him only because they saw in his election the call for active anti-imperialist struggle. Through the mobilisation surrounding this election the Gandhi-controlled bourgeois Congress leadership was already alienated from the people. Gandhi's candidate lost in the wake of this general fervour. In this moment of crisis, Gandhi and his followers resigned from the highest party committee (working committee) in an act of non-cooperation with Basu. At this point, the leftists could have easily gained complete control of Congress and begin anti-imperialist struggle. In that case, however, Congress was to split as Gandhi and his followers were to distance themselves from the party.

V

Sen wrote in the manner of anxious chorus: "At this critical juncture what will be the stand of Communist leadership? Will they assume the leadership of Congress along with Basu's collective and the Socialist party and depend on the pro-struggle workers, peasants and poorer section of the middle classes to launch an anti-imperialist struggle? Or will they submit to the inert, anti-struggle, pro-negotiation and defeated Gandhi leadership to maintain the meaningless, purposeless, ancient unity of Congress? Will the Communist leadership align with the revolutionary power of workers and peasants who defied innumerable attempts of the Gandhi-leadership to conduct unprecedented mass struggles in 1919-22 and 1930-32, and strengthen active struggle? Or will they strike unity with the counter-revolutionary Gandhi leadership, a servant of imperialism, big bourgeoisie and feudal class, and thus stifle the Communist

International and the anti-imperialist united front struggle?"[126] The answer was received in March 1939, during the Tripuri Session of Congress. The Communist leadership 'shook off their mask of Communism' and declared allegiance to the Gandhi leadership, a leadership which in two prior moments betrayed the anti-colonial struggle. The Socialists were left dumbfounded by this treacherous act of the Communist leadership. The people in colonial India declared their distrust towards the Gandhi leadership. By positing faith in that leadership, the Communist leadership coldly betrayed the masses. The bourgeois-leaning leadership of the Communist Party united with the bourgeois leadership of Congress.[127] The theoretical defence of this act started next, especially in the weekly Communist Party organ *National Front*. It was declared that for anti-imperialist struggle, a united front led by Gandhi was necessary; the leftists should not acquire absolute authority in the united front. The organ also said that in anti-imperialist movement, Gandhi had the power to attract the highest number of people. At such an important historical juncture, the extremely adverse effect of this somersault of the Communist leadership on ordinary members and empathisers of the party was tangible. Only one contemporary leader of the party protested against this act of betrayal. In a March, 1939 issue of National Front, Ajay Ghosh wrote that the submission to Gandhi's leadership undermined all previous stands of the party. Ghosh observed that the decision of the Communist leadership had created great confusion in the minds of members and supporters of the party. The general prestige of the Communists was seriously diminished. Ajay Ghosh raised the following questions: "Had not this event destroyed the Communists and all leftists? Did the Communists not follow a completely tailist policy? Were not the Communists completely paralysed by this sudden spectral will to unity? Had they not given up on fundamental Communist principles and programmes?" [128] Subsequently, the Communist leaders did indeed try to placate the masses and make the betrayal palatable for them. At the front of this task were two able candidates: Nehru-loyalists P.C. Joshi and S.G. Sardesai. Barring Ajay Ghosh, the entire central committee encouraged these efforts.[129] In the April 30, 1939 issue of the organ, Sardesai wrote that the Communists sought to co-operate with Gandhi because they ascertained that he assumed a progressive role. It was clear to

[126]*Ibid*, P-93.

[127]*Ibid*, P-93-94.

[128]Quoted in *Ibid*, P-94.

[129]*Ibid*, P-95.

Sardesai that at such a time, the leftists should not retain the old interpretation of Gandhism and Gandhi leadership. For Sardesai, the time was ripe for the expanding Communist Party to reinvigorate Gandhism with a new brand of nationalism. He urged all to accept the positive aspects of Gandhism. Thus far, Sardesai's contentions made for a rather feeble and vague defence of the act. But what interested Sen was Sardesai's assertion that 'this is the Gandhism that we have to resurrect, burnish and replenish' (National Front, April 30, 1939, P-189). Sen interpreted: "But, why resurrect redundant protoplasm, digging it up from a grave? The weak and paranoid petty bourgeois leadership of the party wanted to safeguard the concrete utopia of imperialism-big bourgeoisie-feudal class from the imminent storm of revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants, by precisely using Gandhism to confuse the workers and peasants. The people had already buried Gandhism and Gandhi leadership. Guided purely by their self-interest, the Communist leadership resuscitated Gandhism, decked it up to slaughter the pro-struggle workers and peasants."[130] P.C. Joshi ensured that all organisations and activities of the party remained a tailpiece of Gandhi leadership. Joshi argued that even the reformist national bourgeoisie could be drawn into anti-imperialist struggle. He also instructed that local struggles of the working class against the capitalists to seek the support and co-operation of Congress leadership.

To understand the meaning and effect of this betrayal in terms of Communist revolutionary theory, Sen read Joseph Stalin's speech delivered at a meeting of students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East on May 18, 1925: "The Political Task of the University of the People of the East". This speech had a very important role in the formation of Ray's thought, and his concept of united front politics. Stalin said: "In some of these countries, India for example, capitalism is growing at a rapid rate, giving rise to and moulding a more or less numerous class of local proletarians….The fundamental and new feature of the conditions of life of colonies like India is not only that the national bourgeoisie has split up into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but primarily that the compromising section of this bourgeoisie has already managed, in the main, to strike a deal with imperialism. Fearing revolution more than it fears imperialism, and concerned more about its money-bags than about the interests of its own country, this section of the bourgeoisie, the richest and most influential section, is going over

[130] *Ibid*, P-95-96.

entirely to the camp of the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution, it is forming a bloc with imperialism against the workers and peasants of its own country. The victory of the revolution cannot be achieved unless this bloc is smashed. But in order to smash this bloc, fire must be concentrated on the compromising national bourgeoisie, its treachery exposed, the toiling masses freed from its influence, and the conditions necessary for the hegemony of the proletariat systematically prepared. In other words, in colonies like India it is a matter of preparing the proletariat for the role of leader of the liberation movement, step by step dislodging the bourgeoisie and its mouthpieces from this honourable post. The task is to create a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc and to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in this bloc."[131] The clear path that Stalin proposed for Communist partisans like Ray as early as in 1925 was completely denigrated in 1939 by the Communist leaders in colonial India. Instead of 'dislodging the bourgeoisie and its mouthpieces from (their) honourable post', they reestablished them in that post and tied the entire Communist party, its policies and even the working class to the tail of Congress. The capitulation of the Communist leaders to the big bourgeoisie was complete.

As Sen observed, 1935-38 was also a period when elections became a more integral part of statist mechanism. At this time, along with the struggling workers and peasants of British India, peasants and subjects of 500 princely states joined the revolutionary struggle for liberation from imperialism and the feudal princes. Bourgeois-feudal Congress was turning this struggle into a movement for piecemeal reforms in the feudal structure, while the Communist leaders retained safe distance from local struggles and were forging a vacuous leftist unity without class and mass struggle.[132] The contemporary elections seemed to have founded a fateful legacy of superficial, depthless, tokenistic changes and of temporary alacrity. Sen noted that the discourse around elections did increase the political awareness of the people and almost all parties managed to increase membership figures considerably. The number of trade unions increased, peasant fronts were opened. Initially, neither Congress nor the Communists stood by the masses in British India and especially the princely states; they had to sustain its struggle without a leadership. Even after the massive betrayal of Communists, the C.S.P and the newly founded Forward Bloc of Subhas Basu joined hands with the former to form the Left Consolidation Committee as a response to the

[131]Bibliography IV.21.b.

[132]*BCPIR,* P-19.

'self-renewing revolutionary mentality of the masses'. The masses were instantly drawn to this consolidation due to its pro-struggle, anti-imperialist position. But the Communist leaders – exhibiting what was by then an established trait – restricted them to economism. The working class strikes of this period were resolute and protracted, soldered through immense sacrifices made by the workers. But the Communist leadership either forgot or carefully avoided connecting these struggles to anti-imperialist, anti-big bourgeois and anti-feudal democratic revolution, to the socialist ideal. The most remarkable failure of the Communist leadership in this period was in the arena of rural movements. During the unprecedented peasant struggles of this era the Communist leadership meticulously erased the question of anti-feudal democratic revolution. These struggles were kept confined to the demands of reducing rent and canceling the debts of peasants, and turned the peasants into objects of pity and charity for imperialists and the feudal class. The most startling development of the late 1930s was the Communist 'Memorandum on the Permanent Settlement' submitted to the Floud Commission convened by the Fazlul Haque ministry of Bengal to review landlordism in Bengal. In this memorandum the Communist leadership proposed the abolition of landlordism by compensating the landlords. Through this proposal, the leadership 'undermined Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, the Communist International, and the programme of 1930'. This was the reason why the 'Communist leadership did not really object to the Congress government's suspension of landlordism in 1950s with compensation to the landlords'.[133]

Before the second imperialist war began – Sen related – Congress leadership declared that it was against both imperialism and fascism. But as the war started, the Congress did not take a clear stand on the war and merely demanded to know the future plans of the British colonial Government. Active resistance to the imperialist war effort was eschewed and the path to negotiation with imperialism was left open. On the other hand, Socialist party and Subhaschandra Basu declared explicitly that even in the unlikely scenario of the British Government agreeing to bestow freedom, they would struggle against the imperialist war. If the British government tried to entangle the colony into the war, they would organise a nation-wide mass struggle. Again, the Communists chose to align with the indecisive Congress leadership. Instead of *opposing* the war effort, the Communist leadership, 'in true Gandhian spirit', chose

[133] *Ibid*, P-101.

noncooperation with it. Through their organs and Gandhian rhetoric they tied the fate of the masses to Gandhi and the bourgeois leadership and relinquished their role in sustaining the anti-imperialist and national liberation struggle of the workers and peasants. This powerful betrayal stood out 'sorely'. The working class of colonial India was the first in the world to declare opposition to the second imperialist war when 90,000 workers in Bombay called a strike on October 2, 1939. Serious economic demands placed boldly by millions of workers on wartime imperialism ensured that 150,000 workers in Bombay - on a strike for forty days – wrested a dearness allowance. The peasant masses struggled relentlessly against the main pillar of imperialism – the rural exploiters. They succumbed to bullets and scaffolds unflinchingly. The most significant episode was the Kayyur uprising of 1940 led by local Communists in Malabar against the landlords, rich peasants and moneylenders.[134]

In November 1939, the Communist leadership raised the slogan of turning the imperialist war into a revolution. British imperialism was expected to carry on strengthening the reactionary forces in the colonies, and the politbureau of the party did not see imperialism gifting freedom to the colonies. Hence it was the responsibility of the people to use the war-crisis of imperialism in a revolutionary manner and accomplish national liberation. The politbureau reckoned capturing state power was the necessary and immediate task. Seemingly impressed this far, Sen asked: "But who, who can use the war-crisis in a revolutionary manner? And we get this answer from the Communist leaders: it is not working class, but Gandhi-controlled nationalist leadership of Congress".[135]

P.C. Joshi's explanation[136], Sen described, hinged on the assumption that the national leadership of Congress controlled a massive portion of the people politically. However, the mass revolts and area-wise seizures of power (that Bijan Sen sequenced and many local Communist documents attested to[137]) that were autonomous from Congress, both in terms of infrastructure and leadership, indicated that this was an erroneous assumption. If imperialism managed to lure this

[134] *Ibid*, P-102-103.

[135] *Ibid*, P-103.

[136] Bibliography I.C.18.b.

[137] See Bibliography I.B.

leadership then most people would opt out of struggle, Joshi opined. On the other hand, imperialism was not prepared to offer the bourgeois much political or economic privilege. Imperialism was apparently counting on the weakness of this leadership and its fear of mass movements. However, the same leadership tended to use mass struggle as bait in negotiation and compromise. Sen stopped reading Joshi and argued that the only conclusion that could be reached from Joshi's sprawling explanation *must have been* that the Congress leadership was incapable of initiating and conducting a mass struggle. [In his calm, step-intensive analysis of an adversary's text or speech, Sen obstructed the author intermittently and asked questions in the gait of a confused, logical, partisan and contrarian listener. The language and pacing of Sen's account encapsulated a sense of simultaneous exasperation and doggedness with a text/speech and created an enlightened mirth which was typically suited for reading circles or local meetings of revolutionaries and the ordinary, disillusioned members of the Communist parties. Sen repeated the strong phrases, words, sentences and assessments he used in the preceding paragraph consciously, and then conjoined them to the new argument of the ongoing paragraph to form long, complex, yet easily comprehensible sentences. This imbued the written articles with the effect of a speech or informal lecture to a very involved audience.] Sen revealed that the Communist leader actually arrived at the opposing conclusion. Joshi stated that the struggle for freedom and against war could only spread far across the nation and succeed only if Congress leadership led the struggle. Sen cut in again to ask: how exactly could the Gandhi leadership be convinced to launch a struggle? The unconvincing answer of the leadership was: by stirring intense anti-war feeling among the people and Congress members, and thus compelling the leadership into the path of struggle, by criticising and exposing the Congress leadership – thus stopping them from negotiating with imperialism. This nebulous effort – to basically retain the authority of Congress leadership by any means – would somehow result in Congress-organised satyagrahas turning into mass insurrection. Rigour was not the forte of Communist leadership.

In the 1940 Manifesto of the Communist Party, the Communist leadership expressed strong faith in a coming struggle that will destroy imperialism. But it was again asserted that "only Congress will initiate the struggle"[138]. The primary task of the party became convincing the inert Congress leadership through organizing big meetings, rallies and processions. The Communist leaders

[138] Quoted in *Ibid,* P-105.

'chirped gleefully' in the manifesto that they feel they were standing at the very gate to victory. But they politely handed the key to open the gate over to the loyal servant of imperialism, the big bourgeoisie and the feudal class – Gandhi. The Communist leadership asserted that for any other entity to initiate struggle would be adventurist and divisive to the cause of the co-ordination of national forces. As early as in 1925, Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) prescribed the alienation of the compromising bourgeois leadership from the national struggle – a leadership who had betrayed the revolutionary struggle of workers and peasants for their own material benefit. The Communist leadership in the 1940s did exactly the opposite and submitted to the 'great Congress dictator' Gandhi. Gandhi was to initiate and lead struggle. Alert on the rear, the Communists will then simply convert the struggle to mass insurrection and revolution. Such 'uncanny understanding' of mass insurrection and revolution could only come from the 'very able' Communist leadership.[139]

Sen also discussed the question of war and revolution. The slogan of turning an imperialist war into a civil war and revolution was raised by Lenin during the first imperialist war. Based on this slogan, he thought the thought of democratic and socialist revolution in Russia, and the revolution attained victory. But that revolution was 'not accomplished under the leadership of Russian bourgeoisie and imperialism's ally Kerensky', but under the leadership of the proletariat. And the 'captains of Communism' in colonial India – trying to 'ape Lenin' in raising the slogan of transforming imperialist war into mass insurrection, revolution and national liberation – welcomed Gandhi to assume the leadership of the actual struggle. One can easily locate capitulation to imperialism, big bourgeoisie and feudalism piercing the revolutionary rhetoric. They wanted the imminent revolutionary struggle to fail. "The Communist leadership has since long sold themselves to the bourgeois-feudal classes. In 1930-32, during second imperialist war, thereafter and always, the Communist leadership has followed the rules of the bourgeois-feudal state. They are antagonistic to proletarian leadership. They never imagined that anti-imperialist struggle could be sustained by linking the politically conscious, striking workers in the cities, the peasants who were spontaneously rising against the feudal rural order in different places of the country and the precarious, intellectual sections of the middle classes."[140]

[139] *Ibid*, P-105-106.

[140] *Ibid*, P-106-107.

In 1940-41, though the entire force of workers and peasants were lacking an organisation and the Communist Party was still out of touch with them, instead of building up the united struggle of workers and peasants for democratic revolution against imperialism, bourgeoisie and feudal class, "the Communist leadership abruptly announced the 'proletarian path' of working class revolution and simply declared a 'civil war'. At that time, though most central and provincial leaders of the party were incarcerated, hyper-revolutionaries P.C. Joshi and Gangadhar Adhikary carried on a very intense 'civil war', exclusively through pamphlets and papers, from some secret resting place. By their complete inertness, the leadership prepared the party for their future role of servitude towards imperialism, bourgeoisie and feudalism. They had never been in touch with the worker and peasant masses."[141]

From 1942 till 1945, as the leaders of bourgeois-feudal Congress drifted away from the masses and the path of struggle, the Communist leadership accompanied them to make peace with imperialism on one hand, and act as the devoted servant of Congress and the Muslim League, both controlled by the bourgeois and feudal classes. The primary tasks of the Communist Party in this period was arranging rapprochement between different Congress and League leaders and explaining concepts to the 'patriotic' Congress workers. Deliberately peddling a wrong interpretation of the people's war, they also invested themselves in cooperating with British imperialism and started permanently endorsing higher production and output in industrial and agrarian sectors as the primary political path of workers and peasants.[142] In 1946, a memorable

[141] *Ibid*, P-20.

[142] See Bibliography III.B. The newspaper editions of the time also tell us about how the Communist leadership whipped up a fear of an absolutely inevitable Japanese fascist incursion into Bengal to proscribe revolutionary politics of ordinary local partisans, especially May-July issues, 1942. The leadership proposed and permanently enshrined a statist, productionist, high industrial, macroeconomic, ethical manner of apolitics instead. The historical implication of this general proscription of inventive politics had been enquired (in terms of 'nationalism' or the legitmising idea of Indian state) by Indivar Kamtekar (See Bibliography IV.150.i), related – in this historian's pithy formulation – to a process of the 1940s which attained perfection in the Indian state of 1947 and continues to the twenty-first century: "the state had swollen enormously, employing many times more manpower and spending many times more money; but the time when it can effectively extract resources from the dominant classes has not yet come." (See Bibliography IV.150.ii, P-221) In the 1940s "even as the more prosperous sections gained from rise in

year in the history of mass struggle in colonial India, the state's navy, air-force, army and police rebelled and the workers and peasants organised revolutionary struggles. In such a situation, with no mass contact, the Communist Party betrayed and murdered all ongoing mass struggles. They actively supported the 'reactionary Pakistan slogan' and helped the imperialist plan to partition the country. But the Communist leadership was not going to quit so easily. Even after 1947, when Congress and Muslim League regimes 'were planted by imperialism on two portions of a partitioned territory', the Communist leadership brandished and popularised it as 'independence' – precisely to befuddle the workers and peasants.[143]

Bijan Sen's understanding of the history of Communist Party or what he called the 'Communist leaders or leadership' in the late 1940s and the subsequent decades revolved round the Telangana Revolution. In 1948, the ultra-left Ranadive leadership assumed power within the Communist party and turned it into an enemy of democratic revolution. Right after assuming leadership – in the name of socialist revolution – Ranadive first attacked the struggle for democratic revolution (Telangana revolution) and then his accomplices in Bengal attacked a threatening Tebhaga struggle. Against feudal exploitation, the 1946-48 Tebhaga struggle in Bengal started as an economic struggle, but in various locations it reached the stage of political struggle. The efforts of Ranadive and his accomplices stopped this political struggle to assume a permanently revolutionary character. Stuck in the economic space, the struggle failed. The conspiracy of rightwing, leftwing and centrist leadership of the party against the people's democratic

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agricultural prices, and the profits of industrialists flowed like water through the tax net, up to three million people died in the Bengal Famine." (*Ibid*, P-220). Within the same Bengal "the children of Bengal Renaissance" (*Ibid*, P-218) remained unaffected and prosperous. Many Communists did indeed plot the famine as a question of political power and the exact political fate of colonial state-society-economy complex – and not as a moral or economic disaster (See for example Bibliography I.B.31). In the most deeply affected areas like Medinipur, this happened after the 1947 'independence': "In the sharecropping region alienation of land was hastening because of the pressure of indebtedness compiled by moneylenders and the government on one hand and an increased cost of living on the other. To further hike the price of rice (for profiteering and black-marketing) and also to stifle the gathering storm of anti-landlordism, the rural rich – organised as Indian National Congress – had stopped advances and loans in kind, while the colonial state machinery of Congress – adamant not to write off the loans from the Bengal famine years, especially with the tillers organising movements for waiver – was not providing any manner of relief." (See Bibliography I.B.34)

[143]*BCPIR*, P-21.

revolution in Telangana from 1946 to 1952 marked them as 'rabid enemies of revolution'. Right-winger P.C. Joshi and his group consistently acted to obstruct the revolutionary path of Telangana struggle with the will to plant a united Congress-League regime under the supervision of Nizam. Ultra-left Ranadive and his accomplices raised the empty slogan of socialist revolution to stifle Telangana revolution. Centrist Ajay Ghosh and his followers expended great effort to use the 'peaceful election' of 1952 to have the revolution surrender to the army of Nehru government and the Nizam, forces which attacked the free workers' and peasants' state in Telangana. Though the rightwingers and leftwingers failed to stop the revolution, the centrists were 'successful in destroying it'.[144]

The betrayal of the Communist leadership was ascribed to a basic irrationality. It can be illustrated thus: the leaders and the ordinary partisans agreed that "description plus [145] prescription = party programme". From this premise the leaders presented: "party programme minus prescription = party programme", which was untenable. The partisans rebelled against the leadership by simply pointing out that "party programme minus prescription = description".[146] Ordinary partisans like Sen were not oriented towards consolidating knowledge. The Communist leadership including Joshi, Adhikary, Dange and Ranadive, in Sen's understanding, always erased the interventionist decisiveness of the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin (to use them for descriptive projects) and thus diluted Marxism-Leninism. More serious was their disavowal of the significance of democratic revolution in China, of Mao Tse-tung's role in the revolution. "The two factions of the Communist leadership, the 'Dange party' (CPI) and the 'Marxist party' (CPI-M), both ride on these distortions and erasures to ensure continued service to big bourgeoisie and landlords, and a rejection of democratic revolution prescribed by the programs of 1928 and 1930. These are parties without any programme whatsoever."[147]

Sen posited class struggle as political struggle, or simply politics, and accused the Communist

[144] *Ibid,* P-21-22.

[145] The plus sign here is neither combinatory nor heterogenising, it only generates separation. On the category of separation, see Bibliography IV.48, P-41-45.

[146] For discussion on the categories of description and prescription in politics, see Bibliography IV.48, P-93-96.

[147] *BCPIR,* P-22-23.

leadership of abandoning politics altogether. In the history of Communist party, the 'primary corruption' of the central leadership was the rejection of class struggle. In the economic space, the Communist party had always invested itself in building up struggles for wage hike and rent-reduction with workers and peasants. But these struggles were kept within the economic confines by the leadership. They prohibited politics, and many struggles failed to assume revolutionary form. Yet, from 1930 through to the Telangana Revolution, many revolutionary struggles were built *despite* the active resistance of the Communist leadership. All of these were either ignored or stopped by the leadership. "During the recent (1967) peasant struggle in Naxalbari the shrill alarm raised by both CPI and CPI (M) has not yet stopped reverberating", Sen observed. The moment the leadership saw the spark of political struggle in the economic struggle of the peasants of Naxalbari, they fell in sync with the bourgeois-landlord's Congress Government and whipped up paranoia against the event. It became clear "what fiendish role these dubiously-named 'Communist' parties will assume when the democratic revolution strengthens further."[148] The emphasis, even obsession with economic struggle was not without some basic theoretical posture, Sen wrote. Sen saw the Communist leadership as functioning within the paradigm he called the 'Bhoodan experiment' – which replaced politics with a macro-economic, bureaucratic-managerial approach to redistribution of land/wealth; a call for Gandhian social justice for the poor, instituted from above (by the state and its parliament and funded by elite, conscientious gifts, donations and charity; a reconciliatory, conservative and anti-struggle approach to stark antagonism). The destruction of Telangana revolution in 1952 was 'the historic moment of the Communist leadership abdicating revolutionary programme for good', and of its permanent capitulation to big bourgeoisie and feudal classes. After 1952, the party became an entirely election-centric party. The parliamentary path in lieu of a revolutionary path was its sole political agenda. This rigid parliamentarianism of the Communist party was a culmination of its long anti-revolutionary stand. From the 'debris of Telangana', the Communist leadership 'plucked out two methods': the acceptance of election to legislative assemblies as their political ideal in the place of conducting the democratic revolution; and devising an alternative to agrarian revolution in the form of the Gandhi-inspired Bhoodan experiment. These made up for their Janus-faced policy in service of the bourgeoisie and feudal classes. The subsequent times saw genuine affection exchanged publicly between Vinoba Bhave, the leader of Bhoodan and the Communist

[148] *Ibid,* P-23.

leadership. Namboodiripad and Bhowani Sen welcomed Bhave with great fanfare to Kerala and West Bengal respectively. By supporting him, they 'sacrificed peasant insurgency and agrarian revolution in the altar of Bhoodan'. Bhave blessed the leadership, too, as the solution to agrarian problem that the Communist leadership endorsed *was* Bhoodan. The two Communist parties were 'unmitigated collaborators of the big bourgeois and feudal classes' whose regime – the Indian state – in the late 1960s faced a crisis and failed to stem the people's revolutionary struggles. Hence, along with all other bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties the Communist parties rushed to safeguard the regime by forming regional ministries under the garb of united front. The electoral path ensured ministry-formation. "When revolutionary crisis deepens, the enemies of democratic revolution organise themselves. We should remember Marx's dictum that only revolution consolidates counter-revolutionary forces. During the present revolutionary struggle, too, the counter-revolutionary forces are alert. The commanding height in this counter-revolution has been assumed by what Sundarayya describes as a bourgeois and petty bourgeois stronghold – the two Communist parties in nationalist (post-1947) India. The so-called United Front in West Bengal is the organised form of counter-revolution. This is the irreversible conclusion to a betrayal that has lasted four decades."[149]

VI

Sudhir Bhattacharya was a Communist who plotted politics as rare, sequential, inventive and in the order of subjective. He grasped politics as a singularity – stitched with subjective protocols and militant thought; evanescent in construction of new subject-bodies, axioms, manifestos, programmes and prescriptions – refusing subjugation to and generating separation from history, culture, economy, society and certainly state. He categorised politics as subjective production of equality, sameness and universalism. Suprakash Ray extracted this affirmative doctrine of politics from his basic partisan reading of Lenin and Mao on one hand, and of documents and pamphlets emerging from Communist platforms/partisan-bodies in Bengal, Andhra and other areas of the colonial-national territory of the Indian state. He codified and projected his thought through the category of 'ordinary partisans' who rebelled against the Communist leadership. The Communist leadership was instituting a regime of strict economism and reformism on the

[149] *Ibid,* P-24-25.

ordinary partisans and insurgent populations of this territory. Economism, reformism and revisionism in general made for a complex project. Its core assertion was on vitality, repetitiveness and finitude and on the necessity of ordinary creatural survival – with a reactive/relational conception of violence and an overpowering fear of an omnipresent yet immeasurable evil (of its own theistic construction). It welcomed difference-thinking in as much as it could be resolved by appealing to God or the language of the State, reduced universalism to loss of human lives and got mired in the particularisms deemed non-threatening by the Indian state. Suprakash Ray and the ordinary Communist partisans were opposing this assertion with a nuanced and difficult atheist politics wherein contingency was the sole necessity – a contingency that was nevertheless frontally and rationally determined with decision, partisanship and intellectual categories, never inserted into a secret conscience. This contingency was reciprocally coded in the terms class struggle, politics, political plane, event, dictatorship of proletariat or socialism, Communist party, idea of Communism, truth (as the exceptional and the new, discontinuous with life, state and economy), people's war, area-wise seizure of power (red political power), democratic revolution, mass line and united front (under the condition of a war of resistance). This truth-procedure unfolded in the material topology of the Indian state – the latter interrogated rationally by ordinary partisans with no concession to the supposed inscrutable indeterminacy of the state that contributed to its massive legitimacy and aura. Violence was non-relational and singular in this thought, with no a priori/posteriori judgment involved. Good and evil were amenable to decisions in the partisan scheme of things. Nothing was deferred in partisanship. Freed from the control of historical consciousness and evolution, time was a subjectivated category for ordinary Communist partisans, a time that did not proscribe immediacy of thought and action.[150] These were the terms that also constituted the antagonism between the revisionists and Bolshevik party (from 1902 till at least 1920) or between Russian Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party (in the 1960s).

Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) was the key here. Through his relentless thought of scission (in dialectics), imperialism, bourgeois state, militarism of international political order, revolutionary

[150]See for the thought of this paragraph Bibliography IV.22, 28, 42, 44, 48, 49, 55, 56, 59.v.1 (Walter Benjamin, "Critique Of Violence", pp. 236-252), 63, 96, 97, 125.a (Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History").

alliance with peasantry, partisan warfare and the soviet or commune concept (socialism as proletarian democracy) Lenin enabled rational[151] enquiry of the singularity of contingency (or of anything implicated in a radical imbalance in knowledge of thought) while simultaneously and courageously transitioning out of historicism, classism, pure empiricism and epistemological conservation.[152] Communism was anticipated and prefigured in every act and thought of the ordinary partisans.[153] Profoundly non-fascist in their complete eschewal of the historical/moral community[154] – and thus of adequation of truth and of hermeneutic resolution of intractable singularities[155] – the ordinary partisans in fact rejected any stricture of pre-given unities like the "fables of Indian nationalism"[156], the archimetaphysics of 1947[157] or parliamentary democracy

[151] The category of 'rational' in this biography – or in the statements of the ordinary partisans – appears in a specific form. It can be called 'aleatory rationalism': "Where dogmatic rationalism asserts the sovereignty of 'reason' qua cognitive faculty harbouring the ends of our activity (whether manual or intellectual) and guaranteeing our orderly dwelling in a predictable categorized world…aleatory rationalism affirms the potency of thought as that which is defined precisely by the discontinuous invention of means for wagering on novelty and forcing the dysfunction of the categories that partition worlds into distinct domains that can be overseen, counted and controlled…There is no sovereign subject of rationality, only rational subjects elicited by a decision on an event and caught up in the aleatory construction of singular universal truths. Consequently there is no thought outside of its dissemination in these procedures." (See Bibliography IV.98, P-266) It is opposed to 'scientistic rationalism' that "presents itself as the scientific or quasi-scientific discourse in exteriority on forms of consciousness, representations and 'prenotion'…(and) 'prohibits the possibility of knowledge of thought' . The ordinary partisans declare that 'there is no one problematical process of stating the real' and 'proposes…a field of rational, debatable and refutable knowledge'. (See Bibliography IV.48, P-54-58)

[152] See Bibliography IV.20-31.

[153] See Bibliography I.B.28, 37, 71-104, 107, 108, 109-112 and Bibliography IV.6-31.

[154] See Bibliography IV.49.

[155] See Bibliography IV.134.

[156] Bibliography IV.133.

[157] The specific manner in which '1947' is an archimetaphysics is an incessant and rapid rolling between two frames of reference to the Indian state: a. as the legitimate power which through its policies will guide its populations to a full rationalisation/decolonisation of society and economy along capitalist path wherein extra-economic coercion will gradually be entirely nullified, enabling the inhabitants to think of higher freedoms. b. as the supreme dispenser of ethical ideology (phrased in relativist extolling of vague religious, moral and communitarian values) which will ensure that structural transformations envisaged from the standpoint of politics never kill a human animal, but structural transformations instituted in the name of history will certainly demand (often supreme) sacrifice from those human animals with inadequate or no private property (in return – unlike in the territories of some other

without shores. The Communist leadership consistently upheld these mythical unities to stifle the (evident) subjective will of the ordinary Communists and rebels to thought, partisanship, infinity, eternity and immortality; it emerged as a successful and powerful modern clinic for curing an astoundingly wide range of 'maladies' and 'perversions' in present or potential Communistic elements (like Suprakash Ray) amongst the people administered by the Indian state. We name only a few: 'daredevilry', 'recklessness', 'hoax-mongering', 'terrorism', 'bragging', 'readiness to become contract-killers', 'antisocial gangsterism', 'sheer madness', 'absurdism', 'intellectual emptiness', 'monstrosity', 'impatience', 'delusion', 'hallucinatory sickness', 'lack of common sense', 'cop-killing tendency'.[158] Though all of this made absolutely no inventive contribution to Communist revolutionary theory, the Communist leadership's role in maintaining the law and order of Indian state and the psychological-behavioral hygiene of 'Indian' society was massive. In its admirably "stupid materialism"[159], all summons to scission, eternity, immortality and infinity attended thoughtfully by ordinary Communist partisans (often in the face of counter-revolutionary power) could be tamed – through a non-rigorous reproach of abstraction – into a language of technocratic (statist, macroeconomic, planned, productionist) finitude. The clinic and its medicine offers "modern man the obstinate, yet reassuring face of his finitude"; in it, "death is endlessly repeated, but it is also exorcized; and although it ceaselessly reminds man of the limit that he bears within him, it also speaks to him of that technical world that is the armed, positive,

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nation-states – these human animals have – before or after 1947 – never experienced free universal health-care, unemployment-cover and education-based welfarism and been trained not to expect/demand these). There is absolutely no allocation for novelty in this strict primer, but plenty for expansionism and ombudsmanship. The genocidal/enslavement imperative of the so-called right-wing organisations in India is precisely a legitimate mastery of this archimetaphysics: it simply proposes to construct an absolute communitarian majority – to magnify the power of the already operative and adequately murderous capitalist consensus – by exterminating the minority communities or turning them into acquiescent labour camps pure and simple. A final, massive extra-economic coercion to end all extra-economic coercions forever – a *ramrajya* or Hindu utopia. The so-called secular, regional and leftist parties (or the Communist leadership) are content with ombudsmanship and occasional chair. Indian National Congress is – of course – the 'God' in this inadvertently colossal theology. See Bibliography I.B.28, 37, 48, 110-112; Bibliography IV.122 and IV.49.

[158] For relevant documents from which these diagnoses have been culled out, see Bibliography I.C.45.

[159] Bibliography IV.17, P-274.

full form of his finitude".[160] The Communist leadership was inevitably the first authority to ban any rigorous thought procedure that advanced indifferent to the language of the Indian state.

The method devised by the Communist leadership – for this clinical and therapeutic imperative – was effective. Lenin was projected exclusively as the disciplinarian of organisational centralism and ideological centrism. The pamphlet "'Left-wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder"[161] had been Lenin's sole work that received consistent mention in the statements of the Communist leadership, accompanying complete erasure of all his inventive interventions outlined above. This covered up the break between a certain Marxism and Leninism. Marxism for revisionist thinkers became a theory of historical consciousness, where history played a constraining role on politics. Lenin inaugurated political consciousness as a separate procedure[162] and demonstrated the very existence of politics as singular and partisan – a decision, an intervention, a taking of side, and a thought that was prescriptive. Politics proceeded as an immediately universalising truth procedure. The texts that through the 1900s and 1910s – from *What is to be done* (1902) to *Guerrilla Warfare* (1906), from *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism* (1916) to *April Thesis* (1917) – proposed this powerful project of thought, were indeed rigorously attended to in the statements of the ordinary partisans.[163] The corresponding blankness that the Communist leadership had to offer was glaring.[164] This evasion allowed them to deploy Leninism/Communism in the most instrumental and perfunctory manner possible – as a superficial distinguishing mark within the Indian parliament and press: projecting a *variant* of statist party competing for attention with many statist parties arranged in the showcase of Indian state. "There is Lenin's work, accessible in the form of his *Collected Works*, which in no way means that one can decide a priori that the theses in these thousands of texts are internally homogeneous and coherent. The existence of such a work does not mean continuity, homogeneity, unity. This issue is important for two reasons. The first is that we can raise vis-à-vis Lenin's writings the same question that Althusser raised in relation to Marx, that is, what are

[160]Bibliography IV.121, P-244-245.

[161] Written in April-May 1920; Published in pamphlet form, in June 1920. See Bibliography IV.14.

[162] See Bibliography IV.48, P-41-44.

[163] See as examples Bibliography I.A.11, I.B.18, 28, 37.

[164] See Bibliography I.C.

the first texts in which we can say that Marx was a Marxist…"[165] Lenin's destitution at the behest of the Communist leadership refused such intellectual rigour and turned Leninism into a practice of anecdotes.[166]

In "Left-wing Communism" Lenin inclined towards a mystification of capitalist power as something capable of an indeterminate variation of antiworkers' responses. Antonio Negri interrogated the document: "The nexus between class action and capitalist restructuring is destroyed and organization becomes a fetish. The forecasting of capitalist comportments is flattened into sociological analysis in the recovery of economism. The naturalism and anarchist utopianism of the notion of the state become characteristic of the international communist movement, on the left and, more frequently, on the right. The exigencies of 1920 end up barring an understanding of capitalist development and of the transformations of working-class composition in the 1920s and 1930s. In the hands of the Dimitrovs and Togliattis, *Left-Wing Communism* becomes a reactionary weapon."[167] In the 1960s, the ordinary partisans in Bengal and other areas explicitly rejected the politics of Dimitrov (united frontism without thought of resistance) and Togliatti (trade unionism without politics). But the Communist leadership retained them in their irrational and uneven pantheon; from explicitly militaristic leftist guerrilla leaders in comfortably distant continents to Gandhian social reformers nearer, the leadership's many symbolic recruitments were – though bewildering – canny. The approach of CPI and CPI(M) towards Communism in its documents and political positions was profitably non-serious. Its anchorage lay in the Indian state and an agonizingly dithering (supposed) leftward tendency of Indian National Congress, not in Communist politics. The sudden inclusion of Che Guevera in its propaganda gallery (1967) was a continuation of the descriptive and non-partisan disposition the Communist leadership assumed in general. It was 'recognition' of a form of struggle, not a

[165] Sylvain Lazarus, "Lenin and the Party, 1902–November 1917", in Bibliography IV.28, P-257.

[166] This is not to say that simple anecdotes could not destabilise the disciplinarian Lenin of the Communist leadership. When faced simultaneously with parliament-centric bureaucratic conservatives and 'deviant' left-wing 'extremists' within Communism, Lenin could exhibit a clear stand in favour of the latter: "You ask how desirable it is that the Norwegian party should send its official representative to the conference. Of course, it is 1,000 times better to have a class-conscious and intelligent Left-winger from among the youth, than a Right-winger or a half-Kautskyite from the party. That is clear." 'Lenin's letter to Alexandra Kollontai', after March 19, 1916, in Bibliography IV.16, P-375.

[167] Bibliography IV.22, P-310.

decision on it. It was this eclecticism that ensured the electoral success of CPI(M) in troubled and anti-statist cycles of 1960s and 1970s. Right when (1968) Pop Art pioneer Andy Warhol and his protégé Gerard Malanga were flattening Che Guevera into a commodity-image in capitalist market, CPI (M) pulverised Guevera into the service of the Indian state.[168]

The so-called 'left deviants' were the only Communists who had offered the most comprehensive and internally consistent plotting of capitalist comportment in the territory of the Indian state (entirely rational and relevant even in 2018): "What is the main source of state power? Capital. The state of India gets its power from imperialist capital, the monopoly capital of big bourgeoisie and the capital of the super rich layer on top of the feudal agrarian system in India. The state is the acting guard of these three moments of capital. Because the national bourgeoisie is relatively extremely weak in terms of these three capitals and because working class politics has not yet become decisive in this country the national bourgeoisie collaborates with neo-colonial politics, but do not share state power."[169] And: "When gradually more than one nations and communities will institute revolutionary peoples' power against the rule of Delhi, then the social antagonism and the contradictions in the entire subcontinental life will explode in a form more sharp and intense than ever before, the initial revolutionary power centres will trigger a new revolutionary wave in the entire subcontinent. As a result, serially, other nations and communities will emancipate from the neo-colonial state and exploitation of Delhi. Naxalbari insurrection of 1967 offers this profound hint. Our core contention can be stated thus. The democratic revolution in a country of many nations will be completed through more than one national revolutions; and when peasants are the largest components in each nation, each national revolution will appear as agrarian revolution. Peasants' struggle will be main social force for each national revolution." [170] Through intellectual innovations and political interventions, the ordinary 'deviant' partisans right from after 1947 also constructed rigorous and pioneering critiques of the rigged nature of parliamentary elections conducted by an Indian state armed with legislated opacity around statist parties being funded (and controlled) by a small set

[168] See Bibliography I.B. 70 and 107 among others.

[169]Bibliography I.B.68, P-43-48. By 'feudal' the ordinary partisans mean a capitalist economy with colonial features and provision for elaborate extra-economic coercion or primitive accumulation, see *BKBGS*, Bibliography I.B.1, 37.

[170] *Ibid,* P-36-37.

of big business interests.[171] The ordinary partisans like Bijan Sen (or the Maoist Communists today) were not dogmatically opposed to elections or parliament-formation; they rejected these because of the specific relation of the Indian state and its nationalism to these practices of enumeration.

[171] See Bibliography I.B.48, 110-112. It was in firm allegiance to these legacies of Nehruvian regime and Indian National Congress (also to quell legal embarrassment of its own party and fellow-nationalists in Congress – the two parties accepted funds from companies owned by London-listed mining group Vedanta Resources between 2004 and 2012 and were found guilty of breaking law by a Delhi court in 2014) that the ruling B.J.P government formally expanded the translucent funding nexus of 'Indian' parties to foreign corporations: See Bibliography II.83.a,b. It was in solidarity with this very capitalist enterprise that the Indian state's police murdered 13 people in Tamil Nadu who were part of a huge rally protesting the hazardous copper smelter unit of Vedanta in the city of Tuticorin. See Bibliography II.122.

Chapter II: Kafi Khan and Suprakash Ray on Telangana and Tebhaga

I

We begin with Kafi Khan's account of Telangana Revolution. He wrote the history of the insurrection in Telangana of 1940s and 1950s in his book *Telangana Biplab* (The Telangana Revolution). Originally written and published in 1969, the edition that survived was a 1989 reprint with minor modifications made by the author himself. He began thus: "Telangana is *the* event in the entire history of this land, a name that shall remain alive forever." In 1947, when the big factory-owners and feudal landlords had just comfortably settled in the throne of Delhi inherited from the British imperialists, at that very juncture the peasants of Telangana, led by revolutionary Communists, rose up to destroy the central pillar of feudalism – they started the first armed anti-imperialist, anti-bourgeois and anti-feudal revolution in the colonial-national territory of the Indian state. Alarmed and frightened, the ruling elite led by Nehru and Patel sent its armed forces to crush the revolutionary peasantry. But Telangana did not die, the struggle did not end. The resilience of the awakened revolutionary spirit of the peasantry and the working class was evident. Disturbingly enough, the struggle was temporarily suspended due to the 'conspiracy of the fifth column – the treachery of the central Communist leadership'. Yet, it did not end; it was a brief hiatus. Telangana for Khan was politics proclaimed. "Telangana is perhaps faint in the youth's political memory, but the idea of Telangana survives in the consciousness of the toiling mass tormented for centuries by imperialism, monopolists and landlords. The insurrections of today rearing head in different regions carry the spirit of Telangana."[172] This was a significant claim, especially in the context that Khan described: in the late sixties CPI and CPI (M), using their organs like "Deshahitaishi", "Ganashakti" and "Kalantar", were trying to establish that the Telangana struggle was based on an economic demand, and was not a political or revolutionary movement.[173] Khan presented a detailed account of the movement – based on newspaper and journal reports that came out during or after the Telangana insurrection – to firmly place Telangana in the order of high revolutionary politics. Khan enquired: "Telangana raises a number of extremely critical questions for the Communist Party and the revolutionary people: whether the path of Chinese Revolution and Mao Tse Tung *or* the compromising path of

[172] *TB*, P-7-8.

[173] *Ibid*, P-55.

the central leadership of the Communists here? Whether the path of Telangana or that of bourgeois elections? Whether the path of revolution or one of acquiring the lawmaking capacity of the big bourgeoisie and landlords? Which path will lead to the emancipation of the exploited working class and peasantry, to people's democracy, and to socialism?" It was hardly ironic for Khan that when the combined armed forces of the Nizam and Nehru-Patel failed to subjugate revolutionary Telangana entirely, it was backstabbed by the central leadership of the Communist Party; with the first general election to the Indian parliament impending, in November 1951, the central leadership of the Communist Party called for a return to 'normalcy' within the country, and the struggle was suspended.[174] This was after more than 4000 ordinary Communist partisans, agricultural workers and women were killed by the combined forces of Nizam and Indian state.

Khan described that by 1948, in a sixth of the whole Hyderabad state, or in 3/4th of Telangana region – in 2,500 villages – Nizam's rule ceased to exist. This vast region was a people's democratic state. All land belonging to the landlords was confiscated. This land, amounting to 36,00,000 *bigha*, was distributed amongst the agricultural labourers, poor and middle peasants. Through autonomous *panchayats* or village councils people exercised the power of lawmaking and justice. This liberated zone had more than five million people. The people's government made primary education mandatory for all girls and boys of peasant origin. There were schools where peasant revolutionaries learnt more about revolutionary theory and philosophy. There was a large peasant-army led by several squads. When there was peace these soldiers ploughed their land, when there was war they fought against the army of the Nizam and the Indian state. Khan found revolutionary accord between making revolution and building socialism, not in a neat resolution, but as a radical inconsistency. It was not a mere call for abolition of landlordism or redistribution of land, it was a battle to eradicate all signs of feudal and statist exploitation from the face of Telangana. It was a concrete move towards a peasant-worker's soviet state supporting democratic cultural-linguistic assertions rejecting the colonial centralizing imperative of Indian state and nationalism. It was also an attack on British and U.S. imperialism which aligned explicitly in favour of the Nizam.

[174] *Ibid*, P-12.

Khan patiently depicted the history of feudal and colonial exploitation in Telangana, including a precise picture of extra-economic coercion, illegal exactions, damnation and poverty. Goon squads of the Nizam hoisted an additional layer of corruption, physical abuse and robbery. A handful of the Nizam's feudatories and collectors-landholders were flourishing: for example, 10 such families had a yearly income of Rs. 100 million, whereas the peasants were burdened by a debt-pool of Rs. 800 million, the high interest rates from which nourished the ruling elite further. Against this, the peasant discontent and movement was progressively radicalised from the relatively docile era of (the rich peasantry and local businessmen-led) State Congress to the newly formed Communist Party-led Andhra Mahasabha. During 1944-1946, with local Communist members anchoring the movement, the conflict between the peasants and the colonial state sharpened; insurrectionary power was unleashed by the peasants against the rampaging goon squads of the Nizam independently in different pockets. Small volunteer squads were formed to avoid frontal battles and implement guerrilla tactics: it was the "declaration of People's War", in Khan's words.[175] The local Communist leadership, was however, misguided by the reformist leadership of P.C. Joshi. He urged the local Communist leadership to rein in the violent excess and the overtly revolutionary programme of the democratic war, and limit the demands strictly to the abolition of illegal exaction and unpaid labour. When the partisans demanded arms from the Party, Joshi's command procured none. With the depredations of reactionary forces increasing, the local leadership started defying the order of the central leadership. Snatching and distribution of arms began.

Khan located the 'revolutionary transformation of the struggle'[176] of Telangana in moments within the Communist Party, and not exclusively in the economy, sociology and geography of Telangana. Locally feudal atrocity was rampant. Nehru-Patel's Indian state – realising that Telangana could trigger similar uprisings up south and down north – sent in its army too. At this juncture, in December 1947, there was a meeting of the central committee of the Communist Party, where Joshi's role was severely condemned and the Communist partisans in Hyderabad were urged to support the armed struggle of the peasants, occupy land and redistribute it among the poor peasants and the landless agricultural labourers. In February 1948, the Party Congress in

[175] *Ibid,* P-23.

[176] *Ibid,* P-24.

Calcutta reiterated this stand. Emboldened, the local Communists now advanced with a number of revolutionary programmes carried out through protracted warfare and intensely democratic forms of building socialism from below. Khan enlisted a number of events of revolutionary violence and organisation, describes the universal aspect of the revolutionary moment of Telangana with evidences – students ready to declass and join the struggle and the effortless bravery of women guerrilla comrades. That Khan was no promoter of undifferentiated peasant essentialism was reinforced by his affirmation of the role of the working class during the Telangana Revolution. By November-December 1946, the working class in different urban centres, factories and mines of Hyderabad began to show solidarity with the peasants of Telangana. They carried out meetings and processions in support of Telangana; they sent propaganda squads in rural areas. In the industrial areas, the Nizam's army camped and started persecuting the workers which only invigorated their culture of protest further: 15,000 textile workers from Warangal, Hyderabad, Nanded, Aurangabad and Gulbarga called a strike which lasted two months. The miners of Kothagudem called five strikes to condemn the arrest of their leaders and in support of the agrarian revolution. When in 1948 their leader Seshagiri Rao was arrested and shot dead, the miners called a strike and declared revolt. They killed a number of police personnel in retaliation. Hindu-Muslim solidarity amongst the workers was shaped by the lesson of Telangana, and they worked in complete unity against the Nizam's regime. Nizam's government tried to create a rift between Hindu and Muslim workers but failed. First P.C. Joshi tried to stifle local Communists, and then B.T. Ranadive's line of the so-called 'socialist revolution' stopped the local Communists of Hyderabad from supporting the armed struggle of peasants. But the railway and textile workers in the city compiled such pressure and criticism that the city committee had to change its stand. In 1950, when the peasant prisoners were sentenced to death by the Hyderabad High Court the working class of Hyderabad rose up. 80,000 factory workers paralysed manufacturing and transport in the city by calling a number of strikes. The Nizam regime subsequently had to revoke the punishment. The workers also joined the peasant struggle as volunteers. "There is no other instance in this country's history that matches up to this revolutionary solidarity."[177]

[177] *Ibid,* P-40-41.

Khan emphasised that Telangana came under the attack of apparently contrasting hues of the central leadership of the Communist Party. Reformist P.C. Joshi harnessed the struggle till 1948, and from 1948 B.T. Ranadive (B.T.R) – the harbinger of the socialist revolutionary line – undermined it. Khan described Ranadive's position in some detail: B.T.R declared that in India feudal exploitation and imperialism had almost entirely ceased to exist, and capitalist industry had developed adequately. The bourgeoisie was ruling and exploiting the working class independently. There was no distinction between a national/regional bourgeoisie and big monopoly bourgeoisie in India. Hence the aim was not an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution, but a socialist revolution snatching power from the hands of bourgeoisie and establishing a socialist state of the working class. Just as the factory-owners and bourgeoisie controlled the urban areas, the rich capitalist farmers dominated in the rural areas. Most peasants were agricultural labourers, and hence a working class revolution was to eradicate the hegemony of bourgeoisie in the cities and that of the capitalist farmers in the villages. Poor peasants and agricultural labourers were to provide support to the working class. Revolution in India was going to be an exact copy of the November revolution in Russia, which according to Ranadive was a socialist revolution conducted by the working class. In one of his articles Ranadive attacked Mao Tse-tung. He asserted that the CPI considered Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin as sources of Marxism; apart from them it did not acknowledge any other valid source. The 'so-called new democracy', an invention of Mao Tse-tung – 'peddled' by some as expansion of Marxism – had not been accepted by any Communist Party of the world, Ranadive persuaded. Ranadive deemed the peasantry as reactionary, dubbed Mao Tse-tung a poor Marxist and the support for Telangana Revolution as right-wing deviation (due to alliance with rural intermediary classes). He argued that Mao Tse-tung's theories were unacceptable for Communist Parties. His question was: why was it that the Chinese Communists had to wage such a protracted civil war?[178] His answer was: the Chinese Communists had often failed to move under working-class leadership and strike unity between working class and the broad masses. Ranadive called Mao's theory of democratic revolution reactionary and against the core tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and that Mao's thought could have no role in the (non-existent, as Khan pointed out time and

[178] The documents from late 1948 and early 1949 that phrased these concerns (Bibliography I.C.24,25) estimated that the Chinese revolution led by the Communist party was failing and will fail. The estimate failed.

again) programme of CPI leadership.[179] Ordinary partisans did not fail to notice that the call for socialist revolution was theoretically untenable and never seriously implemented on in real urban situations (where electoral alliance with intermediary classes was promoted).[180] It was a purely proscriptive move.

Khan reminded that on 15th November, 1969, in Calcutta at a public meeting of the CPI (Marxist), the party's Secretary Sundarayya said, alluding to the Communist party of China: 'We shall conduct our own revolution. We need not listen to any other Communist Party.' Khan located the long crypto-nationalist shadow of Ranadive in this wager.[181] This continuity was brought out by Khan for some concrete reasons. He posited the "Andhra Letter" as a historic document that created a fault line that would predict and pattern the history of Communism in his area as a rational sequence of internal contradictions, antagonisms, division, renascence and resurrections. The Telangana Revolution deeply influenced the Communists in the adjacent Andhra areas. They considered Telangana as the vanguard of anti-feudal people's democratic revolution, and wanted the Party to support it. By the first half of 1948, the theoretical and practical engagement between the Telangana and Andhra Communists was dynamic. From close proximity, the Andhra Committee started ascertaining the theoretical underpinning of Telangana line. The resultant ferment was enshrined in the "Andhra Letter", which began circulating within the Party from June 1948.[182] This document proclaimed Mao Tse-tung's new democracy as the path of revolution. Khan summarised the document thus: In the territory of the Indian state the primary contradiction was between the big monopoly bourgeoisie and feudal landlords on one side and the people and peasants on the other. Small entrepreneurs, regional small bourgeoisie were exempted from the full statist implication of capital at this stage, a stage in which the peasantry and broad sections of the people led by the working class struggles against monopoly capitalism and feudalism in an armed and protracted guerrilla war, which would be the primary form of struggle. It also stated that the revolution in Russia and the impending one in the territory of the Indian state could not be identical. General strikes and urban insurrection could not

[179] Ranadive and his leadership accepted in 1950 that this stand was completely erroneous and untenable – not before such 'errors' weakened Telangana Revolution and its proliferation in other regions; see Bibliography I.C.29.

[180] See Bibliography I.B.28, 39-44.

[181] *TR*, P-56.

[182] See Bibliography I.B.37.

feasibly cleanse the rural areas from feudal ethos and private property; an agrarian revolution would accomplish this task through intense resistance and protracted civil war. Through people's war a democratic dictatorship led by the working class would assume political power.[183] These Communist partisans were acutely aware of the perils of an overt dependence on middle and rich peasants (which plagued the two Communist parties consistently), as Khan emphasised: "The most important feature of Telangana Revolution was that it patterned a broad peasant unity initially. But more the struggle approached decisive encounters, the leadership of the agricultural workers, poor peasants and landless tillers was consolidated – as the other middle to rich peasants either became neutral or hostile."[184] This was the most important innovation of Telangana Revolution. This revolution was certainly not a populism permitted by middle and rich peasants or any sub-regional elite or gentry.

Ranadive's position was formed in antagonism to the "Andhra Letter", as were the later positions of both CPI and CPI (M). This antagonism was interpreted by Khan as contrary to the internationalism that marked Communism; the leadership fell into the 'garbage of bourgeois nationalism' by claiming a special or authentic path for 'India'.[185] The call for agrarian revolution or peasant guerrilla war had nothing to do with exclusive national specification, it was seen and consistently proposed as the internationalist, universal Communist idea by its militants, while those calling for 'socialist' revolution and 'peaceful transition to socialism' increasingly posited faith on bourgeois nationalist ploys of statist economic policy: "As revolution advances, reactionary forces unite too, and deploy new counter-revolutionary strategies." The bourgeoisie and the landlords devised a plan to deflect the struggle from its revolutionary path. They appointed Vinoba Bhave, one of the chief disciples of Gandhi – 'the arch-enemy of peasants and workers of India'. Bhave started the *Bhoodan* Movement. Immediately after the Communist central leadership backstabbed Telangana in 1951, he initiated *Bhoodan* in Hyderabad. This was a 'hilarious movement, albeit a satanic frivolity'. It was designed to stop the landless agricultural labourers from participating in revolutionary struggle. Bhave's core principle was that feudal structure and landlordism should remain, only the landlords should donate a small part of their holdings for distribution among the landless agricultural labourers – the latter would thus refrain

[183] *Ibid,* P-51-52.

[184] *Ibid,* P-9.

[185] *Ibid,* P-56.

from political struggle and anti-landlordism. Bhave wanted to convince the peasants that the agrarian question could be solved through Gandhi's methods of non-violence; landlordism could co-exist with the peasants. Significantly, this scheme was applied first in Hyderabad, where 'Telangana shook the foundation of feudalism'. More important was the fact that leaders of the Communist Party welcomed *Bhoodan,* and used it as a justification for participating in parliamentary elections and suspending the Telangana insurrection.[186]

II

In his book *TS*, developed and published first in 1983 – based on unpublished notes from the 1960s – Suprakash Ray narrated the peasant movement in Bengal of the 1930s and 1940s. The sharecroppers demanded two-third of the produce as against the prevalent half and half arrangement between the sharecroppers and the landlords. To write this history, he used accounts from documents, newspapers, journals, books, participant-testimonies in an acute construction of lengthy quotations and a sequencing of disparate episodes and spatial irruptions into a political question for the present. This statement sequenced the past of 'Tebhaga' politics while retaining the episodic nature and local colour of each insurrection.

While discussing the leadership of the local struggles, Ray never mentioned the CPI: he named the local leaders and the rank and file of the party in the areas of struggle. He stated the 'lessons of Tebhaga': From initiation till its end, the programme of this movement remained temporary survival by snatching crops. The Communist programme of unencumbered freedom for the peasants – declaring that the feudal exploitation of landlords, intermediaries and moneylenders could only end if the state of foreign and indigenous capitalists and landlords was destroyed – was never disclosed to the struggling sharecroppers and agricultural labourers. Partial triumphs became the absolute end of the movement. Corresponding organisational innovations were not formalised. The necessity of working class leadership in the struggle for agrarian revolution was never reiterated to workers and peasants. The struggling tillers of Tebhaga were denied the support of available Communist axioms. They were banned from developing their understanding that anti-feudal struggle for agrarian revolution had to be protracted. This betrayal stopped the

[186]*Ibid*, P-13.

peasants from adopting the tactics of long-drawn guerrilla warfare or people's war. Facing the guns and columns of well-trained military and police personnel with stick and spears 'may exude mythological valour and courage', but victory could not be consolidated as such. Where the people lacked all forms of infrastructure and the enemy's armoury was replete with firepower, guerrilla warfare or people's war was the sole prescription for the struggling people.[187] Ray was drawing from the thought and experience of the Chinese revolution and Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976) which was proscribed by the Communist leadership. Only in Telangana and Andhra (in the late stages of Tebhaga Bengal, too) local partisans delved into the banned ideas. In the very last paragraph of the book Ray named the Communist party controlled by the central leadership, in this vein: "Though this peasant struggle started spontaneously it was later organised and led by CPI. Hence the responsibility for the success or failure of this movement applies to the party. The main duties of the party were political and organisational. The party failed in both these tasks. The workers and peasants were denied access to the Communist idea that agrarian revolution was their common programme. The military strategy, i.e. ***people's liberation war***, necessary to sustain the struggle was neither debated nor deployed. The struggle of the peasants did not lack in vision, courage and consistency. Without a true Communist Party and betrayed by a central leadership frightened to take the struggle to political plane, Tebhaga had to fail and the peasants had to give up."[188] But local Communist peasants – unlike the leadership – were committed to the method of red zones of revolutionary power (in Lalgonj, in Moyomonsingho)[189]. Let us read a frame captured by Ray.

Sonarpur-Bhangar area, 1949, was the estate of Congress Minister Hem Naskar. The 'Noble' was also a powerful fish-merchant. Despite owning huge stretches of wetlands, he deliberately jammed rivulets to create more for his fish business. Fields got swamped and peasants were evicted. He was earning a fortune simply by killing off tillers whose cultivable land was shrinking alarmingly fast. Every piece of currency that 'the shark' Hem Naskar accumulated was a concrete form of the blood and nutrition lost by the peasants. He was joined in his profitable pursuits by the secretary of Indian National Congress in 24 Parganas, Hridaybhushan Chakraborty. Other collaborators and jotdars of the region were Bhupati Naskar and Sricharan

[187] *Ibid,* P-79.

[188] *Ibid,* P-80. Emphasis in original.

[189] See Bibliography I.B.35.

Napte. This was a cruel regime. Peasants were evicted at will, those who found work were often paid close to nothing, and starvation was common. Sixty years old Ramanath Mondol died after starving for ten days. Before his death, he went to the houses of moneylenders and landlords of the area to ask for food. All he received was severe thrashing. His death was an eye-opener for all poor peasants. They realised that passivity meant certain starvation and death; crops would have to be seized forcibly. Like in the adjoining Kakdweep pro-Communist slogans to capture and redistribute crops from the storehouses of the rich started reverberating in Sonarpur. In Banagram, Beota, Batabari villages, collectives of hungry peasants captured the storehouses of landlords and moneylenders. Hundreds of *mon* of paddy was redistributed. Peasant volunteer squads were formed. A People's Court decided to confiscate the assets of the landlords, jotdars and moneylenders. The latter were arrested by the peasant squads. When the first big wave of state aggression arrived the volunteer squads chased the police away, but not before beating the police up adequately. Struggle committees were formed in all villages. Land was distributed to agricultural workers and sharecroppers *mouja*-wise. The popularity of local Communist partisans was profound. The movement to occupy the fishing sites from the Congress leaders and the rural rich began in right earnest. The intention was to drain saline water away and re-cultivate the plots. In Tihuria, Nayabad, Kheyada, and Saheber Abad – such occupation ensued. The main leader of the fishery-workers was a worker from Saheber Abad Number 2 of Sonarpur, Tulsi Naskar. Large-scale local police attacks were foiled by the people, but Moti Dhara and Dashu Mondol were martyred. Five hundred armed police from the district-level had to camp and torture the local people for three months to stifle the struggle. Rape, murder and arrests became rampant.[190]

In early 1980s, Ray chronicled this area on the fringes of Calcutta - partly urbanised from that very decade. As minuscule as such attention might seem, this area has remained an intermittent flashpoint between a robust Muslim and lower-caste peasantry and the Indian state (regional ministries of both CPI-M – 1977-2011 – and Trinamool Congress or T.M.C 2011 onwards) up till 2018.[191] That the slogan of encircling statist cities with revolutionary villages popularised

[190] *TS*, P-75-76.

[191] See Bibliography II.115.

during Naxalbari struggle in the 1960s[192] was not a simple hyperbole, was amply demonstrated in Ray's account of this liberated zone close to Calcutta.

From 1951 till the early 1980s, Ray continued to support the principle of people's war. Ray in many ways was a rather simple and dogged thinker. In this trail he was able to threaten the state with the convergenceless multiplicity of the political surface and even inaugurated them in the realm of knowledge. The finest example was where Ray narrated an account of martyr Rashmoni. He collected and rephrased the story from Pramathanath Gupta, who was one of the local partisans of Tebhaga struggle in Moyomonsingho, and wrote a book called *Muktijuddhe Adibashi* (Indigenous People's Struggle for Freedom). The meaning of Moyomonsingho in Ray's world was: "In the history of this country there are three places: Telangana, Kakdweep and Hajong area of Moyomonsingho. These massive bonfires once spread in different directions of the country and are still a source of fear for the landlords and jotdars and the allied ruling classes. These places can invigorate the drained and desperate workers, peasants and ordinary masses, the workers' struggle against retrenchment and fair wage, sharecroppers and poor peasants struggling against the jotdars and against eviction, agricultural workers fighting for wage-hike. These three proposed a highly matured form of militant struggle of workers and peasants. And none of these were absolutely singular. These were related to the anti-colonial struggle that was prevalent in nineteenth-century colonial India, to the 1932 rebellion of Saotal peasants in Dinajpur and Malda; to the rebellion of the Riyang peasants in Tripura in 1942. Tebhaga was acting on the programme of eradicating the landlord-jotdar system in agrarian Bengal for good."[193]

We can remember that Suprakash Ray or Bijan Sen posited the contradiction between Communist leadership and the ordinary partisan as the key to understanding how politics could be or could not be thought, proposed and practiced. In his report on martyr Rashmoni, a Hajong woman, Ray captured the subjective resources and constant innovation that had ordinary partisans in colonial India inventing politics defying the proscriptive regime of the Communist leadership. We go through his report.

[192] See Bibliography I.B.68-126, 128-137.

[193] *TS*, P-50.

In eastern Bengal the Garo Hills lay verdant on the northern borders of Moyomonsingho district. Tribal communities like Hajong, Garo, Dalu and Koch inhabited this area in the early twentieth century – controlled by the Susanga landlords of Moyomansingho. A few centuries earlier these landlords brought in the Hajongs from distant mountainous tracts. They captured wild elephants for the landlords. The Hajongs continued to hold the position of landless share croppers and agricultural labourers. Irrespective of yearly produce they had to give the landlords a predetermined portion of the harvest each year. The Hajong peasants had to toil without wage for the landlords and placate them with gifts. Even if lack of rain or excessive rain damaged the crop the Hajong peasants had to deliver the dictated amount to the landlords. When they failed the land tilled by them was taken away. As a result, death from starvation was inevitable in many families. This mode of exploitation was called Tonk system. Between the landlords and the peasants there was a complex pattern of intermediaries and money lenders who unabashedly exploited the Hajong peasants. In Haluaghat and Nanitabari villages of this region there were instances of a peasant's three *bigha* land being grabbed in exchange of an umbrella or a spade or some amount of salt. There were days of rituals when the peasants used to worship the landlord – on those days the women from the house of a Hajong leader washed the feet of the landlords and wiped them with their tress. This exploitation and oppression, nourished and reared by the colonial rule, came under the onslaught of the India-wide peasant struggle of 1937-38. As the Hajong peasants woke up, the 'Permanent Settlement' of Moyomansingho became precarious. Inspired by the efforts of the new local Communists the Hajong peasants along with Garo, Dalu, Banai, Koch and Muslim peasants started a movement that quickly spread into 300 villages of North Moyomonsingho. The demands were abolition of Tonk system and obtaining tenurial rights for the peasants. As the movement gathered momentum between 1938 and 1945, the revolutionary consciousness of Hajong peasants intensified. They refused to pay illegal taxes in the local markets set up by the landlords and their intermediaries and even started constructing market-spaces. They also won back rights to forestry and fishing in common natural areas. The local militia of the landlords was defeated by the Hajong peasants. From 1946, the struggle of the Hajong peasants united with Tebhaga movement and the concrete symbol of this higher revolutionary struggle was Hajong Mata (mother) Rashmoni. In the entire sequence of revolutionary struggle and its woman militants, Martyr Rashmoni was 'undoubtedly the leading figure'. In Bogabari village, Bhedipura region of Susanga subdivision, Rashmoni was born in a

poor Tonk peasant's household. When she was twelve, she was married off to another poor young Tonk peasant – who died soon after. The Hajongs of her village used to call her a witch because of this misfortune. In Hajong society widow remarriage, divorce and remarriage, living together without brahmanical rituals of marriage were prevalent. Rashmoni opted for a solitary existence. Devoid of financial security or resource Rashmoni had to sow and cut crops in other sharecroppers' plots and earned a small amount of paddy as wage. Then she ground out rice grains from the paddy and sold the same in local market. She used to collect wood from the forests to sell them and also to save for the winter. In her 'leisure', she weaved clothes for the poor Hajong women. 'Rashmoni the witch' performed another noble task. She provided the best technical help to women giving birth in and around her area. Whenever she learned about a woman suffering from birth pangs or attendant complications she rushed in to facilitate a smooth birth and mellow the pain of the mothers. She was a healer for the weak newborns and their weak mothers. Rashmoni interacted with the old men and women of the community and learnt about the medicinal and therapeutic properties of various substances. She became indispensible for the local Hajong community. The Second World War curved a new path in Rashmoni's life. The war was destroying the very fabric of Bengal's already precarious social and familial structure. Mass struggles were throbbing all over the country. The toiling multitude was gathering within various mass organizations. Women were mobilised by local Communist partisans under the flag of self-defence committees. Rashmoni joined such a committee. During the famine of 1943 Rashmoni led squads to roam and collect paddy, rice, money and clothes from all over her subdivision. She also led Hajong peasants in locating the secret stocks of food in the black marketeers' and hoarders' precincts. She ran a mass kitchen with the collected and confiscated items. Radical initiatives to resist famine, like 'grow more food crops', 'cut canals', 'build dams' were also led by Rashmoni. Rashmoni and the self-defence committee set up a common collective grain-store and centre for cottage industries in her village. Rashmoni understood that the landlords and his intermediaries could exploit the Hajong peasants easily because the Hajongs were inadequately educated. Rashmoni proposed to open a night-school for people from all age groups. Such a school was indeed opened; Rashmoni was its primary organiser and the first student. Soon innumerable Hajongs thronged the school both for basic education and political debates. All through the day there were processions and propaganda and the nights were for reading, writing and discussing politics. In no time, Rashmoni was able to

build a highly politically conscious revolutionary group. She was also in charge of women's emancipatory movement in the region. As this local revolutionary groundswell merged with the Bengal-wide Tebhaga movement Rashmoni's brilliant oratory skill, her mobilisational prowess and her radical itinerant living contributed to the eradication of landlordism, money lending and colonial police-system from sizeable tracts of Moyomonsingho: it became a people's liberated zone. Soon the military might of the colonial state was summoned. The Eastern Frontier Rifle Force instituted a generalized state of murder, pillage, rape, and crop-burning. Resolutely, the Hajongs – led and inspired by Rashmoni – devised a variant of guerrilla tactics with local weapons against a brutal army with developed weaponry and firearms. In the battle of Baheratoli along with many brave Hajongs, Rashmoni lost her life but not before beheading the very enemy soldier who tortured Hajong daughter Saraswati. In this battle the colonial army retreated and the Hajongs snatched firearms from them.[194]

This was typical of Ray's historical enquiries. In this one obscure episode or character of Tebhaga struggle in Bengal, Ray recommenced many a theme of multiplicity – womanhood, gender roles, cultural norms of the oppressed, the will of inversion in life and ritual of the oppressed communities, internal contradictions in communitarian settings, and strategic abnegation of sexuality while retaining the primacy of birth (Rashmoni's dynamic lines of mobility were related to her intimate access as a facilitator of child delivery). Ray confidently evaded an exclusive anthropologising of the episode or denying Rashmoni or the Hajongs coevalness[195], recognising that Hajong politics had its own thought of singularity irreducible to the vitality of life and the dualism of body and language – the latter coupling dissipated in the face of the decision of murder and/or sacrifice. In terms of late colonial history, such insurrectionary episodes became local resistance against 'communal' violence time and again. Rather than the demand of economic justice, it was the politics and control over quasi-liberated areas of Tebhaga struggle that acted as solid bulwarks against the local implication of the 1947 partition and communal strife. "The insurgent peasants of Bagerhat, Khulna stood up against communal riots. The 60 year old, blind Yasin Fakir of Moubhog and lower caste leader Giridhar Mondol became volunteers to retain communal harmony. Rural partisans mellowed down

[194] *Ibid,* P-38-44.

[195] See Bibliography IV.126, P-25-35.

tensions by holding village-level meetings in all areas. Moubhog area saw no communal riot. Thousands of peasants started cutting crop with red flags hoisted all around. In the Sudder precincts, in Bagerhat and Satkhira sub-zones Tebhaga movement was massive. It spread across Rupsa and Baherhati rivers to Chitalmari, Kochua, Rampal, Sarankhola, Boteghata, Dakon areas in the south."[196] The Communist leadership – by abdicating and hiding the clear programme of agrarian revolution – did not allow similar politics to deepen and spread in different volatile areas of colonial territories. It remained an appendage to Congress and Muslim League in a particularly distorted and limited understanding of the problem of nationalities in British Empire – and was instrumental in letting the involuted and reactive violence of 1946-47 thrive and detonate.

III

Sudhir Bhattacharya's partisan stand on Tebhaga and Telangana was explicitly related to his understanding of Chinese Revolution and the thought of Mao Tse-tung. In 1951, when Ray's *Cheen Biplab O Cheener Krishak* (Chinese Revolution and China's Peasantry) appeared, the atmosphere within the Communist party was already polarised and there were unmistakable signs of unfinished ideological struggle. The Communist leadership proscribed Mao Tse-tung and his thought because it inevitably led to Tebhaga and Telangana. The latter in turn completely dismantled the tacit yet coercive assertion of the Communist leadership that the Indian state instituted between 1946 and 1951 had enough 'progressive' credential to complete anti-imperialist democratic revolution. In the acknowledgment, he wrote:

"My friends thought that I should write two short books on the role of the peasantry and the working class in the revolution in China.[197] Their suggestion flowed from the idea that in India – like China – the stage of revolution is democratic or new democratic. There are obvious specificities in the revolutionary movements of these two nations, yet with the stage ascertained to be same, there is a lot to learn from the role of peasants and working class in the revolution in China. I have deliberately dwelt more on facts than theoretical discussions to make it more accessible. On the crest of disparate waves of revolutionary sequences from the ancient era, the

[196] *TS*, P-28-29.

[197] Despite much effort, I failed to locate a copy of his book on the working class and the revolution in China.

Chinese peasantry could finally emancipate itself with the organization of Chinese workers – the Communist Party – through protracted struggle. They fought for this freedom repeatedly against the ruling classes of all eras – only to be defeated in the absence of necessary leadership. The revolution in China teaches us how in a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country, without a protracted struggle led by the working class and Communist Party it is impossible for peasants to be free from all forms of exploitation and oppression. Peasantry is the leading column of the revolution in a feudal and semi-feudal, and colonial and semi-colonial country."[198]

By 1951, a considerable number of texts on the revolution in China were evidently available in Calcutta. Suprakash Ray based himself on a list of such texts, as his footnotes suggest. Ray read the history of China before the advent of imperialism – imperialism as an expression of monopoly capital that is – as a struggle between the feudal landholding class on one side and the peasants and craftsmen on the other; "the national wealth, development, civilization and culture was an expression of this struggle."[199] Apart from nourishing the feudal class, the peasants were taxed or expropriated heavily for maintaining the huge bureaucracy of the central government and also the army, these in turn were geared to keep a leash on the peasantry and crush their legitimate rebellions against omnipresent forms of exploitation, misrule and oppression. The revenue varied from 40% to a feverish 70% of the produce. This absolute economic subjugation was coterminous to what Ray called "lack of political freedom and control on their bodies."[200] Ray's emphasis on physical violence on Asian peasants was consistent. He located class struggle as the singular aspect of history as much in Asia as everywhere else.

Noteworthy was his expert enunciation of the idea and advent of imperialism. He wrote: "In this (modern) era another epidemic has descended on the Chinese peasantry. Along with the exploitation of the already existing feudal class now comes the terrible enemy of the people of the entire world, imperialism. This imperialism in its bid to eclipse and control the entire world triggered a dance of death in weak, feudal China. Four thousand years of heinous exploitation and misrule just got worse for the Chinese peasants. It was a bigger, meaner world imperialism

[198] *CBCK*, p-i.

[199] *CBCK*, P-3.

[200] *CBCK*, P-

that was now targeting them. Big and small imperialist clouts, British, Belgian, Dutch, American, all flocked to have a share in China's spoils."[201] One can note a peculiar feature: Ray seemingly conflated the grammatical tense of his writing at the beginning of this quote. In 1951 (after the Chinese revolution) he referred to the advent of imperialism in China in present tense. Though aesthetically, this conflation was not really glaring (especially in Bengali), his constant antagonism to the deferral/betrayal of anti-imperialist revolution in the territory of the Indian state by the Communist leadership had him talk about the advent of imperialism and its generally additive nature in relation to the existing forms of exploitation and oppression in terms of 'now'. A revolutionary historian not merely saw time in its chronological sense, but in its cairological sense, as a lapse, as "a halting of time and interruption of chronology...a qualitative alteration of time", a revolutionary historian remembers "history as he would remember his home, will bring this memory to everything, will exact this promise from every instant: he is...the true seer, released from time not at the millennium, but *now*".[202]

Ray assimilated the idea of capital within the framework of imperialism (commonplace for an avowed Leninist) in China or colonial India; countries with an already well-developed class-society on which variegated forms of exploitation and production could consolidate. In his works, the factories and the bourgeoisie – whether imperial or local – were not seen under the sign of 'Europe' or 'foreignness', but within a sequence of class struggle or politics. He did contend that industrial capitalism, the bourgeoisie and the working class or proletariat were the most developed forces in history now, but the pronunciation was neither celebratory nor defeatist.[203] It rather flowed from a stated necessity of final and immediate revolutionary transformation. Ray drew from Mao to see the specific trajectory of capital amidst imperialism, wherein the working class (not the emergent bourgeoisie tied to feudal interests and colonial state) leads the peasantry in a democratic revolution. Ray was not writing ossified and historicist stages into revolutionary politics and contended that the proletarian revolution against capital was internal to the revolution against feudalism.[204]

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[201] *CBCK,* P-6.

[202] While discussing Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, Bibliography IV.127, P-105.

[203] *CBCK,* P-24-25.

[204] *Ibid,* P-25.

Keen to enlist the politics of the peasant rebellions before the advent of Communist Party, he wrote: "From 221 B.C.E till the famous Taiping Rebellion of 1850, there had been thousands of peasant revolts in the history of China. On innumerable occasions – despite unfavourable leadership, organization and communication facilities, these revolts engulfed an entire province or a number of provinces in China. These did not merely destabilize the rule of the local landholders or provincial administration, but the central imperial government itself."[205] And this was a 'pedagogic revolutionary tradition'[206] for him. He drew from Mao to show that the productive forces and historical changes were unfettered because of *the blows that these peasant revolts landed on feudal polity and economic order.* Imperialism was seen not in terms of the mere external make-up of foreign conquest, but how internally hierarchical social formations were open to the institutions of capital and empire.

In the Chinese situation, it was the singular innovation of its Soviets that elicited fidelity from Suprakash Ray: “In the history of Revolutions, the Paris Commune of France and the Russian Revolution established Soviets. The Soviets reappeared during the course of the Chinese revolution.” In China, the slogan of Soviet meant eradication of Kuomintang regime and initiating the struggle of workers and peasants to seize power area-wise. The Chinese Soviet meant democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants, while Russian Soviet meant dictatorship of the proletariat. Even the Soviets that developed during the February revolution in Russia were distinct from Chinese Soviets. Though formally the February Soviets constituted a dictatorship of workers and peasants, their content was different. Real power was still in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the Soviets were forced into a mutualist relationship with the bourgeois government. With the reactionary bourgeois government abdicating the programme of democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants, the Russian Soviets became a tool of reaction. That was why the October revolution could not possibly be bloodless. Realising this, Lenin rejected the existing slogan of ‘all power to the Soviets’ which was coined when Lenin thought that the Soviets would be able to quell bourgeois hegemony and transform into an organ of workers and peasants seizing power. But bourgeois and petty bourgeois reaction stifled that possibility. Hence, he raised the slogan of armed insurrection against the bourgeois military

[205] *Ibid,* P-5.

[206] *Ibid,* P-17.

government. Only after the victory of armed insurrection in October, Lenin revived the slogan of Soviets acquiring sovereign power and these became base areas of proletarian revolution. Unlike the bourgeoisie in Russia which did put an end to feudal tsardom, the bourgeoisie in China – despite joining the united front – quickly allied with the feudal edifice and the warlords. No aspect of bourgeois democratic revolution was addressed. The entire responsibility of ending the rule of feudalism and imperialism fell on the democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants. The Chinese Soviets were the concrete expression of this dictatorship, which had to occupy the entire country immediately before executing socialist revolution and building socialism.[207] (It is important to note that Ray did not accept that there was dual power in Russia of 1917, for any stable combinatory machination of duality in twentieth century led to statism[208]) Ray presented a thorough documentary account of the process of building socialism in agriculture after 1949, citing an entire legal document from People's Republic of China. Democratic revolution here emerges indeed as completely free from any penchant for summary destruction. Maintaining the principles of united front and mass party, the victorious Chinese Communists were against witch-hunts and summary justice. It was clear that redistribution would only happen politically and through local, deliberative, struggle-centric and case-specific decisions.

Ray rigorously charted each local development during the course of the Chinese revolution, including the inventive role of Mao Tse-tung and the leadership of the Communist Party of China that contributed to the formation of the Soviets. But what was truly relevant for Ray was that the Soviets came into being by the simple, dogged, unflinching application of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal programme of agrarian revolution – as the primary Communist task in colonial, semi-colonial, feudal, semi-feudal countries – in every locality where the Communists could reach out. It was this application that politicised the restive masses further and made it clear to them that armed struggle was necessary and protracted guerrilla war was the only form of struggle to oppose feudalism and imperialism simultaneously. It was this application that

[207] *Ibid,* P-68-70.

[208] See for an explication of this contention in two key documents of the Communist leadership: Bibliography I.C.24,25. This ploy banned partisanship or the politics of truth that ordinary partisans like Ray pursued in favour of hermeneutic resolution and recombination of the rebellious and inventive subjectivity with the sterile tranquility of the state and its structures.

allowed the Chinese Communists remain creative in practicing the principle of united front (against fascism and imperialism) and retain the principle of struggle, resistance and insurrection against the local state as its cornerstone. It was this application that exposed the reformist and reactionary nature of the national bourgeoisie to the masses. [The Kuomintang – just like the Indian bourgeoisie – did not carry out any agrarian reform even when Japanese invasion made the rural poor more precarious, and sided with feudal elements to institute what was called 'new feudalism' by Communists – it was a 'new form of feudal exploitation'. The rural poor became a source of already oppressed, cheap labour to nurture indigenous capitalism and capitalist industries under the weather of direct and invasive foreign competition. Chinese politics and fate was now controlled by a few rich dynasties combining bourgeois and feudal interests (not really different from what happened to colonial India in 1947). This statement by Ray applied to China and colonial/national India equally well: "Here the final stage of capitalism – imperialism – did not emerge internally; but monopoly capitalism with features of imperialism did indeed. This strange edifice could be built only because of intimate links with foreign imperialism and indigenous feudalism."[209]]

The united front became a dynamic mass front of students, army, workers and peasants. It was this application – Ray stated – that put politics in command in such an unprecedented manner that the workers and peasants often abdicated their immediate sociological interests in favour of peerless solidarity, revolutionary transformation and Communist partisanship (it was on this ground reality of flux and fluidity that Ray prescribed working class leadership for peasant columns in the territory of the Indian state). It was this application which turned the most persecuted victims of feudal oppression and ritualised coercion – the poor peasants, agricultural labourers and the precarious section of middle peasants – into the most advanced military expression of Communism. It was this application that had Mao Tse-tung analyse the sheer variety of class forces in his specific landscape to reach a non-classist Communist politics (insurrectionary united front and later, mass line). It was this application that led to an acceptance of the necessity of immediate insurrection, interruption and intervention derived from October, 1917 as the key tenet of Communist thought, yet the expanded subjective composure of protracted guerrilla struggle freed the tenet from clocks and calendars and stretched or dissolved

[209] *CBCK*, P-88.

a moment in time to eternity – or abolished time in favour of politics and subjectivity. The whole situation needed the Chinese Communists to take their fidelity to Communist ideas to the corner of existential risks and physical commitment. By 1951, Suprakash Ray was noticing in no uncertain terms the stark contrast between the Communist party in China and the Communist leadership in colonial/national India.

We shall end this section with a discussion of the starting point of this book. The book was dedicated to Panchugopal Bhaduri: "To one of the greatest peasant leaders of Bengal, to my political teacher and well-wisher, respected Panchugopal Bhaduri." The acknowledgment section ended thus: "The royalty due to the author on the sales of this booklet shall be spent on Comrade Panchugopal Bhaduri's treatment and medicine."[210] Let us see what this gesture meant at that time. Panchugopal Bhaduri was a political leader and active organiser from the district of Hooghly in the 1930s and 1940s. He was a member of both the Congress and the Communist party, which was common at that time. He was imprisoned in the colonial prison for long stretches of time for his political work, which resulted in failing health. When the Communist party was banned by the West Bengal Congress Government in 1948 for secretly planning an armed uprising against the government, the implementation of the ban was only an element of the general onslaught against basic democratic assertions in both rural and urban areas. Trade unions, peasant associations, their leaders and their followers – along with left-wing press – faced massive repression. Evidently, women and peasants bore the brunt of the physical attacks that the police and Congress volunteer squads unleashed in the province. The Communists and other leftists (even those within Congress) organised committees for the protection of individual rights. Their tracts shared the statements and arguments of the contemporary Communist documents on the nature and meaning of 1947, on the Indian state's authoritarian foundations and on the socio-economic conditions unveiled by revolutionary struggles like Tebhaga and Telangana. In this political ethos, the peasant families struggling for Tebhaga in Bora[211] union of Hooghly and a humiliated ailing Communist partisan in Calcutta simultaneously emboldened the programme of democratic revolution in colonial/national India. The common perpetrator was the

[210] *Ibid,* p-ii.

[211] Bora-Kamolapur – among many other sites – saw a united peasantry and agricultural workers occupying and redistributing land and resources among the rural poor during the Tebhaga struggle of 1948. See Bibliography I.B.31-61.

newly formed Indian state led by Congress. Excerpt from a statement of this committee on Bhaduri: "In 1947 – after a bout of polyneuritis – he remained bedridden in a hospital for many months. An upper and a lower limb were completely paralysed. After partial recuperation, he went to his mother's house in Srirampur, Hooghly in March, 1948 to seek some care. He was arrested from there after the Communist party was banned. His treatment and medication was stopped and his condition deteriorated. The prison doctor allowed Bhaduri to have a letter sent to his doctor to ask for medicines, but it seems that letter never left the police department. Even when Bhaduri was in great physical distress, the authority remained indifferent. In fact, it was decided that Bhaduri would be shifted to Dumdum prison in Calcutta. But the prison doctor intervened and stopped the dangerous relocation. On May 19, paralytic seizures and a failing heart brought Bhaduri to the brink of death. On May 20 – perhaps to mellow their imminent infamy – higher authority of police department ordered his release. The chargesheet in Bhaduri's name states as its primary basis of arrest the 'fact' that he had recently been selected by the Communist party for training in military methods and use of guns. To think of the imaginative bureaucrat of Home Department who cast a person like Bhaduri – who cannot perform basic and quotidian personal tasks on his own strength – in the role of an armed soldier!"[212] A seriously ailing person was tortured and humiliated for his Communist affiliation. More importantly, the Indian state's paranoia towards politics as such was clearly manifest. The antagonism between the 'ordinary partisans' and the 'central leadership' that Bijan Sen projected as the generative factor in politics was applicable to pre-1947 Indian National Congress as well. Its mass basis was formed with those who rooted for it to carry out profound democratic reforms in the countryside and repeal oppressive colonial laws. The acting president of this committee – Ksitish Prasad Chattopadhyay – was a Congress member and he praised the tradition of local Congress leaders defending the rights of political prisoners during anti-colonial movement. He called for fellow Congress members to "protest against the heinous and atrocious acts of the police. Today when state power is supposed to be in our own people's hands, why are we returning to the full barbarity of the state in British era?"[213] Such statements certainly strengthened Communist

[212] Bibliography I.B.53.

[213] *Ibid,* P-410. This letter was sent to a so-called nationalist English newspaper on May 21, 1948. It was not published. With Communist press already proscribed, facts of innumerable such incidents were easily suppressed by

politics and augmented pro-Communist voices. In the rural areas of Tebhaga struggle, the police – in active collusion with landlords and *jotdars* – were not sparing (arresting and torturing, rather) the struggling or politically conscious tillers who were affiliated to Congress. This committee sent enquiry teams to such areas to investigate police brutality supported by the state.[214] We find that the politics of democratic revolution was a complex Communist programme which was reducible to neither rural nor urban foundations. Its militants – in the 1950s - were worried about the expenses of an ill and humiliated comrade's treatment in a Calcutta hospital and immersed in the novelty of rural Chinese Soviets simultaneously. Ray's first book remains a very advanced expression of Maoism, Maoism beyond the allegation – as old as at least Leon Trotsky – that it was 'built in mountains'. This facile allegation rendered Maoism primordial and denied it contemporaneous status and thus, subjectivity. The ground was cleared to project it as an Asian or local peculiarity whose propositions could not be generalised. Ray wrote his first book on the role of peasantry and the Communist Party in Chinese Revolution to dispel this unjust projection. He delved into the political innovations of Mao Tse-tung. This book also held signs of Ray's eventual enquiry on the peasants in the colonial past and present from the angle of democratic revolution or Maoist politics. Through his comrades he was in contact with the Tebhaga and Telangana line of Communist politics in colonial/national India which was affirming partisan warfare and democratic revolution in its statements. Panchugopal Bhaduri was one of them. His torture and degradation at the behest of the Congress Government triggered a robust and civic discourse on the freedom and rights of individuals, which were found to be permanently vulnerable under the Indian state which ruled through emergencies, special powers and ordinances. As a militant Communist trade union organiser, Sudhir Bhattacharya had deep understanding of the openly oppressive role the state assumed the moment trade unions took political stands (supporting liberated zones in the wake of agrarian revolution). Democratic revolution and its programme of protracted partisan warfare – or the 'Chinese path' – was everybody's politics. That the Communist leadership rejected the proposal of the Andhra Marxists to support and organise guerrilla warfare wherever democratic struggle was present as

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the state and its institutions from the masses. Portraying 1947 as a progressive, postcolonial beginning became easier for future historians.

[214] Bibliography I.B.54.

the party's key task undermined this moment of universalism, nowhere more gravely than in Bengal. The physiognomy of this 1951 book by Ray, *CBCK* – composed with Panchugopal Bhaduri and Chinese Soviets – brought the axioms of a universal Maoist politics raging back, reneging on the dying of light.

IV

Suprakash Ray wrote a biography of Mao Tse-tung in 1970. The biography can throw some light on Bijan Sen or Suprakash Ray's statements on the Communist party and its leadership in colonial/national India. This book described Mao as "the greatest scholar, the greatest politician, the greatest philosopher, the greatest historian and the greatest military-thinker of China"[215]. Indeed, this book was an unapologetic eulogy. But it was a theoretically coherent eulogy. Mao's ideas were not measured in terms of their human cost, but rather in terms of their political and philosophical coherence. Once the peculiar humanism that marks the critique of figures like Mao Tse Tung or Joseph Stalin was rejected, a eulogy refused the need to be covert, secretive and hypocritical. As Alain Badiou put it: "The death count is the zero dimension of political polemics. Regarding the Cultural Revolution, people become outraged before they understand...Seven hundred fifty thousand dead over a period of 10 years, on the scale of China...if (one applies) that type of calculation to the French Revolution, including the Vendee uprising, (one would) end up with figures that weren't so different, relatively speaking. I don't think (one would) derive a definitive critique of the republican form of state from them! How can anyone imagine that a struggle for total reorientation of power, for a complete overhaul of the form of the state itself, could be accomplished without substantial material and human damage? When parliamentary democracies...are called on to take responsibility for large-scale atrocities – as happened with them at the time of colonial wars and global conflicts, where it was a matter of deaths by the tens of millions – (does one conclude) that these democracies are essentially criminal regimes?...Mao was in charge of a complex, multifaceted venture, which, although locally violent, was much less so than commonly used statistics suggests."[216]

In this account, Mao's subjective journey perfectly coincided with the congealing of a

[215] *MST*, P-11.

[216] Bibliography IV.128, P-43-44.

revolutionary Communist politics. In a eulogy such as the one written by Ray, Mao emerged as a singularity, a pure accident, yet it was neither a devotional exercise, nor the creation of an icon. It merely affirms the necessity of the contingent, of exception, of unprecedented emergences. It was an acceptance of proper names which "symbolize historically – in the guise of an individual, of a pure singularity of body and thought, the rare and precious network of ephemeral sequences of politics as truth. The elusive formalism of bodies-of-truth is legible here as empirical existence. In...proper names, the ordinary individual discovers glorious, distinctive individuals as the mediation for his or her own individuality, as the proof that he or she can force its finitude. The anonymous action of millions of militants, rebels, fighters, unrepresentable as such, is combined and counted as one in the simple, powerful symbol of the proper name."[217] Mao was the eternal rebel in this portrayal, his confrontation with his authoritarian, oppressive father being a formative moment.[218] His strict espousal of the entirely revolutionary nature of Communism was the central theme of the text. Ray created a monument where landscapes and sociologies were invented by the massive subjective protocols of Mao's politics. He won battles, occupied terrains, crossed mountains, was always on the emancipatory side of every local struggle, built socialism from the scratch, and situated communes in both agriculture and industry.

That Ray drew unflinchingly from Stalin's politics was clear; again, with the human cost not considered internal to the sequence, this was not really scandalous. Alain Badiou elucidates the situation well: "Didn't Stalin—no longer what he once was, even qua exemplary state criminal (a career in which he's been overtaken by Hitler in the last few years), though still a tactless reference—codify, under the heading *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, the most formalist rules of a Communist subjectivity, the source of whose paradoxical radiance no one can locate any longer? What is one to do with such a black sun? A 'beheaded sun'....?"[219] Ray siphoned out Stalin's thought, not his statist role in a particularly berserk temporal stretch – the inter-war years and the Second World War – to pinpoint the source of 'paradoxical radiance'. He related that Mao and other Chinese thinkers recognised the fact that Stalin prepared the philosophical basis of what shall turn into an epochal expansion of Communist thought and revolutionary subjectivity –

[217] Bibliography IV.55.b, P-250.

[218] *MST*, P-12-13.

[219] Bibliography IV.53, P-4-5.

the new democracy of Mao Tse Tung – in the mid 1920s.[220] "In April 1927, Stalin pointed out the basic factors that would determine the character of the Chinese revolution 1) the semi-colonial status of China and the financial-economic supremacy of imperialism therein; 2) the oppression of feudalist remnants intensified by warlordism and bureaucratism; 3) the rising revolutionary struggle of the millions of workers and peasants against the oppression of feudalist officials, warlords and imperialists; 4) the political weakness of the national bourgeoisie, its dependence on imperialism and fear of the scope of the revolutionary movement; 5) the increasing revolutionary activities of the Chinese proletariat and the growth of its authority among the millions of the working masses; and finally 6) the existence of the proletarian dictatorship in the neighbouring Soviet Union. According to Stalin, these factors established the character of the Chinese revolution as a 'bourgeois-democratic' one against foreign imperialism and domestic semi-feudalism. Because of its anti-imperialist character, the Communist revolution in China was considered by him 'directly associated with the anti-imperialist proletarian revolutions of all countries'. It is, therefore, a part of the world proletarian revolution in accordance with the Leninist principle."[221] It was from this assured location of an always local universalism that Mao Tse Tung started the great debate with the Soviet Communist Party in the 1960s, which after Stalin's death took a humanist turn, with an accent on peaceful transition to socialism, on co-operation with imperialist parliamentary democracies.

Ray was especially interested in the building of socialism in Chinese agriculture after an anti-feudal revolution. The united front principle assured that the importance of reactive violence was minimal in the transformation, only rich peasants and landlords – the elite and overwhelming minority – were affected by a justice that was deliberative and participatory, and the role of active struggle was paramount in the slow formation of agricultural cooperatives – the clear concept of friends and enemies of revolution was retained through the slogans of 'three enemies' and 'five enemies'.[222] The dangers of the party-state were clearly recognised and confronted by Mao Tse-tung, and through him, by Suprakash Ray. Through the 1950s and 1960s, Mao Tse-tung led movements and rebellions against the corrupt and anti-revolutionary elements within the

[220] *MST,* P-78-79.

[221] Bibliography IV.129, P-375-376.

[222] *Ibid,* P-91.

party.[223] From here Ray derived the courage and theory to oppose the Communist leadership coherently and consistently.

Another aspect of Communist partisans in colonial/national India who emphasised anti-feudal agrarian revolution as primary task was their unflinching commitment to end social oppression. The Communist leadership – starting with B.T. Ranadive – selectively and always vaguely deployed the language of socialist revolution whenever active anti-feudal agenda (annihilation of caste and end of landlessness) took the party to a revolutionary position. The absurd proposal of mandatory working-class majority and physical presence in every democratic struggle (of agricultural workers, peasants, women, tribes, regions) that ordinary Communist partisans were bent on leading was a direct result of this proscriptive move.[224] For no other purpose the CPI and CPI (M) deployed the language of socialist revolution – they remained cloistered in different descriptive frameworks of democratic revolution. The Chinese path of democratic revolution as formulated by the ordinary partisans in colonial/national India exposed this unjust move as basically stalling the annihilation of caste and gendered oppression. Ray devoted much space in this biography on the Chinese Communists' revolutionary solidarity with the cause of women under modern patriarchy. The destruction of a feudal morale enlivening the domination of ruling elite in a country with semi-colonial and semi-feudal lineage was a basic Communist task – as much in colonial/national India as in China. Why Ray – following Lenin – considered dictatorship of the proletariat as the highest form of democracy in a class society[225] became clear. The Chinese transitory state as envisaged in the early stages of the post-1950 era brought in major democratic reforms (in sync with the programme of building socialism) to emancipate Chinese women from feudalism and patriarchy, to reformulate the meaning and freedom of marriage and reorganise family structure. For Ray, this "fatally injured the domination of the possessive and authoritarian father-figure".[226] Such radical feminist positions do emerge in those who have seen and bore the full weight of the statist brutalisation of struggling peasant-women in Tebhaga and Telangana. The figure of the women and the figure of the agricultural workers are

[223] *Ibid,* P-89-92.

[224] See Bibliography I.C.

[225] See Chapter III.

[226] *Ibid,* P-85.

placed interchangeably in the Communist vocabulary of democratic revolution. The Naxalbari thinker and martyr Saroj Dutta was a young journalist working for the Communist daily Swadhinata in 1954. Compared to his high literary and radical political tracts[227], Dutta definitely seemed a little out of his wits while reviewing a melodrama from Bombay, a film called *Laila Majnu* – based on an (by 1954) Indo-Islamic literary motif of the true fanaticism of love. In a long digression, he ended up discussing how a rabid feudal ethos and patriarchy in colonial/national India (in a productive alliance with capitalism) stifles the healthy and free romantic interaction of men and women. He cited China as much advanced in performing profound democratic reforms in terms of family and marriage laws, and demanded the application of those principles in colonial/national India.[228] Democratic revolution was definitely an ode to love as an unpredictable and shattering encounter.

Ray concluded the book with a chapter on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China (1966). The Cultural Revolution in China, led by Mao Tse Tung, was a new type of revolution in history. The Cultural Revolution was launched to restructure the entire Chinese society, all of its people – workers-peasants, young girls and boys, all intellectuals – as suitable for a socialist world. This revolution created a great tumult in every person – their mind, their old modes of thought, behaviour and education were broken and galvanised into something new. This was a step towards the advent of a new Man, new socialist Man. This revolution was against feudal and bourgeois culture and for the building of a proletarian culture.[229] Mao stated: "To make a plot of land cultivable, we need to rid the plot of all the weeds, and this is accomplished by the peasants themselves. Similarly, to build a new socialist order we need to get rid of all the weeds of the old order and the recent ones too. And this task is to be completed by the Chinese people led by the proletariat."[230] Ray disclosed the exact variation of the 'weeds': the revisionists within the Communist party who were taking the capitalist path to exaggerate the tumult and flaws in building socialism, and the sediment of dormant bourgeois and feudal elements who were slowly reclaiming political, cultural, educational and economic spaces after initial but incomplete

[227] See Bibliography I.B.108, 121-125.

[228] Bibliography III.A, January 4, 1954.

[229] *MST*, P-114.

[230] Quoted in *Ibid*, P-115.

subjugation, even seeping into the sinews of the party.

Ray pointed out a few salient features of the Cultural Revolution:

1) Mao Tse Tung Thought was the driving force of this revolution, at the centre of which was his directive of pursuing a 'mass line' to all party committees. The motto was to learn from the mass and then teach the mass, to be a student *and* a pedagogue. This was aimed at dissolving the growing bureaucratic party-state. The reactionaries with a Communist garb were to be exposed and banished. Since socialism was a proletarian world view, the party could not run the dictatorship of proletariat divorced from the constant political intervention of the working class, poor peasants, the lower section of middle peasants and the servile, toiling masses. However, these identities were not to stand and congeal amidst the universalism of the mass line – the minority of reactionaries would be purged and the overwhelming majority would become one revolutionary people.

2) Another lesson of the Cultural Revolution was a clear identification of the enemy and friends of Communism. This was linked with stating the intractable contradiction within a mode of production and even emancipatory projects. It was this that according to Ray galvanised a chaotic and creative phase of propaganda, posters, wall-graffiti, proliferation of local publications, meetings, assemblies, debates and speeches. Every wall in the city became the newspaper of the masses. Mao emphasised that no one was above criticism, and the entrenched party leadership who started espousing conservatism and capitalist path came under fire locally. The Cultural Revolution helped the formation of new local revolutionary committees in the tradition of the Paris Commune[231]; this contributed to the formation of an unprecedented democracy. This committee-layout was patterned according to Mao's principle of 'three within one', with three elements from the broad masses: a) Members and representatives of the revolutionary mass organisations. b) Members of the People's Liberation Army stationed in an area. c) Leading revolutionary cadres.

3) Spaces of regimentation – the university and the army – were to be turned into conscious

[231] *Ibid,* P-121.

dispensers of revolutionary politics. All reactionary ideologies were to be quelled and these institutions were to align with the sequences of revolutionary politics. The People's Liberation Army became a concrete and constant military expression of Communism – an expression without which it could not advance[232] - and harbinger of world revolution. These militants were soldered in an extreme intensity of their local contact – they fought in war, tilled or worked in factories in peace, carried on revolutionary propaganda during mass movements.

One can think about this biography obliquely by placing it in the trail of Suprakash Ray or Bijan Sen's assessment of the central leadership of the Communist party in colonial/national India. Mao's biography stood in stark contradiction to the career of Communist leadership in colonial/national India in the thought of Suprakash Ray. We find that Mao Tse Tung – unlike the Communist leadership in colonial/national India – not only innovated in terms of revolutionary praxis, but also in terms of revolutionary theory. We have seen that Ray also proposed a similar antagonism between the ordinary partisans and the Communist leadership as the generative scission in the territories of the Indian state. By elimination, we find equivalence between Ray's subjective projection of Mao Tse-tung and the ordinary partisan. Ray's report on Hajong Rashmoni (and of other peasant rebels) was an exceptional and insurgent biography in history – a biography that also was an unprecedented declaration of multiplicity – approved this equivalence precisely as unencumbered capacity for invention, infinity, thought and politics in subjectivity. The eliminated element – Communist leadership – was reactionary in Ray's thought precisely because it consistently suppressed and subjugated politics, insurrection and subjective innovation, from Peshawar and Sholapur in 1930s, through Kayyur, Kakdweep, Moyomonsingho and Telangana in 1940s to Naxalbari and Srikakulam in 1960s. Mao Tse-tung Thought was the thought of these ordinary Communist partisans and militants. Taking the side of Chinese Communists was not a facile search for geo-political legitimacy. It had a long, teeming, creative, affirmative sequence – upheld among other Communist partisans by Suprakash Ray.

V

[232] For this vein in Communist thought, see F. Engels, "Conditions and Prospects of a War of the Holy Alliance against France in 1852", in Bibliography IV.3.b; and Bibliography IV.41.

In the two decades that these works were interspersed in, Suprakash Ray was also preparing for his historical enquiry into nineteenth and twentieth century colonial Indian territories. From 1947 onwards, in Communist debates ascertaining the prescription and politics of the present, a resort was sought in a sequencing act. Events and texts of nineteenth century – beyond the nationalist monocular that the reformist cultural texts during Joshi leadership trained on those – were sequenced in conflicting partisan ways to claim rationality for present wagers of politics. Historical and cultural knowledge was produced as a result, but these sequencings were in the ordinary partisan's thought intelligible only in terms of internal registers of Communist politics and party.

By ignoring the intellectual trajectory of ordinary partisans, the central leadership endorsed history in as much as it was a relation of the state. The sheer multiplicities and insurgent singularities that history in partisan plotting threw forth were either left unexamined (and shoved into an alterity responsive to planned capitalist development), or attempted to be resolved hermeneutically (progressive bourgeois culture combined with peasant insurgency = Indian state and nationalism). The Communist leadership was a trusted protector of an elaborate system of oppression and repression. It was this that the thought of history in Suprakash Ray had to surge up against. A schoolteacher who taught history faced a question: was it possible to subtract history from state? His book from 1951 already demonstrated that the Communist leadership's notion of 'Asia not being awake in nineteenth century'[233] was not feasible. There were rebellions and certain generic collectives indeed emerged in the wake. But how could such presence (as against the claim of slumber, absence and alliance) be accounted for without taking recourse to the hermeneutic path that the leadership carved?

Marxism surely had some answers. Amit Sen – a party intellectual – wrote in his book on Marxist theory of history (drawing from Marx and Stalin): "This world changes through struggle and confrontation, everything inspected yields an image of contradictory forces clashing, and this dialectics is the motor of change. In history too, this confrontation is the key to societal progress. Economic status being paramount in society, we see everywhere class distinction is accompanied and ultimately superseded by class struggle. Socialism accepts this as an easy truth, which other world-views fail to do. The latter – blind towards class struggle and natural situations of

[233] See Bibliography I.C.36.

confrontation – evoke false consciousness. The changes that were slowly becoming - suddenly appear as major transformational leap, appear as the new. Similarly revolutions appear in history, and new society is formed."[234] Amit Sen was the pseudonym of Susobhan Sarkar, a renowned professor of History in Presidency College, Calcutta and a leading intellectual of CPI. In most of his other works where he practiced history-writing – especially when he looked at texts and figures of nineteenth century Bengal – a consistent commitment to the tenets espoused by him at the level of theory was missing. Like in the texts of leading Communist intellectuals Narahari Kaviraj or Rabindra Gupta[235], he resorted to a resolution of the stark contradictions of nineteenth century by a redemptive (yet thoroughly non-exhaustive) reading of the content of bourgeois authors.[236] Neither the truth of class struggle nor the calamitous aspect of revolutionary change that Marxism proposed was phrased out in terms of the 'natural situations of confrontation' in nineteenth century Bengal.

This evasion was of a nature that Bijan Sen identified with the party leadership. By proscribing democratic revolution against the Indian state and Congress Government, the leadership was bound also to attempt suppression of sequential precedents that affirmed the politics of democratic revolution. Even when figures close to the party leadership wrote directly about the events of confrontation between the peasants and the colonial state in nineteenth century, the onus was strictly descriptive (or often pejorative) with a very vague stand on its programmatic implications.[237] As a 'loyal opposition' of Congress Government in the 1950s and 1960s (which they themselves inadvertently – and only technically – characterized as a bourgeois government collaborating with feudalism and imperialism), these Communist leaders could not have felt safe in delving too much into the theme of antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the peasant masses during anti-colonial struggle. Only a partisan of democratic revolution like Ray could have felt an urgency to enquire the theme. Ray understood the historic betrayal of the bourgeoisie in not espousing the destruction of colonial state before 1947 as entirely consistent with its refusal to decolonise the country after 1947. He was thus predisposed towards understanding the segregated singular term of 'new' in concrete historical sequences of

[234] Bibliography I.C.37, P-114-115.

[235] See Bibliography I.C.34, 35.

[236] Bibliography I.C.46.

[237] See Bibliography I.C.38, 39, or for a later, academic sample, I.C.47.

nineteenth century Bengal without fear or anxiety. The 1950s and 1960s was also a phase when the perennial call for 'reorganisation' of peasant associations (All India Kisan Sabha) and trade unions gathered great rhetorical force, in antagonism to their thoughtful rejection in the preceding phase (of Tebhaga and Telangana, 1946-1951) through 'village squads', 'urban slum committees', 'factory committees', 'liberated zone, 'struggle committees' and vanguard organisation of lower caste and tribal agricultural workers. The peasants and workers were harnessed as passive bodies awaiting statist reforms. Ray had to sequence them as thought and act.

The centrist leadership in 1950s notionally retained the language of democratic revolution in its program. L. Natarajan – a leading party intellectual – was among the very first to attempt a narrative on the question of peasant rebellion in 'Peasant Uprisings in India (1850-1900)'. A leader's call to ordinary partisans and historians to develop on the theme, it casually described a few events. The question of peasant rebellion in colonial India – in the wake of Tebhaga and Telangana – became one of the most intractable questions in devising present prescriptions and programmes of the Communist Party. It was significant then that leading party intellectuals like Natarajan and others would not themselves complete the task. The ordinary Communist partisan's documents of the preceding era (1947-51) exhibited a very developed and clear vocabulary of politics.[238] They set rigorously drawn parameters for ruminations on history. None of the prominent works on peasant rebellions in nineteenth century Bengal and colonial/national India seem to follow that trail. Natarajan sought to restore "the richly deserved glory of these heroic trail-blazers of the present-day popular movements."[239] Natarajan also wrote: "Although these uprisings were spontaneous and sporadic, the forms of struggle created during them have a deep historical meaning even for today...All these (the peasant uprisings) foreshadowed the form in which peasant discontent is finding expression in modern India."[240]; and elsewhere: "Each new uprising focused attention on the foremost demands of the Indian peasantry: particularly, the end of zamindari and moneylending oppression. The uprisings not only added living reality to these demands but helped establish them as the very core of the peasant's long-cherished

[238] See Bibliography I.B.30-62.

[239]Bibliography I.C.38, P-6.

[240] *Ibid,* P-75.

aspirations. So long as these aspirations remain unfulfilled, the peasant struggles will go on."[241] In his book, however, there was no concrete exposition of forms of struggle and programme in terms of both the past and present. The leadership had mastered a descriptive resolution of antagonistic forms of struggle which sustained the dualism of body and language from the time of Ranadive leadership, obstructing the (always exceptional) truth from emerging.[242] By singling out abolition of landlordism and indebtedness from the complex and coherent plethora of political positions generated by the peasant-led insurrections and wars from the nineteenth century till Telangana and Moyomonsingho in 1940s – area-wise seizure of power, protracted partisan warfare, vanguard organisation of lower caste and tribal agricultural workers – such historical accounts opened the peasantry up for economism and statist legislations.

In terms of textual constitution, this betrayal worked by never trying to collapse the two major themes of nineteenth century Bengal – bourgeois sphere and peasant insurrections – unto each other. The Communist leadership would rather synthesise them or combine them. The politics of democratic revolution against a bourgeois state in colonial/national India demanded that the absence of bourgeois subjectivity from nineteenth century anti-colonialism and the presence of peasant insurgent subjectivity in the same arena be declared as a present revolutionary programme with immediate effect – to avoid hermeneutic resolution of presence altogether (the leadership was already appropriating this agenda and adopting a concept of history which found "itself in an impasse of an excess of presence"[243] – taming singularities into the regime of policy and recognition). It was this precise task that Suprakash Ray would accomplish between 1958 and 1966; only by *writing* the very episodic supplementation and sequential spatio-temporal dynamics (and not resolving them unlike the leadership) a partisan could carry out radical 'dis-qualification and unrepresentation' [244] (to "engage in the analysis of the contemporary episteme"[245], which the Communist leadership invariably failed to do). The resort to sequencing procedures on the past in Communist statements was finessed by Ray into a topological plotting

[241] *Ibid,* P-72.

[242] The key statements: Bibliography I.C.24, 25, 29.

[243] Bibliography IV.52, P-10.

[244] *Ibid.*

[245] Bibliography IV.48, P-89.

of 'communist invariants'[246] which healed the past-present rupture. Like all tasks in Communist history in colonial and national 'India', this intellectual task, too, had to be dispensed by an ordinary partisan. "...The task of unearthing facts about peasant struggles is not an easy one....Facts relating to many other large and small struggles are not even available at present. Much greater research, carried on by several persons and utilizing the official and non-official records and manuscripts and the vast treasure-house of folk-lore, folk songs and contemporary literature is needed before a real attempt can be made to resurrect many of the forgotten details"[247], Natarajan stated. The sheer weight of the incomplete task in the leadership's psyche was clear from the clause of 'several persons'. Researching on colonial era against the grain of nationalist historians and bourgeois histories in a colonial/national India of 1950s was a task that could have fractured an individual encumbered by state and society. Especially after the Telangana Revolution, the risk of such enquiry became explicit. The Nietzschean in Suprakash Ray was perhaps equal to this difficult task.[248]

From around 1950-52, Sudhir Bhattacharya started distancing himself from party-work. He was disillusioned with the Communist leadership. From what Bijan Sen called 'the poorer section of middle class', Sudhir Bhattacharya and his wife also faced grim questions of livelihood and survival. Having started political work as a teenager, Sudhir Bhattacharya now found he was nearing forty, unemployed and without a political party. Without any material inheritance, they had to start from scratch. Both of them landed jobs in government schools in Calcutta as teachers around 1956. This was a phase when Sudhir Bhattacharya could have settled for a life of small comforts, astute savings and visions of upward social mobility. The seriousness with which the centrist leadership espoused the cause of world peace and of peaceful transition to socialism, the certitude with which it wanted the national state and the Indian bourgeoisie to dispense all anti-

[246] See Bibliography IV.87.b: "aIl the great mass revolts of the successive exploited classes (slaves, peasants, proletarians) find their ideological expression in egalitarian, anti-property and anti-state formulations that outline the basic features for a communist program" and "communist invariants have no defined class character: they synthesize the universal aspiration of the exploited to topple every principle of exploitation and oppression. They emerge on the terrain of the contradiction between masses and the state". Translated by Bruno Bosteels, in Bibliography IV.87.a, P-277.

[247] Bibliography I.C.38, P-5.

[248] See Chapter III.

feudal tasks (only very) gradually – this would have been a thoroughly acceptable 'Communist' choice for the era.[249] He could have contracted his thought within the boundaries that the leadership drew for the ordinary members. But Sudhir Bhattacharya suffered from what can be called partisan unrest. He was deeply anguished by what happened during his active work for the party – 1938-1951. A thorough militant, he did not spread rancor. He was still personally close to many important party intellectuals. Understanding the necessity of rigorous groundwork, enquiry and thought before a clinching intellectual assault could be mounted on the party headquarters, Bhattacharya must have started preparing himself. This could not have been a comfortable situation for him both socially and psychologically, because 'headquarters' were everywhere - even in some of his own 'acknowledgments'. His many pseudonyms might have been devised primarily as a suppressant on this discomfort – as a guerrilla anti-sociality of self rendered unnameable by a proliferation of many names.

The Communist organs and daily newspapers from the 1950s and 1960s generated description based on democratic revolutionary tenets, while erasing its conception of politics and forms of struggle. The result was a disturbingly voyeuristic and touristic elaboration of people's suffering. The Indian constitution, trade unions, peasant associations and parliamentary representative framework were time and again reported to be facilitating anti-democratic, social chauvinist, economically exploitative actions, it was apparent everyday that only exclusive political power of the poor (or despotic inroads into private property) could eradicate poverty/malnutrition/hunger/houselessness/unemployment and ensure people's welfare (free universal health-care, education, egalitarian treatment of refugees) – but the retrospectively devised (through a flimsy analysis of the historical enormity of Gandhi, Nehru and 1947) fiat declaring the progressive nature of the Indian state turned the shattering knowledge of violence into a moral issue. Yet, in the short and curt reports there was material for partisan thought. There were micro-instances that could have stopped partisan readers like Suprakash Ray settle into what could be a self-validating seat of a dissident simply critical of the party leadership's betrayal of revolutionary theory. Beyond the large structures and nominated movements, the ordinary partisan worker entered a cage at work every day wherein decisions, commitments, enumerations, measurements and accidents had immediate and important implications: "In the

[249] See Bibliography I.C.32-33.

Central Mechanical Department and Spinning Department of Birlapur Jute Mill, dictatorial retrenchment and suspension of workers is becoming a widely practiced norm. A babu (labour supervisor) was standing behind a labourer who was working. The laborer's elbow accidentally hit the babu's face and he started bleeding profusely. He suspended the labourer for four days immediately via oral command. He had to take his diktat back in the face of united protest of the workers."[250] Or: "In the dealers' convention of Philips Electrical Company (India) Limited, a fund was consolidated for female workers. But this was doled out by the male in-charge undemocratically, in a biased manner. When women workers protested, he defended his act with verbal abuse. The workers have long demanded a female in-charge but not a female of the present in-charge's choice. This male in-charge has always been autocratic; he enforces arbitrary transfers and reduction of wage."[251] These were not simple cases. The elite, anxiety-ridden and explicitly undemocratic babu (supervisor) surely had to monitor the proletarian worker from uncomfortably close, invasive quarters and the corrupt male in-charge surely managed to have women as collaborators. In such complex cases, subjective initiative to think forth the singularity of politics was at a premium for workers and partisans in every specific setting.

This cornered, specific and productive aspect of partisan politics must have convinced Ray not to become a virtual troll to the Communist leadership. He also, however, did not become an everyday variant of a workerist or ouvrierist who switched off all thought hoping for an eventual self-organisation of workers by erroneously overestimating i. his individual self's (critical) withdrawal from the organisational works of politics ii. historical consciousness or evolution. That would merely have allowed him to take mental and public notes of contemporary suffering, oppression and exploitation, and then hanker for a concomitant fact of negation, if any. Such descriptive, non-partisan work of amassing knowledge was clearly not in Ray's agenda. Instead, what such complex cases of Calcutta could have egged an observant partisan towards was interrogating the conditions and hierarchies of one's own work in singular terms. That Ray located a reactionary 'leadership' in the higher academia of colleges and universities, however, was something that managed to forge a link with both his everyday appraisal of the world and the trajectory of Communist politics in colonial/national India. Amalesh Tripathy was an

[250] Bibliography III.A, January 3, 1954.

[251] *Ibid*, January 5, 1954.

eminent historian who taught in the premier academic institution of Calcutta – Presidency College – standing right by the side of Hare School, where Sudhir Bhattacharya taught. This was January, 1959: "In Sunderban, a movement against paralegal transfer of land (which allows the rural rich to retain their monopoly on land despite certain feeble legal constraints and land ceilings), a movement demanding distribution of excess and unused land has met with police brutality. The peasant-women assumed a leading role in this struggle. Sharecroppers from Banashyamnagar and adjacent villages under Mathurapur Police Station started seizing and storing paddy after the owners of thousands of bighas of land – *Amalesh Tripathy* and Hrishikesh Tripathy – started accumulating land using extra-legal means. The police have started to physically attack the resistance of peasants and the women. The local partisans of Kakdweep leading this movement are Jatin Maity, Hrishikesh Maiti, Pyari Ghorui and Janab Jabbar."[252] It is not our intention to imply here that Ray believed historians from the ruling class could only write ruling class histories. Always committed to the politics of democratic revolution, Kakdweep and South Bengal evidently had a special significance in Ray's thought. We cannot – then – rule out that from such a raw moment of coincidence of the figures of a liberal/nationalist historian and an oppressive landlord, a partisan like Ray could plausibly have absorbed a technique to calibrate his ever-alert response to the summons of subjectivity. Fatefully enough – as we shall see in Chapter V – Ray was punished for this transgression by the academia.

[252] *Ibid,* January 1, 1959.

Chapter III: Other tracts and treatises by Suprakash Ray and Bijan Sen

I

Sudhir Bhattacharya's last work of the 1950s - *PK* – was published in February, 1958. The book was introduced by a professor of University of Calcutta. The professor wrote: "In this scientific age the expanse of knowledge is expanding fast, the common reader's questions are also proliferating proportionally. But answers are not easily available....In the West it is not difficult because they get the most advanced books on relevant topics in their own language. Even those of us here who read English books cannot make complete sense of the topics because of a lack of command on different technical and specialised terms in English. Knowledge remains flimsy. In such a scenario, this is a very useful book, for laymen and specialists alike. It is a valuable text for the Bengali reading public....The ideologies and ideals that have stirred society – from ancient Greece to the modern world of Cold War diplomacy – are introduced in the form of easily comprehensible summaries by the author. Such a condensed presentation of theoretical terms is rare not only in Bengali language, but in any language. However, it is true that in most cases the author's analysis and definitions shall differ with the viewpoint of many. But that is only very natural."[253]

Ray's preface was somewhat different. He informed that terms were selected for the text based on a concrete principle. The entire corpus of present knowledge could be divided into two parts: conventional (or bourgeois) and Marxist. Marxism while analysing the entirely antagonistic capitalist system and ideology had fundamentally recast the entire corpus of knowledge and coined innumerable new terms. In the English dictionaries of specialised terms Marxist analysis and terminology were deliberately rejected. The so-called and much-advertised 'fount of all knowledge and final arbiter of man's wisdom' – Encyclopaedia Britannica – performed this very duty, Ray felt. In English-language dictionaries the entries related to Marxist precepts and politics were often written by 'antagonistic thinkers'. Ray informed that in the fourteenth edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica the entry on Atheism was written by a trenchantly theist priest and

253 *PK*, p-vii-viii.

that on Bolshevism by the anti-Bolshevik Professor Harold Laski. The rejection of this standard procedure of the prevalent English encyclopaedias and the embracing of Marxism would not please everyone, Ray estimated. But his contention was that more than a billion people's lives (primarily Russia and China) were organized based on Marxism. Ignoring Marxism meant turning a blind eye to the billion lives and thoughts founded on Marxism. Ignoring a philosophy that had wrested half-the-world was 'blatant self-deception' for Ray. The remaining half was also deeply and extensively influenced by Marxism. Many universities had to include the Marxist canon within their curriculum. "I have taken some liberty in coining new Bengali terms where I have not found any existing Bengali usage of a certain term, or the existing usage was found to be wrong...."[254] Ray was locating the necessity and significance of his work primarily in the realm of politics and class struggle and secondarily in the problem of education and the academicisation of Marxism by the middle of twentieth century; but strictly not in the cultural, linguistic and social tremors of an infantile nation with moth-eaten provisions for disseminating science or other projects of the modern.

His exposition of terms related to agriculture and peasantry followed Lenin's thought. To sum up, he did not valorise pre-capitalist agrarian formations, emphasised depeasantisation under the regime of capital, did not ascribe an entirely 'autonomous' political role to the peasantry, and understood economic logic only in terms of corresponding politics. There was an arrival at the need for rural property distribution or collectivisation, as also unfettering the logic of capital. But this was neither a promotion of a politically unchallenged capitalist transformation, nor a historicist plotting of capitalism first and socialism eventually. As Lenin stated: "Trying to save the peasantry by protecting small-scale farming and small holdings from the onslaught of capitalism would be a useless retarding of social development; it would mean deceiving the peasantry with illusions of the possibility of prosperity even under capitalism."[255] The peasantry was not located in an autonomous zone which was 'outside capital'. The onslaught of capital was seen here as an explosive and (eventually) self-defeating exaggeration of capital, not its expansion. Agriculture was already 'under capitalism'; capital was ubiquitous but operated by co-

[254] *Ibid,* p-ix-xii.

[255] Vladimir Lenin, "The Workers Party and the Peasantry", written February 1901, first published April 1901, Bibliography IV.6.b, P-422.

opting many existing forms of exploitation and oppression (the modern state as an 'Augean Stable', linked to capital's chronic and profitable failure in carrying out profound democratic revolution *anywhere* in the world – this was Lenin's contribution attended adequately by ordinary partisans[256]). Thus the frontier of depeasantisation – proletarianization – could not be brought about by capital, and did not merely mean becoming a worker in a factory de-linked with land. The proletariat became proletariat only in dictatorship of proletariat (or proletarian democracy), which permanently politicised the abolition of classes and the state.

A detailed entry on the term 'people's capitalism' demonstrated that Ray was equipped to intellectually reject the contention (of statist thinkers and theoreticians) that the post-second world war economic prosperity in U.S.A disproved that capitalism had any general crisis. A mass consumer society and a high industrial order had socialised capital, with an educated, managerial middle class in charge of the state of affairs. People's capitalism had established an egalitarian society avoiding politics altogether. This growth-centric, productionist vision was bolstered by Keynesian welfarism (our own times demonstrate that the vision can easily survive without the latter). Following Lenin, Ray emphasised how the huge profits of imperialist role equipped a nation to ensure phases of visibilised affluence for collaborating social groups. It was this model of capitalist development that was exported to various regions of the world under the garb of democracy and individualism. Ray rejected this concept by pointing out that this new-fangled theory was a continuation of the fable of American exceptionalism. That the general laws of capitalist economy and the inevitability of crisis in capitalism did not abide by this exceptionalism became clear in the 1929 economic depression. Piecemeal reforms could hardly plaster over the evident class struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat in U.S.A before and after the Second World War. It came across as a deeply inegalitarian, divided nation. Ray predicted many more economic slumps in the economy of U.S.A.[257] Resisting the lure of 'America' in the 1950s – the golden era of limited welfare capitalism in the 'liberal' west, of an expanding middle class and certainly of a very resourceful university system – was a significant gesture coming from a poor petty bourgeois schoolmaster in Calcutta with a clear inclination

[256] See "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution", October 14, 1921, in Bibliography IV.15, P-52.

[257] *PK*, P-273-277.

towards research and enquiry.

The encyclopaedic mode was not his stronghold. His colleague suggested that he considered it to be an incomplete work and wanted to publish many more volumes – but that never happened. This portrayal of *PK* as incomplete work could have been more about the anxiety of disavowal than a will to extend encyclopaedic work. There were no entries on Chinese Communism, one of the two major intellectual influences on Ray (the other being the documents and politics of Tebhaga and Telangana). Ray's writing took an exceptionally assured shape when he faced the intractable question of time. In the encyclopaedic mode that question was irrelevant. Ray's conception of politics was inclined towards the truth of class struggle (insurrections/liberation of zones and new militant subject-bodies like committees, communes and red army reciprocally formalising each other) rather than the vitality of class struggle: a knowledge project could hardly stimulate the complex faculties of his partisan thought, which readily related to the episodic, exceptional supplements of rebellions or insurgencies to a conventional state more piquantly.

This work shared a feature with his 1955 work on revolutionary nationalism[258] which we discuss in the fourth chapter. There were momentary centrist/statist lapses in these texts in the context of his entire oeuvre. The unflinching commitment to the politics of democratic revolution (that he exhibits in 1951 and in the 1960s) being unnecessary in these texts, it seemed certain mass actions during anti-colonial movement was due to the positive leadership of the Indian National Congress. There was an objective, evasively descriptive language that Ray used in these texts for nationalist figures like Vivekananda, Gandhi and Nehru (though still strictly in the order of sobriety rather than praise) that sharply accentuated his later and elaborate departures. Nehru's socialist rhetoric and Vivekananda's insurgent metaphors were uncritically accepted in a few pages. These concessions were however consonant with his content. In these two books he – at the behest of the topics of research – could not assume partisan position and had to take a magisterial approach. The resultant descriptive shift injected small doses of an uncharacteristic objective approach (that was demanded by an encyclopaedia which could not go beyond 'knowledge') – which in turn led to occasional acquittal of state-venerated figures in his pages.

[258] *BJBS*; see Chapter IV.

His objective take on lumpenproletariat[259] could have been an extension of these statist moments of his writing; for we shall see militants of his exact orientation would radically affirm lumpenproletariat excess in Calcutta of the 1960s, Ray himself would do the same with nineteenth century figures of 'criminality' and 'illegality'[260]. His entry on 'Policy of Peaceful Co-existence' and the Indo-China diplomatic tie through *Panchasheel* – in the gait of cold objectivity – accepted piecemeal statist resolution of intractable political opposition.[261] He resolved this issue through ceaseless thinking and enquiry.[262] Though spectacularly minor in terms of the general body of his intellectual statements, it cannot be ignored – coming from a dogged partisan like Sudhir Bhattacharya. About whether this was connected to sustaining employment in a government-sponsored school or to the civil relationship he shared with a few leading party intellectuals (this book was dedicated to one, Gopal Halder) there can only be shaky conjecture. It can be said that the relationship between Ray's core propositions and the sporadic discordant notes in these two texts can be understood as "one or another form of difference (such as tension, contradiction, supplementarity, lack of communication)."[263] This subjective torsion might have taken a profound toll on Sudhir Bhattacharya. His deep solitude (and reticence) – or a decentering of communication from protocols of thought – might have grown out of this stress, so could his understanding of his vocational compunction in singular and revolutionary terms. As a history-teacher and a government worker, he understood that he could not neatly declare his statements on the Indian state without losing his livelihood. It was in the capacity of a history-teacher and a school employee that he slowly reassembled his throughly

[259] *Ibid,* P-114-115. Yet, one must concede that Ray's reservations about lumpenproletariat reactions did not temper his radical affirmation of the extraordinary goals of working class movements and organisations. While discussing the meaning of trade unions he denounced the opinion that trade unions should have no relationship with politics and limit itself to the struggle for the economic demands of the working class. He accepted the Marxist assertion that the trade unions were centres that oriented itself towards the larger goal of revolutionary organisation of the working class. Ray invoked Lenin's work on trade unions to assert that as a working class organisational mode, trade unions could not remain neutral to political struggles; along with its quotidian struggles, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat was its primary task. (*Ibid,* P-251-252)

[260] See Chapter IV.

[261] *PK,* P-38-40.

[262] See below, and Chapters I, II and IV.

[263] Bibliography IV.1.b.ii, P-21.

partisan position. As a partisan in a revolutionary nationalist organisation and militant Communist trade unionism of Calcutta tramworkers, Sudhir Bhattacharya learnt well that the contradiction between party leadership and the active ordinary partisans was an axiomatic aspect of revolutionary politics. In those terms, the primary struggle of a worker who taught in school was against the intellectual domination of historians from the academy (colleges and universities). It was a compilation and summarisation of the latter's works and concepts that Bhattacharya had to teach in school, and he was evidently opposed to the dominant nationalist and liberal strain in the same. His enquiry of the 1960s can be seen thus as a school teacher actively setting the agenda of what can be taught to children and youth in an area. A school-teacher was exceeding his supervised role and challenging the condition of work and production that a school teacher was thrown into. Instead of writing imitative and quick-fix textbooks or manuals for students, instead of getting busy in the bargaining politics of middle class professionals with the government, he decided to research in an archive, chose his areas of research and read exhaustively. He squeezed out a small pocket in his school building for a work that had nothing to do with the school or his profession in any direct or profitable sense. His alienation from active party work thus ended up opening new subjective pathways for him to retain his Communist partisanship by other internally consistent and rational means. Ray definitely knew how to strengthen, stretch, contort and risk modalities of his individuation that made for a hyphen between the creature and the subject – the individuation of a partisan was always equal to 'anomaly and excess'[264]. In an entry in *PK*, Ray was found to possess some appetite for Friedrich Nietzsche: "Super-Man: An entity thought forth by German philosopher Nietzsche (1844-1900). He proposed that an extreme intensification of the forces of morality and life can bring about the emergence of a Super-Man. Many believed that this concept of Super-Man acted as the philosophical basis of the later German fascism and rise of Hitler. Eventually all have accepted that this was an erroneous opinion. Nietzsche's philosophy was not seen as destructive, but as affirmative and creative."[265] This was certainly a refreshing gesture of attending to a philosopher autonomously after his (tenuous) appropriations by a modern, oppressive state straitjacketed his work into a figure of radical evil. The latter practice was noticeable even in one of the leading Marxist historians in colonial/national India (who had been

[264] See Bibliography IV.2.a. For more on the problem of individuation, see Bibliography IV.2.b-h.

[265] *PK*, P-243-244.

close to the Communist leadership for six decades and recently suggested CPI-M leadership to enter into an alliance with Indian National Congress in 2016 to counter the power of Bharatiya Janta Party[266]), as late as in 2005, fifty years after Ray's entry on Nietzsche. While raising a number of resolute and nuanced points to reject Edward Said's conceptual reworking of the term 'orientalism', Irfan Habib also wrote: "That such expansion of 'positivistically verifiable' knowledge of the Orient should make no difference to the currency of prior prejudices is in itself prejudice pure and simple. Said can cite no better authority in running down the impact of such discoveries on our mind than Nietzsche, the notorious father of Fascism, with his notions of 'truths' as 'illusions'. Between the time Said wrote his book and his 'Afterword' western archaeologists and geneticists established that Africa is the most likely original homeland of succeeding hominid species, including the anatomically modern man. No racial 'truths' of Nietzsche and Co, however deeply rooted in one's mind, can possibly accommodate this discovery created out of the work of persons, many of whom individually possibly had no great motivation to undermine the widespread racial prejudice against African peoples."[267] So much for not throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Suprakash Ray persistently refused to consider CPI(M) as a 'Communist Party'. He never thought about locating progressive politics in a CPI(M)-Indian National Congress alliance. The schism between Suprakash Ray and the academy was irreversible.

II

In 1968, Suprakash Ray chose to assemble his notes on the "Communist Manifesto" of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The compilation was only limitedly circulated as a pamphlet at that time, and was first brought out as a book in 1998. The text began by quoting the famous opening lines of the Manifesto before going on to elaborate the reason of his own visit:

"'A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe has entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot,

[266] Bibliography II.84.

[267] Bibliography II.85.

French Radicals and German police-spies.' One hundred and twenty years after these words were uttered in 1848; the spectre is haunting not merely Europe but the world. To quell the spectre the imperialist powers of the world have again united – led by the worst enemy of human beings – U.S imperialism. Like the working classes in imperialist countries who have understood that revolutionary struggle – not the parliamentary path – can launch socialism, the unfree people of semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have understood that only by defeating U.S imperialism and its agents (big bourgeoisie and landlordism) through a protracted armed struggle for liberation can democratic revolution be completed, which in turn ensures advancement of socialist revolution. *But it is also true that at present, in the name of socialism and communism, a group of social democratic collaborators are out to foil the armed struggle by using the parliamentary path – this is as true in England or France as in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These agents have for long concealed the prescription of the Manifesto from peoples' thought.* Today, let the true Communists revolt against them and echo Marx and Engels: 'The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.'"[268]

Suprakash Ray posited Communist Manifesto as the thought of the worker-figure that declared itself in the events of textile workers' rebellion in Lyon, 1834; the Chartist movement of working class people in England of 1830s and 1840s; the rebellion of textile workers in Sylatia of Germany, 1844.[269] It was the appearance of new revolutionary subjectivity that triggered both the critique of bourgeois political economy and the science of historical materialism in the politics and ideas of Marx and Engels. The sporadic and sprawling appearances offered concrete concepts and were referred to present and future revolutionary procedures. The irresolvable contradiction in bourgeois political economy (bourgeois and proletariat) remained a stable site for the appearance of this new revolutionary subjectivity, its programme nothing less than the

[268] *CMSD*, P-5-6. Emphasis added.

[269] *Ibid,* P-13-14.

liberation of all people from servitude, class society, private property and state.[270] In the emergence of this revolutionary thought in 1840s – if we attend Ray's consistent emphasis – the struggle against reformism was the key. The conservative declarations of emphasising 'fraternal' ties between human beings in working class movements were rejected in favour of the new internationalist 'workers of the world, unite'.[271] No continuity with the immanent forms of organising life was sought. Before authoring the Manifesto, Marx and Engels had written a number of key texts where the basis of proletarian world-view was formed: 'Holy Family' (1845), 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' (1845), 'German Ideology' (1845-46) and 'The Poverty of Philosophy' (1847). But in truth it was in Communist Manifesto that they presented the new concept of Communist Party and its programme. "Marxism did not merely state the historic role of the working class. It laid out the programme for accomplishing revolutionary tasks. This programme was one of non-negotiable class struggle, destruction of capitalist exploitation-oppression through armed proletarian revolution and establishment of proletarian dictatorship."[272]

Though primarily descriptive, this scrapbook of a work was dotted in with brilliant commentaries, parenthetical observations and adumbrations. The stretches of the Manifesto that Ray chose for citing, quoting and emphasising in this note help us understand his politics and thought of history.

a. While discussing the blatant attempts made by 'bourgeois philosophers and sycophants' to conceal the real character of modern state, where the state was portrayed as an institution of all people that looked after the interests of all – Ray pointed out that Marx and Engels declared: 'The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.' Ray provided a parenthetical discussion next. "Let us take the example of the Indian state. It is brandished as a 'free' and 'democratic' state. But who are free here? The foreign imperialists, the monopolists, the big bourgeoisie and the big landlords. The freedom is to exploit the peasants and the workers, to increase price of commodities arbitrarily and immiserate the toilers, to profiteer, to retrench workers and lock factories out, to exacerbate

[270] *Ibid,* P-10.

[271] *Ibid,* P-17.

[272] *Ibid,* P-1-18.

unemployment, to murder the workers by unleashing police, to expropriate the land and produce of the peasants. And workers and peasants are free precisely to starve and die. *Democracy in India is another big farce. In a country where eighty per cent of the people are illiterate and hungry, votes can be bought cheaply by the wealthy political parties. Here slavery – in land, factory, and office – is the very basis of life for the people; here centralisation and arbitrary power of so-called 'Presidents' and 'Governors' can override parliament and its decisions ever so easily. To slightly modify the sentence in Manifesto: The state in modern India is a committee for managing the common affairs of the monopoly bourgeoisie and the landlords.*"[273]

b. Who were the bourgeoisie? "The bourgeoisie has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom - Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation."[274] Ray commented: "The truth of this statement has persisted through these one hundred and twenty years. Marx and Engels were hinting at our present with prescience. The developing capital of 1848 is now the sick capital of 1968. And this sickness has forced capitalist society to shed its veil – its crimes, cruelties, decadence and deceptions are completely manifest now."[275]

c. Ray lingered on how the manifesto charted the procession of capital through crisis. The statements of Marx and Engels in 'Communist Manifesto' and later, Marx' 'Capital' bore explanations of capitalist crisis that were also entirely (and especially) applicable to the stage of monopoly capitalism (twentieth century and beyond). Based on these explanations Lenin analysed monopoly capitalism. It was in the monopoly stage, i.e., imperialism, that the contradiction in capitalism reached its highest and last stage. In the age of imperialism it became clear that capital developed in an uneven manner. This unevenness created even more stasis,

[273] *Ibid,* P-21-22. Emphasis added.

[274] From Communist Manifesto; quoted in *Ibid,* P-22.

[275] *Ibid,* P-22. This was the time of Vietnam War.

resulting in imperialist conflicts and disastrous wars among imperialist powers to carve up the world. In 1968, Ray found imperialist nations – especially U.S.A and Great Britain – resorting to acts of exception and emergency to arrest the crisis. They were reorganizing the entire economic order in rigid militaristic terms, increasing the production of arms and ammunition massively and launching wars. But these measures only exacerbated the crisis. In the capitalist countries poverty, hunger and unemployment remained endemic among the working class. Through periodical destruction of the produce of wheat, potato, coffee etc the capitalists increased prices and poached on misery. With the majority in their own country impoverished, the imperialist bourgeoisie ventured into other countries and waged war to maximize profit frenziedly – this was the fundamental trait of contemporary capitalism in Ray's thought. Lenin demonstrated that though sick, monopoly capitalism shall end only under the blows of proletarian revolution. Ray declared: "Proletarian revolution had ensued from 1917".[276]

d. "But every class struggle is a political struggle."[277] Ray commented: "The opportunists here and now completely distort the meaning of this statement by brandishing the struggle to increase wage by even 2 *anna* or 4 *anna* as political struggle. They compromise on the revolutionary significance of class struggle and thus defy the revolutionary role of working class. Lenin criticised such opportunist machinations rather strongly and stated that when class struggle enters the political compass, it takes a clear aim at state power – this is the fruition of class struggle. Lenin further declared that a Marxist is one who considers class struggle to be the struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat."[278]

e. Ray commented on the theme of proletarian leadership in the Manifesto. Lenin adapted and developed the concept of proletarian leadership for the imperialist present of twentieth and twenty first centuries. The struggle of toiling people in rural and urban areas allied with the proletarian leadership. It was the revolutionary alliance of the workers and peasants under the singular leadership of working-class that ensured the victory of revolution in semi-capitalist,

[276] *Ibid,* P-24-25.

[277] From Communist Manifesto;Quoted in *Ibid,* P-27.

[278] *Ibid,* P-27.

semi-feudal countries in imperialist era. The fate of people's democratic revolution and socialist revolution would also be guaranteed by this revolutionary alliance, Ray stated.[279]

f. "The essential conditions for the existence and for the sway of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by the revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."[280] Ray commented: "This immortal prescription became an immanent break in 1917. In 1917, led by Lenin and the Communist Party, the working class of Russia – assisted by the toiling people – eradicated a bourgeois-landlord state for the first time in history. They established the dictatorship of the proletariat and attempted to build socialism against all obstacles. The November Revolution fundamentally transformed history. After Russian Revolution, Chinese Revolution and other people's democratic revolutions forcefully reiterated the programme of Marxism enshrined in 'Communist Manifesto'."[281]

g. Ray argued that Lenin developed the concept of the party enshrined in the Manifesto. He founded a new Communist Party which was the active conductor of rebellions and revolutions. The party started providing ideological, theoretical, political and organisational leadership to events of class struggle with the clear goal of establishing proletarian dictatorship and building socialism.[282] This new Communist Party performed this role – in Ray's account – by remaining doggedly anti-reformist. The social democratic parties of Europe – members of Second Communist International – were revising Marxism; they replaced 'revolution' with 'peaceful transition to socialism' and 'class struggle' with 'class reconciliation'. The only agenda was to

[279] *Ibid,* P-28-29.

[280] From 'Communist Manifesto'; Quoted in *Ibid,* P-29-30.

[281] *Ibid,* P-30.

[282] *Ibid,* P-32-33.

protect the capitalist system from the 'revolutionary blows of working class'[283] locally, and turn the working class into a tailpiece of the bourgeoisie, imperialism and nationalism. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party struggled against this rightwing current. They supported and initiated the revolutionary blows on the capitalist system. On the eve of Russian Revolution, Marx and Engels of 1848 returned to christen this politics. Ray related: "In April 1917, in his pamphlet 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution', Lenin stated: 'I am coming to the last point, the name of our party. We must call ourselves the Communist Party – just as Marx and Engels called themselves Communists. We must insist that we are Marxists and that we have as a basis the Communist Manifesto, which has been perverted and betrayed by the Social-Democracy on two important points : (1) The workers have no country; 'national defence' in an imperialist war is a betrayal of Socialism; (2) Marx's teaching about the state has been brutalised by the Second International'."[284]

h. Ray cited the rebuttal of the bourgeois allegation that Communism was against freedom and individuality: "Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriations."[285] Ray observed his present in this light: "Where can the individual's real freedom exist? In a place where exploitation has ceased. In a place where the oppression of the ordinary masses at the behest of a meager minority has been put to an end. In a place where unemployment and poverty have been abrogated. In a place where people are not eternally doubt-ridden on the feasibility of a tomorrow. In a place where people are not in terror of retrenchment from work. In a place where people are not peaceless about impending hunger and houselessness. Where is this place? In socialism. Stalin stated in his speech from the Nineteenth Congress of Soviet Communist Party in 1952: 'Earlier, the bourgeoisie presented themselves as liberal; they were for bourgeois democratic freedom and in that way gained popularity with the people. Now there is not one remaining trace of liberalism. There is no such thing as "freedom of personality" any more, - personal rights are now only (operative for) the owners of capital - all the other citizens are regarded as raw materials that are only for exploitation. The principle of

[283] *Ibid,* P-33.

[284] *Ibid,* P-34.

[285]Quoted in *Ibid,* P-28.

equal rights for people and nations is trodden in the dust and it is replaced by the principle of full rights for the exploiting minority and the lack of rights of the exploited majority of the citizens. The banner of bourgeois democratic freedom has been flung overboard. I think that you, the representatives of Communist and Democratic parties must pick up this banner and carry it forward if you want to gain the majority of the people. There is nobody else to raise it'."[286]

i. On Dictatorship of the Proletariat: "..The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degree, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible. Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production."[287] Ray raised and answered a question here: "What is the duration of the dictatorship? Until a classless society appears."[288] Ray quoted the task of the dictatorship spelled out in the Manifesto: "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[289]

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[286] *Ibid,* P-37.

[287] Quoted in *Ibid,* P-43.

[288] *Ibid,* P-43.

[289] Quoted in *Ibid,* P-43.

j. Suprakash Ray quoted from Lenin's "State and Revolution" to assess the latter's contribution to the concept of proletarian dictatorship: i. "Marx's theory of 'the state, i.e., the proletariat organized as the ruling class,' is inseparably bound up with the whole of his doctrine of the revolutionary role of the proletariat in history. The culmination of this rule is the proletarian dictatorship, the political rule of the proletariat. But since the proletariat needs the state as a *special* form of organization of violence *against* the bourgeoisie, the following conclusion suggests itself: Is it conceivable that such an organization can be created without first abolishing and destroying the state machine created by the bourgeoisie for themselves? The Communist Manifesto leads straight to this conclusion."[290] ii. "In speaking of the state 'withering away' and the even more graphic and colorful 'dying down of itself', Engels refers quite clearly and definitely to the period *after* 'the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society', that is, after the socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the 'state' at that time is the most complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists, who shamelessly distort Marxism, that Engels is consequently speaking here of *democracy* 'dying down of itself' or 'withering away'."[291] iii. "The transition from capitalist society—which is developing toward communism—to communist society is impossible without a 'political transition period', and the state in this period can only be the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."[292] Ray reminded that the opportunist section of the Second Communist International distorted the concepts of proletariat and dictatorship inherent in Marx and Engels. Lenin freed these concepts from the distortions and inaugurated its true meaning. Lenin demonstrated that soviet was a specific form of dictatorship of proletariat. It was a specific alliance of workers and peasants led by the working class. Lenin established that in class society, dictatorship of proletariat is the most profound form of democracy. This was Lenin's extraordinary contribution to the development of Marxism. That dictatorship of proletariat was the singularity of all transitory political forms between capitalism and communism was a powerful truth for Ray. After Second World War the people's democratic states established in various countries were a form of dictatorship of proletariat. Mao Tse-tung expanded the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat through the people's democratic

[290] *Ibid,* P-44.

[291] *Ibid,* P-44.

[292] *Ibid,* P-45.

revolution in China. It was a more developed form of the concepts of Marx-Engels-Lenin. Mao Tse-tung induced that in the final stages of imperialism – 'the present phase of revolution' for Ray – not only peasants but other exploited groups of people would assemble under the working-class banner. The form of this dictatorship of proletariat would be people's dictatorship under proletarian leadership. The revolution in China had realised the lesson of Mao.[293]

k. Suprakash Ray commented on the critique of reactionary and petty bourgeois socialism: "Nowadays, in every country petty bourgeois socialists abound. Their nuisance was not negligible in the times of Marx and Engels (who called this socialism reactionary). The all-pervasive exploitation of a developing capitalism disheveled the lives of many urban petty bourgeois and relatively well-off peasants in the villages. Their socialism was a 'strong protest' against this. They discovered the contradictions inherent in capitalism quite precisely. But their orientation was reactionary. They wanted to conserve the given social order only with a reduced scale of production and economy." Bourgeois nationalist socialism was also relentless in its defence of economic management of the bourgeois state – Ray found – portraying the state as working in the interest of the workers. Completely anti-revolution and pro-reform, they perpetuated the capitalist system through modifications. "One hundred and twenty years after Communist Manifesto appeared, such reactionary socialism is now practiced by the two 'Communist' parties of colonial/national India. The leaders of these parties hanker for ministries in a bourgeois-landlord state, they are completely against proletarian internationalism and revolution, and they believe socialism can be reached through bourgeois elections." In effect, the Communist leadership supported the bourgeois society and protected the bourgeois system from the revolutionary blows of workers and peasants. Such socialism argued that exploitation and oppression were unethical. To transform society, the transformation of bourgeoisie state into an ethical entity was emphasised. "These leaders think that in the wake of their continued propaganda – when all members of society will realise that socialism is good – all of them will advance amicably and change the society."[294]

[293] *Ibid,* P-44-45.

[294] *Ibid,* P-47-49.

l. "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement."[295] Suprakash Ray commented: "This is the fundamental principle of the Communists: to build the struggle of tomorrow - the struggle for destroying capitalism and establishing dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism – in the struggle of today. This is the immutable lesson of Marx and Engels." The Communist Manifesto declared that the Communists had to support all types of democratic and revolutionary struggles with all their might. Through this support a struggling unity with all true democratic parties of different countries would be built. Through this support the unity of the toiling people would be ensured. 'All true Communists' in different countries followed this idea and strengthened the struggling democratic forces of their own countries. It was through this idea that Lenin and the Russian Communist party, Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Communist party, Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese Communist party could ensure the victory of socialism. "It is by following this idea that true Communists of different countries will unite struggling democratic forces against the forces of reaction, to build a world-wide 'democratic front' against imperialism."[296]

m. "The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got."[297] Ray elaborated: "Communists of every country have as one of their main tasks to take this message to the working class and the toiling people. During 1914-1918, the agents of imperialism – the social democrats of Europe and nationalist leaders like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – carried on intense propaganda to push the workers of the nations into the war. They portrayed the war as a just war of national defence and justified the massive manslaughter." Only Lenin and the Bolshevik Party fought these machinations with full might. Lenin asserted that these tendencies were against the working class, against Marxism and proletarian internationalism. The economic role of the working class was not merely national, it was international. Class enemies were not merely national, they were international. International unity is hence more important to the working class for its emancipation than national unity is. At

[295] Quoted in *Ibid,* P-50.

[296] *Ibid,* P-51.

[297] Quoted in *Ibid,* P-40.

various crucial junctures, however, the working class had to support democratic movements within the nations. Lenin categorised wars into just and unjust wars. Imperialist war for subjugating new territories was unjust war. Lenin opposed the war of Tsarist Empire and called for turning the imperialist war into a just, i.e. revolutionary war. It was with the slogan of just war that after the 1917 revolution Soviet partisans fought the imperialist onslaught of American, British, French, German and Japanese imperialism between 1918 and 1920. It was with this very slogan that the Chinese people fought under the leadership of Communist party to resist the fascist aggression and capitulation of indigenous bourgeoisie. For Ray, the working class and its party were the greatest local patriots. They opposed unjust wars waged by the ruling classes to ensure the security of the working people, while they joined just wars to defend their country. This was the Marxist-Leninist vantage towards 'nation'. "Only three types of wars are just wars: national liberation war, anti-imperialist war and defence of socialist territory."[298]

n. 'The significance of Communist Manifesto, the most revolutionary of all documents'[299]: "In Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels have i. explained the course of social development; ii. established the theory of mode of production and relation of production; iii. built the theory of the inevitable destruction of capitalism; iv. established the theory of socialist victory through proletarian revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. The first attempt to establish dictatorship of the proletariat through working class revolution was the Paris Commune of 1870. The first victory of socialism through proletarian revolution was in 1917. In China's 'Sanghai Commune', in Germany and Hungary post-first world war, in Sholapur and Peshawar (1930) this sequence continued. Communist Manifesto is the most advanced document in the history of human societies. It keeps inspiring in people a new praxis of thought without end. The presence of Communist Manifesto is in the proletarian dictatorship of Russia, the people's dictatorship in China, in anti-fascist resistance in Europe and the appearance of sizeable Communist Parties in many countries of Asia."[300]

[298] *Ibid,* P-40-42.

[299] *Ibid,* P-52-53.

[300] *Ibid,* P-52-53.

III

In 1969, Suprakash Ray published a brief commentary on Karl Marx's "Capital". The spirit of the work can be grasped from a passage where his estimate of both the great work of Karl Marx and the situation of Communism in his area converged. "For many years now right-wing socialist and some parties using the name 'Communist' have directly or indirectly rejected the core principal of Marx' *Capital* that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat – the being and antagonism of these two classes – are markers of capitalist society. For them the Marxist statements of class-split society and class struggle are vestigial now and should be abandoned." For Ray, their vague and unsubstantiated theories declared that revolution and wresting state power from the bourgeoisie-landlords were not necessary. It was indeed possible to transform capitalism and establish socialism through peaceful elections. "When Marx was alive, the agents of the bourgeoisie attacked the revolutionary philosophy of *Capital*. Now this duty is performed by reformists and revisionists within the so-called 'left'." Ray did not find in them the courage to reject Marx outright – they continued to decorate themselves as 'Marxists'. "But all they want is to gentrify Marxism, alter its revolutionary principles and sustain capitalism through social reforms". Ray asserted that 'class struggle' was much more formalised and threatening in the late 1960s than in the time of Marx. Democratic and social revolutions led by the proletariat made for the real order of the world. At such a juncture 'cliques of bourgeois agents (some of them 'Socialists' and 'Communists')' were hell-bent to sustain capitalism and feudalism by 'distorting Marxism'. The bourgeoisie – to stall their imminent demise – had been able to 'contaminate Communist movements and parties by injecting this strain'. This process was explicit in the Soviet Communist Party after Stalin. It was promoting class reconciliation and the theory of peaceful transition to socialism 'erasing the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat'. It claimed socialism could co-exist with capitalism and imperialism – 'a smokescreen of bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology'. Ray wrote that the leadership of the two Communist Parties in colonial/national India – "both 'Marxist' and 'not-Marxist'" – was of the same ilk. These did not deem revolution as necessary. Bourgeois elections provided for them the tranquil path to state power. "Marx and Engels had in their times exposed the reformists and revisionists, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung carried forward this task. Lenin reinvented Marxism into an entirely relevant

and always contemporary theory of socialist revolution. Leninism is the Marxism of the age of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Now – for states that are alliances between capitalism and feudal ethos – Stalin and Mao Tse-tung have applied Marxism-Leninism to mobilize people's democratic revolution. Hence, the thought of Stalin and Mao Tse Tung is the Marxism-Leninism of this age."[301]

The primary themes of his reading of "Capital" can be summarised thus: i. Socialism is an abrogation of the theory of value central to capitalism. ii. The category of society is central to capital. Capital is in the final call a specific and domineering social relation. iii. For abrogating the theory of value, hence, a destruction of this relation is necessary. Class struggle is conceptualised as the truth of the description generated by massive interpretive apparatus of 'Capital'. iv. Dictatorship of proletariat ensures an immediate programme and struggle to build socialism – an affirmative cut to the negativity of abrogation. The destruction, in essence and effect, is a subtraction. v. The immense knowledge accumulated by "Capital" is subsumed within the evental procedure of the singularity of rebellions and 'revolutionary blows'.

Ray concluded his reading with a long and deeply affirmative excursus. In *Capital* – Ray surmised – Marx demonstrated that wherever capital accumulated and developed, the fundamental laws of capitalism work the same. This was a very significant discovery from the vantage point of rational world-view and revolutionary praxis. The strong tendency of capitalism towards becoming a world-system could be grasped only by accepting this discovery. It was this discovery which offered a material topology for proletarian unity and the organisation of proletarian revolutionary power. Marx demonstrated that capitalist system exhibited a definite pattern everywhere: contradiction and conflict between the working class and the bourgeoisie, big industries devoured small enterprises; poverty and suffering of the working class; the accumulation of disproportionately massive wealth and properties among the bourgeois class; destabilization of peasant communities due to rapid differentiation within the peasantry; gradual destruction of the lives and livelihoods of toiling people. This was true for every capitalist territory. These conditions intensified in the monopoly stage of capitalism in twentieth century and beyond. After Marx, Lenin discovered a new stage of capitalism: in every territory, capitalist development entered the phase of imperialism abdicating the phase of competition by instituting

[301] *MC*, P-30-32.

the dictatorship of monopoly capitalism and imperialism on a captive society. Drawing on the foundations and features of capitalism spelled out in 'Capital', Lenin established this truth. The theory of proletarian revolution and dictatorship of proletariat was developed by Lenin in the light of this discovery. 'In every extension of thought, Marxism-Leninism holds.' It was the truth of free capitalist countries; it was the truth of dependent and semi-dependent countries. The programme of transition from democracy to socialism was to be the same everywhere. The path for the shift from capitalism to socialism in the imperialist era was drawn by Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. This path passed through the most exacting of tests in the Russian socialist revolution. This path ensured the victory of people's democratic revolution in China. The people's liberation struggles against imperialism in Laos and Vietnam was following this path for twenty years. The people of Africa and Latin America were resolutely moving towards the people's democratic revolution on this very path. The goal of people's liberation in the territory of Indian state was also laid out in the path of people's democratic and socialist revolutions. In the imperialist era or the era of general crisis of capitalism and proletarian revolution, Lenin, Stalin and Mao developed the revolutionary theory of 'Capital' to devise new programmes for the proletariat and the Communist party. Capitalism would not deconstruct itself, it must succumb to the powerful revolutionary blows of the revolutionary struggles organised by the working class and a true Communist party. With the help of the toiling masses in every country, the working class would have to bury capitalism and imperialism. "'Capital' by Marx is the essential weapon to put an end to imperialism. Let the prescription and programme of 'Capital' find eternity."[302]

IV

In *JM* (1969) Ray based himself on Stalin's *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question,* Lenin's texts on self-determination, the *Communist Manifesto* and Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* There were clear forays into his historical research on peasant insurgency to grasp the specificity of national question in India, Pakistan, and Burma.

[302] *Ibid,* P-34.

For Ray, "the national question is a modern problem."[303] But amorphous national spatial territories – based on language, religion, ethnicity – indeed existed in the pre-modern era. With the development of modern capitalist system, the capitalist class – to facilitate the creation of markets for its commodities – instituted an intimate connection between various regions and people of the proto-national space. The power of capitalism to create the 'national' proved to be unprecedented. It removed feudal states (but not social power) to club together entire populations. Capitalism triggered the massive assembly of working class in industrial areas and structured a relationship between industrial cities and raw material-producing rural areas. This very process created a collaborative and servile middle class. This middle class then spoke for capitalism and propagated the idea of nation and nationalism. In colonial India nationalist movement opposed British imperialism to serve indigenous capitalism. "Indian capitalists – with help from middle classes – created nationalism and to perpetuate their exploitative machinery brandished India as one nation while in truth it was a palimpsest of many nationalities."[304]

This was a radical declaration. Especially in the context Ray constructed: in a 1923 report from the 12th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party Stalin enumerated eight hundred tribes and communities in colonial/national India. After that, through continuous struggle new communities with their own set of features and demands surfaced. The 1961 Census Report revealed that a thousand linguistic communities populated the territory of Indian state. Various tribes and communities were fighting for autonomy. The struggle of these communities against British imperialism was relentless for two hundred years. The tribal peasant masses rendered the history of peasant insurgency luminous. Naga, Kuki-Mizo, Garo, Santhal, Oraon, Munda tribes and the Kashmiris were still struggling in 1969. But this long and inexhaustible struggle was ignored by British imperialism, Indian state and Communist leadership. In 1946, the Communist Party of 'Joshi-Dange-Adhikary-Ranadive' presented a memorandum to the British 'Cabinet Mission' which enumerated merely eighteen nations within colonial India: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Sindh, Baluchistan, Pakhtunistan, Kashmir, West Punjab, Middle Punjab, Hindusthan, Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Assam. Ray intervened: "Let us focus on a few regions. To call the homelands of Santhal, Munda, Oraon 'Bihar', to call

[303] *JM*, P-15.

[304] *Ibid*, P-17.

the homelands of Khond and other tribes 'Orissa', to call the homeland of Gurkhas, Santhals, Lepchas 'Bengal', to call the homelands of Nagas, Mizos and other tribes 'Assam' – was not merely ignorance, it was deeply conspiratorial. The only purpose of the revisionist Communist leadership was to obfuscate the struggle of these communities against exploitation and oppression. They murdered Marxism by determining nationhood solely in terms of religion and supporting the Hindustan-Pakistan scheme." Religion was not the decisive element of nationality; this 'Marxist truth' was ignored by the revisionist leadership. This betrayal of the Communist leadership was to undermine the greater truth that "the national question can only be solved through revolution."[305] The language of 'national integration' used by the Communist leadership from 1950s and 1960s had stopped them from taking a decisive stand on these democratic struggles.[306] This was an untenable position in terms of the Communist sequence that ordinary partisans like Ray constructed; and confusing too, since CPI (M) broadly retained the language of national liberation struggle and even democratic revolution. Unlike Ray of 1969, the party is still against the democratic struggle for self-determination in Kashmir. Most communities and areas that Ray mentioned are still struggling for freedom and democracy, and are seen as 'insurgent' and a 'problem'. Ray's sequencing act was relentless and most obdurate. Marxism and Communism were for him thoughts proceeding from events. Paris Commune, 1871 and Sholapur and Peshawar insurrections, 1930 were put in the same sequence of Communist politics. Rural areas on the fringes of Calcutta and Kashmir appeared in one rational sequence of politics. The Indian big bourgeoisie and landlords was a minor partner of imperialism. Conflicts and open antagonism had started cropping up between bourgeois cliques from different regions over their slices in the Indian and foreign markets. The strife between the Birla conglomerate and other capitalist clouts in the late 1960s validated his point, Ray asserted. Thoroughly tied to these developments was the direct attack of the big bourgeoisie on the working class for more profit. This attack assumed a dreadful proportion. Industrial crisis was permanent, and thousands of workers were being retrenched every day by the so-called reorganisation of industries. The working class was protesting in various locations every day. Another important condition was the sharpening antagonism between the small regional bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie, and in this struggle the suppressed regional nationalities and communities were asserting themselves

[305] *Ibid,* P-39.

[306] See Bibliography I.C.45.

with renewed resolve for full democratic autonomy. The contemporary struggle in Andhra demanding Ispat industry in the region was for Ray a bright spot in this trail. Peasant struggles against feudal exploitation were appearing with new revolutionary possibilities. Unemployment, hunger, increasing landlessness and indebtedness were opposed with revolutionary struggle in Bengal and beyond. These struggles were developing rapidly. The struggle of Naxalbari (1967), the struggle of Sonarpur-Bhangor, the peasant struggle in Bihar, the struggles in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra were affirming his contention. The liberation struggle of nations, tribes and communities were also revivifying itself in different territories of Indian state. The Kashmir struggle, the struggles in Naga-Mizo areas, the struggle of Girijans in Andhra, the struggle of tribal masses of Madhya Pradesh – among many more cases – were assuming momentum. The oppressed sections of the middle classes were struggling against growing unemployment and the increase in prices, 'strengthening the conditions of people's democratic revolution'.[307] The complete dissociation of politics from objectal arrangements in Ray was entirely distinct from the statist, bureaucratic and macroeconomic approach taken to resolve political issues in the texts of Communist leadership.[308]

Ray wrote that Santhal, Naga, Mizo, Riyang among others had dwelled hill and forest tracts practicing agriculture, retaining specificities of their clan and community. Only agriculture could not unite various communities into one nation. In Bengal, capitalist development was in full sway in the plains and forced various communities to mingle. That was how the so called 'Bengalis' emerged in nineteenth century. But in the north-east and north-west of these plains, various communities strove to regain their autonomy from capital and refused to be 'Bengali'. "In future these communities will unite and demand liberation and autonomy from the Indian state."[309] The acute political prescience of these pronouncements in 1969 notwithstanding, Ray's learned hints at the limits of capital within a colonial-national setting and pitting of communities against colony, nation and capital reminds us of later elaborations in the works of scholars like Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee.[310] For Ray this was not a failure of capital to universalise –

[307] *Ibid,* P-41-43.

[308] See Bibliography I.C.

[309] *Ibid,* P-12.

[310] See Bibliography II.86.a,b.

which would have led him back to the project of statist nationalism in colonial/national India in lieu of proletarian internationalism – but rather subjective innovations of insurgent people bearing a clear programme. He brought out the revolutionary and Communist substance of the national liberation framework of the 1960s through Mao Tse-tung. He quoted: "In the final analysis struggle for national liberation is class struggle." And "For every exploited nation and class, revolution is the central question."[311]

The inspection of the national question became necessary as Ray absorbed mass line politics of Cultural Revolution (1966). 'Mass line' tapped into the political power of a thoroughly disjunctive synthesis of 'nation' rather correctly for Ray. He proposed a 'front' to facilitate a people's war against the Indian state. The struggles of working class, peasants, exploited middle class, national bourgeoisie and nation-communities were developing simultaneously yet disjointedly. "The unified form of these disjointed struggles will be the 'front' of people's democratic revolution here. But the unity of various struggles and a unified 'front' cannot build itself. A true Marxist-Leninist Communist Party is indispensable. The people's democratic revolution led by the working class will emancipate all oppressed classes, communities, castes and tribes and precipitate the socialist revolution."[312]

The specific revolution in the territory of Indian state was determined by the exploitation and oppression of a tripartite apparatus – foreign imperialism, big bourgeoisie and feudal landlords, Ray argued. In a territory of many proto-national spaces revolution could not 'begin and end at one go over the entire stretch of colonial/national India'. Revolution here should be an accumulation of regional and local revolts happening one after the other or a few simultaneously. With the active cooperation of the proletariat, peasant revolutionary war would create liberated zones while the urban struggle of exploited middleclass and students would unite with working-class struggle in industrial areas to support sustenance and expansion of the zones liberated by the peasants. This was a sporadic, intense and singular reality of the late 1960s in Ray's Bengal. He related: peasants were an overwhelming 80% of the Indian people. Feudalism on one hand

[311] Quoted in *JM,* P-31; Mao was expressing solidarity to the struggle of Black Americans in United States of America in 1964.

[312] *Ibid,* P-43.

tied the peasantry to outmoded land relations and oppressive practices, on the other it arrested the full unfolding of productive forces in the landmass. The end of feudalism through an agrarian revolution was the central tenet of the revolution in colonial/national India, and the peasants were the primary column of democratic revolution. Led by the proletariat, the peasant army would eradicate the last vestiges of feudalism from rural areas and break constraints on people's creativity and thought. The workers would support the peasantry - existentially tied to the land - towards socialism. The various liberation struggles of the many nations would be organised and unified by the proletariat. These would inspire the oppressed middle class and small regional bourgeoisie to struggle. The liberation struggles would not remain disjointed and transform into an internationalist revolution that, in turn, would quickly pass to socialist revolution.[313]

Ray followed Marxist critique of political economy and Lenin's theory of imperialism to understand the different phases of colonialism internationally. Competition led to war and the cost of war created a tumult within the oppressed nations and the nations within such nations. The First World War and the Second World War saw imperialism shed some of the resultant political discomfort while keeping intact its politico-economic suzerainty. India, Pakistan, Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia were some of the new states instituted after the Second World War. In the 1960s, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia were rejecting the imperialist attempt to conserve the status quo and carrying on anti-imperialist armed struggle for liberation. Among these, Laos and Vietnam were attempting to solve the national question through socialism. In stark opposition, India, Pakistan and Burma accepted the imperialist continuum as a boon. The states of India, Pakistan and Burma were tools created by imperialism. Capitalism hoisted on a thick feudalism held these three states together. It was imperialism that patterned a new feudalism in these countries (to immune itself from revolutionary mass struggles) and also selectively promoted indigenous capitalism servile to foreign masters. In the face of political upheavals, the direct role of colonial states receded in favour of comprador states of big bourgeoisie and landlords ruling over various nations and communities. Within these new regimes, major communities exploited and oppressed minor nations and communities. For Ray, the reason was that these new states were based on private property and class oppression, i.e., the exploitation of workers and peasants by capitalists and landlords. These states could not exist

[313] *Ibid,* P-43-45.

while not being massive coercive machines. The need to exploit and oppress the workers and peasants had created national conflicts and lengthened wars in the region. In Burma, Pakistan and India, the ruling elite waged wars against many communities; Karen in Burma, Pakhtoon and Afridi in Pakistan, Naga, Mizo, Kashmiris in India (to name a few cases). Thriving on exploitation and oppression, these states nurtured a regressive ruling class which ground down minorities and tribes and occupied resources of neighbouring states. Such states – in order to guard its self-interests and wage protracted wars – sought economic and military help from strong imperialist states. Inevitably these new states became completely servile to the imperialist powers – "like the so-called independent Indian state is", Ray stated in 1969. Its exorbitant defence expenditure intensified crisis in industrial and agricultural sectors; it was a de-facto slave to British and American imperialists and Soviet revisionists. Due to differential unfolding of capital within even a centralised state like colonial/national India, the capitalists and landlords were dominating various communities and tribes politically and economically. To veil this domination "Nehru created a smoke screen under the names of socialism, democratic socialism and national unity."[314]

From Ray's vantage the nations of the world were divided into two camps. In one camp there were only a few imperialist nations. These nations, through monopoly capitalism, exploited the less advanced nations. The other camp was composed of colonies, semi-independent erstwhile colonies – 'with their emaciated people'. The Communist nations were also divided into two camps. "Some led by the revisionist Soviet Union supported imperialism, while the other led by China support people."[315] In Ray's account of the situation in the territory of the Indian state, the proletariat, the lower sections of peasants and middle class, the various tribes and communities in colonial/national India; all sought liberation from the exploitation of big bourgeoisie, landlords and foreign imperialism that included Soviet revisionists. The Soviet revisionists were restructuring the big bourgeoisie through aids, providing foreign markets and fields of capital investment, and through massive arm deals goading them to expansionism. British and American imperialism consistently renewed their right to exploit and oppress the country.[316]

[314] *Ibid;* Ray's view pieced together from different but close location in this book, P-22, P-25-26, P-20.

[315] *Ibid,* P-35.

[316] *Ibid,* P-41-42.

Ray had an acute understanding of the specific alignment of classes in terms of their corresponding political role. In the era of monopoly capitalism or imperialism, capitalist development in the Indian nation-state divided the bourgeoisie into two. One camp was that of the big bourgeoisie with their big monopoly industries while the other had the small regional bourgeoisie with their relatively small enterprises. In sync with the centripetal imperative of capital the monopolist big bourgeoisie ate up small enterprises. With the help of the state and foreign imperialism it captured the entire national market. It enjoyed monopolist access to foreign markets. To retain its rights of exclusive exploitation it entered into an alliance with foreign imperialists. It invited foreign imperialism to colonial/national India and - against people's interest – allowed it to exploit the masses through 'investments '. As junior partners in an apparatus of exploitation, the bourgeoisie became the main enemy of all communities and classes in the country. The small regional bourgeoisie also faced the wrath of big bourgeoisie, landlords and foreign imperialism. They could not access labour power and raw materials because of the obstacles set by big bourgeoisie and feudalism, while unfair competition with foreign imperialism destroyed their enterprises. The small bourgeoisie had the same set of reactionary enemies that the workers, peasants and oppressed communities had. The small bourgeoisie should join the revolutionary front as national bourgeoisie. In Ray's book, to enter the front this intermediary class would have to accept the leadership of the proletariat unconditionally and without vacillation, struggle against the three reactionary forces, support peasant insurrection against feudalism and recognise the autonomy of oppressed communities.[317]

Ray declared that bourgeois society was entirely incapable and burnt out; it could never resolve the national question. As long as the right to private property and the rule of capital continued, the enmity between nations and the oppression/exploitation of one nation of others was to increase and the emancipatory struggles of exploited communities and tribes were to intensify. 'Just as establishment of socialism cannot be imagined without the liberation of oppressed nations, capitalism and bourgeois rule cannot be imagined without the oppression of various nations'. Till the peasant masses and petty bourgeoisie remain under the spell of nationalism and are swayed by the diktats of the bourgeoisie, chauvinism and national conflicts were deemed

[317] *Ibid,* P-34-35.

inevitable. Only proletarian revolution could liberate the oppressed nations.[318] Ray asserted that proletarian internationalism actively supported the full logic of nationalities beyond bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie chauvinism. He quoted from Communist Manifesto: "In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another will also be put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between the classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end." [319]

V

In his article *PP*, Bijan Sen closely examined a set of terms circulating in Communist parlance in Calcutta which in his view were erroneous. Sen began the article thus:

"A long time back[320] I went to a peasants' meeting. The chief organizer of the meeting – a key member of the district's Kisan Sabha – took me along with him. He was the primary orator in the meeting. Eagerly, I braced myself to listen to the important Comrade. He began --- 'Brother Chashu![321]' I was scandalised. The word Chashu began pulverising my mind. I did not know this word, I never heard it before. After the meeting ended I was returning home with that very Comrade. I asked him the meaning of the word. He answered me emotionally: 'These peasants are very poor, exploited and oppressed. Hence, I used this word to express my affection and sympathy.' New to Marxist politics, my respect for the comrade increased. I felt that perhaps this was the way to show sympathy to the oppressed and the exploited --- it did not matter that the word Chashu had no meaning whatsoever! I came from a poor but middle class family, read books on Marxism and accepted Marxism to the core of my being. I tried to convince myself that to be sympathetic towards and mawkish about the unfortunate workers and peasants is natural for me; I accepted the comrade's explanation. After that I have learnt so many similar Bengali terms in the Marxist literature here. But now I am old – emotion and sympathies while getting churned

[318] *Ibid,* P-28.

[319] From Bibliography IV.3.c, P-33.

[320] This was late 1930s or early 1940s.

[321] One of the words for peasants in Bengali is *Chashi*. The word used by Ray's Comrade, 'Chashu', was an improvised sweet-nothing of a term which can roughly be translated into 'oh-peasant-honey!'

in the vortex of thought seeks refuge in reason and science."[322] Sen considered three terms and a phrase in Bengali Marxist literature: *Sarbahara, Puji, Madhyabitta and Sasastra Krishi Biplab.* We serially discuss his arguments on these.

Sen pointed out that factory-workers had been named *Sarbahara* in Bengali. *Sarbahara* meant one who lost everything or one who was rendered incapable. Sen contended that everyone could become *Sarbahara* in one or the other situation. "For example, during the Second World War innumerable banks failed in Bengal. Some people become bankrupt by gambling. During the partition of Bengal some rich landlords and gentlemen – pampered little Brahmins – from eastern Bengal became beggars and refugees in the streets of Calcutta. Small industrialists and entrepreneurs go kaput as monopoly capitalists flex muscle. In Calcutta of the 1960s there are more than 20000 homeless people who live on the streets, often termed 'vagabonds'. They should surely be called *Sarbahara.* But such an empirically additive category surely could not have ushered in 1917." [323] This was a complex, layered move. He simultaneously re-territorialised proletariat and posited it as victorious subjectivity. This was a forceful reiteration of the question of ascertaining sites of production and an insurgent transformation of the sites (political strikes and occupation of factory-site or working-class neighbourhood led by worker-controlled partisan committees that supplanted trade unions[324]) in the benign environ of animal humanism, peaceful transition and bargaining, economic co-existence (of socialism and capitalism). He wanted to break the false unity exuded by the mystified word *sarbahara* used uncritically by revisionists and unselfconsciously by revolutionary Communists. [325] Ray's critique was a tactical mobilisation of science against the ascendancy of amorphous ideology and humanism within Communist politics (tied to the stricture of 'peaceful transition to socialism'). Also, the Communist leadership in colonial/national India intermittently assumed a soft and

[322] *PP,* P-200.

[323] *Ibid,* P-201-202

[324] See Bibliography I.B.39-44. The Tebhaga-Telangana sequence of politics sought to destroy the factory as a site of time (economism, bargaining with the state and capitalists, historical consciousness) and pronounce it as a site of politics. Through rigorous partisan enquiry the method towards this goal was ascertained : every worker-led factory-committee in the areas of the Indian state would call for agrarian revolution in rural areas (whose perpetual 'backwardness' had been ensured by imperialism and the collaborating Indian state) as its disinterested and permanent revolutionary task.

[325] *Ibid,* P-202.

disfigured language of socialist revolution to stifle the prescriptions and forms of struggle associated with democratic revolution.[326] In that context – for a true splitter like Ray – it was important to underline the immediate local tasks of Communist politics among the working class. The factory-site and its spaces for regimenting the workers (barracks, neighbourhoods) had to be emphasised as the critical node of private property and concentration of wealth in each area, amenable to seizure and occupation in defiance of the economistic constraints set by trade unions.

Ray argued: "Marx and Engels never conceived of the proletariat or working class as a category of the bankrupt. Working class was declared as the advanced guard of revolution to seize power from the state and confiscate all factories and properties from the bourgeoisie. The working class was to institute its dictatorship on society. A system of thought was worked out to buttress this anointment. Everything around the workers is actually already theirs. They are bearers of ineffable creativity – labour power; stolen from them in the factory. In what sense are they *Sarbahara*? This reminds me of 'oh-peasant-honey'!"[327] The accent on labour power did not let Ray forget that the key here was 'theft' or forceful appropriation that established the contradiction between bourgeois and proletariat as the crux of the final struggle against class society and state. That this 'theft' was the cornerstone of capitalist system was emphasised so effectively and consistently by Ray that his vision of socialism could not have retained any easy reshuffling of capitalist relations for future social stability – uninterrupted revolutionary struggle of oppressed people and ordinary partisans was the primary register of socialism (or dictatorship of proletariat) for him. His absorption and affirmation of Mao Tse-tung Thought and the tenets of Cultural Revolution marked his opposition to a party-state or centralised bureaucratic control on ordinary local partisans. The concept of socialism as merely a new arbiter of social wealth and labour power was rigorously refuted in Ray's thought.

In the conjuncture of the late 1960s, Ray espoused the science of logic in Communism – against the oppressive humanism in the texts and practices of both CPI and CPI (M) – then united in ruling West Bengal on behalf of the Indian state and upholding the agenda of reformism and revisionism. A virulent critic of economism and piecemeal reforms (to alleviate the familial

[326] See Bibliography I.C.23-33, 45.

[327] *Ibid,* P-202.

condition of the working class) becoming the sole factors in Communist trade unionism, Ray understood that the sentimental term *sarbahara* was strengthening an ethical ideology at the cost of revolutionary breach. Ray argued: "Proletariat or working class is a concrete economic category to be understood in terms of wage and exploitation of labour power. This category is the basis of capitalist profit and capitalism itself. How does the term *Sarbahara* contribute to this understanding? To show sympathy and bestow charity? This category – the greatest revolutionary force according to Marx-Engels-Lenin – needs no sympathy, expects no charity."[328] Ray's rejection of any form of ethical ideology was comprehensive.

He proposed that 'sromik', 'majdoor' and 'majoor' (in Bengali and Urdu/Hindi---one who labours) or sromik-sreni, majdoor-sreni and majoor-sreni (sreni means class) should be the words used for proletariat or working class, 'those who sell their labour power to factory owners and create commodities with their labour'[329]. Non-factory labourers (who in Marxist terminology are called 'toilers') should be called 'sramajeebi', or those who earn livelihood through labour. Labour was understood as the unbridled creativity of the ordinary people who – even under slavery – had built the entire modern material scale, and that creativity in Ray's exposition was on the threshold of forcing the final innovation: situating politics, permanently occupying factory sites by abolishing time and state power.

Ray pointed out that 'capital' was translated as *Puji in* Bengali. *Puji* meant passive wealth or hoard. For Ray, this word failed to encapsulate the processual, relational character of capital, whereby it guarded capital from its exploitative connotation – and thus fed into the intrinsic petty bourgeois desire of improvability by acquiring propriety and property from existing capital.[330] This was also an abnegation of the dynamic and coercive nature of the transformation of wealth, objects and machines into capital, which was the substance of exploitation and in the final call, class struggle. He read Marx, Engels and Lenin to assert that capital was a specific social relation buttressed with the repressive machinery of the state that could be negated solely through affirmative revolutionary action rather than by negotiating with its inert moments like salary, wage and currency. Ray continued his campaign against the economism of the Communist

[328] *Ibid,* P-203.

[329] *Ibid,* P-204.

[330] *Ibid,* P-207.

leadership. He proposed the term *mooldhan* for capital, which in Bengali hinted at the key moment of investment and the beginning of the cycle of exploitation.[331]

In Bengali Marxist literature, middle class was popularly translated as madhyabitta, which meant 'with medium wealth'. Ray charted the origin of this practice from the early 1950s when a group of leftist intellectuals inserted the idea of wealth into the category of class. Sen called this practice 'strange, unrealistic, laughable and malicious'. There were many who were confused by this practice. For them, and Ray, class meant parts of society involved in similar economic activities. These parts in every society were involved in specific aspects of the production and distribution of commodities: the owners of factories and mines were the capitalist class, owners of land were the landlord class, those who sold their labour power in factories for wage were the working class or proletarian class or proletariat. The capitalist class was on top by controlling the means of production while the working class, landless agricultural labourers and informal toilers were at the bottom. In between there were intellectuals, small feudatories, small entrepreneurs, shop owners and middle peasants. They constituted – with their often feeble but mostly ubiquitous relationship with entrenched properties – the middle class. In such a transparent scheme, Ray wondered why the reference to wealth was necessary at all. In the scheme he criticised, the capitalist was called *uchhabitta* which meant one with a high amount of wealth; the middle class was called *madhyabitta* and the working class was called *nirbitta* which meant one with no wealth. In this tendency, Ray read the angst of middle class intellectuals who constituted the burgeoning bureaucracy of the two communist parties in 1950s and 1960s. The forced reference to wealth ascribed immutability to wealth which deliberately veiled the processual and oppressive nature of expropriation, accumulation and distribution. Ray thus made the readers think that the scheme of *bitta* or wealth helped misrecognise stable sociological fragments from the real homogenous multiplicity that was capitalism. This misrecognition led to a bargaining for creatural interests, which went against the grain of Ray's Communist politics.

In the last examination of this treatise, Ray pointed out that agrarian revolution was the primary aspect of Communist agenda in colonial/national India initially and always but the 'two communist parties had hidden it'[332]. "But Naxalbari in 1967 unconcealed agrarian revolution and

[331] *Ibid,* P-204-206.

[332] *Ibid,* P-209.

exposed the two existent Communist parties as revisionists and neo-revisionists. Red Salute, Naxalbari!"[333] Ray inspected the phrase *Sasastra Krishi Biplab* (Armed Agrarian Revolution) used first in the organ of the incipient party-form that congealed around the event of Naxalbari, *Deshabrati*, then in graffiti on the wall of the central library of Calcutta University and from there to innumerable walls in the city of Calcutta, 1968. Ray wrote: "We know that agrarian revolution means fundamental change in existing land relations; in this context, taking land through armed upheaval from the feudal landlords supported by imperialism and the big bourgeoisie, redistributing land to poor peasants and agricultural workers, building co-operatives and thus ending all expressions of feudal ethos in agriculture and society is agrarian revolution. Revolution will lead to agrarian revolution. Agrarian Revolution announces the victory of revolution, the acquiring of state power, the radical redistribution of land after people's democratic revolution led by the proletariat."[334]

For Ray, revolutionary violence did not need to refer to its effects or its causes. He argued that agrarian revolution internally alluded – given the specific trajectory of the politics of democratic revolution in the territories of colonial and Indian state – at insurrection and protracted warfare. The use of *sasatra* (armed) before *krishi-biplab* for him was superfluous and relational. Revolutionary violence, 'the highest manifestation of unalloyed violence', was never the means of what Walter Benjamin called 'sacred execution'[335], never 'bastardised by law'. In other words, it was sovereign, pure and outside all relations. When Ray asked his friend-comrades committed to Naxalbari insurgency about the phrase, they pointed out that the alliance of revisionist forces like CPI and CPI (M), vying for governmental power by winning an upcoming state assembly election, was promising agrarian revolution, which, however, was clearly not possible without a violent overthrow of the exploiting classes. Hence, there was an emphasis on armed insurrection (*sasatra*) in the phrase. This in Ray's contention was relational and reactive. Ray deployed an old jocular Bengali proverb: "Beating up the maid to instruct the wife."[336] Ray

[333] *Ibid,* P-209.

[334] *Ibid,* P-210.

[335] Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', in Bibliography IV.125.b, P-300.

[336] *PP*, P-211.

concluded: "The correct phrase is armed struggle for agrarian revolution. The continuity and true meaning of 'agrarian revolution' remain unperturbed, and the necessary emphasis on 'armed struggle' is also retained."[337]

Ray's strong contention was against the logic of habit, common sense, common knowledge and popular usage – against opinion. He concluded: "We cannot be lenient and tolerant towards current opinions and complicit practices. Prevalent and pervasive circulation of erroneous coinages does not make them true. In fact, we, as Marxists, need to destroy them without remorse. If that is not our task, why are we destroying the thousand years old feudal system in this country? If that is not our task, why are we following Marx, Engels and Lenin in destroying two hundred years old capitalism? (These are surely much in currency) If that is not our task, how can we justify that we prescribe completely unprecedented sequences like peoples' democratic state and socialist state? If that is not our task, how are the middle classes going to declass and assume the revolutionary proletarian standpoint? Revolution is the establishment of the true and the just against the untrue and the unjust that is common, that is prevalent for a few millenniums now. The argument in favour of habitual and popular knowledge is one deployed by capitalists, landlords and priests to perpetuate the exploitative order."[338]

VI

Gandhi was not merely an object of study for Sen. Gandhi's growing popularity amongst the Communist leadership was a cause of concern, for it signalled a shift from class struggle to class reconciliation, and a complete statist subjugation of politics. He wrote in *PGC*: "The erstwhile general secretary of the Communist Party, P.C. Joshi christened Gandhi as the 'father of the nation' during the Second World War, Gandhi reciprocated by certifying Joshi as 'honest' – which the latter needed to amass funds unhindered, and which was indeed made possible later by the Bhulabhai Commission in the wake of Gandhi's praise." Much later, in 1958, Communist professor, barrister, parliamentarian and intellectual Hiren Mukhopadhyay decorated Gandhi

[337] *Ibid,* P-211.

[338] *Ibid,* P-209.

with the epithet gentle colossus. About the shift in the international Communist scenario Sen informed that when Gandhi was alive – 'in Stalin's time' – the Soviet Encyclopedia interpreted Gandhi as a traitor to the liberation movement, an enemy of the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants and an ally of imperialism. After Stalin, Khrushchev became the new leader of Soviet Russia. By that time the English had left and 'Gandhi's stooges ruled the land'. To 'please his friends in the Indian ruling elite' Khrushchev edited out the few pages on Gandhi, and added a few new ones. Here Gandhi was portrayed as an unwavering anti-imperialist and a beacon of world peace. There remained no obstacle to Indo-Soviet friendship. Sen informed that "last year the British Government spent Rs. 48,000 for a statue of Gandhi in the city of London: British capital represents the majority of foreign investment in India; how can it forget a friend like Gandhi?"[339]

Gandhi was collaborative towards the expansion of capital, despite his critique of modernity. Just like Lenin saw in Tolstoy an obscurantist politics of populism, in Gandhi, Sen located the organic aspect of populist mobilisation which mutilated the possibility of revolutionary break in exchange of amorphous crowds, moralistic noise and the false elixir of traditional cohesion. This mode was encapsulated in the formation of post-1947 political democracy in colonial/national India which formally enfranchised yet substantially exploited and oppressed the people as an organ of the big bourgeoisie and feudalism.[340] Gandhi's ideology was not attributed to a wicked mind or a wicked individual, but a reactive philosophy: Gandhi edited out class struggle and scission from the thought of history and politics. He was against any manner of abstraction and followed the immanent vitality of life to decipher the course of politics (which, however, was not a mawkish view of individual human life, as Faisal Devji elucidates[341]). This critique on Gandhi was at its core an attempt to rescue Communism and revolutionary violence from the Communist leadership.

Ray translated and paraphrased a number of Communist documents on Gandhi that went against claims made by Hiren Mukhopadhyay (a leading parliamentarian of CPI) that there was no concrete stand on Gandhi within Communists in colonial/national India and internationally. a. A

[339] *PGC*, in Bibliography II.5, P-239.

[340] *GS*, P-52-53.

[341] See Bibliography IV.2.k..

programme in the third Communist International of 1929 stated: Gandhi's ideas and his concepts were based on religion; they were regressive to the core, and in socio-economic questions reinstated reactionary life-ways. His ideas failed to locate any redemptive aspect in socialism, and tried to find solace in tradition. It basked in apparent and complete passivity and rejected class struggle; and when revolution was imminent such ideas renounced the veil of passivity and emerged as an openly reactionary force. Communist politics should wage relentless struggle against Gandhi's ideology.[342] b. In 1930, another document of the CPI declared: The task was to attain freedom from colonialism while keeping the flag of agrarian revolution high. That would have put an end to the servitude of the masses and the immiseration of the workers-peasants. The basis of the colony's revolutionary freedom was agrarian revolt against British capital and collaborative feudalism. The Indian capitalists – tied as they were to feudalism and moneylenders – subjugated anti-colonial politics and the revolutionary resolution of the agrarian situation. Congress politics was a negotiation with British Imperialism in order to betray the interests of the people. And the foundation of Congress politics was Gandhi's ideology. It was based ostensibly on love, gentleness, humility, extremely hardworking approach to livelihood, national unity and the historic role of Hinduism. It projected an eternal co-existence of the rich and the poor and valorised ancient wisdom (the wisdom of an exploitative and hierarchical society). With explicit support from the imperialist powers, his ideology strived to organize and stabilise the collaborating indigenous exploiters on the debris of the masses....[343] c. A report in the 16th Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (1930) thought: Bourgeois masters took recourse to murderous violence. But they also depended on men like Gandhi. Police and bayonet were not invariably effective. Tsardom at one time tried to thrive solely through coercion, but it needed liberal apologists like Gandhi. Such figures perpetuated confusion and chaos, they were incapable of novelty.[344]

Sen pointed out that the statement of Communist leader-prisoners in Meerut case or British Communist R.P. Dutt's texts had interpreted Gandhi similarly.[345] For Ray, there was something

[342] *PGC,* in Bibliography II.5, P-243.

[343] *Ibid,* P-243.

[344] *Ibid,* P-244.

[345] Also see Bibliography I.B.1-3, 5-8, 13-18.

rotten in the state of Communist parties if all these strands had indeed been erased. That state had to be addressed. In Hiren Mukhopadhyay's portrayal of Gandhi – which included uncritical usage of Hindu mythological figures to institute messianic proportions on the latter[346] – an India was insinuated where there were no antagonistic classes, no contradiction between capitalists and working class, landlords and peasants, there was no anti-imperialist struggle; "above this classless human society of this India exists the colossal and gentle overarch of 'Mahatma' Gandhi."[347] In the late 1960s, Sen read intense local revolutionary struggles as flying in the face of Mukhopadhyay's statist and conservative propaganda. He wagered in favour of an imminent people's democratic revolution.[348] Mukhopadhyay (and by extension the entire Communist leadership) was identified as – following-Lenin – 'yellow or pink Communists'[349]. Mukhopadhyay proudly addressed himself as the 'leader of the (Indian) president's most loyal opposition'. Sen reckoned: "It is precisely the intrusion of such leaders in the higher echelons of the Communist party that limited it to being a subservient opposition-party of the Indian state and parliament."[350]

VII

This stasis and servitude was nowhere more explicit than the relationship that the Communist leadership struck with Jawaharlal Nehru. *DGC* began with pungent and satirical force: "On May 27, 1964, 'Modern India' lost its father. On that day Nehru left the world. His departure left restless seas of sorrow in the minds of his ardent followers. That restlessness resulted in a nationwide, frenzied dispersal of his mortal remains, which was his wish and will. That frenzy did empty the public treasury of a few million rupees. This drain of wealth could bring calm to the minds of his followers, but unfortunately enough, failed to achieve its goal. The oceanic

[346] The sharp contrast with the rational and secular disposition of Ray's eulogy of Mao Tse-tung is instructive. See Bibliography I.A.12.

[347] *Ibid,* P-242.

[348] *Ibid,* P-242.

[349] *Ibid,* P-242.

[350] *Ibid,* P-245.

groundswell of mass discontent against Nehruvian Indian state could not be harnessed. The festival of ashes failed to douse the rebellion that Nehruvian regime made necessary. The war against China gave Nehru an opportunity to remove the burden of taxes on the big bourgeoisie and the landowning elite and place the responsibility of war economy on the workers and peasants, which included compulsory savings plan. The latter was rejected through working class militancy and Nehruvian regime became precarious. Hence his valuable mortal remains were turned into a consolation prize for the rebellious masses. But ashes can hardly calm seas of mass upheaval. That, as we know from an old Bengali historical fantasy, needs huge amount of oil. The wise sailors from Saptagram while returning from a commercial voyage with their fleet poured 55 barrels of oil to calm the Bay of Bengal during a storm and coasted safely. Similarly, wise sailors are appointed today to pour oil and tame the sea of mass rebellion – the so-called Communists like P.C. Joshi, S.G. Sardesai, Mohit Sen, Mohan Kumar Mangalam and Nikhil Chakraborty. These were the very people who drove the Communist party into the quick-sand of revisionism and have written exaggerated hagiographies of Gandhi and Nehru. Nehru needed them because as 'Communists' they had the image of being close to the pulse of the masses and could effectively hide the pro-imperialist capitulations of Nehru."[351] This essay took polemical strikes at the fulfilment of self-interest by the Communist agents of the Nehru regime. Sen made fun of the enormity that Hiren Mukhopadhyay ascribed to his first meeting with Nehru in 1952; Mukhopadhyay gloated that Nehru was a resident of Olympia who could descend to meet the common men of the world, because Nehru, kindly enough, considered them his own. Sen wrote: "The juncture where Hiren Mukhopadhyay submits himself to god's kingdom is crucial." The paradise of British and U.S. capital, the haven of feudalism – Hyderabad's Telangana – was under grave threat as the peasants rebelled and escalated a revolutionary war. Nehru sent his army in to crush the initially victorious peasant-rebels. In 1951, Nehru's armed forces, along with 100,000 personnel of Nizam's army were successful in reclaiming this utopia of feudalism and foreign capital. The Nizam – right after the partition, or 'freedom' in 1947 – took a loan of £60 million from British capitalists, around this time U.S capitalists were building three large factories for the manufacture of arms and ammunition in the region. Imperialism was a local enemy of the Communist revolutionaries. Telangana was inspiring peasants from various regions of colonial/national India to eradicate feudalism. Nehru, by defending the Nizam and crushing

[351] *DGC*, in Bibliography II.5, P-246-247, 256.

the Telangana revolutionary movement clearly exhibited his reactionary orientation. “And in 1952, Hiren Mukhopadhyay (right after entering the parliament as a Communist representative) became a loyal devotee of the god of counter-revolution."[352]

Working through the ornate and fuzzy praise that these 'Communists' showered on both Nehru and Gandhi – wherein Nehru was compared with Gautama Buddha umpteen times – Sen pointed out that there were a few core ideas that underpinned this celebration. These intellectuals claimed that the two *knew* and *understood* ‘Indian’ history, society, tradition with an insight and breadth that was exclusive to them. It was also declared that Gandhi and Nehru were aware of the perils of a structural and social revolution. They were traumatised by its enormous human cost (disclosed by their knowledge of modern revolutions). Nehru and Gandhi shunned that path and adopted the path of slow, peaceful transformation and co-existence of social groups and classes (which was – Sen pointed out – in sync with the revisionist Soviet party’s propaganda that the existence of a powerful socialist bloc in the world guaranteed that empathisers like Nehru would deepen a socialist pattern in countries like colonial/national India through state machinations without tumult and local struggles[353]). It was argued that Nehru lacked the *crass bluntness* that was required from someone acting to create history. He was compelled to conserve in order to retain sophistication and modesty. The Communist leadership – like in their eulogy of Gandhi – also placed an allegation: despite the organically peaceful, prosperous and conflictless socio-political environment created by Nehru, the people did not want to bear the pain and suffering that would accompany socialist transformation planned by Indian state. This condescending stand of the Communist leadership towards ‘people’ was scandalous for Sen. P.C. Joshi was the most aggressive in this espousal of Nehru’s and Congress’ commitment to socialism/progress and dismissed criticism from other Communist positions as ‘psychological disease’ and ‘insanity’.[354] It was this allegation of ‘excess’ and ‘abnormality’ that insurgent Communist partisans like Sen wore like a second skin.

Sen consistently enumerated the instances wherein when revolutionary change was imminent, Gandhi and Nehru helped quell it by collaborating with the colonial state. But Ray’s primary

[352] *Ibid,* P-256.

[353] *Ibid,* P-263. Also see Bibliography I.C.51.

[354] *Ibid,* P-250.

concern was not that the 'Communist' apologists of Gandhi and Nehru must come clear on the politics of the two leaders; the demand was rather of having the apologists' own theory and practice of Communism and Marxism on the table. Sen wrote, "These intellectuals, once drawn to the indomitable spirit of proletarian revolutionary movement and Communism, made these their medium of self-expression and like washed-away moss entered the flood called Communist Party. Exploiting the weak moments of the party, they used their high degrees, polished English and proximity to imperialist culture and education to hide their true nature and attain a commanding position within the Party." They were propounding revisionist theories of peaceful transition to socialism and collaboration with bourgeois state to confuse the working class and deflect the party from the Communist programme. The party leaders became a tailpiece of Congress – a party of the bourgeoisie and the landlords. After 1947 – 'when the bourgeoisie acquired power' – they expressed themselves explicitly from the safe shell of Nehruvian regime.[355] Sen pointed out and condemned the fact that Hiren Mukhopadhyay called Nehru the hope and hero of an awakening Asia, without mentioning Mao Tse-tung or Ho Chi Minh: "Which Asia was Nehru a hero of? Contemporary Asia is a new and revolutionary Asia – in half of which workers and peasants have exterminated imperialist exploitation through revolutionary struggle and are building socialism; the other half is resolutely following the path of revolutionary struggle. Is Nehru a partisan of these revolutionary places and people?"[356] Sen stated that China, by making a revolution and by an intense struggle to continue that revolution, had amplified the scope and legitimacy of Communism unprecedentedly. To sustain the incendiary spirit of the revolution and to think revolutionary thought, the party and the proletariat in China were alert on treacherous elements encroaching into Communist space – the party was a revolutionary guard on duty. On the other hand, in colonial/national India, 'a country as big as China', Communism 'is down and out'. But the powerful revisionist clique was not the sole contributive factor for Sen. "All Marxists and all radicals have to take responsibility for this. How was Communist space surrendered to revisionism and the revisionists? The only way out is for all Marxists to understand and reverse this cruel collective fate by implementing revolutionary methodology and patterning a great movement of thought and self-criticism."[357]

[355] *Ibid,* P-265.

[356] *Ibid,* P-261.

[357] *Ibid,* P-265.

This great movement of thought was welcomed not only by a schoolmaster of Calcutta in perfect internationalist vein, but in various Communist bastions across the world of 1960s.

VIII

In another manuscript of the late sixties (unpublished notes accumulated around *PGC*), first published in 1987 as *GS*, Ray charted the course of Gandhi's thought and its critical relationship with the revolutionary situation in late colonial era. After a succinct survey of Gandhi's crypto-racist, pro-imperialist project of limited liberal reforms in South Africa, Ray fleshed out that Gandhi's politics catered to British rulers of colonial India, to the big bourgeoisie and to the landlords, and was openly and rigidly proscriptive and punitive towards rebellious peasants, soldiers and workers during 1920s and 1930s. Ray provided fairly frequent and lengthy evidences for these claims. Ray did not take the popular notion that Gandhi was an avid humanitarian and a compassionate protector of life seriously. He saw Gandhi's ideas as having an intrinsically (reactive) political orientation. By putting together examples from the political career of Gandhi Ray emphasised that Gandhi's central aim was class reconciliation. The basis of his utopia was the 'co-operation between the owner and the wage-earner, the landlord and the tiller'.[358] For Ray, Gandhi's stand on violence was relational, neither revolutionary nor sovereign, and was designed to deflect class struggle and the subjective protocols of the oppressed away from the theatre of anti-colonial politics. Ray also saw Gandhi's anti-modern stand as devoid of intensity and profundity. "Gandhi's tirade against contemporary civilisation had nothing to do with the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-capitalist struggle of the masses. His affirmation of multifarious superstitions and carcinogenic customs was to undermine this rational struggle. He was well aware of the weakness of broad sections of the masses and peasants – caste system, lack of education and feudal ethos; Gandhi used these to launch himself as the authority in the political theatre and duped the people by feigning struggle. He thus saved British imperialism and the big bourgeoisie-feudal nexus from the wrath of true revolutionary struggle."[359] Ray

[358] *Ibid,* P-46.

[359] *Ibid,* P-16. In a footnote on the same page, Ray commented: "We do not want to discuss Gandhi's personal life and experiments with physical desire here. For that one might read Nirmal Bose' book 'My Days With

deployed Lenin's interpretation of Tolstoy in the essay “Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution” to understand Gandhi, whose affinity to the literary artist was well-known: "....we have the landlord obsessed with Christ....the jaded, hysterical sniveller called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails: 'I am a bad wicked man, but I am practising moral self-perfection; I don’t eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets.' (Gandhi, however, preferred goat's milk – Suprakash Ray)...the crackpot preaching of submission, 'resist not evil' with violence....the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace officially appointed priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction, i.e., to cultivate the most refined and, therefore, particularly disgusting clericalism."[360]

Ray pointed out in this connection that Gandhi normalised Hinduism in nationalist politics and thus created a divide on which future Hindu-Muslim riots will be situated on, and culled out from Gandhi's writings his deep distrust towards *'base' mob and popular politics bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity*[361]. Ray also upheld the politics of B.R. Ambedkar over the politics of Gandhi. Gandhi’s method of slow social reform and providing ritual access to the untouchables stood in the 1930s in stark opposition to Ambedkar’s call to the lower castes and untouchables to resolve the issue politically, by seizing political power and destroying the hierarchical social relation of caste.[362] The Communist partisan programme of democratic revolution was the only politics that had been since the 1930s the most rigorous formalisation of the idea of annihilating caste system, built on an inaugural understanding of differentiation within peasantry (at the behest of capital-accumulation under colonialism) and increasing landlessness.[363]

Gandhi'." It was clear that his frontal and unflinching critique of Gandhi was philosophico-political in orientation, and not polemical – the latter a deliberate engagement with the apparently weakest aspects of a political opponent.

[360] *Ibid,* P-30.

[361] *Ibid,* P-51.

[362] *Ibid,* P-36.

[363] See Bibliography I.B.31-35, 47. It is armed with this understanding that Maoists today find natural ally in ‘tribes’ and other rural proletarians, not because of any implicit communitarianism. The agricultural workers, landless and poor peasants and rural women-workers did not lead back to the totality of society. With a minimal Communist party locally and symbiotically working as a subjective factor – proposing the real of victory to oppressed people – they emerged as a revolutionary subjectivity that could force ‘the passage of the agrarian reform over to an egalitarian redistributive line’. (See Bibliography IV.53, P-501, and Bibliography I.B.37) In the document *"Khetmojurer Sangram O Sangathan"* (Struggle and Organisation of Agricultural Labourers; Bibliography I.B.33), a

In a short article on a Saotal insurrection (including occupation of political sites and armed insurrection) in Malda-Dinajpur districts of Bengal in 1932 Ray took another tangent on Gandhi. He wrote: "The commander of the war was Jitu. He declared himself as 'Commander Gandhi'. At that time Congress - led by Gandhi – was carrying on the civil disobedience movement. The peasant-worker people of colonial/national India - with no party of their own – joined this movement. The Saotal peasants of North Bengal merely heard Gandhi's name. They did not know who Gandhi was, what his purpose and ideas were. They only knew that a person named Gandhi was fighting against the enemy of the people – the English rule. The circulating name of Gandhi was turned creatively into a symbol of the local insurgency of the Saotal."[364]

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radical and threatening formalisation of this very innovation in the Bengal region during Tebhaga struggle (1946-1951) was thought. The fate of an inaugural subject-body like this (Provincial Agricultural Labourer Conference) strengthened Sen's statements about the callous and criminal role of the Communist leadership in letting the most inventive valences of politics die in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In a deeply evasive yet honestly coded comment (at the end of the *Minutes)* the editors of the volume (where this rare document is presented: Bibliography II.1, Volume V, 2010) wrote this: "Without flirting with 'whether any conference of this West Bengal Agricultural Worker's Association took place before the split of the Communist party in India into CPI and CPI (M) in 1964', we can say – at the very least – that the existence of this organisation was lost on the consciousness of these two parties. Even today (2010), CPI (M) has no separate organisation of agricultural labourers in the province, though they have a central national entity. In West Bengal, they still discuss the problems of agricultural workers within the Kisan Sabha. CPI has a separate organisation for agricultural workers called *Bharatiya Khetmajur Union.* Its first conference took place in Ghetugachi of Nadia district (West Bengal) in May 1969. We might guess that the organisation of 1949 was not given a consistent run." (P-586) Such reincarnated re-presentations of sabotaged organisational moments (emerging prescriptively entangled with insurrections in many districts) was consonant with the CPI and CPI (M) leadership's obsessive emphasis on the eternal trail of psychological preparation preceding a perpetually deferred revolutionary maneuver. The situation was like that of a popular people's tale wherein the fox ate up all but one of the offsprings of the crocodile admitted to the former's deviously fangled school, and kept showing the remaining one several times separately to keep the violated crocodile ignorant, interested and optimistic.

[364] Bibliography I. A.17, P-57.

Chapter IV: Historical enquiries of Suprakash Ray

I

We read in this section the first extensive historical narrative of Suprakash Ray where he visited the theme of revolutionary nationalism and terrorism in colonial/national India: *BJBS* (1955). Ray pointed out that 'biplabbaad', the Bengali for revolutionism, had a relationship with nationalist movement that varied from symbiotic to disjunctive. This book can be seen as a move to establish strong anti-colonialism as distinct from Congress and Indian state. This was an artful plotting. In terms of details, chronicles and politics-thinking of this important strand of anti-colonialism, this book remains the most comprehensive account. The secret and often competitive nature of the organizations made it difficult to distil truth from whatever little documents they had, and the official reports were often malicious and incomplete. Ray's insider status helped him glean documents and facts and put them in a sequence.

Ray undermined the false notion that under the umbrella of nationalism, various political currents, or perhaps the true forms of anti-colonial politics were rearing up amicably, and he projected nationalism as an incomplete arrest of dynamic and malignant modes of politics. The discussion on the ideology of militant nationalism was illuminating, for militant nationalism was articulated in a cultural language that was exclusively Hindu in many cases. Ray chose a rhetorical understanding of the ideological texts of militant nationalism, where the Hindu hue of the language recruited had the function of synecdoche. He quoted from the Sedition Committee Report to drive the point: "The name of some Hindu deities and warriors like Shivaji are invoked to awaken a frenzy of war against the present government. The names used are veils, the real slogan being: 'Pick up your sword, destroy this government, for it is foreign and repressive'. The ideas of Bhagavad-Gita enunciated in the text are unnecessary, really".[365] The specificities of early cultural nationalism and revolutionary terrorism appeared distinguishable from later (post-colonial) articulation of a monolithic Hindu nationalism – the latter was a function of the post-

[365] *Ibid, P*-46.

1947 Indian state. In a rich section of this book, Ray presented long citations from the programmatic documents of two main revolutionary organisations of Bengal at the beginning of twentieth century – Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar. In these documents – rather than mere religious traditionalism – we find elaborate readings of the organisational principles of Russian anarchists, concrete proposals of politicising army and soldiers beyond statist imperatives, ruminations on the mass basis of armed actions and the tactics of guerrilla warfare, formation of secret yet stable scouting mechanism in schools, colleges and offices of Bengal. Even the Hindu tenets absorbed were of a reformulated nature; more maxim than mantra, more a prescription and a spur to action, a roll of dice in a decisive, partisan moment – than irrational strictures.[366] The uncomplicated assumption was that colonial structure could not guarantee full freedom for the colonised people – for that to happen the very structure would have to be broken down by force. The preparation for an armed warfare was the most important task to ensure victory for the colonised.[367]

An important aspect of revolutionary nationalism or 'terrorism' was bringing into the arena of organized anti-colonial politics one of the most intractable issues in revolutionary theory – the question of violence – to which subsequent politics and thought had to come to terms with. However, this was strictly not lawmaking violence, situating itself against law-preserving violence, but had its expiatory, pure, sovereign moments, where there was no move to preserve itself, to insist or persist; and which became non-relational revolutionary violence.[368] Ray plotted violence in this manner, for he impugned the lawmaking violence of the Communist leadership in the 1950s on behalf of the ordinary Communist partisan. What else was the staunch proscriptive/punitive authority that the Communist leadership wielded towards the events of mass insurrections and movements, if not lawmaking violence? From more than one episodes plotted in this book it is possible to understand how Ray thought of violence.[369] Numerous causal chains were quickly patterned into a dense crowd, and then violence appeared out of joint. Pure, eschatological violence – dark festivals of breach and cessation – expiation by blood – had a

[366] Also see Bibliography I.B. 11, 12, 63.

[367] *Ibid,* P-65-88.

[368] See Walter Benjamin, "Critique Of Violence", in Bibliography IV.59.v.1., pp. 236-252.

[369] See *BJBS,* especially P-101-102 and P-191-194.

clear and unambiguous place in Ray's statements. It was not the execution or its sacrality that was important, but the mode, form and texture of their deployment (by the author) into the nullity of death and inexistence. A certain narrative that led to violence became radically irrelevant at the moment of violence, a moment shaped by pure externality, an element extraneous to the immediate propositions of the narrative. Victims of genocide, a martyr and the assassinated oppressor made for equal axes in this method. The alignment of his sentiments and solidarities could do little to his enunciation of violence – and it was this manner of thought that he subtracted from non-Marxist revolutionary nationalism.

Elsewhere in the book, Ray charted a trajectory of revolutionary nationalism within the Muslim communities in colonial/national India, separate from the social reforms of Sir Syed Ahmed in nineteenth century and the later statist ploy of the alliance of bourgeois and feudal interests in Muslim League. It drew from Wahabi radicalism of nineteenth century and the geo-political significance of Muslim populations in an age of imperialism in an equally serious manner. Groups of educated Muslim people created links with anti-British powers in the world to further militant nationalism and declared advanced bodies of Indian revolutionaries as contingent, free governments. Maulvi Obedulla of Punjab was instrumental in popularising this politics in Punjab in the 1910s. *Jihad* was devised as a trenchantly anti-colonial slogan. Many travelled abroad and sought to ideologically convince Muslim polities across Eurasia to attack British Empire, which was to provide a signal to the Hindus and Muslims to rise in a united insurrection. However, the emphasis on the spirit of the *mujahedeen* or freedom-fighters in North West Frontier province was the most important factor in Ray's account. "The glorious Wahabi rebellion of colonial India almost decimated the British enemy's state in many areas. It burnt bright from 1824 to 1870 before receding, but its memory was alive in the Muslim peasant masses, and among the *mujahedeen* of many free areas within British Empire. Turkish Empire was absorbed as a symbol of anti-colonial Muslim stand by all these political bodies in the 1910s and 1920s. The political call of the *mujahedeen* reverberated among Muslim revolutionary nationalists from Lahore in the west to Rongpur district in eastern Bengal. The mobility of this strain of politics was well-orchestrated and far-reaching, and the squads of *mujahedeens* became the active, itinerant link between Muslim revolutionaries in colonial/national India and foreign anti-British political power." The staunch anti-colonial stand and the call (to the colonised) to seize state power

through armed insurrection in this politics was enshrined in the document 'Ghalibnama' – devised in the presence of Turkey's military leader Ghalib Pasha in Hijaj.[370]

Ray pointed out that this advanced and radical strain of politics – nationalist revolutionism – of the last few and first few decades of nineteenth and twentieth century failed to be socially progressive. Revolutionary nationalism broadly became a Hindu chauvinist, regressive and irrationally anti-modern enterprise. The distance of revolutionary nationalism (of the intermediary classes) from mass struggle resulted in the development of another grave weakness. Facing economic ruin after spending much money and labour on completing colonial education, they were afflicted with great despair. This despair and retaliatory strain stirred animosity towards a homogenised 'modern European civilisation'. The educated, nationalist middle class wanted to protect ancient 'Indian civilisation' from the all-devouring 'modern' civilisation of the foreign rulers. They started hating even the rational protocols they identified with 'Europe' simply as 'ruler's vice' and celebrated traditional Hinduism uncritically as 'pure and sacred'. "These elements – by combining their modern and progressive political ideology with reactionary Hindu religiosity – instituted a new contradiction in the general body of anti-colonialism. This contradiction became a consistent and critical feature of nationalist politics."[371]

In Suprakash Ray's account, revolutionary nationalism broke from religion-centric (and thus in the order of execution) individual terrorism (but not collective terror for a justice that is the very gap between politics and law) decisively. Ray observed that despite sharing the conditions of emergence with constitutional nationalism[372], revolutionary nationalism was inventive in establishing the idea of complete independence from foreign rule as the non-negotiable task of anti-colonial politics. It was due to the organisational efforts and political work of the revolutionary nationalists in the late 1920s that Indian National Congress had to adopt the demand of complete independence in Lahore, 1929. Ray wrote: "Gandhi's *Swaraj* remained a vague, cryptic and esoteric concept with no clear political programme – as even his followers in Congress attested." Initially, there was no concrete idea amongst the revolutionary nationalists,

[370] *Ibid,* P-163-169.

[371] *Ibid,* P-355.

[372] *Ibid,* P-354.

too, about the polity of an independent colonial/national India. The revolutionaries of Maharashtra adopted the motto of establishing a *Dharmarajya* (Land of Justice) following their national hero Shivaji's tenets. The Bengali revolutionaries also dabbled with many concepts related to kingship, like *ramrajya* and *dharmarajya*. But by the 1920s, their ideas became more lucid. On this count, the revolutionary nationalists of northern India were more advanced than those in Bengal (where in fact some grassroot-level ordinary Congress members introduced egalitarian social tenets amongst the revolutionaries). In 1923 – during the formation of a new revolutionary organisation – the revolutionaries set the establishment of a republic as their goal. Independence would see a democratic government elected by mass voting of adults – irrespective of caste, religion and gender. It was based on this principle that they named their organisation 'Hindustan Republican Association'. This innovation of the revolutionaries marked a massive advancement of the revolutionary struggle in colonial/national India. In the years that followed, socialist ideology was absorbed by the revolutionaries. The issue of socialism was also discussed among the revolutionaries of Bengal, but Bhagat Singh, Shiv Varma, Ajay Ghosh and others in Hindustan Republican Association enshrined it by unanimously rechristening the organisation as 'Hindustan Socialist Republican Association'. This name initiated a great movement of thought among the revolutionaries.[373] In Bengal of 1924-25, many groups of revolutionaries were arrested under government ordinances. In the prison, these militants carried on collective discussions and deliberations. The result was a regenerative split in the ranks of the revolutionaries. The younger generation of militants rose against the culture of non-ideological factionalism and assassination-centric politics of the old guard. They emphasised the necessity of unification of various groups – but principally of Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar. They also underlined the necessity of creating the condition of an organised armed insurrection rather than resorting to short bursts of terror. The young guard was successful to a large extent in unifying the revolutionaries and the new group that was formed was called 'Revolt' or 'Advance'. They were influenced by the republicanism of Bhagat Singh and were instrumental in normalising the demand of complete independence in different districts of Bengal. Their concrete programme was 'to leave the path of individual terrorism and take the path of organising small, local rebellions in different spatial pockets at the same time. If the enemy withdraws due to heavy losses under our attack on their strongholds (police and military sites), a dynamic and

[373] *Ibid,* P-360-361.

unadulterated nationalist movement can emerge in the vacuum around that area'.[374] The era of 'Revolt' or 'Advance' created the ground for the reorientation of the younger revolutionaries towards Communism and the Communist Party from the mid-1930s. Ray's account established that revolutionary terrorists and nationalists plotted a complex and thoughtful trajectory for themselves. The primary political innovation of revolutionary nationalism was in spelling out and demonstrating the subjective resources required for political partisanship: "They proposed to people the concepts of sacrifice, non-egotistic and dogged work, fidelity to an idea, indifference to pain and suffering in dispensing political tasks, courage and heroism."[375] It was such thought of politics *in subjectivity* that saw the revolutionary terrorists arrive independently at the question of state and a decisive overhaul of colonial order. It was such thought of politics *in subjectivity* that so-called 'terro-communists'[376] like Sudhir Bhattacharya brought into the Communist party in 1930s.

Ray's politics was tirelessly operative at the level of form, of writing. The structural analysis and political rethinking of revolutionary nationalism were given in short, dense insertions, while the major element of the book was a thorough, relentless sequencing of past events of revolutionary organisation, armed encounters with the colonial state and place-names of those encounters. Despite his awareness of the international geography of revolutionary nationalism and revolutionism, Ray's real laboratory of politics was always the local and the micro-sites – where the entire process unravelled or revealed evanescently.[377] Ray was most certainly approaching history from the angle of singularity. Also, the linear and chronological stricture in school history curriculum of Calcutta did not suit the schoolteacher Ray much, certainly in touch with revolutionary immediacy or anti-historicist abolition of time in every thought or act. Yet, Ray's

[374] *Ibid,* P-295.

[375] *Ibid,* P-361.

[376] Bibliography II.15, P-21.

[377] From the biography of Suprakash Ray we extrapolate that there was no relationship between thinking universal statements and the thinker's physical mobility – though the biography of such a thinker is bound to be dour and interiorised. Suprakash Ray is entirely distinct from M.N. Roy – the globe-trotting poster-boy of 'Indian Communism'. Travel/physical mobility/immigration and 'internationalism' were as categories entirely indifferent to eachother, unlike what a recent volume would have us believe: Bibliography IV.115.

mode of engagement with the world was subtractive. He took the skeletal form of chronology – but, instead of accepting the statist and dynastic histories based on ruling class figures and themes that instituted the victorious chronology in the first place – he forced the frame into obscure and ignored insurrections, prescriptive statements and militant bodies in colonial India – devouring chronology gradually with unnatural weight. His obsessive, inaugural and more sophisticated compiling of dates and events in the 1960s can be seen – in the lost moment of its instinctive nascence – as a method devised to instil a certain meaningful sequence or statement in a student/comrade. This method was to help the student/comrade *remember well* the sequence or statement for reiteration or reactivation in a situation of crisis and creation (examination/insurgency).

How far he went in removing the stray notes of statism of the 1950s[378] can be read from a short addendum he attached to his work in 1983, when a second edition of *BJBS* was published. This was the last elaborate political statement of Suprakash Ray. The 1955 edition ended with a highly tentative portrayal of 1947. He wrote: "The torn up dominions of India and Pakistan *prepared the path* for the birth of a new India and *opened up the possibility of* India appearing as a united, sovereign, free nation at the world stage – for that was the hope of the struggling anti-colonial people."[379]

It is not difficult to realise that Ray was holding back more than what he said here – for the concrete achievement of August 15, 1947 remained unfounded, or at least very vague in the statement. In the 1983 addendum named "The Real Nature of India's Independence", Ray wrote that in 1947 – according to the terms and conditions of a negotiation with British imperialism – state power was gifted to Indian National Congress ('Indian dominion') and Muslim League ('Pakistani dominion'). Dominion was a colonial country with self-governing rights. This was the basic trait of the 'Indian' and 'Pakistani' independence in 1947. The people of this region were completely ignored in this exercise favouring the two elite parties instead. The people were not allowed to express what kind of political transformation they expected to happen to them. The Congress and League – as beneficiaries – posed no critique of the imperialist masters and grabbed colonial state machinery. Both these parties were thoroughly tied to the big bourgeoisie

[378] See Chapter III.

[379] *BJBS*, P-413.

in the region, the alliance and collaboration between the big bourgeoisie and imperialism was the basis of transfer of power. In 1950, the 'dominion' tag was removed and the term 'republican' was appropriated by the Indian state. But 'India' (and 'Pakistan') remained within the British 'Commonwealth'. The control of British imperialism on this landmass remained as strong as ever. Over and above, American monopoly capital infiltrated India and Pakistan very rapidly. Both the parts turned into mutually competing imperial subterfuges, and 'animosity between India and Pakistan became the permanent, profitable crisis of the region'. The three wars between the two halves of the partition and the fractured existence of the area of Kashmir bore strong testimony to Ray's contention.

In the imperialist action of partitioning the empire a 'vicious possibility' was kept intact. The boundary between the two parts had not been drawn according to tenets of language, culture or nationality, but according to religious affiliation. The boundary became a zone of statist excess and antagonism. Internally, too, the use of religious principle deeply communalised the world of urban neighbourhoods and villages alike and the possibility of strife was kept alive. The existence of massive minorities and of innumerable refugees in both the so-called Muslim and Hindu parts exacerbated the implications of this dangerous plan. "The fact that communal riots are almost a daily feature of this region is a toxic result of the 'independence' designed and gifted by imperialism in 1947", Ray wrote. Congress was indeed the most resourceful mass platform during nationalist movement. But right after 1947, it folded itself entirely into a dedicated organ of the conservative elements, monopolists, big landlords, profiteerers and speculators. "Under Gandhi's influence, government control on textile industries was lifted immediately after 1947, allowing the capitalists to profit to the tune of 20 million rupees within two years", Ray informed. Within three years of the first five year plan, the big monopoly businesses made astronomical profits; there was also an unimaginable and accelerated expansion of black market and corruption in this nexus of state and capital.

Congress in India and League in Pakistan began ruling the land using the exact state machinery that the imperialists devised; in fact, they perfected the machinery. They retained the entire colonial edifice of bureaucracy, judiciary and police. The new states were intense in the use of imperialist repression on unarmed masses with democratic aspirations: the rights to congregate, protest and associate were curbed, processions were fired on, ordinary people and political

workers were incarcerated with no due deliberation, and the organisational bodies of workers and peasants were crushed. These states survived by finessing oppressive colonial laws. "According to an All India Trade Union Congress estimate in 1949, about 25,000 peasant and worker members of the Communist party were in jail. Some figures: firing by state forces, 1982 occasions; death count, 3784 people; injured and invalidated, 10000 people; imprisoned, 50000; women murdered in West Bengal, 47; newspapers banned, 40; prisoners murdered inside jail, 82. The adoption of a new constitution in 1950 made no difference to the Congress' method of rule through emergency acts, oppressive ordinances and police brutality," Ray related. From after 1947 the living condition of the ordinary masses worsened. "Apart from the partial agrarian reforms in Kashmir, there has never been any attempt at true land reforms in India till this day. Hence, agrarian crisis is permanent in India," Ray reflected in 1983. Price and capitalist profit increased exponentially and the real wage of toiling people and poorer middle classes kept decreasing through the 1940s and 1950s. Taking the index of profit in 1939 as base 100, the profit indices of 1947 and 1951 were 191 and 310 respectively. But 'the working class of 1951 was poorer than the working class of pre-second world war era'. In the 1980s, 50 to 60 per cent of people in India resided below poverty line. The economic policy pursued by Congress from the very beginning was also very significant for Ray. Before 1947 at various junctures Congress espoused the cause of nationalising all major industries and economic resources. Nationalisation would have facilitated rapid industrialisation, but primarily it would have been a political act of *wresting away* capital accumulated under colonial structure and protocols. But this cause was 'put in a morgue after 1947'. By 1948, Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru declared that 'there will be no sudden change in the economic structure of India; possibly, the present industrial set up shall not be nationalised.' The imperialist news agency Reuters rejoiced: 'The issue of nationalisation is absent from the economic and industrial agenda adopted by the Indian government for the next ten years.' In the educational front, both India and Pakistan aped the colonial educational system. In 1983 – counting people who could barely sign their names – national literacy rate hovered around 30%. The number of illiterate people in India was around 421 million. Such was the basis of the 'so-called largest democracy of the world'. Yet, Ray affirmed: "The masses have not passively accepted this ghastly situation in 'independent' India as the final verdict. Evidently, they have restarted their struggle for national liberation with new organisations and new consciousness to emancipate from the colonial inheritance of profound

servitude and win political, social and economic freedom. And this new struggle is now led by the working class in India. The more this struggle led by the working class will spread the big bourgeoisie will panic, retaliate and stifle." The ideological dressing to this mechanism was provided by Jawaharlal Nehru. It made for the permanent populist template of the Indian state. The vague insinuation that a 'socialistic pattern' could be brought into Indian society under the leadership of an undiminished big bourgeoisie featured in the rhetoric of all manner of rulers in various estates of the Indian state. This was a way of placating and confusing the working class and the toiling masses, a position actively antagonistic to the tenets of and struggles for true, proletarian socialism. The revolutionary nationalists of colonial/national India also arrived at the programme of socialism as the most secure guarantee of the people emancipating from all types of slavery, oppression and exploitation. The 'Hindustan Republican Socialist Association' marked this arrival. Ray asserted that there was no duplicity or dishonesty in this call for socialism. They struggled to find a path to the establishment of socialism. Ray concluded: "That path is one of working class leadership to the final liberation struggle in colonial/national India. The goal of this path is not the Nehruvian sop of a society with socialistic patterns, but a complete and undistorted proletarian socialism. The great Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung predicted in a message sent to the CPI immediately after the November 1949 revolution in China: 'The fate in the past and the path to the future of the Indian people are similar to those of Chinese people on many points. Like free China, a free India will one day emerge in the socialist and people's democratic family breaking the yoke of imperialism and its collaborators; that day will end the imperialist reactionary rule in the history of mankind'."[380]

II

Let us now look at *BKBGS* by Suprakash Ray (1966). We present a series of statements from and descriptive accounts of different portions of this book, complimented at certain points by statements from his subsequent work, *BBSI* (1970):

[380] *BJBS,* P-413-417. His figures and statistics matched with the Communist documents of the late 1940s and early 1950s in Bengal and other areas under the Indian state. Mao Tse-tung's message here was also the concluding element of the first major political programme activated by the Naxalbari militants in 1970. See Bibliography I.B.25-37, 69.

a. In Imperialist historiography there was no place for the masses in colonial/national India. It proposed that British rule inherited this landmass from a few imperial families and had recast it. But from the ancient era till the completion of nineteenth century history in truth was the history of the peasant masses or the history of their class struggle against the landlords and imperialism. Imperialist historians suppressed this history to further their interests of rule and exploitation; nationalist historians imitated them by veiling and distorting an entirely consistent history of struggle. They have passed off the history of an elite exploitative minority as the history of India or Bengal.[381] Ray quoted from E.H. Carr's *What is History* (1961): "As Lenin said: 'Politics begin where the masses are; not where there are thousands, but where there are millions, that is where serious politics begin'. Carlyle's (the historian of French Revolution – Suprakash Ray) and Lenin's millions were millions of individuals: there was nothing impersonal about them. Discussions of this question sometimes confuse anonymity with impersonality. People do not cease to be people or individuals because we do not know their names."[382] He lamented: "That the ordinary people and masses are an active force in history is formally accepted by many. But historians willing to bestow people's power its deserved place and majesty in history-writing are non-existent. The middle-class intellectual history-writer – though unable to completely ignore the presence of people – categorise them as 'riotous mobs', 'degenerate crowd', 'abominable creatures', 'robbers', 'unruly squads'. Peasant insurgencies become 'civil disturbances' in their narrative – in blatant imitation of English administrators-writers – and the rebellious peasants are variously called 'marauders', 'dacoits' and 'murderers'. These narratives merely reveal the opinion and class-affiliation of these writers."[383]

b. The nationalist volumes on history – popular and widely accepted in the 1950s and 1960s – divided history into a series of imperial eras based on dynastic games between Hindu, Muslim and British rulers. Modes of production based on slavery and serfdom, exploitation and oppression of peasant masses and the history of their struggle remained in the dark.[384] The British and Indian historians ignored these aspects to safeguard the interest of modern imperialism, Ray argued. In this scheme, the nationalism of all anti-colonial struggles was a

[381] *BKBGS,* Preface-page-Sixteen.

[382] Quoted in *Ibid,* Preface-page-Eighteen-Nineteen.

[383] *Ibid,* Preface-page-Nineteen.

[384] *Ibid,* Preface-page-Sixteen.

conscious creation of imperialism itself. "Academic historians of India like 'Sir' Jadunath Sarkar have never hesitated in mimicking this central notion of imperialist historians. The truth that freedom struggle was a rebellion against the state and exploitation of imperialist elite was obfuscated by these historians to leave British imperialism untainted." The freedom struggle oriented against the colonial state and working towards its destruction was brandished by these historians as a refracted projection of the liberal intellectual tenets of British imperialism – in their thought, imperialism consciously created the means of its own demise. This grave distortion denied subjectivity to the ordinary people of this land.[385] Moreover, it attempted to maim the radical critique of continued imperialist dominance (through bourgeois collaboration) after 1947 that ordinary partisans patterned. Ray deployed a lengthy quote from a treatise by the poet Rabindranath Thakur (1861-1941) to arrive at a philosophical rejection of such histories. A summarised translation: The history of India that the colonised was forced to read and mug up for writing examinations, that history was the narrative of a nightmare that the country had. The bloody strife between ruling clans – Mughals, Portuguese, British – hid the truism that this murderous vein could not be the decisive aspect of a country's history. Even on the day in which a storm occurred, the storm was not the primary event, despite the calamitous noise it made. On that day, amidst the dust-covered air, the perennial flow of birth-death-happiness-grief remained unperturbed in the homesteads of a settlement. But for the alien traveller, the storm remained the primary occurrence; the dust blinded him from everything else because he remained outside home, he was never at home. The history written by that alien traveller was a history of dusty storms, home was not at home there.[386]

c. Peasant rebellion in colonial India was not entirely a new occurrence, from the most ancient of eras these rebellions appeared in variegated forms and under variegated names. However, during imperialist rule of the British these rebellions were singular. Foreign imperialism moulded a new feudalism to entrench its rule and thus it was impossible to exterminate feudalism without ending imperialism, and hence the peasant rebellions were simultaneously anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. With no other revolutionary class on the horizon of nineteenth century, the peasants had to struggle 'alone'. "Till there remains the last signs of feudalism in India, peasant rebellions will

[385] *Ibid,* Preface-page-Sixteen-Seventeen.

[386] *Ibid,* Preface-page-Seventeen-Eighteen.

continue....Even after 1947 the land relations in India has not changed, and feudalism is thriving. In this state democratic struggle against imperialism and feudalism will continue. And the peasant masses will be the primary phalanx of the struggling forces."[387]

d. In his account of the Saotal insurrection of 1850s Ray stated that despite the military failure the Saotal community had not forgotten their demands and though the forms of their struggle changed the struggle was never renounced. In the regime of Indian National Congress after 1947 their demands remained unfulfilled. Demands of land, of ending the exploitation of moneylenders and landlords, of regional autonomy had not actualised. "As a notified tribal community the notional insulation they have from their lands getting alienated has not been implemented by either English or Congress regime. This is the fight of the entire peasant mass."[388]

e. Ray was acutely attentive to the subjective ordinates of the structural expansion of capital, and as a historian's task, disaggregated the expansion into propertied and powerful individuals chosen by the state. In deep deltaic Bengal, in the Sandweep islands – an extremely fertile region which derived its name from 'golden' crops – on Bay of Bengal, the person chosen to expropriate revenue from the agricultural laborers was one Gokul Ghoshal from Khidirpur, Calcutta. About 80% of the laborers were Muslim, the rest were lower castes like Haliya Das or Mahishya, Jogi, Kaibarta, Sutradhar, Behara, Bhuinmali, Karmakar. This was 1763. He was a revenue agent of the English Company – his devious ways suited the colonial interest – which demanded revenues at high rates while also providing ample opportunity for the conquistador-agents to enrich themselves. Ghosal and his officials were notorious for their excessive torture of the peasantry of the region. Massive rebellion ensued in 1769. Ray wrote: "Just like the English merchants, who had to loot Bengal only for a few years to turn England into the wealthiest nation, their local collaborators like Gokul Ghosal – in one generation of predatory land-grabbing – established the Ghosal family as one of the wealthiest 'princely' clans of Bengal."[389]

[387] *Ibid,* Preface-Page-Thirty-Two.

[388] *Ibid,* P-341.

[389] *Ibid,* P-66.

f. In Ray's book hidden and oppressed modalities of being were brought out fearlessly. Before the advent of English rule an expansive forest-land called Jangalmahal was a part of Medinipur. The Chowarh were inhabitants of Jangalmahal. They earned their livelihood by cultivating, hunting and selling various products of the forest. The majority among them were *paiks* or soldiers for the local *zamindars* in lieu of plots of land called *paikan.* They used to fight with arrows, sickles, spears and clubs; some groups also had guns. In 1766, the English East India Company decided to send their army to the northern and western parts of Jangalmahal to compel the recalcitrant *zamindars* to pay revenue and demolish their forts and 'evil abodes'. This news ignited widespread rebellion from the start of 1767. The *zamindars* were not yet landlords of the Permanent Settlement and merely extracted revenue for the English rulers as they had done for the Mughal state. But the English rulers demanded such oppressively high revenue that even the exploiting *zamindars* couldn't extract the amount sought from them. These *zamindars* also existed in relative autonomy since the last days of Mughal era. The *zamindars* of Jangalmahal rejected English authority and mobilised the paiks. But the English army defeated the landlords of Lalgarh, Ramgarh, Jamboni, and Salda. The company's army advanced to Singbhum, Manbhum and Bankura and subjugated the zamindars there. In all these battles 'the poisonous arrows of the Chowarhs took the lives of many soldiers of the Company'. In November, 1770, the Chowarhs of the hilly tract in Ghatsila rose in rebellion. The powerful *zamindar* of Ghatsila was also willing to throw off English allegiance. A huge number of Chowarh *paik* fought for him against the English, but the English won. Threatened by the rapid expansion of the English merchant's rule, the interests of the common peasants and autonomous zamindars often coincided. The zamindars were enemies of the peasant, but the English rulers were greater enemies. The peasants accepted the leadership of the zamindars in certain cases. In 1798-99 there was a massive rebellion in the south western part of Bankura district and north-western part of Medinipur district. This rebellion was the second Chowarh rebellion. "Many have always known the word 'Chowarh' as an expletive; our authoritative dictionaries explained the term as meaning 'criminal and lowly people'. Bengal District Gazetteer identified Chowarhs to be the indigenous inhabitants of Bankura, Medinipur and Manbhum who lived off the land. It is hard to explain why the word arrived at disparaging connotation; perhaps the furious figure of the Chowarh rebel hurting from intense oppression and their lack of remorse for their oppressors and exploiters made the local *zamindars* and their lackey chroniclers refer to the name as such", Ray

intervened. These ‘uncouth’ people branded by a pejorative connotation erased all signs of colonial state from an expansive area of Bengal. “It will be superfluous to mention that this rebellion does not find mention in our academic histories.”[390] Ray was writing here about Bengal before the Permanent Settlement. Before gaining political control of Bengal the English merchants – despite many attempts – could not have their business of commodities infiltrate the innards of society beyond the urban centres. In the more or less self-reliant rural order the becoming-commodity of things or products was rare and arbitrary. With that exact order in place commodity economy could never flourish. After usurping the political mantle, the English business interest set about to shatter the inertia of rural order. By cracking open the shell of self-reliance they tore away the peasants from a certain social arrangement. The tillers were turned into instruments for producing the raw materials for burgeoning industry in England as also into consumers sustaining the Company's business in commodities. The tillers were tied to a regime of exclusive exploitation.[391] The processes of appropriation of high land revenue from individualised peasants, of proletarianisation and monetarisation began, with the concomitant rise of predatory landlordism, private property and multiple layers of intermediaries; the moneylenders emerged in alliance. A massive ‘pyramid of exploitation’ was hoisted on the peasant mass by the British rule in the vacuum created by the violent dispersion of the old rural order. The peasants were gradually getting crushed by its painful weight. “There were only two paths open for the peasants of colonial India – inevitable decimation under the pyramid, or destroying the pyramid through rebellion and revolution. The peasants chose the second path, and the tainted history of an unfree country became the history of peasant insurgency redeemed by red revolutionary blood.”[392]

g. Ray's enunciation of (economic) class was never closed to a radical understanding of social, cultural and religious subjugation that decided the specific boundaries of the oppressed classes. In his account of the Chowarh, he touched on peasants who were marginal or even the 'other' in terms of caste society or brahmanical order. Their entry into societal discourse came wrapped in the very fear of the feudal ruling classes who sought to domesticate them by making a police out of potential rebels. This also spoke for a historically dynamic sequence of politics in pre-British

[390] *Ibid,* P-55-56 and P-139-140.

[391] *Ibid,* P-10.

[392] *Ibid,* P-19.

era and spaces. The Chowarh were canny enough to accept the leadership of the ruling classes on their way out faced with the might of colonialism and capitalism. Yet, when the battle with English East India Company began, they had enough internal coherence to wage a guerrilla war with a more powerful army. Ray was always in favour of protracted guerrilla tactics based on defensive organisation and sudden ambush against the false bravado of frontal war against an army with greater resources at their disposal. He pointed out that the rural elite assigned a humiliating station for the 'Chowarh' (used to mean 'abominable creature') in local vocabulary because of their insurgent methods and this manipulation seeped into vernacular cultural texts as well as imperial manuals. In his historical enquiry, Ray picked up innumerable modalities of being and simply ascertained the multiple character of their gathering, without forcing their convergence.

h. From the plotting of political Islam in the Farazi and Wahabi movements in Bengal led by poor peasants to the messianic tone of Saotal rebellion, from the obscure biography of the egalitarian regime of the revolutionary leader of peasants – Samsher Ghazi of Tripura (1767-68) – to the new legitimising *Pagalpanthi* religion of the rebellious Garo tribe in Moyomonsingho – Ray introduced untamed singularities to destabilise the Procrustean narrative of the Indian state and the Communist leadership (national unity, integration, planned capitalist development). Ray grasped religion or messianism as an irreligious eschatology and refused to privilege religious modality of being over the other modalities – for that would have tied the inventive capacity of peasant insurgents to the language of their situation, to anthropological representations of their life. Ray saw the deployment of religion in insurrections of the past as a source of military and battleground cohesion, a subjective protocol. Ray worked here within Friedrich Engels' framework of peasant war. He upheld insurrectionary warfare as the breachful supplement to the ordinary trail of statist, societal, economic and cultural structures and languages. During the medieval times revolutionary struggle against feudalism was persistent. Often, mystical movements against conventional religion and armed anti-feudal insurrection complimented each other. Leaders of peasant wars often paid allegiance to such mysticism.[393] Ray eschewed prioritising religious modality and accessing it through the prism of language, knowledge or ethics. This foreclosed the possibility of reactive nostalgia and declared the ubiquity of capital,

[393] *Ibid,* Preface-Page-Twenty-Two.

only as the clueless carrier of the 'last oppressed class'[394]. This vein remained oriented towards the strain of an exceptional event that revealed a truth. About the Wahabi rebellion led in rural Bengal by peasant-insurrectionary Titumir – Ray wrote – after conceding that religion as mobilisational tool had exclusionary content and failed to attain a united mass solidarity: "But we should not forget that before capitalism and industrial development in all countries religious idioms helped communities mobilise people for war and rebellion. Given the social situation of colonial/national India, a certain amount of relativism in the rebel's world-view was natural."[395]

i. The specific task of democratic revolution was to destroy feudalism and unfetter progress in a colonial, semi-colonial structure. Feudalism was based on an agrarian order, on agricultural labour. Peasants were the primary victims of feudal exploitation and they assumed the primary responsibility in destroying feudalism. "This historic role of peasantry became radically evident first during the epochal French Revolution of 1789. The bourgeoisie mobilised and organised peasant power. The bourgeoisie did lead, and the peasants were the battalion. Due to weakness of the situation of class, the peasants could not assume leadership but their role was paramount and decisive as the army of revolution. Peasants in colonial India had the same role." With no class capable of leading the struggle – it was necessary for the peasants to pour into the battlefield on their own. Colonial rule dispersed the old rural order and tore forth the peasantry for its own exploitative purpose, and this imperative to exploit hoisted an order of new feudalism following-Europe. It was this new feudalism that the peasant insurrections had sought to undermine from eighteenth century onwards. In Europe, self-interest had the bourgeoisie accept peasantry as fighting column against feudalism. However, in Bengal of the nineteenth century there was no such bourgeoisie, nor was there a revolutionary working class. In Bengal and Bihar the merchant-bourgeoisie that was emerging before English rule could not withstand the first blows of English regime and were rendered insignificant. The middling indigenous zamindars and talukdars collaborating with colonial land revenue system were pillars of the new feudalism. It was impossible for them to lead the anti-feudal struggle of the peasants. From late nineteenth century a weak capitalist class emerged primarily through textile industry and service sector; they had points of conflict with British imperialism but were in favour of moderation and

[394] 'Last' not in terms of an 'elucidation of pure scientific knowledge' of the past, but as an 'instrument of war' against capitalist present. See Bibliography IV.137, P-224.

[395] *BBSI*, P-52.

negotiation. Anti-feudal struggle never featured in their agenda. Indian National Congress – supported by this class – always co-existed profitably with imperialism and feudalism. "Despite all predicaments – *the peasants and the peasants alone* fought the new feudalism of the colonial state." The anti-feudal anti-imperialist struggle in this country was an explicit liberation war of peasant masses; it was anti-colonialism proper immediately oriented to decolonisation. The peasant struggle and the question of national progress and prosperity became one and the same. Peasant masses formed eighty five per cent of the country's population; the working class emerged from it. The peasants produced food and raw materials for the industries, as the major consumers with very basic purchasing power they kept core industries alive. "The collective emancipation of the colony depended on the liberation of the peasants. The peasants of Bengal and Bihar – peasants of the entire country – *conducted the struggle alone speaking for the emancipation of the entire oppressed nation*."[396]

j. The book was replete with substantiations of what Ray called 'new feudalism' under the aegis of capitalism and colonialism. Rather than focusing on the peasant-ness of the entire oppressed people in colonial/national India, he brought out the deep texture of new feudalism wherein movements of workers – "working-class-like associational, combinatory politics" – reinforced a new peasant's habitus – it was from there in turn that Ray was able to account for the exceptional insurrections. One of Ray's acumens was in picking up specialised, local academic endeavours, and (citationally) juxtaposing them with his book without exuding any form of authorial aggression, without exhibiting any academic care (proprietor-to-proprietor) towards how the original meaning of the works fare in its insertion to his massive project of sequencing and reactivation. The de-industrialisation thesis on colonial depredations in the second half of eighteenth century focused on the handicraft and artisanal economy of Bengal. Ray stayed on the political negotiations that marked this encounter between the English East India Company and the workers, through a discussion of Professor Hari Ranjan Ghosal's thesis – 'Trade Union Spirit Among the Weavers of Bengal Towards the Close of 18th Century' published in Historical Records Commission, 1951 (Volume 28, Part II, P-42-43). Ray wrote: "A professor of history in Muzaffarpur's G.B.B. College – Hari Ranjan Ghosal – while researching old government documents of Bengal discovered in an official archive a number of unpublished letters on the

[396] *BKBGS*, Preface-Page-24-26. Emphasis added.

weavers' movement."[397] According to Ghosal, the general notion that trade union movement derived from Western influence was not true. The ancient guild system that ordered the country's industries carried traces of trade unionism. Ghosal accidentally stumbled on unpublished documents which depicted the weavers' movements in Bengal of the late eighteenth century as marked by trade unionist spirit. The weavers of Shantipur and other regions collectively and strategically bargained and negotiated with the oppressive British merchants. In a 1793 letter written by the Commercial Resident of Dhaka to the Calcutta-based Board of Trade the official stated: the weavers of Dhaka collectively informed that with cost price of various raw materials increasing it was impossible to continue supplying clothes to the company for the old unilaterally dictated price. When the fixed rate was not increased, all the weavers resorted to subversion and passive terror. They made clothes out of materials of much inferior quality and supplied them to the Company. Another letter from 1794 was written by the Commercial Resident of Sonamukhi. The weavers collectively abrogated their contract with the oppressive company to do business with some independent merchants who arrived in the region. Coercive measures and suspensions were treated as liberation by weaver-members of the collectives; they could aspire to resume business beyond the Company's intensely exploitative ways. Another letter of 1794 talked about the social power and rural combinations behind the strength of the weavers' collectives, wherein the village-heads backed these weavers to fight against the Company; this also led to a new peasantisation wherein artisans started tilling land to avoid the Company's torture – even if it was much less profitable. Slowly - in trying to tame the weavers – the Company had to destroy them. Ray concluded the discussion by connecting the weavers' movement with the advent of colonialism proper: "Due to this destruction the economy of Bengal saw an unprecedented change. A thriving manufacturing economy lost its primary vocation and became entirely dependent on agriculture. The inevitable consequence was that suddenly the peasants of Bengal were permanently stuck between the industrial capital of England and the new collaborating landlords."[398]

k. At this juncture we can also seek to see how Ray dealt with the rebellion of Sirajgunj in Pabna district of Bengal in 1872-73. The primacy of armed insurrection in other such rebellions against

[397] *BKBGS,* P-74.

[398] *Ibid,* P-78.

the colonial state was absent here; it was a mass movement that for the first time (in colonial India) radically deployed the practice of associational politics and a united league of peasantry. This compelled the colonial state to usher in limited legal changes that recognised and notionally defended the rights of the peasant-tenants on the land they tilled against the authoritarian depredation of the landlords of colonial revenue system (or Permanent Settlement of 1793 buttressed by the lower courts and armed forces of the state). Ray described – based on his masterful collation of government reports and local vernacular histories – secret meetings, skirmishes, attacks on the property of landlords, the formation of leadership of the movement from among the lower echelons of landholders, and refusal to pay irrational levy. Ray refused absolute primacy to the legal-proprietorial language of this rebellion by locating it assuredly within the sequence of peasant insurgencies he charted in his work. Reading government reports, he highlighted the situation of productive polarisation that this rebellion provoked, where "people wearing shoe, carrying shawl and umbrella were universally seen as pro-landlords, while those with only loincloth and a cotton towel on their shoulders were seen as a member or supporter of the peasant association."[399] Like other peasant rebellions in Bengal the Sirajgunj rebellion of 1872-73 left for the revolutionary peasants highly pertinent lessons. Though this rebellion did not raise the question of seizing state power, it did raise the fundamental question that was still a concern of the peasants (of 1950s and 1960s): the question of permanently asserting the alienated rights of the tillers on agricultural lands. Before 1872 arbitrary eviction of peasants from their land was a pervasive phenomenon in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The struggle of the peasants in Sirajgunj subdivision was the struggle of the entire peasantry of eastern colonial India. The rebel in Sirajgunj – amidst its economic aims – demanded the abolition of landlordism. The significance of this demand was intense in colonial territories as landlordism was built as the main pillar of imperialist exploitation. When that pillar was acted on for abolition – not only the unmitigated oppression and exploitation of the peasants was challenged - the entire colonial state stood precarious. The liberation struggle of the broad masses was strengthened. The method adopted by peasant rebel of Sirajgunj to fulfil this historic demand charted a new path for the revolutionary struggle of the peasants. With very little bloodshed they accomplished a task which inaugurated associational politics for later Communist peasant associations to take cue from. "This rebellious peasant of Pabna district is teaching the entire

[399] *Ibid,* P-461.

peasantry that when the combined power of the innumerable masses stands in front of its enemy – be it legal struggle in a court or armed combat in a terrain – the defeat of the enemy and the victory of peasant mass organisation is inevitable."[400] In his enquiry into the past Ray did not ignore flashes that did not entirely fit into his prescription for the present. He delved deep into the contours of a monad to find that it was the impossible demand of political equality in attempts of reform that placed them firmly in the sequence of insurrection and seizure of power in past and present.

l. Ray concluded the book with an account and interpretation of bandits and banditry in colonial territories. He opened up here the possibility of rich social and discursive histories that elaborated on this theme in writing modern history thereafter. Ray posited pertinent, germane questions. He began by rejecting the early colonial government's notion that entire peasant communities in colonial India had felony as their vocation or creed, while the robbers and bandits of England stumbled on the path due to 'sudden penury'[401]. Such acts were related by Ray to the immiseration that class society had always thrived on. Colonial-capitalist exploitation and the landlordism of new feudalism exacerbated that general social situation so much more that banditry proliferated. "The robbers of England are robbers to quell want, and the robbers of Bengal are communally ordained robbers – such strange notions bend rationality. The bandits are not racially prejudiced. Everywhere, in England as in colonial India, pauperised and hungry peasants, out-of-work artisans, craftsmen and small traders had no other option but to steal and snatch, abrogating the established concepts of just and unjust."[402] Ray firmly located the bandits in the general insurrectionary procedure that the peasants of colonial India unleashed. He also unveiled the issue of casteist oppression in banditry: "Like they are now, the Baagdi, Majhi, Namasudra among others in Bengal and Dosad, Kurmi among others in Bihar were the most poor and oppressed communities then. They lost land and homestead and turned to banditry."[403] The relation of banditry to peasant mobilisation during the nineteenth century Indigo Rebellion was also brought out through a biographical sketch of a lower caste Baagdi bandit who was legendary for his valour, strength, redistribution of wealth and hatred for landlords and English

[400] *Ibid,* P-431-432.

[401] *Ibid,* P-435.

[402] *Ibid,* P-435.

[403] *Ibid,* P-441.

traders. Ray in this chapter made a definitive foray beyond bourgeois legal ideology and conventional propriety that announced the insurrection of 'now'. It was 1966.

m. Ray described how Birsa – educated in German Missionary and Catholic schools – reflected on the role of religion in the life of the Kol tribe. He saw the role of Christian clergy and polytheistic Brahmins as one spreading acquiescence, hopelessness and superstition among the people which distracted them from the unjust order of the landlords and moneylenders. While describing the 'lie' of Birsa's divine encounter, Ray talked about Birsa's selective appropriation from existing beliefs and declaration of an impending day of apocalypse and rebellion. The lie, in this case, was a cancellation of the conservative emphasis in religion and an accent on the eschatological aspect of religion.[404] In Ray's account, Birsa envisioned and his followers followed during Kol anti-colonial struggle. However, nowhere did the Munda crowd come across as 'mindless rabble' or 'moronic followers'.[405] A glimpse of Ray's account might testify. When Birsa was arrested, they held the prison-house under siege. During this time, a famine, triggered as much by exploitation as by lack of rain and a cholera epidemic made the people vulnerable and angry. After release, Birsa was informed by the people that in a place called Chutiya, there was a Hindu temple around which the Brahmins, landlords and moneylenders were regrouping, consolidating their power and exploiting the indigenous peasants anew. "Birsa, after consulting the matter with his followers, decided to attack this temple. Along with his followers, Birsa attacked this Hindu satanic salon, occupied it and destroyed all idols. The Brahmins, moneylenders and landlords took the help of the king of Chotanagpur and attacked Birsa when he was attending a meeting of his followers. Birsa's group had to flee."[406] In Ray's account, the exact contour of fidelity practiced by Birsa's insurrectionary followers got more importance than Birsa's statements laying out the doctrinal aspect of his religious view. Ray concluded: "Before court procedures could end in the first half of 1902 the leader of the historic Munda rebellion, 'God' Birsa died – at twenty eight – of cholera inside a Ranchi prison. Many *learned* persons have called him 'fanatic', 'volatile and perverted', 'adventurist', failing to understand the true nature of his innovations, political ideas and movement. This young man chastened by the idea of liberation sacrificed himself to reverse the degradation of his

[404] *BBSI,* P-95-96.

[405] See allegations mounted on Ray in Chapter V.

[406] *Ibid,* P-99.

community in the preceding hundred years, to uproot the exploitation and oppression of zamindars-moneylenders and Christian-Brahmanical priesthood, and to radically renew the dignity of their deeply ancient existence. The new consciousness he ignited among his people made the latter immortalise him as their 'God'. Birsa is safe up on that pedestal."[407]

n. We have to note that Ray was writing in a context where the authoritative secondary source on Birsa Munda was written by one Sarat Roy, whose article was quite unambiguously named "The Curious History of a Munda Fanatic"[408] – unambiguous because it encapsulated the exact combination of exoticising and vilification of 'tribes' and their lifeways marking elite Bengali expression in the region. The amount of ground-clearing that Ray enforced – in terms of understanding the religious modality of being – was epochal. In his account of the Saotal rebellion, he used the word 'imagine'[409] connecting the leaders Sidhoo and Kanoo to the message of 'God' that ushered in the rebellion; this helps us see the word 'lie' used for Birsa (when he sought legitimation for insurrection from 'god') in perspective.[410] Other examples of Ray's negotiation with religious modality of being and the event of insurrection/seizure of power (for Ray, the apotheosis of anti-colonial politics) can be explored. After the advent of British rule in Bengal, in 1775, a Fakir named Karam Shah came to the Pargana of Susanga in Moyomonsingho district and inspired the Garo and Hajong tribes into the fold of the egalitarian Pagalpanthi or Baul religion. The central tenets of this religion were truth and equal, fraternal ties between all human beings. Within a short span of time the Garos and Hajongs – exploited and oppressed for centuries by the zamindars – became disciples of Karam Shah, accepted his creed and emboldened by this new egalitarian order, regrouped collectively against the zamindars. In 1802, one of the important Garo leaders, Chapati aspired to create a new principality of hill-dwellers uniting Garo, Hajong, Koch, Mech, Hari people among others.[411] Ray moved to another location in chronology. In 1813 when the proponent of Pagalpanthi

[407] *Ibid,* P-102.

[408] Quoted in *Ibid,* P-95. The article was published in the journal *Modern Review,* 1911.

[409] *BKBGS,* P-321.

[410] See *BBSI,* P-94-96.

[411] *BKBGS,* P-222-223.

religion Karam Shah died, Tipu Garo, an inhabitant of Letiakanda village, reiterated the tenets of Pagalpanthi religion for his people....Pagalpanthi was a variant of Bengal's Baul religion, the Bauls referred to themselves as *Pagal* (Mad). Tipu taught that every man was created by God, no one was inferior to the other, and hence there was no legitimacy to hierarchy. Thousands of impoverished people rallied under this egalitarian idea, stopped paying taxes, defeated the combined forces of the zamindars in an intense battle in Garhdaripa and occupied the town of Serpur. Local Brahmin scholars mocked the Garo regime but it thrived for two years, during which Garo armies defeated English soldiers a number of times. Tipu was overseeing the administration from a secured bastion in Garhdaripa; Baksu looked after judicial matters while Dipchan was the Fauzdar. In 1826 Tipu was defeated and imprisoned; he died incarcerated in 1852, by that time his grandson was also in prison. An English official wrote that even after Tipu's death his disciples treated his home as a shrine, and believed voluntary labour in his household will enable them to accomplish the most impossible of tasks. His disciples never paid obeisance to anyone other than God, no one spat within the boundary of his home. "The Garos - in future – would rise in rebellion consistently."[412] While writing the episode of Farazi rebellion (1838-47) in Faridpur district Ray read English sources to strongly affirm the profound religious experience of the leader of the movement, and also the democratic shift from the more hierarchical *pir-murid* relationship to the collaborative *ustad-shagird* relationship while organising local subject-bodies.[413] In the interiority of Farazi insurrection, in its creation of an autonomous people's rule, an army of peasant volunteers, people's courts and egalitarian redistributive measures for the inhabitants of liberated zone – Ray revealed the peasant revolts as true innovations in politics.[414]

o. Ray brought up the issues of caste and language in locating the sinews of peasant proletarian militancy. One of Ray's arguments about early colonial expansion was critical. The English regime could pattern a political economy and culture of new feudalism (with active collaboration from existing elite classes) as constitutive of global capitalism; this decided the specific contours of capitalism's long-term career in colonial and Indian territories, yet was in sync with the laws of capitalism in general. This expansion from its early stages entailed genocide of lower orders

[412] *BKBGS,* P-233-236.

[413] *Ibid,* P-291.

[414] *Ibid,* P-299.

and castes. In Medinipur region of Bengal, the indigenous peasants like Baagdi, Ghorui, Khoira, Majhi and Chowarh had a very long tradition of insurgency. Even before the advent of English rule in 1760, they warred with local feudal oppression and exploitation. In 1696-97, the insurrection (against Mughals and their feudatory from Bardhaman) led by the landlord of Chitua-Borda subdivision of Medinipur, Shobha Singh and the Pathan chieftain Rahim Khan of Orissa was really a rebellion of the Baagdi indigenous peasantry. Shobha Singh and Rahim Khan merely used the peasants to further their ambitions[415]. Right on the eve of English power consolidating itself in Medinipur, the Ghorui peasants rebelled. Their livelihood was small-scale agriculture and they had consistently surged up against the landlords. The landlord Satrughna Chowdhury entrusted his son Narahari Chowdhury to quash the rebellion. The Ghorui people assembled every year in the night of dark moon in early autumn in the house of their chief to pay taxes. On such a night, Narahari Chowdhury led his army into the house of the chief and killed seven hundred unarmed Ghorui. They were beheaded and the heads were buried in one place, and the bodies in another. In 1773, again, when Narahari Chowdhury himself was the landlord, he killed hundreds more in another such attack.[416] Such casteist atrocities had been a recurring theme of the past; Ray unveiled its texture, particularly in the field of historiography and generally in that of Communist politics. Ray in his elaborate use of folk poetry brought out the question of language-use of the peasantry and the oppressed. In his account of the fourth rebellion in Sandweep in 1870, he returned to this fertile island in the south-eastern coast of Bangladesh where the Permanent Settlement willingly degenerated into a chaotic network of new competing landlords. When half of Sandweep was openly auctioned off to a new English landlord he attempted to measure plots forcibly and raise the revenue, with no intimation provided to the existing tillers. He had local administrators and bureaucrats in cahoots. At that time Hindu and Muslim peasants unitedly stuck to the resolve of not letting the new landlord

[415] By reading early Marxists of Bengal like Bhupendranath Datta and English scholar L.S.S O' Malley's *Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under British Rule* in combination, Ray pointed out the early complicity between the Mughal state and the armed English-Portuguese merchants in fighting peasant revolts. The merchants reacted when their territories of operation were occupied by the rebels, and it was as a reward for this support that the English East India Company acquired the region that became 'Calcutta'. Gautam Bhadra later elaborated on this episode in Bibliography II.88.

[416] *BKBGS,* P-53-55.

succeed. Under the leadership of Munshi Chand Miya from Nyaymosti of Sandweep they vouched through elaborate meetings and assemblies that every peasant subject was to foil every collaborator of the landlord in measuring land or torturing the peasants. They refused to cooperate, but avoided frontal showdowns. This highly cohesive determination indeed suspended the attempt to exacerbate an already oppressive revenue regime. Ray showed how a song sung with a local poem served the purpose of radical propaganda and instruction – positing it as a sample of subversive use of local language by the oppressed in Sandweep. It can be noted that Ray referred to the song's make-up as language, not dialect, despite its tenuous but discernible link to literary Bengali and despite its 'marginal' (from both Dhaka and Calcutta) setting. He culled this piece out from Dr. George Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India, (1894-1928) Volume V, Part I. According to Ray, 'gentlemen-scholars' of Sandweep did not agree that the language was the authentic language of Sandweep, in their view it was a pidgin combining traits of Noakhali and Sandweep. Ray presented it anyway; the insurrectionary wager declared by the language of this song was true for Sandweep and everywhere else. It was creative of the new time and new place that was Sandweep at that node. The song while plotting and presenting the peaceful mobilisation in Sandweep in conversational and non-ornamental language, abruptly posited a crimson bull as the fire that would be set on the homestead of a local collaborator of the revenue regime – the partisan Ray was able to confidently pre-figure the movement away from language in language itself. This certainty came from a general disinterest in hermeneutic resolution of the past; his emphasis was not merely on language of social use, but on its evanescent intersection with and dissolution in politics. Thus he could use hostile songs written by the paid writers of landlords to demonstrate the valour of rebel depredations in his recounting of Sirajgunj upheaval.[417]

p. The song from Sandweep:

Kiyo haichinir baap ailana kya kailo boitohe

(Why did you not attend the meeting yesterday, father of Haichini?)

Ameen kodin firbo chohe chohe

[417] *Ibid,* P-428-429.

(How much more the surveyor can be allowed to survey the fields?)

Golaey golaey mapook goi jai chin ditam no jomine

(We shall not mark our plots, let the survey go on)

Bellish soner chidaadee ar kitto hare ameene

(What shall the surveyor do with the old rates of '42?)

Mairot gele barite daiya jaiyum tahate

(If he comes to beat us up we shall flee)

Aurat-ey koi dibohete barit nai Koilkatta thahe

(The women shall say that he lives in Calcutta)

Huinchoni baichaabera Chhan Miya-er je koi hadaiche

(Do not you know what Chand Miya has told?)

Laal balad lagai dium jeter barit Ameen ache

(The person who shall accommodate the surveyor in his house, a crimson bull will burn it down)

Jummaey namaj poirte hunlam mojide cholla

(Heard this while praying in the mosque on Jumma)

Jorip koirta ditam no bhai jaey jabe kella

(Let us be beheaded, but brothers, we shall not let the land be surveyed)[418]

q. An explicit and thorough rejection of colonial and bourgeois-nationalist historiography and a pioneering ascertainment of two domains of anti-colonial politics pervaded *BKBGS* (complimenting the primary rejection of liberal appropriation of Marxism by revisionist thinkers in his broader oeuvre). In a vociferous attack on the 'Renaissance' in colonial Bengal Ray

[418] *Ibid,* P-415.

inaugurated the two spheres of anti-colonial politics: he called the framework 'Renaissance versus Peasant Rebellion', or ‘two classes, two politics’. Alongside the peasant rebellions the 'renaissance'-movement of the English-educated landlords and middle classes was underway in nineteenth century. Exercising their landed proprietorial power bestowed by the English ruling class they began the so-called 'renaissance'-movement to entrench the mechanism of exploiting the peasantry and to attain the leadership of colonial society. “Thomas Babington Macaulay was the primary thinker of creating a loyal class in colonial India through English education, who would never oppose English rule. That Macaulay's scheme was a long-term success is evident from the fact that the middle classes virulently opposed the peasant rebellions – especially the Saotal rebellion, the 1857 Mutinee and the Indigo Rebellion – and exhibited unflinching allegiance to English rule. Even at present a group of highly educated people follow the footsteps of Macaulay in the manner they write their history of colonial India.” When the insurgency of the peasants was accumulating in the form of a massive political storm the educated middle class turned its back on the mass struggles and celebrated the providential nature of the colonial state. It was through ‘renaissance’ that the so-called nationalist movement began in colonial India. After the mutinee due to economic crisis the middle class was compelled to oppose English rule and organised a movement. But in that project they were not prepared to support the peasant rebellions or to welcome the peasant insurgent to turn their movement into an anti-colonial struggle proper. They developed their movement keeping the peasant masses of the country away in nineteenth and twentieth century. “This demeanour towards the peasants and later the working class is the basis of the reconciliatory nature of nationalism. The co-operation and reconciliation of nationalism with imperialism is absolute."[419] Before beginning his sequencing of nineteenth century peasant revolts he took this rejection further. He rigorously dismantled the Bengal 'renaissance' icons like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rammohon Roy and Vivekananda because of their distance from or indifference to – be it a hostile one or an ambiguous one – the peasant revolts of the time, and their vigorous espousal of the language of the colonial state. Rammohon Roy’s support for commercialized agriculture as being progressive brought untold misery on the peasants of Bengal. "The anti-peasant land relation or 'Permanent Settlement' from which the middle class emerged, that very 'Permanent Settlement' is the source of the comprador, reconciliatory nature of nationalism”, Ray wrote. This was patterned slowly in nineteenth

[419] *Ibid,* Preface-Page 26-28.

century and became the full-fledged national movement in twentieth century. On the basis of their trenchant opposition to the solitary revolutionary power – the peasantry, the nationalism that Bengal renaissance created was not revolutionary nationalism, it was in the interest of the landlords and the middle class; it was a specific expression of the will to assert – with the help of the colonial state – the authority of their class against people's struggle. “It is this authoritarian expression that matured during the Congress-led national movement in twentieth century."[420]

r. Ray's enumeration of the aspects of peasant insurrections included, for example, an idea of territory. Ray called it 'struggle for autonomous territory'. The attempt to establish zones liberated from the colonial state and the collaborating landlords-moneylenders was one of the primary characteristics of the peasant rebellions in Bengal and colonial India. The rebellion of Samsher Ghazi in Tripura, the first Pagalpanthi Garo rebellion, Wahabi rebellion, Farazi rebellion, Saotal rebellion and the Mutinee of northern colonial India were assertions of this very feature. The peasants, through relentless struggle, understood that wresting political power from the English rulers and creating autonomous zones was the only way to emancipate from exploitation and oppression. Samsher Ghazi destroyed the rule of the collaborating king of Tripura and established an autonomous territory in the districts, distributed land among all peasantry exempt of tax, dug up water bodies to supply drinking water for the people. Tipu Garo also established a temporary free Garo territory. The Wahabis led by Titumir liberated extensive parts of 24 Parganas, Nadia and Jashor and declared Titumir as the Badshah. 'Badshah' Titumir banished all landlords and indigo planters from his realm, taxed the exploiters of peasants heavily and instituted courts of justice in each village. The superior English military column had to use powerful canons to destroy the audacious and valiant bamboo fort of this autonomous territory, after being defeated time and again by Titumir's liberation army. The Farazi rebellion was geared towards establishing a free territory of the people of Faridpur district. The leader of the rebellion and the free territory – Dudu Miya – initiated the superstructural procedures that Samsher Ghazi and Titumir did. The main aim of Saotal rebellion was to establish an autonomous territory of the Saotal people. In 1857, the attempt was not merely the establishment of a central government in Delhi, but people's territories in the rural areas of four stretches of northern colonial India. The project of wresting state power and establishing liberated territories

[420] *Ibid,* P-218.

observed in all these rebellions was “the highest manifestation of class struggle”. That the rural areas made for the basis of people's rule in colonial/national India was demonstrated by these rebellions. “Though these failed in nineteenth century the present continuous attempts to establish people's rule are in the sequence of those first struggles. The bamboo fort of Titumir remains the place from where people’s liberation will proceed."[421]

s. While writing about the rebellion led by Titumir, Ray informed that he was writing in a scenario where the writer of the only Bengali biography of Titumir stated: “Be it a Hindu, a Mussalman, a Christian, a Sikh, a Parsee, if someone is up to some great mischief like Titumir, Titumir’s sorry fate will deter them. Titumir was extremely malevolent. Hence, he could not understand how kind and charitable the English are. Titumir could not comprehend the loving nature of the English. In this kingdom of the British in India, everyone appreciates their empathetic largesse and paternal care. Who here is uninitiated to the taste of manna that is English rule?”[422] Even an important early Marxist thinker like Bhupendranath Datta, Ray related, saw the rebellion of Titumir as a communal upsurge.[423] Ray argued that the semi-feudal formations on colonial society meant the landlords and the ruling elite gnawed into the religious practices of peasants, and the resultant rebellion, predicated on religious idiom, cut strong and parallel to the economic and political modalities of the insurgent’s being.[424]

t. Around the end of 18th and beginning of 19th century a Garo chief, Chapati tried to wrest power from the local entrenched landlords and establish direct administrative and revenue relations with the English regime. In the context of long-term oppression of local Bengali landlords on the Garo tribe, this attempt to define a free Garo principality – though within the structure of colonial state – was read by Ray as a radical move. He did not call it a rebellion or struggle. This episode was in fact used as a bridge between the religion of truth, equality and fraternity spread among the Garo by Karam Shah around 1775 and the Garo uprising in 1825 (and thereafter intermittently). In various studies of contemporary insurrections Ray located ambiguities and shifts in the relationship between the peasant insurgents and the landlords or the colonial state, as also

[421] *Ibid,* Preface-Page-23-24.

[422] *Ibid,* P-262.

[423] *Ibid,* P-261.

[424] *Ibid,* P-262.

prejudices in pre-Communist secondary narratives of the rebellion. Ray read in Chapati's attempt a will to Garo autonomy, and in the evidences of Chapati's complicity and self-interest indeed a 'fabrication' of colonial archive and local elite chronicles.[425]

u. Among the ordinary rebels of the 1857 Mutinee, Shah Mal was introduced to the readers by Ray, albeit briefly: "In the rural areas of Meerut agricultural communities like Gujar, Rangaur, Jat and others joined the revolt. A Jat chief named Shah Mal assumed the leadership of the rebellion in this region. Shah Mal and his accomplices destroyed a bridge on the Jamuna River to disrupt English lines of communication. The tribal peasantry led by Shah Mal defeated the British armed groups a number of times."[426] Ray posited landed magnates and feudal chiefs like Bahadur Shah, Nana Saheb or Lakshmi Bai as stooges in the hands of the peasants, ordinary warriors and the mass in general; stooges compelled to join the mutinee when all avenues of negotiation with the English regime were broken. Though the feudal chiefs and landed magnates – stripped of political power – joined the revolt to fulfil their interest, though the event was referred to as sepoy mutinee as the army remained at the forefront – for Ray the peasants and artisans of northern plains were the main force of the rebellion. The sepoys too were primarily peasants. The feudal chiefs joined the rebellion to reclaim their lost sovereignty, their right to exploit. But they realised soon enough that the leadership of the insurrection was passing away from them. The sepoys and the peasant masses were attacking the propertied and the elite in vast rural areas and made victory more frightening than a loss for the rich classes claiming to lead the rebellion. Moneylenders and merchants collaborated with the English state. The peasants started occupying areas and patterned people's rule. The new landlords of English revenue regime were the primary enemies. The treacherous elements of the elite leadership contributed to the failure of the rebellion. The peasantry was a heterogeneous class with divided interests, and no vanguard class took up the leadership of the mutinee and generated ideological or programmatic coherence. “Yet, this rebellion captured a moment of true anti-colonial cohesion, carried on by a disparate people composed of landlords down and out, out-of-work artisans, starved peasants, disgruntled sepoys and puritanical priests. It was not as well-defined as future bourgeois nationalism, but it was an incomparably more intense and radical project of national liberation

[425] *Ibid,* P-223.

[426] *Ibid,* P-345.

from foreign rule..."[427] About the failure of the rebellion Ray's conclusions were unique, astoundingly clear and partisan. One of the main reasons of failure was not following the tactic of people's guerrilla war and espousing one of frontal encounters, that too mostly in urban areas. The speed and suddenness of attack gave the sepoys initial victories, but the military resource of the English was incomparably superior, and defeat was certain. The root and the power of this rebellion resided in the peasant masses. Even before the mutinee began, the peasants rallied with the rebellious sepoys and supported them. The leaders of the sepoys did not organise the peasants and through guerrilla warfare of the peasantry did not spread the war wide into the rural areas. This failure could be ascribed to the silencing of the ordinary people's demand by the elite leadership. The initial programme of abolishing landlordism could not be pushed due to elite indifference. If this programme could become decisive, the elite leadership would have 'surely betrayed the rebellion early enough'; and the peasant masses would have rallied much more forcefully to abolish colonial rule. With the help of the sepoys, that peasants' struggle 'had to assume the form of a guerrilla war in vast areas of northern plains'. The English army, forced to spread thin into rural terrain, would have been defeated easily. "At the beginning of the nineteenth century the invading army of the great general Napoleon was defeated and ejected by the partisan warfare of Spain's peasantry. If the leadership of the rebellion fulfilled the ordinary peasant's demand of land and organised them into guerrilla war the result of 1857 could have been very different."[428] Ray concluded the discussion with a comparison between peasant insurrectionary politics and bourgeois nationalism. For some the mutinee was a war for freedom, for some it was a reactionary struggle of the feudal chiefs. For Ray, a struggle to evict foreign rule and establish independence in the entire country, a struggle actively participated in by the masses, could not in any seriousness be dubbed 'reactionary' merely on account of the involvement of a few weakened feudal chiefs; to denigrate a struggle where the main force were people of all classes in four large northern regions – 'especially landless peasants exploited and oppressed for a century by new feudalism' – was for him not merely ignorant, but malicious. Princes loyal to the English and the middle classes created by the colonial rule remained inert and treacherous to the cause of mutinee, but the masses of the four regions started the mutinee for the independence of entire areas. Bahadur Shah was merely the symbol of revolutionary

[427] *Ibid,* collated from various parts of P-341-369.

[428] *Ibid,* P-357-358.

people's power. Ray compared the mutinee with two of the biggest mobilisations of Congress in 1921 and 1930-34. The depth and unmitigatedness of the great rebellion of 1857 became clearer. '1921' and '1930-34', led by Gandhi, ended in capitulation to foreign rule, while in the great rebellion the people sacrificed their lives fearlessly. The two movements of Congress did not empower the overwhelming majority of the colonised people - the peasants – and worked for the upper echelon of society; "in Chauri Chaura and other regions where the peasant community self-willed their movements and methods of struggle, the mobilisation was suspended. On the other hand, the peasant masses of the four regions of northern colonial India remained the main column of 1857. Even during 1930-34 – though civil disobedience was the sole method of struggle – merely a hundred thousand 'disobedient' volunteers were imprisoned; in 1857, more than hundred thousand peasants and sepoys lost their lives."[429]

v. "To establish the idea of a freedom struggle strictly devoid of negotiation and compromise was a salient feature of the peasant insurgencies" Ray wrote. The Sanyasi rebellion in Bengal and Bihar of eighteenth century, Samsher Ghazi's rebellion in Tripura, Rangpur rebellion and from the beginning of nineteenth century Pagalpanthi Garo rebellion (Moyomonsingho), Wahabi rebellion, Saotal rebellion and the great rebellion of 1857 confronted and absorbed complete destruction and defeat. Yet the thought of these rebels never dwelt on the notion of compromise or submission to the enemy – imperialists and their local collaborators. Peasants, artisans, indigenous communities were fearless in the face of death, and struggled without flinching. In Saotal insurgency – amongst fifty thousand rebels – twenty five thousand insurgents sacrificed their lives in the battlefields. The colony learnt about 'committed, self-transcending, uncompromising and fearless struggle - for freedom from colonial state – from the insurgent peasants'. Frugal living and a will to anonymous and unceremonious death were also a lesson of these insurrections. On one side the peasant rebellions proposed the idea of a non-negotiable struggle for freedom from foreign and national exploiters and oppressors. On the opposite side the capitalists, big proprietors, landlords and the middle classes presented the practice of capitulating to foreign ruling powers and striking deals with them. "The so-called 'freedom struggle' from 1921 to 1946 – organised or led by Indian National Congress – in crucial and decisive moments – witnessed at the very least six instances of the leadership arbitrarily

[429] *Ibid*, P-360-361.

suspending movements and collaborating with the foreign exploiters. These two distinct politics have split entire history in two. One side is sustaining itself on the struggles of the ordinary masses of the country; the other is based on the mendicancy and compromise of the elite social groups."[430]

III

In this section we read a select few theoretical statements (translated and paraphrased) from Suprakash Ray's subsequent work, *BBSI*.

a. The revolution in the territories of Indian state – in Ray's thought - was in the stage of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-big bourgeois democratic revolution. Democratic revolution could succeed only in a specific revolutionary sequence. From after the French revolution of 1789 democratic revolution had advanced in many countries. Though the primary goal of democratic revolution was to remove the feudal obstruction to economic development it assumed different forms, contents and strategies in different countries. In French revolution feudalism was eradicated under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The serfs and the peasants were led by the bourgeois class to accomplish the democratic revolution in France. The Russian revolution of 1905 and February 1917 also stand for democratic revolution. But these two revolutions in Russia were different from the French revolution. The revolutions happened in the imperialist era when capitalism had already relinquished its transformative role and was expanding by allying with feudalism. The working class organisation of Communist party struggled against the bourgeoisie for the eradication of feudalism and emancipation of the peasantry. Peasants became a force allied to the working class. In Russia the democratic revolution was an anti-bourgeois, anti-feudal revolution. Though the Chinese revolution was a democratic revolution in the age of imperialism its character and strategy were different from that in Russia. Russia was an independent and imperialist nation. There was no foreign occupation within Russia, nor were there autonomous warlords in Russia like in China. China was semi-dependent, semi-colonial and the main section of the Chinese bourgeoisie was completely subservient to imperialism. The democratic revolution in China was a revolution against imperialism, feudalism and comprador bourgeoisie. Though there were adequate similarities between China and colonial/national India,

[430] *Ibid,* Preface-page-Twenty Two-Twenty Three.

there were differences in terms of revolutionary lineage. The democratic revolution in these two countries had specific forms, contents and strategies. The revolutionary sequence of a country was made of revolutionary programmes and axioms stated in its places. "We have to pass this specific lineage through the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism, to arrive at a theory of action that guarantees the success of revolution in a country. A country's history holds a long trajectory of revolutionary politics followed and applied therein. Hence, local histories should be put through Marxist examination precisely to extricate specific features. These histories should be deployed in revolutionary tasks – that is how 'national' histories are redeemed."[431]

b. Suprakash Ray presented a statement of Mao Tse-tung as the starting point of his thought of history: "Another of our tasks is to study our historical heritage and use the Marxist method to sum it up critically. Our national history goes back several thousand years and has its own characteristics and innumerable treasures. But in these matters we are mere schoolboys. Contemporary China has grown out of the China of the past; we are Marxist in our historical approach and must not lop off our history. We should sum up our history from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen and take over this valuable legacy. This is important for guiding the great movement of today. Being Marxists, Communists are internationalists, but we can put Marxism into practice only when it is integrated with the specific characteristics of our country and acquires a definite national form. The great strength of Marxism-Leninism lies precisely in its integration with the concrete revolutionary practice of all countries. For the Chinese Communist Party, it is a matter of learning to apply the theory of Marxism-Leninism to the specific circumstances of China. For the Chinese Communists who are part of the great Chinese nation, flesh of its flesh and blood of its blood, any talk about Marxism in isolation from China's characteristics is merely Marxism in the abstract, Marxism in a vacuum. Hence to apply Marxism concretely in China so that its every manifestation has an indubitably Chinese character, *i.e.*, to apply Marxism in the light of China's specific characteristics, becomes a problem which is urgent for the whole Party to understand and solve. Foreign stereotypes must be abolished, there must be less singing of empty, abstract tunes, and dogmatism must be laid to rest; they must be replaced by the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the common people of China love. To separate internationalist content from national form is the practice of those who do not understand the first thing about

[431] *BBSI,* Preface-page 21-22..

internationalism. We, on the contrary, must link the two closely. In this matter there are serious errors in our ranks which should be conscientiously overcome."[432]

c. Ray noted in 1970 that the magnitude of working class in colonial/national India had increased noticeably. At the beginning of Congress rule in 1947 the number of workers employed in industrial production was 650000. It reached 900000 as state planning expanded industrial sector. Counting the informal or casual labourers, the total number of workers in colonial/national India could be estimated at 150 million. Most big industrial setups in colonial/national India lay outside the precincts of the big cities. From census reports and other sources it was evident that almost 60 per cent of workers lived in rural areas from where they travelled to their factories. Most of them retained some link with the land. A large section of the working class was semi-proletarian and semi-peasant. Through militant factory struggles the working class was attaining new political consciousness and world view. Militant trade union movements and relentless political propaganda would have certainly led them into assuming revolutionary leadership. The revolutionary will of the working class was explicit in their past struggles which asserted that through politics the establishment of working class leadership in the democratic revolution in colonial/national India was not merely possible, but inevitable. The intimacy of the working class with the rural actually offered a massive pathway in Ray's contention. A well-developed opportunity of combined struggle of workers and peasants existed. The workers and the peasants were intensely aware of each other's origins and desires. The condition for declaring a direct political role of the working class in conducting peasant struggles could certainly be induced. The combined struggles of workers and peasants had repeatedly proposed this condition in the first place. Ray's examples were: revolutionary struggle in Madras and Punjab in 1907; the street battles of the Bombay working class in 1908; the strike of workers in Lilua railway factory of 1926-27; the struggle of workers and peasants to occupy state power in Peshawar and Sholapur, 1930; the participation of workers and peasants in August struggle 1942; struggle-centric unity of workers and peasants in feudal principalities of colonial India, 1936-1947; cooperation of local peasantry with railway workers in the struggle of each, 1936-1947. "Working class struggle and peasant struggle here are completely interlinked and

[432] Mao Tse-tung, *Report to the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, 1938* or *The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War*, in Bibliography IV.36.b, P-209-210, in Preface-page 22-23, *BBSI.*

two mutually reinforcing components of one revolutionary struggle. This is a remarkable feature of revolutionary politics in the territory of the Indian state. To deny it is to ignore the lesson of history."[433]

IV

The design and layout of Suprakash Ray's historical enquiry made it distinctly rhizomatic, it "(had) neither object nor subject; it (was) made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds."[434] The effect and proliferation of the book's astute citational arrangement and curated translations was alarmingly immediate. One of the earliest thoughts of the 1967 insurrection in Naxalbari, in that very 1967, began thus:

"*'When those who were cultivating and living off land from long before in a certain area realize that – for no fault of theirs, with no local necessity at all, merely on the pretext of raising money for the government's police forces – their land is being snatched from their control and a new tax is being instituted on them for their own land, a tax they can never afford to pay, and no amount of prayer and petition is having any effect, then their taking to arms to reclaim what has been unjustly alienated from them can hardly elicit surprise or anger.'* These words do not come from Kanu Sanyal, they do not come from Jangal Santhal.[435] These words are from across one hundred and seventy years in the past. But it is the same relevant issue of peasant insurgency. The Collector of Medinipur wrote these in a letter to the Board of Revenue of colonial state on May 29, 1798. This was about the Chowarh rebellion in the area. The peasantry of colonial/national India had repeatedly risen up against the new feudalism instituted by British rulers. This very Medinipur is witnessing intense struggle of the tillers for vested lands now, and it has triggered a similar struggle in North Bengal of 1967."[436] The footnote attendant to the quotation used in this statement informed that the source is 'Suprakash Ray, *Bharoter Krishok-Bidroho O Ganotantrik Sangram* (Peasant Insurgency and Democratic Struggle in India), 1966'.

[433] *BBSI,* Introduction-page 19-20.

[434] Bibliography IV.131, P-3-4.

[435] See Bibliography I.B. 116, 126.

[436] Bibliography I.B.114, in Bibliography II.5, P-159.

This article simultaneously reproduced a rare and important pamphlet circulated by a local Communist partisan body in Naxalbari, 1967:

"All democratic people unite with the peasants' struggle for just demands!

An enquiry commission led by the united front ministry (helmed by parliamentarians from CPI-M and CPI) arrived at Naxalbari to investigate the peasant movement here. They distributed a propaganda pamphlet too. In this pamphlet they accepted that the land-owners destroyed the basic rights of the peasants. But they declared simultaneously that the movement was adventurist and anti-ministry. The charges of robbery and murder were slapped on the peasants. Only one land-owner had been killed and there was no evidence of the struggling peasants being involved in the murder. On the other hand the land owners defied government order, killed peasants (while the enquiry commission was in Naxalbari) and burnt down a series of villages in the area. None of these actions were mentioned in the pamphlet and the land-owners were not opposed. In the open meeting presided by 'Communist' ministers, landowners were encouraged to punish the struggling peasants. A discussion took place between the peasant leaders and the police superintendent in the presence of the land revenue minister of West Bengal. A workable future modus operandi was decided upon. But the police immediately relinquished the understanding and started attacking the peasants. Eleven peasants including seven women and two children were killed. The ministry's pamphlet did not mention this at all. The parties that constitute this ministry were in the opposition a little while back and would have certainly demanded judicial investigation into the matter. But as ministers, they remained silent. Through their pamphlet they declared that if agrarian trouble continued the police could certainly exercise the right to kill peasants. Only the landowning class had the right to be armed and active. After passing such verdicts the ministers went back to Calcutta for some well earned rest. Friends! In this struggle between the poor peasants and landowners the ministry is not neutral, it has taken a side and that side is of the landowners. The right to rebel against injustice and exploitation has been taken away by this ministry from the poor and toiling people. Democratic, toiling and struggling people have to come forward to increase the strength of the peasant movement. If the largest force in this country – peasants – remains weak and paralysed, no sustainable economy can be developed. If the peasants are exploited the whole society falls prey to exploitation. The struggle

that the peasants here are waging now, it is a struggle of every person trying to uphold freedom, to defend democracy and to invent some patriotic prestige. Every patriot is called upon to make this struggle a success – Siliguri Mahakuma Krishak Samity, 1967."[437] The partisan reporter was agitated: "Any political party that discovers 'extremism' in this statement should certainly be dismantled".[438] The Communist leadership's betrayal was as serious a corruption as willful infanticide.

The article concluded with an addendum.

"A report on a conversation between two peasants in Naxalbari within my authentic aural range.

First Peasant: We are supposedly in the path of excess. The time for revolting against the landholders has not yet arrived – we should wait patiently. The way fruit ripens, the way crop ripens – supposedly, time ripens in the same manner, too – the great ministers of CPI and CPI(M) are saying that time is not ripe to resist the exploiting parasites.

Second Peasant: Haven't you heard a story in the mythology of Nepali Satyanarayan? Once there was a terrible famine in the country. In a certain household the parents were overwhelmed by the demands of their hungry children. They informed their children that they were going to another country to try their luck; they would certainly bring back food. The children enquired about their ration till food would indeed be brought. The parents placed the grinding stone in the kitchen to boil on a burning earthen stove and suggested them to eat it only after the stone would turn really soft. They warned the children to be patient with cooking the stone, and avoid rush.

First Peasant (Laughing): The revolution will happen only after the grinding stone is boiled to perfection?

Second Peasant: Yes, that is the instruction of our great ministers. If we disobey, they will call us extremists."[439]

Intimacy with Suprakash Ray's work guaranteed that a partisan reporter plotted an insurrection not as a negation of the state (Indian state), but affirmation of a rare and sequential politics that was 'insurgency and democratic struggle' in the 'history' written by a partisan enquirer. The

[437] *Ibid,* P-165-166.

[438] *Ibid,* P-166.

[439] *Ibid,* P-168.

intractable contradiction – in the order of direct antagonism – between 'Peasant Insurgency' and 'Bengal Renaissance' that Ray proposed in his book on eighteenth and nineteenth century Bengal, appeared ineluctably as the antagonism between the ordinary partisans of Naxalbari or the new subject-body – 'Siliguri Mahakuma Krishak Samity' – and the 'Calcutta-based ministry of CPI and CPI(M) leadership' in the mangled, partition-fuelled West Bengal of 1967. Time as a guarantee of objective and innocuous past (and of knowledge and information) or time as a function of a 'botanic' ('like fruit and crop') historical consciousness – was completely abrogated in this historian's statements and the places of its reiteration.

V

The final two historical enquiries or statements of Suprakash Ray deserve a separate full-length treatment and our approach in interiority (to this biography) deserves minimal lengthy diversions. A short patchwork hinting at the intellectual tracks opened up by these two works will serve our immediate task – under the twin constraints – adequately.

BKBGS proposed peasant insurrections in eighteenth and nineteenth century Bengal as what was worth the name of politics in colonial/national India and the world, in colonial history and philosophy of history. This sweeping and multi-pronged metonymy was not explicitly explained or accounted for by Ray. 'Bengal' was not posited as an ideal example, nor as a cellular unit that would then, by any given rule of generality, express the whole, that was the name 'India' in the title of the book. 'India' remained for two reasons. a. The workers through the pan-India trade unions in the 1950s and 1960s compiled extensive and intensive economic struggles which ordinary Communist partisans saw as the legitimate springboard to political strikes endorsing democratic and agrarian revolution while the Communist leadership proscribed such wagers and forced the trade unions to focus on mellowing the Indian parliament.[440] b. The operational and organisational basis of the Communist Parties of the world was imperialist/nationalist territorial divisions – open to seizure by rebellious ordinary Communist partisans.

The book simply endorsed the physical extent of the archive that was available to Ray as both sufficient and open-ended – it thus invited the real in the possibility of infinite cases confidently, ceaselessly – while the Communist axioms at work were not constrained by the differentials of

[440]For an illustrative example see, Bibliography III. A, February 5, 1964.

those cases. The resultant uneven topology of the book demanded an understanding that would fit the book from all directions into other minor and major texts of Ray, demanded to be a singular element in a horizontal network of thought, paper, people, organisations and politics.

The book proceeded from the eighteenth century and covered the nineteenth century. The self-sufficient episodes of the book punctured the march of linearity and proposed a pure immediacy as the very antithesis of chronological emptiness. In between such episodes and centuries of uprisings, the book was marked by discussions of state and capitalism in colonial India and also a new intellectual history which – through a critique of nationalist and liberal thinkers vis-à-vis the thought of peasant insurrections – upheld the partisan intensity of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution (China, 1966) that declared: 'one divides into two'.[441] This book was constructed with long and very long quotations, and lengthy descriptions paraphrased from extremely disparate sources. Chroniclers and historians of the local, elite Indian magisterial historians, colonial administrators, colonial administrator-historians, scholars from the first half of twentieth century authoring secondary works, early Communist and moderate nationalist authors writing on aspects of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were among those quoted or paraphrased. Folklore and folk songs were also used intermittently, with great force. This seemingly unprocessed depiction successfully destabilised the conventionally authoritative and objective voice of the historian, or the presence of an omnipotent narrator, and allowed Ray to remain firmly in the 'now', or seen from the obverse, to dissolve or lose identity in his archive. It declared a universal impending event without prematurely absorbing the power of that universalism in the book's physical extent and mode of narration.

"Rise like lions after slumber,/In unvanquishable number–/Shake your chains to earth like dew/Which in sleep has fallen on you –/Ye are many, they are few." *BKBGS* began with this romantic dedication to the 'many', a 'many' that presented itself in 'unvanquishable number'. These lines were from the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). In one of his previous books – *BJBS,* 1955 – his dedication drew from another poet Lord Byron (1788-1824): "Freedom's battle, once begun,/Bequeth'd from bleeding sire to son,/Though vanquished oft, is ever won,..." In this serious mobilisation of early nineteenth century romantic radicalism – he inscribed Shelley's words on top of his most delirious work of partisanship – Suprakash Ray was in truly

[441] See Bibliography IV.42, 50, 53, 55.b.

fine company in terms of twentieth century revolutionary politics. "Garment workers in lower Manhattan rediscovered Shelley's poetry in the early twentieth century. In the first and second decades, 'The Mask of Anarchy' served as 'a ray of courage' for Pauline Newman, who became one of the leading union organizers for the International Ladies' Garments Workers' Union. Often drawing on the language of "The Mask of Anarchy," she recounts in unpublished letters that laborers encountered Shelley when they "were ready to rise," recalling the famous last stanza of the poem: 'Rise like lions after slumber….Ye are many – they are few.' Shelley inspired Newman, by her own account, and through her countless others, to march in both the 1909 'Uprising of Twenty Thousand' (when 15,000 garment workers in New York walked off their jobs because of poor working conditions) and the great funeral march of 1911, when 350,000 New Yorkers publicly mourned the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (when 146 people, locked into the sweatshop factory, either died in the flames or leapt to their deaths from the upper story windows). 'There is nothing passive,' Paul Foot (in *Red Shelley*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982) points out, about Shelley's last stanza; 'the images are of fierce and sudden action [and] the reference to unvanquishable numbers implies that the people will win in a fight'…"[442]

The exceptionality of the insurrectionary moment, of the unpredictable surge of masses and partisans, of entirely new evanescent organs of power of the exploited and oppressed majority – within the network his minute arrangement of places, sites and names of places created – was explicit in Ray's sequencing of the events of history. In the pages of his work, the event was formalised and declared in attacks on granary and revenue offices, forceful reallocation of crops, mosque meetings, heretic and anti-social congregations, destruction of prisons, police stations and local courts, laying siege to local administrative headquarters and strategic towns in agrarian hinterlands, improvised and low-cost forts and hideouts of the rebels, mass participation in non-statist and egalitarian procedures of redistribution and collectivization, and large-scale cancellation of bourgeois or feudal debts. With the working class (as seen in *BCPIR* and *BBSI*) from the early stages willing to transform their economic bargaining to political militancy, his

[442]Bibliography IV.139, P-646. For a thorough account of Pauline Newman's politics see Bibliography IV.140; for a fascinating experiment in historical narrative-writing, see the graphic history-novella that tied together Shelley and Newman's lives and politics, Bibliography IV.141.

accounts also joined occupation of military and labor barracks, armed skirmishes in urban alleys, attack on police stations, liberation of urban stretches and protracted collective withholding of work affirming political slogans or prescriptions. Bengal Renaissance, the nationalism of Indian National Congress and the revisionist economism of the Communist leadership were entirely devoid of politics in the inventive and singular sense that Ray proposed. While *BKBGS* was the most rigorous and intense enquiry of communist invariants in local histories of the territories of colonial/Indian state, *BBSI* (in its movement from 'democratic struggle' to 'revolutionary struggle') declared that "with the proletariat, ideological resistance becomes not only the *repetition* of the invariant but also the mastery of its realization"[443]. Telangana Revolution was crucial in this thought, for it was not only a moment where the territorial subversion (of colonial and Indian state's authority) was the most extensive; it thought the thought of the centuries-long self-organisation of people (that Ray sequenced in *BKBGS* and *BBSI*). The revolution subtracted a bureaucratic party into a local minimal organisation of 'subjective factor'.[444]

[443] See Bibliography IV.87.b; Translated by Bruno Bosteels, in Bibliography IV.87.a, P-279.

[444] See Bibliography I.B.37. The authors of this document were the first Communists outside China to declare the universalism of the thought of the Chinese Revolution led by the Chinese Communist party. This declaration was built up by rigorously resequencing the trail of Leninist theory and politics with the thought and practices of Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese revolutionary Communists – the text was a site of major innovation. It declared that proletarian subjectivity could not be reduced to a fixed sociological determination of revolutionary action, especially in the exceptional environs of insurrection, partisan warfare and mass uprising against the state where abolition of class was prefigured in new redistributive superstructural experiments and reterritorialisation of state-controlled areas. The arrival at guerrilla struggle and a tweaking of insurrection into protracted partisan warfare was a process in the real. The key was – as Bijan Sen or Suprakash Ray did not tire in reiterating consistently – foregrounding the core programme of agrarian revolution in all sectors of Communist activity, including urban, factory and electoral arena – the partisans carried on 'legal' work with militant ardour and inestimable courage both before and after the decision to wage protracted people's war. Through the grasping of differentiation within the peasantry, these partisans accomplished fateful innovations. Agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and landless or poor peasants and rural women were proposed as a force that could generally and profoundly radicalise (or render trenchantly Communist) the united front of peasantry against feudalism and imperialism. Thus, they took the first step in the history of colonial-national territory of India to annihilate caste hierarchy and casteist oppression through a self-organisation of the lower caste and tribal people (supplanting trade unionism and kisan sabhas) capturing political power area-wise (belying both colonial and national unity). The militants and partisans like the Andhra Marxists or Suprakash Ray were especially thoughtful in inducing a trail of affirmation (through a thoroughly singular

The readiness to act, the transparent enmity, the unflinching depiction of statist repression/social oppression, the solidarity with people's justice for the rich few and the sudden (and fierce) realisation of the absolute majority in the unfree in a situation of open antagonism were indeed features that dominated the episodes of insurrection, local melees and profoundly telluric subject-bodies in Suprakash Ray's book. Given his specific transaction with romantic literature and his awareness of the historian Thomas Carlyle, we can locate certain narrative strategies that Ray used, the crux of which was: "what was it like to be there?"[445] His theoretical insertions in the book drew from Communist party literature, international Communist publications and the writings of primarily Lenin and Mao (which was adventurous enough for a schoolteacher in 1950s and 1960s in Calcutta trying to write a historical account). In the episodes however – he was even more adventurous – and carefully modulated the use of long and short quotations from primary and secondary sources to form tendentially cinematic depictions of situations of intense local and irregular warfare between a mighty colonial state and the most profoundly exploited sections in the highly settled plains of lower Gangetic and Brahmaputra Delta (not always forests and hills where armed resistance was – amongst the Communist leadership – thought to be natural and apolitical). In cornered situations, innumerable decisions and innovations had the rebels put utmost pressure on their subjective resources and permanently inscribe themselves on places and landscapes. These very traces were being sequenced by Ray for present and possible partisans in 1966, Bengal, or conversely these traces were subjectivated by the political real of 1966.

Apropos the way Suprakash Ray used Rabindranath Thakur's historical thought, we can say that in this encounter with dialectics, Ray deployed the very image of continuity posited by a poet to construct a book patterned by a series of historical ruptures and radical discontinuities. Suprakash Ray rescued an original-historical signification that was the 'home' in the poet's history and had it collapse on to inventive scissions of subjective capacity. Through a reading of

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understanding of history and politics) that would not let contradiction and antagonism turn into pure negation and eventually a plea of terror or victimhood. This affirmative doctrine of politics forced bare the aggressive intent of the post-1947 Indian state in retaining anti-democratic feudal and imperialist allies – discrediting its ethical ideology, or rather, exposing its reactionary entrails.

[445]Bibliography IV.142, P-3.

Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno's statements on the task and methods of a historian encountering dialectics and materialism[446] we can propose that his work – like Carlyle's – had pronounced natural historical tendencies wherein universal history was both construed and denied (democratic revolution as "the world-Phoenix, in fire-consummation and fire creation… the Death-Birth of a World!"[447]). The singularity of politics (for Carlyle, romantic idealism; for Ray, Communism) in their texts ever became a time-image – astounding in its materiality and tactility, in its call for immersion and witnessing, in its creation of insurrectionary atmospherics in victory, defeat and invention, in its subjectivation of time[448]. One of Suprakash Ray's younger colleagues stated this very effect of Ray's accounts on his mind.[449] Ray's accounts and episodes – published in 1966 – can be internalised in terms of the aesthetics of partisan (or colonial) warfare and mass insurgency in the films directed by Miklos Jancso (1921-2014), Akira Kurosawa (1910-1998), Theo Angelopoulos (1935-2012), Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986), Robert Bresson (1901-1999), Elem Klimov (1933-2003) and Lav Diaz (born. 1958).[450] These very different directors were united in their use of long takes and judicious (but indispensable) use of cuts. In such films the nucleus of time autogenetic to an instance, appearance or event was carefully retained – defying any mandatory relationship of time in art with time as a mandatory reserve of information. Time did not remain a bearer of facts, time became the *only* fact. Only such exhaustive enquiry into the polysemy of time could clear the way for the abolition of time in a. actions, innovations, prescriptions (wherein the category of what was possible traversed past, present and future) and b. Ray's thought of history (rather than historiography).[451] Be it

[446] Bibliography IV.144 and Bibliography IV.118.

[447] Bibliography IV.142, P-11.

[448] As Carlyle had put it in a letter to a friend: "*Understand* me all those sectionary tumults, convention-harangues, guillotine holocausts, Brunswick discomfitures; exhaust me the meaning of it! You *cannot*; for it is a flaming *Reality*; the depths of Eternity look thro' the *chinks* of that so *convulsed* section of Time;—as thro *all* sections of Time, only to dull eyes not so visibly." *Ibid,* P-4.

[449] See Introduction.

[450] For the films referred above see Bibliography IV.143.

[451] Suprakash Ray's thought of history abolished time and delinked history and state, proposing name (democratic revolution), its intellectuality ('idea of Communism'; see Chapter I and Bibliography IV.55.b) and its places (factory committees, urban settlement committees, sub-district peasant associations, village squads led by agricultural workers and landless peasants, struggle committees with radical redistributive role, areas of people's government, armed partisan units). Given the telluric threat of Maoist thought Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana,

Titumir's rebellion in the central districts of Bengal in early nineteenth century or the Subandiya revolt of Bakharganj, 1792 against the colonial state and its local elite collaborators, Suprakash Ray inserted readers into his 'simple, direct observation'.[452] Among the many metaphorical guises that Walter Benjamin proposed for a historian upholding materialist dialectics ("expert cameraman, a transfixed angel, a retrospective prophet and a 'herald who invites the shades of the past to table'") – Ray can certainly be accessed as an 'expert cameraman'.[453]

But he was also most certainly a *lumpensammler, chiffonier,* the ragpicker.[454] His regular journey from 1958 till the late 1970s was from the residential, older section of the northern part (and then suburb) of Calcutta to Asiatic Society, located at the suave consumer's paradise of the city, Park Street – a thoroughly cosmopolitan space for grand hotels, corporate and government offices, night clubs, pubs, high-end shops and restaurants. It was this dazzling hubris of civilisation – the central urban district of Park Street – from where Ray scrounged the peasants and the rural proletariat - history's suffering face, the submerged dreams of history, its refuses, its detritus – from the catacombs of an imperial library. His will was to counter the sterile centrism of the Communist leadership in the 1950s. "The realization of dream elements in waking is the textbook example of dialectical thinking. For this reason dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it...with ruse. In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled."[455] Ray was a modest gleaner – "in the towns today, as in the fields

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Orissa, Bastar, Dandakaranya, Kashmir among others also emerged as place For the work that proposes the categories of name, intellectuality and politics – as also the protocol of abolition of time – see Bibliography IV.48. In this regard, Ray can be read along with historians transitioning out of historicism (Marc Bloch, Mohammad Habib) or non-historicist historians (Moses Finley, D.D.Kosambi): Bibliography IV.149. While Sylvain Lazarus has grasped the inventive faculties of Bloch and Finley (Bibliography IV.48), similar enquiries into the thought of historians like Kosambi and Habib are pending.

[452] The statements of this paragraph are based on a reading of: Bibliography IV.145.

[453] See Bibliography IV.95. The specific use of citation-knit images was precisely in destabilising knowledge and grasping the maximal intensity of an appearance without foreclosing its capacity to make absolute its own inexistence. (See Bibliography IV.124.b, P-39)

[454] See *Ibid.*

[455] Bibliography IV.144.e, P-162.

yesterday, gleaners will humbly stoop to glean"[456]. The gleaner who became one with gleaning could state: "Time doesn't pass but I pass"[457].

The commitment to insurgent peasants in Ray cannot be read as romantic pastoral fantasy, as anti-modernism; it was neither a rejection of one sociology and celebration of another nor a morose anti-urbanism. It rather spoke of a prostrated doggedness, a militant ardour to wrest an absolute exception to life's generality right from the faultline where the generality subjugated a human animal completely – right where a poor schoolmaster reached Park Street to construct his "unclassifiable scrap-book, the ruined 'death-mask' of its own 'conception'"[458] – or to pick his rag. Ray never strayed into a vision of his life's improvability, and never tied himself to the benign populism of the Communist leadership which was slowly gaining electoral power in West Bengal. For indeed poorer middle classes and grassroot government employees benefited socially and materially from CPI(M)'s populist policies sustaining a stable statist regional social complex.[459] What was a teacher with a taste for research looking for in Ray's time? "The Commission states that the existing pay structure is heavily weighted in favour of administrators, and, therefore, the Commission while recommending the scales have kept this principle in view: that all service people (technical and scientific) who entered government service should be able to reach the top without having to shift as administrators."[460] The mood of the time was that the educated middle class needed more opportunities, resource and incentive to exhibit creativity, analytical acumen, academic excellence and sustain the project of knowledge production. Ray never wanted to be a historian of such affiliation, despite dispensing serious historical research all through the most active and pressing phase of his life – in an anonymous yet engaged, underground yet interventionist vein. He did not enter the archive to discover authentic, unsullied relics, but to simply apply full partisan torsion to a space already opened up by other practitioners of history. His deep and tiring location in urbanity, its shabby squalid quarters, its slums, its sprawling libraries, eternal condemnation to the dead beat of the pounding grinding

[456] From the commentary of Bibliography IV.146.a.

[457] Bibliography IV.146.b, P-188.

[458] Bibliography IV.95, P-144-145.

[459] See Bibliography II.117.

[460] Bibliography II.118, P-54.

stone from the sovereign proprietor house-owner's kitchen, the thick sound of an exasperated and kindred child falling from an adjacent terrace, the suppressed anxiety of constant poverty, sickness and death constantly looming in his life's rescued narrative – never triggered a move away from the city, to a negotiated, quieter order (whether planned small towns in West Bengal or big towns in the Western Democracies), never elicited in him any exasperation towards the scrawny riotous multitude of the city. [Sample how a contemporary US-trained Bengali scholar-bureaucrat wrote about the problem of urban space: "With reference to the problems and issues of development planning for the Eastern India Region, we argue that the dominance of Calcutta Metropolitan District needs to be reduced, not only because further large-scale migration might adversely affect the quality of the already not-too-pleasant urban environment in the metropolis, but also because of the subculture conflict and the psychological hostilities which condition the behavioral propensities of the people of the region."[461]] Ray wrote partisan statements instead, whose content and design would reveal that its place-references slowly and carefully encircled the city of Calcutta with rural proletarian armies spilling over from their location in the past – owing to an ordinary partisan's "violent taste for the surface"[462]; to write this premonitory powder keg for the city Ray had to dwell in all the modalities of Calcutta, which he did. The phantasmagoria of the city or the multiplicity of being was accepted like a cherishable fever by Ray; forcing the exception to being appear under the radically tentative and extraneous counting – or an 'outside impetus' disrupting 'what the analytic has revealed'[463] – of the peasant insurgents. In Ray who belonged to the city of Calcutta, the seemingly irreconcilable figures of Baudelaire's *conspirateurs* and Marx's revolutionary collapsed[464] – this was precisely what made for the 'behavioral propensities' of Calcutta that planner-administrators or experts abhorred.

[461] Bibliography II.119, P-95.

[462] Alain Badiou, "One Divides itself into Two", in Bibliography IV.28, P-14. The real resultant threat destabilised the Indian state and the *jus publicum Europaeum* in equal measure (see Bibliography IV.26, 67).

[463] Bibliography IV.2.h, P-34.

[464] Bibliography IV.144.d, P-47-50.

Chapter V: Suprakash Ray and Subaltern Studies

I

This chapter follows the traces of Suprakash Ray in SS scholarship[465]. The exercise helps us grasp the thought and politics of Ray in its very passing. SS and its commentaries make for a wide and voluminous corpus, which has no relationship with the theme and method of this biography. Only Ray's name forces us to come to SS, and our traversing of SS is slender, non-encyclopedic, intensive (rather than extensive) and partisan as a result. There is a sharp opposition at work between SS and Ray. We account for this opposition not on the basis of their respective class positions, but on the conflicting categories of philosophy and politics active in the two parties involved. We shall not follow the path charted in a number of popular critiques of Subaltern Studies and its postcolonial theory, where the practitioners of the latter have been castigated for their supposed anti-Marxism and anti-leftism. Ranajit Guha, Shahid Amin, Partha Chatterjee, Gautam Bhadra, Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty – to name a few of them, are highly accomplished readers of Marx and the Marxist canon. If selective appropriation and equally selective rejection of Marx's philosophy is a sign of some rabid anti-Marxism, then all important Communist leaders and thinkers of the twentieth century were anti-Marxist, anti-left. Hence, this line of argument proves nothing apart from sectarian lines being drawn within academia or at a narrower level, left-liberal intelligentsia. This leads to a general strain in the critical commentary on SS that the latter, along with postcolonial theory, is a canny game of careerism eager to cater to academic fads, covert right-wing politics, exoticisation of the non-West and apolitical hyper-academic froth. We find this strain to be solely polemical and unsubstantively so.[466]

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[465] A collective historiographical and theoretical project most prolific in the 1980s and 1990s.

[466] A few examples of the critical texts hinted at in this paragraph are Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, Verso, 2013; Vasant Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe,* Brill, 2014; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "One for the Money, Two for the Show. On Postcolonial Studies and South Asian History", *L'Homme*, No. 187/188, Miroirs Transatlantiques (Jul. - Dec., 2008),

Ranajit Guha, the founder-member of this collective wrote: "The corpus of historical writing on peasant insurgency in colonial India is made up of three types of discourse. These may be described as *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary* according to the order of their appearance in time and their filiation....Secondary discourse is…the work of administrators....The prestige of this genre is to no mean extent due to the aura of impartiality it has about it. By keeping their narrative firmly beyond the pale of personal involvement these authors managed, if only by implication, to confer on it a semblance of truth…The overtly aggressive and nervous prose of counter-insurgency born of the worries of the early colonial days came thus to adopt in this genre of historical writing the firm but benign, authoritarian but understanding idiom of mature and self-assured imperialism....to celebrate a continuity – that of British power in India....These serve admirably to register the event as a datum in the life-story of the Empire, but do nothing to illuminate that consciousness which is called insurgency. The rebel has no place in this history as the subject of rebellion. There is nothing in tertiary discourse to make up for this absence....It is the work of non-official writers in most cases....(Some)...actually...are unable to speak in a voice other than that of the custodians of law and order....But there are other and very different idioms within this genre ranging from liberal to left. The latter is particularly important as perhaps the most influential and prolific of all the many varieties of tertiary discourse. We owe to it some of the best studies on Indian peasant insurgency and more and more of these are coming out all the time as evidence both of academic interest in the subject and the relevance that the subaltern movements of the past have to contemporary tensions in our part of the world. This literature is distinguished by its effort to break away from the code of counter-insurgency."[467] The first and only concrete (and examined) example of the 'left' literature within the tertiary discourse was Suprakash Ray's *BKBGS,* which Guha named 'radical scholarship' and 'radical tertiary discourse'.[468] Singling out Ray's account of the Santhal rebellion of 1850s, Guha found "there is...little in the description of this particular event which differs significantly between the secondary and tertiary types of discourses"[469], that "Ray reproduces *in extenso* Hunter's (writer

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pp. 93-104, Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India,* Rutgers University Press, 2003.

[467] Bibliography II.89, P-3-28.

[468] *Ibid,* P-28.

[469] *Ibid,* P-28.

of the secondary discourse) testimony"[470], that "Ray relies heavily again on Hunter, as witness the extracts quoted liberally from the latter's work."[471] This accomplished, Guha moved on to a theoretical criticism of Ray's work. Ray arrived at a different kind of 'destiny' than that enunciated in secondary discourse, where he rooted for the rebel instead of the state, but he "goes through the same steps as Hunter's – that is, *context-event-perspective* ranged along a historical continuum – to arrive there."[472] Guha defined history-writing of Ray's sort: "The purpose of such tertiary discourse is quite clearly to try and retrieve the history of insurgency from that continuum which is designed to assimilate every jacquerie to 'England's Work in India' and arrange it along the alternative axis of a protracted campaign for freedom and socialism. However, as with colonialist historiography this, too, amounts to an act of appropriation which excludes the rebel as the conscious subject of his own history and incorporates the latter as only a contingent element in another history with another subject. Just as it is not the rebel but the Raj which is the real subject of secondary discourse and the Indian Bourgeoisie that of tertiary discourse of the History-of-the-freedom-Struggle genre, so is an *abstraction* called Worker-and-Peasant, *an ideal rather than the real historical personality of the insurgent,* made to replace him in the type of literature discussed above."[473] Guha did not diminish the political importance of such 'appropriation'. "Since every struggle for power by the historically ascendant classes in any epoch involves a bid to acquire a tradition, it is entirely in the fitness of things that the revolutionary movements in India should lay claim to, among others, the Santal rebellion of 1855 as a part of their heritage."[474] Thereafter, he warned: "But however noble the cause and instrument of such appropriation, it leads to the mediation of the insurgent's consciousness by the historian's – that is, of a past consciousness by one conditioned by the present. The distortion which follows necessarily and inevitably from this process is a function of that hiatus between event-time and discourse-time which makes the verbal re-presentation of the past less than accurate in the best of cases. And since the discourse is, in this particular instance, one about properties of the mind – about attitudes, beliefs, ideas, etc. rather than about externalities which

[470] *Ibid,* P-28.

[471] *Ibid,* P-29.

[472] *Ibid,* P-30.

[473] *Ibid,* P-33.

[474] *Ibid,* P-33.

are easier to identify and describe, the task of representation is made even more complicated than usual."[475] In texts like Ray's Guha found no acknowledgement of the resultant distortion – which reduced the distance between past consciousness and the historian's – which was the "best one could hope for"[476]. With the gap remaining, Ray's text had an "irreducible degree of error." The understanding of religiosity in the Saotal insurrection is where Guha located Ray's most debilitating error. Guha argued that "religiosity was, by all accounts, central to the *hool*. The notion of power which inspired it, was made up of such ideas and expressed in such words and acts as were explicitly religious in character. It was a matter of both being inseparably collapsed as signified and signifier....in the language of that massive violence. Hence the attribution of the rising to a divine command rather than to any particular grievance...." This, Guha complained, had not been authentically represented in the historical discourse. The primary discourse located fanaticism, frenzy, superstition in this while secondary discourse interpreted messianic rumours as propagandist ruse to encourage the numerous rabbles. "Nothing could be more elitist. The insurgents are regarded here as a mindless 'rabble' devoid of a will of their own and easily manipulated by their chiefs...Tertiary discourse of the radical variety, too, exhibits the same disdain for the political consciousness of the peasant masses when it is mediated by religiosity."[477] As a sample of the latter, he turned to Ray's account of the rising again. Guha found no difference between Ray and the colonialist writer when it came to depicting the "presumed backwardness of the Santal peasantry, the manipulative designs of their leaders and the uses of religion as the means of such manipulation. Indeed, on each of these points Ray does better and is by far more explicit of the two authors in attributing a gross lie and downright deception to the rebel chiefs without any evidence at all. The invention is all his own and testifies to the failure of a *shallow radicalism* to conceptualize insurgent mentality except in terms of an unadulterated secularism." [478] The following indictment was decisive: "Unable to grasp religiosity as the central modality of peasant consciousness in colonial India he is shy to acknowledge its mediation of the peasant's idea of power and all the resultant contradictions. He is obliged therefore to rationalize the ambiguities of rebel politics by assigning a worldly

[475] *Ibid,* P-33.

[476] *Ibid,* P-33.

[477] *Ibid,* P-35.

[478] *Ibid,* P-37. Emphasis added.

consciousness to the leaders and an otherworldly one to their followers making of the latter innocent dupes of crafty men armed with all the tricks of a modern Indian politician out to solicit rural votes."[479] Citing Ray's description of the Munda Rebellion/*Ulgulan*, where Ray portrayed its leader Birsa as *using* religion and lying tactically, Guha proved his point. "Thus the radical historian is driven by the logic of his own incomprehension to attribute a deliberate falsehood to one of the greatest of our rebels. The ideology of the mighty *ulgulan* is nothing but pure fabrication for him....It follows, in each case, from a refusal to acknowledge the insurgent as the subject of his own history. For once a peasant rebellion has been assimilated to the career of the Raj, the Nation or the People, it becomes easy for the historian to abdicate the responsibility he has of exploring and describing the consciousness specific to that rebellion and be content to ascribe to it a transcendental consciousness."[480]

Guha delved deeper into the radical historiography of Ray's type: "... (I)t is impaled on a concept of peasant revolts as a succession of events ranged along a direct line of descent...in which all its constituents have the same pedigree and replicate each other in their commitment to the highest ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In this ahistorical view of the history of insurgency all moments of consciousness are assimilated to the ultimate and highest moment of the series---indeed to an Ideal Consciousness."[481] Such practice, even when 'wrongly carried on in the name of Marxism', could not "cope with contradictions which are indeed the stuff history is made of."[482] In Guha's estimate, devotees of unadulterated secularism like Ray looked away when confronted with evidence of religiosity as if the latter did not exist or explained it away as a clever but well-intentioned "fraud perpetrated by enlightened leaders on their moronic followers."[483] Hence, the failure to gauge myths, rituals, rumours, apocalyptic and utopian dimensions which spoke of the self-alienation of the rebel and the obsession with abstract and sterile discourse in such scholarship. The co-existence of sectarianism and militancy in rural history could not be explained by these historians. Guha added that religious element in rebel consciousness was not the only point of failure for Ray/writer-of-radical-tertiary-discourse. More

[479] *Ibid,* P-37.

[480] *Ibid,* P-37-38.

[481] *Ibid,* P-39.

[482] *Ibid,* P-39.

[483] *Ibid,* P-39. Emphasis ours.

generally, the *specificity* of a rural insurrection expressed in terms of many other contradictions was missed due to the "glare of a perfect and immaculate consciousness"[484]. Ray – in Guha's estimate – ignored the constraints instituted by localism and territoriality. Guha concluded: "Convinced that mobilization for a rural uprising flows exclusively from an overall elite authority, he tends to disregard the operation of many other authorities within the primordial relations of a rural community. A prisoner of empty abstractions tertiary discourse, even of the radical kind, has thus distanced itself from the prose of counter-insurgency only by a declaration of sentiment so far. It has still to go a long way before it can prove that the insurgent can rely on its performance to recover his place in history."[485]

II

Let us now look at the works of Gautam Bhadra – a leading figure of SS (SS). In his book *Iman O Nishan* (Faith and Flag) Bhadra discussed Garo rebellion and Titumir's rebellion in eighteenth and nineteenth century Bengal; episodes that Ray's *BKBGS* recounted in considerable detail and established in a sequence in anti-colonial mass politics. Bhadra alleged that because of the ideas of 'progress' and 'consistency of struggle' "the many episodes of peasant struggle lose their singular characteristics in Ray's extra-ordinary research work, and become mere points in a linear narrative." [486] In case of Titumir, Bhadra reiterated Guha's argument against Ray - Ray undermining religious modality and communitarian ideology. We have read about the figure Chapati in our short account of Ray's work in the fourth chapter. Ray's attempt to read in Chapati's attempt a will to Garo autonomy, and in the evidences of Chapati's complicity and self-interest a 'fabrication' of colonial archive and local elite chronicles (which is what Ray explicitly speculated[487]) is itself termed as 'fabrication'[488] by Gautam Bhadra. Bhadra was against a 'secular approach' to communitarian upheavals and subsumption of rebellions into the logic of class struggle. (However, it is hard to gauge what – if not class struggle [though shrouded in the shrill veneer of moral community] – Bhadra was describing when he wrote about Garo

[484] *Ibid,* P-40.

[485] *Ibid,* P-40.

[486]Bibliography II.91, P-144. Hereafter ION.

[487] *BKBGS,* P-223.

[488] *ION,* P-143-144.

consciousness: "The antagonism between the ruler and the ruled...points to the fact that the two are bearers of two opposing consciousness. The two occupy two opposite poles. Hence, they find each other's arguments about land, labour and ownership unviable and unreasonable. The *logic of tradition nourished by community consciousness* and that of labour is inevitably opposed to the logic of market, capital and investments."[489])

In another article Bhadra denounced all previous historical studies of the mutinee of 1857 for missing out on the "ordinary rebel, *his* role and *his* perception of alien rule and contemporary crisis."[490] He opined that even "with the best of intentions, radical historiography does not appear to have opted out of the paradigm within which the bourgeois-nationalist and liberal historians operate"[491], they identified the feudal chiefs and landed magnates as the leaders of the mutinee. Bhadra missed Ray's enunciation of the mutinee in the same book which he read and criticised in his study of Garo politics and Titumir's rebellion. Among the four ordinary men Bhadra described, the first, Shah Mal was indeed introduced to us by Ray. We have also read Ray's ruminations on the politics of the Rebellion of 1857; Bhadra's allegations certainly did not apply to him. Nevertheless, Bhadra did not discuss Ray in this article or in the introduction to his book *Iman O Nishan.* Suprakash Ray was projected as an unoriginal compiler of accounts who more often than not got his facts or mode of narration wrong. SS denounced the 'empty' abstraction and 'shallow radicalism' operative in Ray's work.

Bhadra's final statement on the 1857 rebellion was: "The recognition of the strength and weakness of these rebels would be a step forward in understanding their role beyond stereotyped categories and formulae. They were not mere adjuncts to a linear tradition that was to culminate in the appropriation of power by the elite in a post-colonial state. Nor were they mere toys manipulated by the latter in a historical project in which they played no part. Nor can they be merely described as faceless elements in an omnibus category called 'the people'. To seek after and restore the specific subjectivity of the rebels must be a major task of the new historiography. That would be recognition of the truth that, *under the given historical circumstances in which he*

[489] *ION*, P-122. Emphasis added.

[490] Bibliography II.90.a, P-230.

[491] *Ibid.*

lives, man makes himself."[492] In conclusion, the fundamental claim in both Guha's and Bhadra's writings vis-à-vis the mention or trace of Ray was that their project was an inaugural one – sweeping aside all extant forms of history-writing on the given themes (history and theory of peasant rebellions); and certainly sweeping aside Suprakash Ray as an 'elitist' historian.

Bhadra's primary problem with Ray was that the latter did not bring the insurgent being into a hermeneutic convergence, did not compose it as a decipherable analogical relation. It always lurked on the aleatory present of Ray. Bhadra (along with his colleagues) located the analogical relation mainly in religious or communitarian texts in uneven chronological coincidence with the insurrections. This was a move emanating from an empirical bias in privileging a certain modality (religious/communitarian) of the insurgent's being because of its linguistic and archival preponderance. Hastily enough, an analogical relation, a premature unity was conjured – one that vituperated against the exceptional 'one' of class struggle – and eventually ended up constraining politics to evolving historical consciousness (while Ray operated on radical separation of history and politics). In Ray's partisan thought, the equality and non-relationality of every modality was risked till the very end – be it religion, society, economy or politics. We have only received a small glimpse of the resultant richness of his historical texts – a disjunctive synthesis of anti-colonial occurrences denouncing any intentional relation between things and words or nomination and the thing, constructing a 'multiplicity without concept'[493] fearlessly to reject all old unity – in Chapter IV. It was through a transparent declaration of his partisanship of democratic revolution in the territory of the Indian state in 1966 that he meditated on the political novelty of 18th or 19th century communist invariants or more specifically, subtracted evanescent destatised and decolonised sites from the past (the 1947 transfer of power was fiercely antithetical to the proliferation of this very thought[494]). The peasant insurgents in his work were in interiority (and indifferent to explication or judgment) intellectual and thoughtful. He did not naturalise – unlike Bhadra or Guha – his historiographic decision as the only ethical, logical and

[492] *Ibid,* P-275. Emphasis added.

[493] Bibliography IV.124.c, P-59.

[494] The Nehruvian or Indian state's clinical and brutal suppression of Telangana Revolution (1946-1951) was a testimony to this antagonism.

radical research method available. He was a formalist and he did not hide.[495] Strangely, SS' demeanor towards Ray's lengthy theoretical meditations on politics and history was one of refusing its existence.[496]

In 1999, a partial translation of Ray's *BKBGS* came out. A randomly and remorselessly abridged version of the original, it retained no clear evidence of Ray's politics and thought of history. The most important aspect of this mysteriously and massively perforated translation was a foreword written by Partha Chatterjee, an eminent political theorist, historian and a leading voice of the SS. Chatterjee located Ray in the political and intellectual culture of Bengali-speaking areas of Indian state: "At least one Indian language that has continued, up to the present time, to benefit from the contributions of some of the finest professional historians is Bengali". He described a lively, acerbic atmosphere of debate in the region where much of the history written by so-called 'non-professional' historians aspired to the same standards of scholarship and rigour as would be expected of writers from the academy. "Their inspirations, and their social and political agenda, however, have often come from outside the academy".[497] He introduced Suprakash Ray as an example of this strand of Bengali culture. Chatterjee brought out the significance of the assertion of regional and vernacular texts and ideas vis-à-vis a professionalized Indian academy where English was the language of deliberation and enunciation. In the post-colony of the middle decades of twentieth century, "emergence of an all-India elite that could speak on behalf of the state as a whole rather than of this or that regional or linguistic fraction, and the crucial role of

[495] To the ordinary partisans "Mao's essential directive is never to treat the 'contradictions among the people' in an antagonistic manner…to resolve the conflict between formalisation and destruction by means of formalisation." (Bibliography IV.50, P-110).

[496] In the 'historical mode of politics' (for an elaboration of the category, see Bibliography IV.48) that Suprakash Ray enquired – nineteenth and twentieth century anti-colonial mass uprisings – it was precisely the category of 'community' that lapsed – marking the mode's saturation. Colonial and Indian state along with rural exploiters and urban factory-owners absorbed and normalised the category of community to break organised (and pro-alliance) militancy of agricultural workers and urban proletariat (most symptomatically during the Tebhaga-Telangana sequence of politics, 1946-1951) – the Indian state itself had been the commanding and fruitive height of the (Hindu) 'community' or communitarian concept since 1947. See Bibliography I.B, Bibliography III and Bibliography IV.55.a, c. SS had aggressively mined a lapsed category to pile knowledge and help the state formulate policies for its variegated populations.

[497] Bibliography II.92, P-8.

English as the effective language of the state, determined the language of academic historiography in India"[498].

On Ray's politics, he wrote: "His inspiration did not come from the academy; it came from the works of revolutionary politics...the theoretical issues he was most concerned with were those that were being hotly debated by Marxists regarding revolutionary role of the peasantry. His own preference was clearly for the perspective of the people's democratic revolution in a backward country, consisting mainly of a series of armed agrarian uprisings in which the peasantry would play a crucial role but always under the leadership of the working class. This was a perspective that had been developed through the ideas of Lenin and Mao Zedong. In the context of the split in the Communist Part of India in 1964, this was the perspective upheld by the new CPI (M). Suprakash Ray's theoretical framework shows his adherence to this perspective that was current in Indian Marxism in the mid-1960s..."[499]

The crescendo of his appreciation was: "It would take a study in itself to determine how many works of poetry, fiction, drama and cinema were directly influenced by a reading of this book. In the sphere of political activism, the 1960s and early 1970s saw militant agrarian struggles reach a peak in West Bengal and Suprakash Ray's book was probably the single most important source for citing historical examples in support of current political strategies."[500]

However, Chatterjee vigorously endorsed the aforementioned critique of Guha when it came to Ray's mode of narration: "For Ray the cause of Santal rebellion was nothing other than the British rule itself and the defeat only a postponement of the ultimate victory of the postcolonial struggle. But paradoxically, even this revolutionary historical narrative managed to displace the Santal rebels from the position of being the subjects of their own history. Like the 'secondary discourse' of official counter-insurgency, this particular kind of tertiary discourse also performed

[498] *Ibid,* P-7.

[499] *Ibid,* P-9.

[500] *Ibid,* P-8.

an act of appropriation by replacing the real historical personality of the insurgent by an abstraction called Worker-and-Peasant."[501] We now have a complete picture of Suprakash Ray's treatment in SS.

We end this section with some preliminary observations about this unidirectional engagement between SS and Ray. Our readings in the previous chapters suggest that most statements of SS on Ray were plain wrong and ignorant. Yet, there was indeed a key opposition at work. Ranajit Guha entered the 'neighbourhood of singularities'[502] obtained by Communist partisans like Ray and affirmed – like the Communist partisans – the multiple nature of being and world. But the paths diverged thereafter. While the partisans like Ray related to the singularities by taking a side in the fractured aftermath of a singularity or decided on them pertaining to the logic of sameness, Guha and his colleagues grasped the multiplicity in unbridgeable differences, absolute alterity and combinatory heterogeneity: the peasant insurgent permanently designated "sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space"[503]. SS was indeed a "totalizing function (which) *abusively permits* a thinkability of the heterogeneity of the areas."[504] It continually and profitably juggled with simultaneous incommesurability and reiterability.

Two distinct approaches – SS and Ray – it seems. But the caustic moral and vocational superiority complex that permeated the statements of Guha and his colleagues while speaking of Ray pointed to the fact that SS had massive guarantees at work behind their approach. We gradually understand below that these guarantees were provided by state and god, two concepts partisans like Ray had nothing to do with.

II

We begin this section by locating SS in terms of Communist politics. This is primarily because we look at SS through Ray's presence in its texts, Ray who was an ordinary Communist partisan.

[501] *Ibid,* P-10.

[502] Bibliography IV.2.d, P-60.

[503] Bibliography II.93, P-309.

[504] Bibliography IV.48, P-10. Emphasis ours.

But a strong secondary factor is that some of its practitioners had indeed recognised Communist politics of the 1960s and 1970s as a trigger of the intellectual project, or of individual scholarly pursuits within the broad rubric of SS. A few samples: "Later, I became something of a Naxal intellectual"[505], claimed Guha. His biographical sketch revealed that in 1970-71, "while in India, Ranajit (Guha) became *involved* with Maoist students in Delhi and decided to give up his projected study of Gandhi in favour of an analysis of peasant insurgency"[506]. Bhadra mentioned the first martyr of Naxalbari insurrection, Babulal Biswakarma in his work on peasant rebellions in Mughal Empire as a figure who retained the continuity of the resistive vein of peasant insurgencies he captured in medieval history.[507] Spivak wrote: "Guha, a seasoned communist who paid the price of his political convictions during a brilliantly maverick career as a historian, created a revolution within the discipline."[508] There is no reason to not take these dignified statements seriously.

Partha Chatterjee's introduction to a collection of essays from the volumes of SS (translated to Bengali) unpacked this aspect elaborately. "The root of SS can be found in the intense yet incomplete debates among the Marxist politicians and intellectuals in the 1970s." Two topics were central: the development of capitalism in the agrarian economy of colonial/national India (among economists) and the so-called Bengal Renaissance in nineteenth century Bengal (among historians). Some economists argued that from late colonial era agricultural production transformed radically. Small, medium and big scales of agricultural production were entangled with the global market of agricultural commodities and large-scale systematic investments, thus bound by the laws of capitalist production. Others demonstrated that though limited transformation was seen in some regions, the vast expanse of colonial/national India remained

[505]Bibliography II.94, P-2.

[506]Bibliography II.95, P-224. Emphasis added. Guha was evidently a very late bloomer in comparison to Suprakash Ray both in terms of politics and thought of history. The inaugural tone of the SS colleagues was perhaps loud and defensive. In his 1963 monograph Guha focused exclusively on metropolitan elite intellectual trajectories to explain the master-edifice of Permanent Settlement in Bengal (See Bibliography II.126), while in 1966, Ray saw the revolutionary anti-colonial blows of the oppressed peasantry in Bengal as eliciting the statist response that was Permanent Settlement (1793).

[507] Bibliography II.88, P-189.

[508]Bibliography II.96, P-186.

under a semi-feudal agrarian system. Larger markets or large systematic investments could not transform the fundamentally pre-capitalist society. Nationalist as well as Marxist historiography emphasised the 'progressive' role of the thinkers of the Renaissance like Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. In the 1970s, some academic historians raised the question that in what terms could these intellectuals be envisaged as progressive. Their reformist thought did not flout the boundaries of colonial economy and state. Their foundational faith was on the progressive nature of British rule. The limitations of that ruling power made for the weakness of their reforms. These 'heroes' of the Renaissance raised no fundamental question on the power-structure of colonial India; they attempted to trigger social progress using the same power-structure. Hence, their project was marked by the inevitability of eventual failure. Major debates within Communist politics were also taking place. The 'peasant struggle' of Naxalbari did not exhaust itself in temporary unrest, bloodshed and political defeat. The question of independent Indian state's power-structure was posited in the theatre of national politics so dramatically by this struggle that the question could no longer be ignored. Even when the political struggle was vanquished this question kept cropping up in social science, history, art, literature, theatre and cinema. "The two scholarly debates were without doubt trying to answer this very question. In the backdrop of this incomplete debate SS was able to address this question in a new way."[509]

In a variation of this 'new way' – for all its latent Communism, there were more or less no Communist categories at work in SS – we find a benign Martin Heidegger that another important practitioner of SS Dipesh Chakrabarty presented in his works. The shadow of Suprakash Ray lurked large on this deployment. Chakrabarty translated abstract labour and concrete labour into the terms History 1 and History 2 respectively, and upheld (which Marx never did sans incompletion, ambiguity and tension, he argued) the heterogeneity of History 2 as Chakrabarty was not concerned with the exceptional, imputed and prescriptive in his enquiry.[510] Through concrete or living labour, he tried to "open Marxian categories up to some Heideggerian

[509] Bibliography II.97, P-10-11. We might note that the two aspects of Communist thought that Chatterjee saw as germane to the emergence of SS were both, in a thoroughly inter-related manner, formalised in Ray's thought of history in *BKBGS* and *BBSI*. Summarily dismissed as an ignorant compiler, Ray did not get to feature in the high theoretical statements of SS. See Chapter IV.

[510] This general trait of SS was enquired rigorously in Bibliography II.98.

ruminations on the politics of human diversity"[511]. Likening History 1 to Heidegger's present-at-hand (objectifying relationships) and History 2 to ready-at-hand ("the everyday, preanalytical, unobjectifying relationships we have to tools, relationships critical to the process of making a world out of this earth"[512]), Chakrabarty pointed out that in the Heideggerian framework unambiguous and equal importance was accorded to ready-at-hand and present-at-hand, or History 2 and History 1.

This, was a type of misreading that Reiner Schurmann termed as the "anthropological misunderstanding" of *Being and Time,* since Chakrabarty's declared aim was to link Heidegger's ontology to a 'politics of human diversity', to produce 'a loving grasp of detail in search of an understanding of the diversity of human life-worlds', to find 'thought intimately tied to places and to particular forms of life'[513]. [Schurmann informed: "Husserl wrote on the first page of his copy of Being and Time: '*Ist das nicht Anthropologie*?'"[514]] There was indeed a thinking of event in Heidegger that did not let easy reductions of his ontology into phenomenology pure and simple, or colourful anthropologies – it was indeed attentive to eventful discontinuity and truth. As Schurmann observed: "The line that leads Heidegger from Dasein to its latest offspring, 'thinking', is drawn in two strokes: from Dasein to Menschentum, a collectivity as situated by an epoch of truth, and from there to Denken as pure obedience to presencing understood as event."[515] This demonstrated a search in Heidegger for "a still more neutral vocabulary than the inquiry into epochal *types of man.* The corollary of the epochs is 'Menschentum', that of the event, 'thinking'."[516]

However, Heidegger was also not entirely unamenable to the anthropology that SS was dedicated to. Alain Badiou's estimate was that Heidegger remained 'too phenomenological'. Badiou, along with Deleuze, admitted that "Heidegger surpasses intentionality", but "he simply then goes on to maintain its ontological substratum, consisting of the relation, or community of senses, between

[511]Bibliography II.99, P-50. Hereafter, *Chakrabarty.*

[512] *Ibid,* P-68.

[513] *Ibid,* P-18.

[514] Bibliography IV.132, P-56. "Is this not anthropology?", Edmund Husserl struggled.

[515] Bibliography IV.107, P-72.

[516] *Ibid,* P-74. Emphasis added.

the actualized dimensions of Being, in another dimension....In assuming that there is an intentional relation between nomination and the thing, or between consciousness and the object, one necessarily breaks with the expressive sovereignty of the One." Heidegger's limit "is that his apparent criticism of intentionality in favor of a hermeneutic of Being stops halfway, for it does not attain the radicalness of the disjunctive synthesis. It retains the motif of the relation, even if in sophisticated form....The unity of Being is interpreted by Heidegger as a hermeneutic convergence, as an analogical relation that can be deciphered between the dimensions....Despite the pathos with which Heidegger talks of distress, his vision of the manner in which Being deploys itself in divergent series remains fundamentally a tranquil one, precisely because of its hermeneutical reference....Despite his apologetics of the Open, he refolds and closes up all the separations, the differentiations without resemblance, and the unresolved divergences that alone prove the equality and neutrality of the One. Heidegger, to adopt a Nietzschean expression, is a conniving priest who only seems to subvert intentionality and consciousness in order to all the more subtly stand in the way of the disjunctive synthesis…He remains within phenomenology, in the sense that phenomenology is 'too pacifying and has consecrated too many things'."[517] We do not suggest that phenomenology or consciousness-of framework exhausted the theoretical space of SS. But it had certain important local results which were illustrative. Guha's robust diatribe against Ray's understanding of the religious modality of the insurgent's being came back to hassle him, as Chakrabarty pushed Guha's own arguments against Ray towards an even more specialised and microscopic ethnography of the past. While discussing "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency" Chakrabarty wrote: "A principal aim of Guha's essay was to use the 1855 rebellion of the Santals to demonstrate a cardinal principle of subaltern history: making the insurgent's consciousness the mainstay of a narrative about rebellion." In pursuing the history of the Saotal rebellion of 1855, Guha came across a phenomenon common in the lives of the peasants: "the agency of supernatural beings". Saotal leaders explained the rebellion as a supernatural act carried out at the behest of the Saotal god Thakur. Guha drew attention to the evidence and underscored how important this understanding was to the rebels. The leaders of the rebellion, Sidhu and Kanu said that Thakur had assured them that British bullets would not harm the devotee-rebels. A careful Guha avoided any instrumental or elitist reading of these statements. Yet a tension inherent in Guha's analysis became perceptible to Chakraborty: "His phrase 'logic

[517]Bibliography IV.2.m, P-21-23. Hereafter, *Clamor*.

of consciousness' or his idea of a truth that was only 'truth for their speakers' are all acts of assuming a critical distance from that which he is trying to understand". It was clear to Chakraborty that the rebel's statement demonstrated that the subaltern refused agency or subjecthood; this put Guha in a dilemma. In response, he resisted analyses that saw religion simply as a displaced manifestation of human relationships that are in actuality secular and worldly. His first move was to resist analyses (common in secular or Marxist historiography) that saw religion as a displaced manifestation of human relationships that are in themselves worldly (class, power, economy). Guha's was not a simple exercise in demystification. Yet – Chakraborty contended – his analysis – unlike Saotal statement – could not offer the Thakur the same order of agency in the story of the rebellion. He concluded: "A narrative strategy that is rationally defensible in the modern understanding of what constitutes public life—and the historians speak in the public sphere—cannot be based on a relationship that allows the divine or the supernatural a direct hand in the affairs of the world. The Santal leaders' own understanding of the rebellion does not directly serve the historical cause of democracy or citizenship or socialism...."[518]

Thereafter Chakrabarty proposed 'minority history/subaltern pasts' which meant many things at once. It warranted recognition of the 'disjointed' and 'heterogeneous' nature of the 'now' of writing history, a preservation of the difference that marked the historian's method and the peasant's praxis, a response to precise demands of *deepening democracy*, a 'groping' for non-statist forms of democracy, a staying with heterogeneities without reducing them to any overarching principle that spoke for an already given whole. It ended with the reiteration of an anthropological reading of Heideggerian ontology: "to stay with the *heterogeneity of the moment* when the historian meets with the peasant... put(s) us in touch with the plural ways of being that make up our own present."[519]

It is adequate to comment that Guha and Chakrabarty were in a trail of improving upon what Ray sequenced in his work, nothing more, and nothing less. They succumbed to precisely what Chakrabarty, somewhat feebly, sought to resist: "additive, 'building-block' approach to

[518] *Chakrabarty,* P-102-104.

[519] *Ibid,* P-108. Emphasis added.

knowledge"[520]. In content as in effect, SS' accumulated knowledge, facticity and traces of variegated agencies – in other words, they practiced pure empiricism. Guha attempted to render Ray obsolete, Chakrabarty tried to render Guha obsolete, as the confident project of amassing knowledge perpetuated. The basis of SS becoming a permanent quest for gathering anthropological knowledge – however – lay in Guha's hostile appropriation of Ray. Ray's enumeration of the aspects – elementary or otherwise – of peasant insurrection included an idea of territory or what he called 'struggle for autonomous territory' (Guha would later call it 'territoriality'). The sites of insurrection were sites of post-evental procedures for the partisan history-writer Ray, procedures inducing the condition and existence of the new – the soviet or commune – because the event of insurrection in his plotting was "a site, appearing in maximal intensity, and equally capable of making absolute its own inexistence."[521] In Ranajit Guha the same site became an 'intersection of ethnic and physical space'[522], or 'a coincidence between community and habitat'[523]. The partisan historian could apprehend the singularity of politics without making it disappear. His history remained a split index of the singularity of a thought (in his case Communism or the egalitarian maxim of soviet/commune), it neither sacrificed the name (democratic revolution, that which was thought in the thought of Communism in territories of colonial/Indian state) nor objectified it (in the manner of 'post-Marxist dialectical anthropology and post-positivist structural anthropology' – a phrase that can be a correct description of SS' methodology and historiography – which referred back to the historical totality, or to society as a composite totality that for SS was 'India' or 'postcolonial' or 'Third World'[524]).

We arrive at a point where we could have concluded that the theoretical basis of SS was blocks of anthropological knowledge pressed on fragments and flashes that Ray recomposed in his texts. The nourishing role of anthropological theory/practice on SS had been discussed academically,

[520] *Ibid,* P-107.

[521] Bibliography IV.124.b, P-39.

[522]Bibliography II.100, P-329-330.

[523] *Ibid,* P-330.

[524] It was precisely the absence of this 'referring back' – this etatising co-thinking – that Bhadra dubiously proposed as an assault on singularity in Suprakash Ray's history. See for the thought and vocabulary of this paragraph: Bibliography IV.48, "Politics as Thought: The Work of Sylvain Lazarus", in Bibliography IV.55.a and Bibliography IV.58.

along with observations that it was never fleshed out adequately by its practitioners.[525] Only Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's epochal assessment of and contribution to the theory of SS – however – can help us understand fully the dynamics of Guha, Bhadra and Chatterjee's unease with and rejection of Suprakash Ray.

III

Partha Chatterjee highlighted Spivak's contribution in a candid manner of approval to the readers. "The most fundamental critique of early SS was accomplished by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." She pointed out two features of SS' study of peasant revolts. First: the location of subaltern politics both inside and outside colonial space. It was outside in the sense that its politics was autonomous from the ideology and state-system of colonialism. But it was also inside because in many cases subaltern politics was found to adjust itself with colonial system, use it to its advantage and internalize it. Second: a simultaneous intimation of a pure form of subaltern subjectivity and consciousness on one hand and the decidedly heterogeneous appearance of the subaltern in the historical archive on the other. Spivak argued that when it was clear that the subaltern always appeared as a deviation from the ideal, the subaltern historian need not indulge in "the political sloganeering for pure peasant consciousness or autonomous domain of subaltern politics". After the sovereign subject called 'man' or 'citizen' established in bourgeois historiography exposed as the 'elite' by the subaltern historian, it was counter-productive to re-dress the subaltern as another sovereign subject, for the subaltern historian had already challenged the assumption that history has a subject with a pure, well-delineated consciousness; an assumption that sustained the fabrication that the subaltern speaks through the historian's work. At best it could be the political intention of the historian to represent the subaltern. "The subaltern cannot speak its own. Spivak recommended that instead of chanting that 'the subaltern is absolute truth', the subaltern historian should bring out how the subaltern was constructed as the *other* of the elite." In a situation of profound cacophony it was futile to segregate the voice of the subaltern. All voices in historical archive were elite constructions. The

[525] See Bibliography II.101; Partha Chatterjee's strong response to sociologist Vivek Chibber's criticism of SS (Bibliography II.102) included affirming SS' key relationship to the discipline of anthropology in unleashing the '*immense heterogeneity of practices*, especially in rural South Asia, that defy conventional orderings imposed by Indological and colonial scholarship'. Bibliography II.103, P-73.

subaltern historian was expected to bring out the social and institutional processes of this construction and the ways in which these earned social legitimacy. "The shift was clear from the fifth and sixth volume of SS."[526] [It is clear that SS in the wake of Spivak realised that it grasped the subjective singularities of peasant revolts alright but did not really know what to do with them beyond stating them. Under Spivak's suasion it recognised that it "copresent(ed) the subjective and the objective"[527], or recombined political singularities with the evolving career of history and state, and had to carry on finessing this approach while also distancing somewhat from purely structuralist, deterministic historiography.[528]]

However, Chatterjee's was a slightly misleading description, for it insinuated a pre-Spivak, post-Spivak scheme for SS, whereas all Spivak was trying to do was find the meaning of SS' already existing 'actual practice'[529] beyond its initial self-projection as a dialectical enterprise – which she saw as a disservice to the project. Spivak was reading SS as a 'theory of reading'[530], already set in motion by what she described as Guha's 'combination of Soviet and Barthesian semiotic analysis'[531] and proposal of a 'theory of change as the site of the displacement of function between sign-systems'[532]. This very hermeneutic path that had SS reject Suprakash Ray as an elitist historian was subtracted from its general dialectical orientation by Spivak as the core innovation of the project. We need not see Spivak's intervention as a break within SS' chronology, but a tempered unveiling of its hidden meaning since its inception.

Spivak demonstrated that SS was a deconstructive practice which re-presented the subaltern as "the blank part of the text, the necessarily indeterminate index of a future epoch of difference."[533] Spivak elaborated the ontological aspect of grasping the subaltern or the peasant insurgent. She warned that if "the restoration of the subaltern's subject position in history is seen by the historian as the establishment of an inalienable and final truth of things, then any

[526] Bibliography II.97, P-15-16.

[527] Bibliography IV.48, P-32.

[528] See Bibliography II.112.

[529] Bibliography II.90.b, P-332.

[530] *Ibid,* P-332.

[531] *Ibid,* P-334.

[532] *Ibid,* P-332.

[533] *Ibid,* P-340.

emphasis on sovereignty, consistency and logic will...inevitably objectify the subaltern and be caught in the game of knowledge as power".[534]

Spivak mobilised Jacques Derrida's thought because – this was critical for a 'postcolonial intellectual' like Spivak – as a European philosopher Derrida articulated "the *European* Subject's tendency to constitute the Other as marginal to ethnocentrism and locates *that* as the problem with all logocentric and therefore all grammatological endeavours....*Not* a general problem, but a *European* problem. It is within the context of this ethnocentricism that he tries so desperately to demote the Subject of thinking or knowledge as to say...that which is thought is, if blank, still *in the text* and must be consigned to the Other of history. That *inaccessible blankness* circumscribed by an inaccessible text is what a postcolonial critic of imperialism would like to see developed within the European enclosure as *the* place of the production of theory. The postcolonial critics and intellectuals can attempt to displace their own production only by presupposing that *text*-inscribed blankness."[535] Following-Derrida, Spivak called for "a rewriting of the utopian structural impulse as 'rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us'"[536]. Along with Derrida, Spivak demonstrated the danger of appropriating the other by assimilation in radical critique, and read "catachresis at the origin"[537].

In Spivak's thought, the concepts of catachresis, trace, iterability, supplementation and strategy played a key role. She endorsed an interruption and postponement of the epistemological[538] by having the subject "constituted by its relation with its own death, by its relation with the entirely other" [539] . The space opened up thus was catachrestic. Names got written and erased simultaneously in her catachrestic nominalism: woman, class, subaltern. But what interrupted the epistemological and what pushed Spivak's theory of the subaltern to the limit of ontology, indeed beyond it too, in this space of catachresis? It was what Spivak called the 'eruption of the ethical'[540]. Aniruddha Chowdhury commented: Spivak "resists the theoretical gesture that wants

[534] *Ibid,* P-345.

[535] Bibliography II.104, P-89. Hereafter, *Speak.*

[536] *Ibid,* P-104.

[537] *Ibid,* P-104.

[538] Bibliography II.105, P-17. Hereafter *Ethics and Politics.*

[539] Bibliography IV.60, P-149.

[540] *Ethics and Politics*, P-17.

to show linearity between the subject of epistemology and the subject of ethico-politics, for Spivak, the necessary catachresis...is also a fecund space where ethics are performed....Spivak points at, in Heideggerian terms, the preoriginary...and non-contemporaneous co-belonging of being and non-being....The catachrestic subject inhabits the differential line, which is the condition of possibility of ethical performance."[541] This shaped Spivak's practice of ethico-politics; she clearly confronted imperialism in both its earlier European and contemporary American moments, as also sketches of totalitarianism – always in the gait of an ombudsman or conscience-keeper. We quote her: "Reporting on, or better still, participating in, antisexist work among women of color or women in class oppression in the First World or the Third World is undeniably on the agenda. We should also welcome all the information retrieval in these silenced areas that is taking place in anthropology, political science, history and sociology. Yet the assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject sustains such work and will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever."[542] Or: "To treat what is powerfully speculative as predictive social engineering, *assuming a fully rational human subject conscious of rights as well as impersonal responsibility, can only have violent and violating consequences*."[543]

What were the ways in which Spivak thought the subalternists dealt with the concrete past and the material/textual archive of history while refusing the 'epistemological' its power? While not appropriating the subaltern in the manner of liberal multiculturalism and dominant historiographies that she critiqued? Spivak deployed the concept of singularity and crucially, returned to her debt to Guha as far as subaltern writing was concerned. She borrowed Gilles Deleuze's 'notion of singularity': "In its simplest form, the singular is not the particular because it is an unrepeatable difference that is, on the other hand, repeated – not as an example of a universal but as an instance of a collection of repetitions. Singularity is life as pure immanence, what will be, of this life, as life... If the thinking of subalternity is taken in the general sense, its lack of access to mobility may be a version of singularity. Subalternity cannot be generalised

[541] Bibliography IV.60, P-150-151.

[542] *Speak*, P-90.

[543]Bibliography II.93, P-84-85. Hereafter *CPR*. This was, of course, an austere ode to finitude.

according to hegemonic logic. That is what makes it subaltern. Yet it is a category and therefore repeatable....'Subaltern' in the early Guha was the name of a space of difference.... Subalternity is where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognisable basis of action... Subalternity is a position without identity. It is somewhat like the strict understanding of class."[544] Spivak evaluated SS as an intellectual project. For her, "constative SS, radical in its place and time, was questioning colonial, nationalist, as well as Marxist historiography. Its connection to the performative was to attempt to expand the horizons of historiography."[545] The subaltern historian was the Gramscian organic intellectual of the class-shuffle between the old and new imperial worlds. In that capacity of a 'permanent persuader' they answered to "another performativity, a contamination of the outlines of historiography by its own place in history, so that the subaltern is not merely protected by 'negative consciousness', as the new historiography continues endlessly to read the archives against the grain"[546].

Though SS described Suprakash Ray as 'elite' for his grasping of the peasant insurgents in terms of present (Leninist) decisions, it was clear that Spivak (by extension, SS) posited and affirmed her/their present – broadly the second half of twentieth century and the onset of twenty-first – as a key organising element of subaltern historiography: "to historicise the subaltern, then, is not to write the history of the singular. It is the active, scrupulous, and vigilant contamination of historiography from the constative through the disciplinary performative into the field of the historical possibility of what we can only call the present."[547] How did this take SS beyond a string of singularities, beyond "heterogeneous multiplicity" [548], beyond repetition and knowledge? How was the singularity of an event thought and retained? Spivak elaborated on two ways. The first, generalised from the reading of a unique document in the essay "Can the subaltern speak", was to focus on "the singular woman who attempted to send the reader a message, as if her body were a 'literary' text. The message of the woman who hanged herself was one of unrecognisable resistance, an unrecognisable refusal of victimage by reproductive heteronormativity....it was the intention of saving the singular oppositional that the example of

[544] Bibliography II.106, P-475-476. Hereafter, *Scattered*.

[545] *Scattered,* P-478.

[546] *Scattered,* P-478.

[547] *Scattered,*P-484.

[548] Bibliography IV.48, P-32-33.

Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri taught me..."[549]The second way was to precisely posit the present, SS' own place in history. Subaltern writing was seen as a component of present humanities education: "If the repetition of singularity that gives multiplicity is the repetition of difference, agency calls for the putting aside of difference. Agency presumes collectivity…All calls to collectivity are metonymic because attached to a situation. And they work by synecdoche. Now in order to be able to restrict singularity by agential intuition, an immense labor of infrastructural change, to make resistance count, to make it recognisable, must be undertaken. This is where *humanities education kicks in*, sees the way reasonable agency is nestled in the permission to be figurative – the right to the metonym/synecdoche political performance of collectivity."[550] Apart from this institutional aspect of the SS' politics, non-affiliated, independent endeavours were also put forth. The example of Spivak's own foray into teacher-training for the subaltern in 'India' (Spivak was or became "nothing but a citizen of India, which is where my students, their parents and relatives, and I, can form a collectivity, in search of agency."[551] – a diasporic citizen of India mired in 'inaccessible blankness' is inadvertently a robust nationalist, it appears) assumed a key role and heavy duty in her argumentations. Spivak, in trying to tap subjectship for agency in this educational project, "in a supplementary way tries to release the possibility of self-abstraction, self-synecdoche. Merely trying to release the possibility – it will not happen in the classroom tomorrow. By infrastructure, I had earlier meant the effort to establish, implement and monitor structures that allow subaltern resistance to be located and heard."[552] Spivak wanted to devise for the subaltern and herself "a philosophy of education that will develop, for want of a better expression, the *'habits of democratic behavior', or 'rituals of democratic behavior', or 'intuition of the public sphere'*."[553] She read the subaltern to learn from "these collectivities enough to suture rights thinking into the torn cultural fabric of responsibility; or, to vary the concept-metaphor, activate a dormant ethical imperative"[554].

[549] *Scattered,* P-478.

[550] *Scattered,* P-480.

[551] *Scattered,* P-481.

[552] *Scattered,* P-483.

[553] *Scattered,* PP-482-483. Emphasis added.

[554] *Scattered,* P-483.

The response of SS and postcolonial historiography to this ethical imperative was to maintain "the critical focus on the *aporia* between the epistemological and the ethical, rather than the linearity and the identity of the relation". Ethical imperative demanded "that the singularity of the Other…must be preserved in the critical work."[555] What was 'writing' for Spivak and her colleagues? How did it live up to the project's cold antagonism to Suprakash Ray who did not preserve the singularity of the Other? Subaltern writing or arche-writing was graphematic in designating the 'originary differentiality, alterity and trace' and in (simultaneously) drawing from an *indeterminate* power (god, as we see below) that *nevertheless allowed* 'something *never tangibly* self-identical' to be '*carried over in acts of speech and writing*'[556]: "Graphematicty, for Spivak, indicates the (pre)originary propriation, or better, the ungraspable ground of propriation."[557] In following the *trace* of the subaltern speech Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri[558] or the Saotal peasant rebel were rendered graphematic, their body and their language enmeshed in a co-presented edifice of singularity and the structural. Chowdhury explicated: "Bhuvaneswari's suicide, in Spivak's reading, is a singular, subaltern, event of giving, which, from the perspective of a totalizing history, would only be read as an act of delirium. If the singular message of the subaltern speech is lost in history, the subaltern speech 'across death' opens, secretly perhaps, *another historicity which we can call ethical*."[559]

IV

This ethical procedure was compelled to posit the present, we repeat.[560] When referred to the present, the subalternity of the peasant rebel of nineteenth century could be reiterated through

[555] Bibliography IV.60, P-143.

[556] Spivak quoted in Bibliography IV.60, P-147. Emphasis added.

[557] *Ibid*, P-147.

[558] Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri was a young unmarried middle-class woman, sixteen or seventeen, who hanged herself from the ceiling of her father's modest apartment in North Calcutta while menstruating, to shut the possibility of any future conjecture about illegitimate passion and/or pregnancy. This was 1926. It later came up that Bhuvaneswari was a member of a revolutionary nationalist group, and could not confront a task of political assassination assigned to her. Spivak came to know about the life and death of Bhuvaneswari through family connections.

[559] Bibliography IV.60, P-170. Hereafter, *Chowdhury*.

[560] The exaggerated and novelistic self-referentiality marking many SS statements was in effect a version of exteriorised and objectifying scientistic rationality where the thesis was: the social scientist or the political

what Spivak called her 'hopelessly idealistic'[561] figurative educational projects of teacher-training among the subaltern in rural 'India' – building an infrastructure of future agency while retaining the singularity of the catachrestic subject in that encounter. Partha Chatterjee plotted the present in a situation "where the capitalist and the petty mode of production are intertwined in a mutually reinforcing tangle"[562], the democratic process developed to create substantial links between the elite and subaltern domain. "*Leninist strategies of working-class organization have foundered here*"[563]. He found examples of subalternity in negotiations of disenfranchised groups with the chaotic sinews of political democracy, they "seek and find recognition as a population group, which from the standpoint of governmentality is only a usable empirical category that defines the targets of policy, they themselves have had to find ways of investing their collective identity *with a moral content*. This is an equally crucial part of the politics of the governed: *to give to the empirical form of a population group the moral attributes of a community*....Alongside its reference to the government's obligation to look after poor and underprivileged population groups, the association was also appealing to the moral rhetoric of a community striving to build a decent social life under extremely harsh conditions and, at the same time, affirming the duties of good citizenship. The categories of governmentality were being invested with the imaginative possibilities of community, including its capacity to invent relations of kinship, to produce a new, even if somewhat hesitant, rhetoric of political claims."[564] In rural Bengal - where some of Spivak's teacher training initiatives took place peacefully – Chatterjee announced "particular claims of marginal population groups, often grounded in violations of the law...made consistent with the pursuit of equal citizenship and civic virtue"[565] as the basis of CPI(M) government in Bengal and its electoral success, as also an actual expansion of the freedom of people in rural communities: they secured the benefits of governmental programs for poor and underprivileged population groups. SS – as its core task – monitored

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philosopher thinks. For partisans like Ray – on the contrary - 'people think'. See Bibliography IV.48 and "Against 'Political Philosophy'", in Bibliography IV.55.a.

[561] *Scattered,* P-483.

[562]Bibliography II.107, P-64. Hereafter, *Governed.*

[563] *Governed,* P-64. Emphasis added.

[564] *Governed,* P-57 and P-60.

[565] *Governed,* P-64.

Indian state's ethical quotient – it evidently was 'too pacifying and has consecrated too many things'. What held the whole procedure together was certainly a secret conscience or a secret god. Sample this tantalising declaration by Spivak: "Then our multiculturalism, or our use of the word 'culture', will name a different strategic situation from *only* our own desire to be the agent of a developed civil society. Which we need not give up; but let us want a different agency, shift the position a bit. I have been consistent in my insistence that the economic be kept visible under erasure. What good will it do? Who knows? Marx's books were not enough and the text of his doing remained caught in the squabbles of preparty formation and the vicissitudes of personal life. *You work my agenda out.*"[566] The subaltern for Spivak was 'an unascertainable ethical singularity that is not ever a sustainable condition'[567], it allowed her linger interminably on an 'unverifiable margin' that simultaneously revealed (facilitating academic knowledge and expertise) and obfuscated (in the vein of a Heideggerian melancholy of loss, taming singularity) the 'wholly other'[568]. This indeed led to a rejection of the logic of sameness in Spivak's thought: "*there can be no universalist claim* in the human sciences."[569] But it also compelled a "prophetic submission to the Law of founding alterity" from Spivak, and rendered SS into a veiled theism: "the ethical primacy of the Other over the Same requires that the experience of alterity be ontologically 'guaranteed' as the experience of a distance… But nothing in the simple phenomenon of the other contains such a guarantee. And this simply because the finitude of the other's appearing certainly *can* be conceived as resemblance, or as imitation, and thus lead back to the logic of the Same…The phenomenon of the other (his face) must then attest to a radical alterity which he nevertheless does not contain by himself. The Other, as he appears to me in the order of the finite, must be the epiphany of a properly infinite distance to the other… This means that in order to be intelligible, ethics requires that the Other be in some sense *carried* by *a principle of alterity* which transcends mere finite experience. Levinas calls this principle the 'Altogether-Other', and it is quite obviously the ethical name for God. There can be no Other if he is not the immediate phenomenon of the Altogether-Other. There can be no finite devotion to

[566] *CPR*, P-357-358.

[567] *CPR*, P-198.

[568] *CPR*, P-175.

[569] Bibliography II.108, P-153.

the non-identical if it is not sustained by the infinite devotion of the principle to that which subsists outside it. There can be no ethics without God the ineffable."[570]

The event in SS – owing to Spivak's indebtedness to Deleuze – remained co-extensive with life and state.[571] It was for this reason that SS was obliged to reintegrate the complicit or dialogic moments of anticolonialism (with the colonial state) on its insurgent procedures – that the rebels were creatures willing to survive became a permanent apology for the legitimacy of the (Indian) state – unmindful that the 1947 transfer of power and Indian state (bourgeois nationalism) *was* the saturation of complicity and collaboration. In ordinary partisans like Suprakash Ray the event was a breachful, exceptional cut of truth and novelty. The relation (with the singularity of event) that the ordinary partisan Suprakash Ray decided on to abrogate the past-present split was based on two Communist categories that escaped the language of the (colonial and Indian) state or necessity of god (unlike the bargaining moral communities of Partha Chatterjee and the 'hopelessly idealistic' teacher-training schools of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, which remained statist and theistic in equal measure): the soviet and the red army.

The ethics of SS was not concerned with the question of truth (there are delicate hints to this refusal in both Spivak and Chatterjee's texts quoted above[572]), rather it remained attached to

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[570] Bibliography IV.49, P-21-22.

[571] Alain Badiou argued that the Deleuzian 'event' which sought to overcome ontology remained within vitalist ontology – it was a vital continuity of life or an intensification of its becoming, while an event was "never coextensive with becoming. It (was), on the contrary, on the side of a pure break with becoming of the object of the world...", Bibliography IV.124.b, P-39.

[572] We can also note here that Dipesh Chakrabarty avoided, and leapt over the consistent and axiomatic enunciation of truth in Communist literature and historiography (in which SS located its root) and with measured nostalgia (and sense of tragedy) returned to/celebrated the fact-mediated, adequated, empiricist and communicative concept of truth in the statements of nationalist historian Jadunath Sarkar (the very name of liberal nationalist historiography in Suprakash Ray's antagonism to the academic practice) in one of his latest works. He did not enquire the concept of truth in terms (relation or non-relation) of ontology at all, while we have earlier seen he was not ill-disposed to 'Heideggerian ruminations'. (See Bibliography II.109.) Chakraborty recommended Sarkar's 'metaphysical ideas of historical truth' which depended on the 'ethics of the historian's personal life' and was 'beyond partisan interest'. (*Ibid,* P-33) By affirming Sarkar, Chakrabarty asserted that politics was to be understood through 'literary analysis', history was a project to attain 'literary grace' and that universalism was the spirit that difference-preserving nations and civilisations could still be "part of the whole", the whole being "broad direction of human history" (*Ibid,* P-181,

what Alain Badiou called 'Heideggerian edifice'[573], which 'as regards the question of truth...leaves no solution other than poem'[574], 'precisely because of its hermeneutical reference'[575], precisely because 'the unity of Being is interpreted by Heidegger as a hermeneutic convergence, as an analogical relation that can be deciphered between the dimensions (*the visible and language*) in which it is revealed'[576] – thus it was never clear how SS could go beyond stating multiplicity. Badiou had observed two contemporary takes on the question of truth. One was the analytic tradition where the question of truth was 'enclosed in the narrow form of the judgment, or of the proposition'[577]. The other was the hermeneutic tradition which sought to 'concede to Heidegger his melancholic vision of the loss of unveiling'[578] – a ground for ethical responsibility to the entirely other. SS retained both takes – its historiographical-anthropological practice the former, its theoretical framework the latter. The interruption of the epistemological in SS was never pushed to its limit. In pronounced antagonism, we have observed in Ray's minor textual archipelago and *BKBGS* an idea of the subject "that subordinates its existence to the aleatory dimension of the event as well as to the pure contingency of multiple-being without sacrificing the theme of freedom"[579], and an acceptance of truth as 'something new'[580], not as an adequation, not as inscrutability, not as an apology for finitude. Truth was clearly distinguished from what transmitted, what repeated – knowledge. If all truth was something new, the militant's work pertaining to truth was investigating its appearance and its 'becoming'. A truth must be

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P-168 and P-282). It seems that SS practitioners could relinquish relativism only at the behest of explicitly liberal abstraction (a combinatory 'metalanguage': 'broad direction of history', 'ethics of personal life') but never Communist abstraction (see Chakrabarty's distaste for Marx' abstraction, or Guha's antagonism to Ray's abstraction above) which was disjunctive, partisan, subtractive and diagonal.

[573] Bibliography 124.a, P-247. Herefter, *Truths.*

[574] *Ibid,* P-247. In SS and its practitioners this was evident in the ill-explained relocation from thought of popular uprisings to the language of cultural texts to think politics (also common amongst party intellectuals close to the Communist leadership). See the documents authored by Narahari Kaviraj and Rabindra Gupta: Bibliography I.C.34,35; Bibliography II.112; Bibliography II.114; and Bibliography II.111 (hereafter, *Derivative Discourse*).

[575] *Clamor,* P-22.

[576] *Ibid,* P-22. Emphasis added.

[577] *Truths,* P-247.

[578] *Ibid,* P-247.

[579]Bibliography IV.54, P-4.

[580] *Truths,* P-249.

submitted to thought, not as a judgment, but as a "process in the real"[581]. In the previous chapters we have seen how exceptional Ray was in terms of being able to propose his partisan intellectual enquiries as a threatening 'process in the real' (democratic revolution after 1947). SS on the other hand was exclusively concerned with ceaselessly finessing the graphematic body of the peasant insurgent or/and the subaltern. It was situated strictly within the ambit of language and the visible, body and language. Alain Badiou called this the contemporary natural belief, or democratic materialism. Democratic materialism affirmed what there already was, and this "situation of knowledge as such, only gives us repetition." In Ray's thought of history, "for a truth to affirm its newness, there must be a *supplement.* This supplement is committed to chance. It is unpredictable, uncalculable. It is beyond what is…(it is) an event. A truth appears, in its newness, because an eventful supplement interrupts repetition"[582], for "every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences (infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is,* any experience at all is the infinite deployment of infinite differences) are then precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant."[583] Reading Marx and Engels, Ray stated that history in true generic coherence could only commence after a revolution of all, all over[584], amidst the people's war (or class struggle) history was simply "the great multiplicity of the real"[585] – wherein a schoolmaster doggedly occupying a small room in his school-precinct found "freedom, or its index"[586].

V

The scholars of SS collective engaged with Suprakash Ray in a manner that was nasty, brutish and short. They broke off random shards from Ray's elaborate construction. A few such pieces were then subjected to judgment according to parameters exclusively extraneous to the registers of Ray's thought. No concern was reserved for Ray's broader corpus of statements on history and politics. Yet, stern verdicts were instituted on Ray's intellectuality in general. Even more puzzling was the complete silence on the facet of Suprakash Ray where he was not only an

[581] *Ibid,* P-249.

[582] *Truths,* P-250.

[583] Bibliography IV.49, P-25-27. Emphasis in original. Hereafter, *Ethics.*

[584] *BKBGS,* Preface-page-19.

[585] Bibliography IV.48, P-54.

[586] *Ibid.*

advanced compiler of events and lists but also an adventurous enquirer of historical mode of politics (or politics as intellectuality, politics in subjectivity) in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This reading was presented by Ray in scattered phases of his work in the 1960s, and its core axioms were virtually indistinguishable from the manifesto of the SS project written by Ranajit Guha in 1980s or other such key texts of the collective.[587] His reading of insurgency and anti-colonialism found echo in a number of works by SS' practitioners. Even such extensive common ground failed to encourage SS into striking even a basic intimacy with a more or less contemporary, living individual (Ray died in 1990). The statements buttressing their verdicts were myopic and erroneous. All the while SS postured as if it was deconstructing 'elite' historiography, it was – through the summary justice instituted on a host-thinker – in truth attempting to deconstruct the Leninist and Maoist thought protocols of ordinary Communist partisans like Suprakash Ray. SS was a botched deconstructive project precisely because it lost intimacy (intimacy with the object of deconstruction is necessary for deconstruction[588]) with the subjective interiority of Sudhir Bhattacharya (and thus Communist politics in the colonial-national territory of Indian state) even before it started regurgitating and embellishing Ray's arguments and presentations. If SS was indeed a (miscarried) deconstructive project, Suprakash Ray was the vanishing 'vanishing point'[589] of the Communist dispositif that SS perfunctorily engaged with before permanently admixing it with knowledge generated by archival studies and anthropological field-trips.

The partisan clarity of Suprakash Ray's position was such that one preconceived ploy of undermining his politics was forced to co-own tenets with another such ploy. It was no wonder then that the theoretical framework that was triggered by the secret burial of Suprakash Ray in SS was similar to the one developed by the Communist leadership to curb the ordinary Communist partisans.[590] Both usurped the singularities thought forth by ordinary partisans, both retained Lenin's theory of imperialism only to arrive at (for the Lenin of *What is to be Done,*

[587] See Bibliography II.110. Hereafter *On Some Aspects.* Also see as an example "The Fruits of Macaulay's Poison Tree", in Bibliography II.113.

[588] *Chowdhury,* P-145-146.

[589]Bibliography IV.135, P-133.

[590] See Chapter s I, II and Conclusion.

Guerrilla Warfare or *State and Revolution* did not exist in their vocabulary[591]) puzzling conclusions: the Indian state had potentiality for radical anti-imperialist egalitarian reforms, Indian nationalism was coterminous with people's anti-colonialism. On the other hand, both proscribed politics in subjectivity and the possibility of the subjective as tenable in terms of its own interiority: "If the thought of singularity is not internal to the singularity, if there is no interiority, the difference between the contemporary and non-contemporary becomes insurmountable because of the past-present opposition; the surrender to history and the stress on the thought of structure over the thought of singularity suddenly appear."[592] This paralysed demeanour in terms of the contemporary was constituted by the reverence to 1947 as an inviolable closure of history as contingent and inventive, and equally a reassertion of history as the ever-unfolding function of the state and its language/structure. Both the Communist leadership and SS hence could do nothing more than stating the existence of singularities or generating knowledge of composite singularities, which did not resolve the problem of the thought that enabled their investigation (the thought of Suprakash Ray that is). This thought was of ordinary partisans and militants, who subjectively related to the singularities, took a side in the diremption that was the work of singularity and proposed the singular-universal. Of course, undermining such partisan places and thought-protocols – where singularity was discontinuous with state and life – required a reproach of abstraction. And that was precisely the primary accusation of SS against Suprakash Ray and other ordinary Communist partisans.[593]

Abstraction as a concept had been an object of rigorous study in Marxist and philosophical texts. It had been seen as being both internal and external to Marxist politics, as both rejected and reiterated in its philosophical articulation. It was an unavoidable issue of finding a 'guiding thread' to critique of political economy[594], of 'non-dogmatic anticipation' in Marxism and

[591] See Conclusion and Bibliography I.C.

[592] Bibliography IV.48, P-89.

[593] Partha Chatterjee admonished the major current of Naxalbari thought and politics [CPI(M-L) formed in 1969] as 'distrust of prolonged and sustained mass activity', 'faith in spontaneity', 'pathological', 'ideological distortion', 'mystical abstraction', 'glorification of violence', 'indiscriminate, uncritical and unhistorical' and 'mindlessness', all of which resonated perfectly with the language of the Communist leadership and the Indian state. See Bibliography II.113, P-90-92.

[594] Bibliography IV.133.b.

Communist thought[595], a problem of balancing the questions of empiricism and emancipation[596] – cannily aware of the domination of the abstract in capitalism and modernity.[597] Rejection of abstraction and use of abstraction were found to be simultaneous, the figure of a scientist and the figure of fanatic collapsed in Communist thought.[598] In such a situation, to reject a thinker high-mindedly for 'abstraction' was quite unprovoked, especially coming from within a broadly anti-imperialist theoretical framework. The simple and unelaborated reproach of abstraction flowed in this specific case from a nonchalance to the question of sameness and universality, to the question of truth as an exception to bodies and languages (or individuals and communities), because with the latter the subalternists presented an absolute ethical singularity – a singularity with "reverence in the spirit of the construal of alterity" in the tradition of ethical ideology, "that religious 'dream of a purely heterological thought' otherwise called 'pure empiricism'", with conceptual abstraction forced to be "accompanied by both a certain *melancholy* (loss of the real object) and a certain *shame* (complicity in the domination of the concept and hence repression of other, more vibrant, more creative aspects of existence)."[599]

Partha Chatterjee pondered on the real political ramifications of Suprakash Ray's work on peasant insurgency, but – following Guha – irrationally proposed that this telluric power of the book had (strictly) nothing to do with the compositional and methodological devices at work in it. Suprakash Ray – given he had no real precedent to draw on – blasted out the singular episodes of peasant insurgencies in eighteenth and nineteenth century into an inventively constructed sequence to the new time and new space proposed by the incipient zones of Communist revolutionary power in the domain of colonial and Indian state – from Peshawar-Sholapur-Kayyur (1930-40) to Moyomonsingho-Kakdweep-Bhangor-Telangana (1940s and 1950s) and eventually Naxalbari-Debra-Srikakulam (1960s). SS would have nothing of it.

SS countered a political choice or decision (Suprakash Ray) with a non-choice. Communist partisans like Suprakash Ray maintained:

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[595] Bibliography IV.133.a.

[596] Bibliography IV.133.c.

[597] Bibliography IV.133.d. Hereafter, *Osborne*.

[598] Bibliography IV.133.a.

[599] *Osborne*, P-22. The quotes within the quote are from one of Jacques Derrida's early writings (Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', in Bibliography IV.134, p. 151), Osborne informs.

"–that every individual is identical to his or her political choice;
–that non-choice is a (reactive) choice;
–that (political) life, having taken the form of civil war, is also the exposure to death."[600]

The reactive brutality of SS towards Suprakash Ray was explicit. Against Ray's Leninist politics of truth (or a Leninist separation of history and politics), a staunch defence of ethical ideology in SS made it "a pious discourse without piety, a spiritual supplement for incompetent governments, and a cultural sociology preached, in line with the new-style sermons, in lieu of the late class struggle."[601] It belonged in a sequence that Alain Badiou called a 'contemporary conjuncture': "Believing itself to possess a stable, guaranteed foundation or democratic materialism, (this conjuncture) wages against the evidence of truths an incessant propaganda war. We are all familiar with the signifiers that punctuate this war: 'modesty', 'teamwork', 'fragmentary', 'finitude', 'respect for the other', 'ethics', 'self-expression', 'balance', 'pragmatism', 'cultures'. All of these are encapsulated in an anthropological, and consequently restricted, variant of the axiom of democratic materialism, a variant that may be formulated as follows: There are only individuals and communities."[602] In Suprakash Ray's writings, the politics of his antagonism to the Communist leadership was transparent: there were only bodies and languages, or individuals and communities, except that there were truths. The thought of the ordinary partisans in colonial/national India – thus – made "a predicate of the impredicable"[603], it faced – without repression, fear, paralysis or mysticism – a new metaphysics rationally. With hermeneutic, critical and positivist baggage, SS proscribed metaphysics only by taking resort to a 'higher indeterminacy'[604] – which in SS was the presentation of 1947 (or the Nehru-led Indian state) as a 'moment of arrival'[605] and the normalization/unification of nationalism, warts and all plus gradual capitalist development[606]. The archimetaphysics of 1947 instituted "the suspension

[600] Bibliography IV.53, P-25 (Hereafter, *Logics*)

[601] *Ethics*, P-23.

[602] *Logics*, P-8.

[603] Bibliography IV.122, P-183.

[604] *Ibid*, P-181.

[605] *Derivative Discourse*, P-131. Emphasis added.

[606] See for this strain Bibliography II.112, P-180-181.

of sense to an undetermined that is purely and simply left to the historical indeterminacy of its coming."[607] History subjugated politics in the scheme of SS, and history itself after 1947 was entirely a statist prerogative for the leading thinkers of SS: "Where then will the critique emerge of nationalism? *How will nationalism supersede itself?* A historical discourse, unfortunately, can only struggle with its own terms. Its evolution will be determined by history itself."[608] SS, Communist leadership and the Indian state simultaneously punished ordinary partisans like Ray when they refused to share this acceptance of finitude and touched 'reigning' state (and academic history) "to the quick of what it represses: politics."[609]

[607] Bibliography IV.122, P-181.

[608] *Derivative Discourse*, P-162. The list of elite-defying popular upheavals that Ranajit Guha presented to destabilise dominant nationalist/statist historiography would have been very familiar to the reader of Suprakash Ray: Chauri Chaura, for example, featured. But the list – tellingly enough – ended with the Navy-led mutinee of 1946 (*On Some Aspects*, P-3) – denying Tebhaga struggle (Moyomonsingho, Kakdweep, Dinajpur, Sonarpur-Bhangor, Bora-Kamolapur), Telangana revolution (Andhra and Telangana) and Naxalbari insurrection (Siliguri and Debra or the 'second Naxalbari') the intellectually inventive role with which these dotted Ray's oeuvre for the same purpose. For SS, history ended in 1947 and the Indian state was exempt from the hazard of politics, as long as it allowed certain social scientists to 'contaminate historiography' or 'read archives against the grain' (see above in Spivak's statements) and set forth 'circulation of notions' (see Bibliography IV.48, P-10). When Guha indeed named Telangana or Tebhaga – with no rigour to enquire their intellectuality and interiority – his objective was anti-Leninism: the peasants were heroic and canny, but the local Communist partisans were usurpers and miscreants (Bibliography II.100, P-334). This view was in solid agreement with the Communist leadership's judgment of locally decided Communist innovations. CPI(M) leader Hare Krishna Konar – who supported police firing on his own party's local partisans in 1967 – said: "The adventurist conception of Naxalbari should not be confused with the heroism and militancy of peasants." See Bibliography I.C.45.xxx, P-1006-1007.

[609]Bibliography IV.23, P-33.

Conclusion

"The fact that he is here is a historical error."[610]

I

Alain Badiou stated: "Lenin is the political thinker who inaugurates the century. He turns victory, the real of the revolutionary politics, into an internal condition of the theory. Lenin thus determines the major political subjectivity of the century… The century is not at all a century of ideologies, of the imaginary or of utopias, as the liberals would have it today. Its subjective determination is Leninist. It is the passion of the real, of what is immediately practicable, here and now. It is not a century of promises, but of accomplishment. It is a century of the act, of the effective, of the absolute present, and not a century of announcement and of future. The century is lived as the century of victories, after the millennium of attempts and failures… The twentieth century says: the defeats are over, now it is time for victories! This victorious subjectivity survives all apparent defeats, being not empirical, but constitutive. Victory is the transcendental motive that organizes even the defeat. 'Revolution' is one of the names of this motive…The century said that its law is the Two, the antagonism (between imperialism and socialism)… The century invokes, as the century of production through war, a definite unity. The antagonism will be overcome by the victory of one of the blocs over the other. One can also say that, in this sense, the century of the Two is animated by the radical desire for the One. What names the articulation of the antagonism and the violence of the One is the victory as the mark of the real…. The century is a figure of non-dialectical juxtaposition of the Two and the One. The question here is to know what balance sheet the century draws of dialectical thinking. The driving element for the victorious outcome, is it the antagonism itself or the desire for the One? This is one of the major philosophical questions of Leninism."[611]

Ordinary partisans like Suprakash Ray responded to this question by refusing the ancient One or any pre-given, pre-mature, restorationist notion of the One, thus inaugurating and voiding

[610] A dialogue in Bibliography IV.138.

[611] *Divides*, P-9-10.

ontology at one go and staying within the subjective protocol of Leninist politics: "All resistance is a rupture in thought, through the declaration of what the situation is, and the foundation of a practical possibility opened up through this declaration…This does not amount to believing that it is the risk, very serious indeed, which prevents a good many from resisting. It is on the contrary the non-thinking of the situation that prevents the risk, or the examination of possibles. Not to resist is not to think. Not to think is not *to risk risking*."[612] The Communist leadership on the other hand turned the detached and difficult desire of One into an interested and immediate fetish (the essential unity of the territories of Indian state) – coercing Communism into an opportunistic arrangement with objectivity/knowledge (or state) and putting thought to sleep. While the leadership instituted "the continuity of science and experience, their indissociable interlinkage, their indefinite reversibility"[613], the ordinary partisans risked "the identification of revolutionary subjectivity"[614] and arrived at the question of being – as being – being.

The rebellious ordinary partisans like Ray having declared that "the One is not what 'there is'", the multiplicity of being was investigated and the nature of being as multiple declared by them without retaining any intentional relation between the multiple modalities of being, "whence a highly characteristic militant tonality, combining the appropriation of particularities with the immutability of principles, the empirical existence of differences with their essential nonexistence, according to a succession of problems requiring resolution, rather than through an amorphous synthesis...." [615] . We have seen in Ray's works the proposal of a radical supplementation to the ordinary trails of exclusive economism and scalar organisation gradually becoming an intellectual mode. This supplementation was the 'event' of normality-escaping truth – *in* the situation of colonial and national domination but not *of* it. In understanding the question of being the ordinary partisans steered clear of both vitality and inscrutability.

These ordinary partisans supposed: "whatever people's opinions and customs, once gripped by a truth's postevental work, their thought becomes capable of traversing and transcending those opinions and customs without having to give up the differences that allow them to recognize

[612] "Prologue: Resistant Philosophers", in Bibliography IV.55, P-8.

[613] "On the Archaeology of the Sciences", in Bibliography IV.147, P-331.

[614] *Divides,* P-11.

[615] Bibliography IV.54, P-99.

themselves in the world."[616] Ordinary partisans – as we have seen through this biography – projected "a fragment of the political real into the symbolic narrative of a History"[617] (the 'political real'[618] of democratic revolution was an internationalist, universal category for ordinary partisans like Ray – same for the territories of an Indian state collaborating with imperialism as well as an imperialist metropolis[619]). The hostility towards partisan-historians like Suprakash Ray and Saki in the territories of Indian state had been activated by this precise threat[620], for the state forcibly concealed the infinite nature of the real and turned history into a "monotonous train of daily work, ordinary oppressions, and current opinions"[621], for human animals to "weave empty hours and epochs"[622].

II

The disciplinarian Lenin of the Communist leadership's device basically contained one caveat: every act of breach with the state and economy risked by a Communist party has to be 'nation-wide' (all-Russia, all-Germany or all-India, for example[623]) in order to not deviate into leftwing Communism. It was through a reading of Mao Tse-tung and an affirmation of the invention of the Chinese Communes or Soviets in 1926-27 (red political power surrounded by bourgeois-feudal-imperialist political power) that ordinary Communist partisans like Suprakash Ray broke this stricture of covert nationalism, and were always clear of the macroeconomic and statist

[616] *Ibid.*

[617] Bibliography IV.55.b, P-239.

[618] The real is "that of subjective prescription, of a prescription that carries out with regard to the world not nothing at all but what it is possible to do (even if it is in accordance with the real law of the impossible)." See "Philosophy and Politics", in Bibliography IV.55.c, P-151.

[619] See Bibliography IV.70-80, Bibliography I.B.70, 107, Bibliography I.A.15.

[620] See below on the historian Saki.

[621] Bibliography IV.105, P-4.

[622] *Ibid.*

[623] This stricture was one with the national-social chauvinism revisionist leaderships of different territories upheld irrationally – and with a great measure of xenophobia - claiming different special paths for imperial-colonial inheritances like, say, Germany and India. If hostility towards Russian reference had the 'German' Communist leadership murder Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in 1919, hostility towards Chinese reference had the 'Indian' Communist leadership murder partisans in Naxalbari, 1967. See Bibliography I.C.45 and IV.33 (Volume II), P-737-786.

prerogatives of the Communist party in colonial/national India during and after Stalin's Russian role in progressive etatisation of the dictatorship of proletariat. The Communist leadership banned Mao Tse-tung and Chinese Communist thought to stem the tide. To compound matters for the ordinary partisans, from the Communist leadership and its sphere of influence in colonial and national 'India', there emerged no thinkers like Ai Siqi, Li Da or Qu Qiubai in China who were willing to grasp – like their Chinese counterparts – philosophy under the condition of politics, or to place a militant bid for philosophy.[624]

The 'all-India' stricture demanded its own cushion. Its simple implication was direct collaboration with the exclusive stakeholder in the workable, colonial and docile unity of the 'Indian' consumer market and labour power – the bourgeoisie, landholders and imperialist-controlled Indian State and its signature party, Indian National Congress. But with a critical stake in the name 'Communist party' – for what else would assemble the Communistic elements in 'Indian' society for correctional treatment and rehabilitation? – the Communist leadership had to do more with this stricture. This was where historicism, relativism and pure empiricism became operational and permanent. Indian liberalism was declared by the centrist leadership of 1950s to be much more evolved and honest[625] than Chinese liberalism – always a vague and highly debatable claim (Mao Tse-tung himself emerged in the late 1910s amidst a dynamic liberal nationalist ethos; again, the leadership was found to take resort to an entirely statist understanding of liberalism, where liberalism was primarily proliferation of municipal elections but not an intellectuality[626]). This authoritarian claim helped Communist leadership to entrust the entire responsibility of democratic revolution to the Indian state, reducing the Communist party to the role of a conscience-keeper of the regime, and certainly reducing democratic revolution to a process of capitalist development with (optimistically) minimal collateral damage amongst the

[624] See Bibliography IV.43 and IV.44. The reason can be located in the Communist leadership's praxis-obsessed revulsion towards theory, the latter's interiorized development was discouraged and dismissed as utopianism and idealism: See Bibliography I.C.11. This explicitly anti-theoretical stand facilitated the authoritarian injunction (in this document) that Gandhi-led bourgeois leadership was the leader of anti-colonial struggle.

[625] One of the claims of liberal apologia of the Communist leadership – that the army and police of the colonial and Indian state remained and remains depoliticized – had been dismantled by ordinary partisans. See Bibliography I.B.37, I.B.33 and I.B.35. This apologia was the basis for declaring that progressive Nehru (the Indian state) would certainly help the Communists in accomplishing democratic revolution in a colonial-national territory.

[626] See for an introduction to a China that the Communist leadership refused to face: Bibliography IV.116.

exploiters and the exploited.[627] This was a well-developed ethical ideology based on an ambitious knowledge project. The people in different regions of the country became a thoughtless, civilisationally distinct enigma and an absolute alterity to be incrementally discursivised and modernised by caring, life-affirming ethnography in the mould of Gandhi, Nehru and the Communist leadership. Centralised capitalist development was to solve the rest evolutionarily, buttressed by the bureaucracy, judiciary, police and military of a colonial regime (with the bitter-sweet pronouncement of the high liberal credential of British Empire – and thus glossing over local elite collaboration with colonial power in untold oppression of the peasant and worker masses – the Indian statist parties and their Communist ideologues could hardly retain any manner of anti-colonialism). Such canny, real retractions (of the revolutionary subjectivity of ordinary partisans and the people) on behalf of the Communist leadership was critical in the late 1940s – for as the documents of the era show[628] – it not only allowed the national state of Congress dispensation to entrench itself rigidly in the spaces of active struggle relinquished by the Communist leadership, it also let the state assume the role of a powerful arbiter in a deeply complex imperial inheritance it called a 'nation' *in general* – clearing a path to force the legal-illegal dichotomy on the thinking and acting (of) subject-inhabitants. The Communist leadership judged that the elaborate acts and narratives of resistance and insurrections of workers were local disturbances that failed to be effectively 'national', or 'pan-national', and hence insignificant or even hazardous for 'planned' progress. In the ordinary partisan's political struggle and enquiry – on the other hand – the category of 'national' itself was forming itself reactively in response to the affirmative doctrine of politics and freedom that the local Communist partisans assumed in various zones of colonial quasi-abdication (Tebhaga and Telangana). This affirmative doctrine also grasped and unleashed the full multiplicity of the situation in the territory of the Indian state with all the force of inauguration. But consistent collaboration of the Communist leadership with the Indian state (and thus press and publishing industry) more often than not allowed the leadership to claim spurious intellectual victories on the rebellious ordinary partisans. In addition, ethical ideology did retain provisions for the

[627] See Bibliography I.C. 29-35, and 45.

[628] See Bibliography I.B.25-49.

murder of political opponents.[629] It was not surprising. Retaining a purely miraculous conception of the distant day of socialist revolution – where people would confront the coercive institutions of the Indian state drawing exclusively from (i) their experience in legal-deliberative trade unions and peasant associations and (ii) cognizance of the state-helmed socialization of production – ethical ideology of the Communist leadership was a chilling and meticulous project of amassing enough human meat for sacrifice in either defeat or a pyrrhic victory.[630]

III

Marxism remained, of course, but a gentrified Marxism; a Marxism compressed into knowledge of political economy and not grasped as a theory of self-abolition of the working class. Free to generate as much subversive description as they could after its collaboration with the Indian state was complete in 1951 – and with no will to enquire into the political capacity or revolutionary subjectivity that simultaneously proposed a radical separation from description – Communist leadership certainly moved towards 'social science' or 'bourgeois Marxism'.[631] Social science and ethical ideology remained the two core procedures with which potential 'extremist deviation' was prevented by the 'leftist' clinic in the territories of the Indian state. Basic affiliation to Marxism-Leninism meant that the Communist leadership and the ordinary partisans alike "claimed that truth was historically deployed on the basis of revolutionary events by the working class." Hurtling away hastily from this premise the Communist leadership (in the tradition of revisionism) "thought the working class as the class of workers. Naturally, 'the workers', in terms of pure multiples, formed an infinite class; it was not the sum total of empirical workers that was at stake. Yet this did not prevent knowledge (and paradoxically Marxist knowledge itself) from

[629] See Bibliography I.B.138 for an incisive political opposition to the 34 year-rule of CPI(M) in West Bengal. A short account: "On November 19, 1987 in Adarshapalli, Muluk, Birbhum, four agricultural workers – Sekh Jiauddin, Sekh Mannan, Sudhir Ghosh and Nirmal Ghosh - were thrashed and hacked to death while at work. The Naxalites are regularly targeted for their armed politics. In this case, the dead four were member-supporter of a local Naxalite group. Forty six local leaders of CPI(M) were convicted in 2009. The families dependent on the four had long been struggling against complete destitution." (From Bibliography II.82, P-22-23)

[630] This stand is passim in the Bibliography I.C.30-33 and 45. For a concrete local reiteration, see Bibliography I.C.58.

[631] See Bibliography IV.65 and IV.66.

being forever able to consider 'the workers' as falling under an encyclopedic determinant (sociological, economical, etc.), the event as having nothing to do with this always-already-counted, and the supposed truth as being merely a veridicity submitted to the language of the situation. What is more, from this standpoint the truth could be annulled – the famous 'it's been done before' or 'it's old-fashioned' – because the encyclopedia is always incoherent." This resulted in a debilitating protocol of co-presentation (inevitably to the state) of the subjective and the objective; the leadership declared Marxism to be "simultaneously political truth, combative and faithful, and knowledge of History, of Society" (after which the elaborate ritual to influence the Indian state's policies could be the only conceivable programme that the Communist leadership would allow) – and thus willingly succumbed to "the fluctuations of the encyclopaedia under the trial of the relation between language and the State."[632] The ordinary partisans - however – adequated truth of a situation in no manner and risked Marxism as the "discourse with which the proletariat sustains itself as subject".[633]

The combinatory and co-presentational approach of the Communist leadership – which was also behind its eclecticism – meant that the tenets of democratic revolution upheld by the ordinary Communist partisans were appropriated and instrumentalised by the leadership time and again. Peasant uprisings led increasingly by the massive majority of agricultural workers and worker's occupation of factories and urban swathes in the face of physical and intellectual disciplining – defying the exclusive economism of leftist-nationalist trade unions and peasant associations upheld by the leadership – were singularities that had to be harnessed for the decorative and disingenuous truth-claim of the Communist leadership.[634] In 1947, 1951 and 1964 factions within the Communist leadership toppled the ascendant factions within the party precisely by mobilising the programme of democratic revolution.[635] In terms of subjective protocol, however, an unnerving compassion for posterity (through a vague and only opportunistically revealed

[632] Bibliography IV.52, P-334 (along with the two previous quotations)

[633] Bibliography IV.51, P-44.

[634] See for the most sophisticated theoretical expression of this mode, Bibliography I.C.53. Communist leader S.A. Dange unilaterally banned dialectics from proceeding inside a Communist party, but the party leadership could certainly legitimise its existence (to its ordinary partisans) by brandishing the dialectically produced new. This ploy was also at work in Bibliography I.C.36.

[635] Bibliography I.B.27,50; Bibliography I.C.45.i-v.

rhetoric of 'socialist revolution') and for preservation of the biological animality of human subjects (through the statist and proscriptive fiat called 'peaceful transition to socialism') judged democratic revolution as a banned thought and a punishable action. The ordinary partisans however were not as conveniently paralysed in the face of singularity as the leadership was, and they immediately universalized the singularity precisely though a partisan affiliation to the singularity, by deciding on it, by relating to it and other singularities in its situation: "We have not discussed the perspective of struggle forms for all-India revolutionary movement. It is neither an easy subject nor do we propose to discuss it here. Just as we, here, in our province, applied our knowledge to our movement and conditions and adopted the armed guerilla warfare as the main form of struggle, if other provinces review their movement and the problems facing their movement and the obstacles they have to overcome and come to a decision, then it becomes easy to evolve clearly the perspective for all-India forms of struggle. We appeal to the cadre, not to enter into (the) dogmatic (assertion) that without deciding the path of struggle and perspective of struggle-forms for all-India revolutionary movement, it would be wrong to decide the path and struggle perspective for Andhra. Whatever that path be for all-India, this much can be said that, it will not disprove the correctness of the path we have adopted here."[636] In partisan work there was always a place for the thought of singularity. The inalienable unity of India was irrelevant to this protocol. Peshawar, Sholapur, Calcutta, Kayyur, Telangana, Andhra, Moyomonsingho, Kakdweep, Bhangor, Naxalbari qualified as places and sites of politics in their thought. The ordinary partisans held that politics could state its own conditions, 'people think' (rather than 'party leader or social scientist thinks') was their basic axiom. These partisans were relentless in inducing those conditions rationally while staying committed to the core Communist programmes emerging in the territory of the Indian state – readily inviting exposure to death. It was in this task that the Communist leadership failed miserably, and consistently vetoed or suppressed popular programmes in an oligarchic, authoritarian manner. Politics – once forced into justification in exteriorities – became statism pure and simple.[637]

Doyens of the Communist leadership like E.M.S Namboodiripad and P. Sundarayya encapsulated a related method of taming the politics of democratic revolution. They demanded a

[636] Bibliography I.B.37, P-2.

[637] See Bibliography I.B.1, 37, 43, 44 and Bibliography IV.49, 54, 58.

completely exteriorised, objective approach towards the fractures burst asunder by ordinary partisans constructing subject-bodies (affirming democratic revolution locally) transversal to the language and infrastructure of Indian state: "…A feeling has of late grown within me that those of us who have been engaged in heated debates on the problems connected with the socialist pattern have been doing so without digesting the material collected and conclusions drawn by a host of scholars and research workers in the field of social sciences. Our failure in this respect is, I believe, one of the main reasons why we are unable to make a proper evaluation of the actual developments taking place in the country, and on its basis to unify the patriotic, democratic and socialist forces in the country. It is therefore my hope that this humble effort of mine (will have all) profit from exchange of ideas based on deep and intensive studies of these problems."[638] The non-language of politics was arbitrarily translated into the language of policy-making. Other results could be more disturbing. In his tracts on trade union, peasant fronts and 'national integration', Sundarayya demanded more knowledge to be generated on the topics. He himself assumed the role of the social scientist to undermine the 'left adventurism' of Andhra partisans in the late 1960s, for he was clearly flustered by 'large-scale defections (that) took place and…several leading cadres of long standing, from taluk level to state level, (falling) victim to Left-infantilism'.[639] In his analysis of the Telangana Revolution Sundarayya (he called it 'peasant struggles'[640]) completely ignored the thought of its partisans enshrined among other documents in the 'Andhra Letter'. He located stable sociological categories in his area-study and the results were strange. He reduced the revolutionary politics of Andhra Marxists to the geographical and sociological factors working in Telangana. Alongside a 'Lenin' of his strictly organisational and centrist moment was deployed and its universalism was proclaimed. The reading of Lenin in the Andhra Letter and its universal wager[641] were not acknowledged by

[638] "Preface", in Bibliography I.C.52, p-viii.

[639] Bibliography I.C.45.xv, P-475. Emphasis added. Hereafter *Deviation.*

[640] *Ibid,* P-481.

[641] We use Antonio Negri's description of this manner of reading: "Before 1905, the relationship drawn (by Lenin) between composition, organization, and insurrection was fairly rigid and…only in the heat of the battle was this relationship shaken up, opening the other path (opposed but nevertheless complementary) of theoretical considerations, the path that indicated a different order for the process: insurrection, organization, composition. In short, from 1905 on Lenin asserts that in the acute revolutionary phase, the proletariat organization can, from within

Sundarayya at all. His deep focus on the sociological categories in Telangana did not lead to any general (and risky) meditation on the question of revolutionary subjectivity (the Andhra Marxists called Communist Party 'a subjective factor'). The category of 'dictatorship of proletariat' was left unthought. It rendered Telangana Revolution into an objectal arrangement with the researcher of social science wherein the politics of Telangana had to be understood in terms of exteriorities. We shall discuss one particularly disconcerting result of this method. In order to account for the success of Telangana Communists in wresting state power in considerable areas he posited this among others: "(Another) factor that worked in the party's favour was the complete social isolation of the Muslim autocratic ruler of Hyderabad state and the general moral sympathy for the struggle against this regime, coming not only from genuinely democratic and nationalist forces but also several Hindu-minded sections, who identified their Hinduism with Indian nationalism."[642] Given the social composition of the population in this area, this might have been an acceptable description. But this new contradiction between 'Muslim autocratic ruler' and 'Hindu-minded sections' to explain Telangana only played a diversionary tactic to steer clear from a partisan understanding of Telangana politics. The Hindu-Muslim binary had no place in the vocabulary of Andhra Marxists, Tebhaga partisans and Kafi Khan; the Nizam was feudal, not Muslim. By smuggling this particular exteriority (with a confirmed empirical bias) in, the leadership fed into a typical majoritarian narrative – 'Muslim autocracy' versus 'Hindu morality' - of the Indian state. Sundarayya and other leaders used the language of democratic revolution to split from the majority right reformist/revisionist leadership in CPI and form a new party, CPI(M). Telangana Revolution being central to the politics of democratic revolution, it was used to distinguish the party from the CPI and Indian National Congress. The calculated evasions of Sundarayya on the interiority of Telangana politics rendered this profitable appropriation purely instrumental. Coupled with its recruitment of social scientists, such appropriations helped the Communist leadership to turn the unspeakable speakable, to set in

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the insurrection, assume an impactful force and a capacity of rupture such that it conditions the same composition of the working class. The organization, as the organization of the armed insurrection, as the capacity of destroying the power of the adversary class, can configure a situation in which the class composition of the proletariat frees itself of its misery to define itself as an innovative, creative moment, as a force that, through struggle, prepares the passage to communist society." Bibliography IV.22, P-160161.

[642] *Deviation,* P-485.

motion a giant normalising circulation. The account of Telangana 'peasant struggles' or the idioms of democratic revolution could now be circulated, reiterated, rehashed, redecorated, even affirmed – with no decision or partisanship or risk of thought involved. Chic, legal and therapeutic radicalism certainly was to become easier – in the name of 'left unity' and 'India's socialist pattern'.[643] The leadership had also (at key junctures of 1950s and 1960s) articulated – in the problematic language of cultural nationalism – the idea of an eternal 'India' with a built-in Hindu bias[644] (given the dominant demographic enumerations involved in the 1947 transfer of power to nationalist parties of bourgeois and landed interests).

This submission to majoritarianism was highly consistent. The necessary absorption of democratic revolutionary tenets meant that the leadership – however sparsely or in hushed tones – kept on characterizing the Indian state and other statist parties as executioners of feudal and bourgeois power. It was mysterious that the leadership signally failed to work out a simple connection: Hindu (and casteist) majoritarianism as the operative ideology of undemocratic (fascist) bourgeois and feudal power (or Indian state). In fact, Namboodiripad was quick in assuring the Indian state inexhaustible tolerance on the Communist leadership's part. The obsessive macroeconomic approach to Communist tasks had significant outcomes. Namboodiripad firmly clarified that the commitment of CPI(M) to the Indian state and constitution would stay even if a proto-fascist government assumed power, without ever trying to review its stand on the Indian state. This was not surprising, for in such situations the rhetoric of 'left unity' and of a quasi-mythological 'socialistic pattern in Indian state' could be safely and conveniently adopted, deepening the leadership's ties with the comparatively less illiberal bourgeois parties: "It is obvious that when applied to Indian conditions, the (Keynesian) theory will have in it the specific national characteristics of India as an underdeveloped country….State intervention and control will be directed against the attempts of the foreign monopolists either to continue their existing domination over, or to further penetrate into, the national economy. This was the role assigned to the Indian state long before India attained independence and long before the 'Keynesian Revolution' in bourgeois political economy. *It is, therefore, illogical that the ruling classes of free India should allow their state to be used against their own class interests*

[643] It was in this festive atmosphere of tamed singularities and co-comprehensible (tied to state and structure) subjectivities that SS (see Chapter V) emerged as an academic intellectual current, we can pause to ponder.

[644] See Bibliography I.C.36 as a typical example.

and go on serving the foreign monopolists. Even if the most reactionary sections of Indian monopoly capitalists come to dominate the state, it will still be used in the interests of Indian monopolists, rather than of foreigners. All the more will the state be a weapon of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle when genuine democracy is preserved and feudal monopoly attack on the people checked. Hence, the positive anti-imperialist role of planned economy and state intervention in our country."[645] Namboodiripad was basically shredding post-1947 Communist politics into the Procrustean bed of 'economic planning' or macroeconomics. He saw the party's alliance with the Indian state, government and bureaucracy as infallible till the anti-feudal democratic revolution would be complete and socialist co-operatives would be the basic units of economic life. Even the most advanced expressions of Communist politics in post-1947 nationalist India would remain tied to the pre-existing system of state-planning and policy-making. Namboodiripad's optimistic expectation from the Indian state remained and remains unfulfilled. But this leader's thought and tracts surely did render it difficult for ordinary partisans of the time to think in terms of a break with the state.

While the ordinary partisans grasped Hindu, casteist majoritarianism as the permanent strike-breaking and politics-assailing populist arm of the post-1947 Indian state (where Hindu chauvinist organisations constituted a bad-cop routine of the Indian state, forcing the inhabitants of the territories of Indian state to desire the crushing normalcy of private property, capitalist development and an ever-retractable secularism)[646] the Communist leadership located it in non-Congress, 'violent' variants of anti-colonial politics – the militant cultural nationalism of fin de siècle colonial India or revolutionary terrorism for its eschatological emphasis (without acknowledging the gradual shift to socialism and republicanism in this politics at the behest of a new generation of active dissenting militants).[647] 'Peaceful transition to socialism' was an exacting and razor-sharp ethical yardstick, no wonder ordinary partisans (and all revolutionary subjects in history) found themselves deviating to infantilism, adventurism and even (allegedly)

[645] "The 'Keynesian Revolution'", in Bibliography I.C.52, P-91.

[646] See Bibliography I.B. 33, 43, 45, 46, 48, 62. In between 1947 and the first nation-wide parliamentary elections in 1951 a permanent majoritarianism was also established, the flaring up or mellowing down of which has exhausted the political capacity of the subject-inhabitants of Indian state unhindered till today, but documents such as these show there were radical possibilities to stomp on the growth early enough.

[647] See Bibliography I.B.8 and I.C.6.

obscurantism more often than not. The hurried defence of the purported secularism of Nehru and Indian National Congress was only a post-facto justification. In terms of seriousness, the Indian nationalism of the Communist leadership was no less intense than the rightwing parties which erroneously claimed its monopoly. Telangana, the many districts of Bengal and many small pockets in different regions were for the Communist leadership too small and too marginal compared to the great and grand idea of 'India'. It was for this reason that unlike Suprakash Ray, the Communist leadership failed (and fails) to propose a Communist task in democratic struggles of Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, of tribal agricultural workers in southern, central and eastern areas of the Indian state's domain – instead they spoke (and speaks) in the language of 'national integration'. Instead of procuring arms for the ordinary local partisans, the leadership sent social scientists and charitable bodies to the places of vanquished struggles. Often, they themselves were actively complicit in crushing these struggles, and in executing the recalcitrant Communist partisans. When CPI(M) and CPI (United Front) formed a ministry in West Bengal government in 1967, it sent police forces to crush a struggle of agricultural workers led by (at that point) CPI(M)'s own local partisans in Naxalbari. The bottomless nuance of the CPI (M) in terms of both revolutionary theory and praxis certainly made it one of the most complex Communist parties in the history of Communism.

The absolute emphasis on the state as the facilitator of conditions of social transformation had severe results. Namboodiripad studied Indian history and his clear conclusion was that pre-British Indian society (by which he also meant 'technologically and socially backward rural communities of the present') was/were more reactionary than feudal or slave societies. His bold prescription was: "It is obvious that modernization and reconstruction of Indian society requires not the revival but complete uprooting of pre-British Indian society. Any tendency to laud the 'good points' which are supposed to be inherent in the ancient system of village communities and to revive that system under any new garb would mean turning the clock back."[648] There were two disturbing aspects to Namboodiripad's statement here. First, based on a historicist depiction, existing groups and communities were denied coevalness. Second, it was explicit that even with limited state power in post-1947 nationalist India, CPI(M) would use all statist means to 'uproot' village communities to facilitate chronological and historical progress. With contradictions

[648] Bibliography I.C.52, P-335.

within village communities invisible from the planner's vantage that Namboodiripad wore, local struggles or partisan organisations became irrelevant. CPI(M) indeed became a zealous militant of neo-liberalism, 'uprooting' thousands of peasants and agricultural workers (even executing many) in Rajarhat, Singur, Nandigram and other places in the West Bengal they ruled for 34 years – to hasten capitalist development.[649] Perhaps this was the reason why Sudhir Bhattacharya refused contact with CPI(M) supporters even when they offered him rehabilitation from inner city blues in the 1980s. Partisans like Suprakash Ray were not reluctant to undertake difficult tasks, and this they did by precisely returning to the thoughts of Lenin, Stalin and Mao abdicated by the leadership. Economic change in this configuration was constituted in local struggles, subjective wagers, superstructural innovations and a proletarian cultural revolution.

Of course, in Namboodiripad's statements or in other texts that demonstrated the stand of the CPI(M) leadership, there was no concrete meditation of how exactly the machinery for organizing and running the public sector enterprises and co-operatives 'will come to be democratically-controlled'. The only accessible path in CPI(M)'s political line was of becoming numerically ascendant in the central parliamentary body in alliance with bourgeois, petty bourgeois parties other than Indian National Congress and Hindu majoritarian parties (CPI-M from late 1960s onwards - however – formed alliance with just about every party in the parliamentary fray) – and changing the state's policy. In 2018, the party has nine from among five hundred and forty three parliamentary seats. It certainly has no influence on the new planning institution – the nattily-named NITI Aayog[650] – established by the government of Bharatiya Janata Party, a party that could fit in Namboodiripad's permitted and welcome category of 'the most reactionary sections of Indian monopoly capitalists'. The old Planning Commission was scrapped (without any meaningful noise apart from a few nostalgic pieces in

[649] See Bibliography I.B. 138.

[650] This is truly a great name. NITI means 'policy' in many Indian languages, but it is also an acronym for "National Institute for Transforming India", which replaced the more modestly-named Planning Commission. Aayog means 'committee' in many Indian languages. We see that instead of one commission, the Indian people now have an institute and a committee to manage their economic lives. In place of merely 'planning', the Indian state now makes policy and transforms India. Such alacrity is not surprising, since the ruling party B.J.P is 'the party with a difference' (see the party website for this straightforward theoretical stand – based on a Hindu majority's difference-thinking – of the largest single political party in India: www.bjp.org).

the liberal newspapers, almost resigned to its historical inevitability) by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August, 2014. The NITI Aayog website suggests a programme of capitalist development with a call to greater involvement from regional governments. It retains many features from the preceding era of Manmohan Singh-ministry of the Congress-led government, 2004-2014, like public-private partnerships. For Communist partisans like Suprakash Ray, this continuing path of capitalist development under an anti-democratic Indian state which perfected the colonial apparatus between 1947 and 1951 would have sufficiently explained why the murder and physical oppression on Muslims and Dalits (women, peasants, agricultural labourers and small/petty/regional bourgeoisie) increased exponentially after 2014. The hesitation of the present feuding factions of CPI (M) leadership to characterize the B.J.P government as fascist[651] proceeds from their long-standing fear to interrogate the specific nature of the Indian state, in which they retain a foundational stake. Suprakash Ray would have cringed over this froth-massaging on clinched questions. E.M.S Namboodiripad's fifty year old solution of deflected and immunizing bipartisanism on the top chambers of the Indian state - on the other hand – is what CPI(M) leadership in general will certainly have to follow in the upcoming elections of twenty-first century, thereafter and forever.

IV

Despite eventual academic censure, Suprakash Ray managed to strike intellectual camaraderie with other Communist thinkers, platforms and partisans. At present, the statements of the CPI (Maoist) – formed in 2004 through the alliance of long-standing Communist organisations and pre-party formations committed to the politics and programme of democratic revolution – bear the most vivid and extensive agreement with the thought of Suprakash Ray.[652] Suprakash Ray forces his biography to become a rational sequence of affirmative Communist revolutionary politics – from the suppressed program of Calcutta District Committee (1931-1933) to the "Andhra Letter" of late 1940s, from the 'seditious' pamphlets of Charu Majumdar (1918-1972)

[651] See Bibliography II.116.

[652] See Bibliography I.B.144-159.

to the articles and mass organisational work of Anuradha Ghandy or the writings of Cherukuri Azad (a Maoist partisan neutralised by the Indian state during talks of 'peace' in 2010).[653] The rare politics of democratic revolution left its axioms in subject-bodies, local committees, places, programmes, and individuals. The sequence of revolutionary politics and thought that Ray has us grasp in his biography assures us that the ordinary partisans never gave in to the "paroxysmal charm of terror"[654] and in a modest and fragile manner reached a 'subtractive way'[655] – united frontism, solidarity with and within a differentiated peasantry, role in democratic struggle of individuals, communities and regions reduced to playthings in the hands of an inexorable primitive accumulation (wherein feudal ethos is reactivated regularly), the upholding of capitalism as imperialism, the declaration of all nation-states (prosperous and poor, parliamentary and authoritarian) as 'Augean Stables' brutalizing democratic revolution, difficult yet unrelinquished experiments with mass organisations beyond trade unionism and economism, struggle for the dignity of political prisoners and (random Muslim youths incarcerated as) 'terrorists'.[656]

Transitioning out of classism and historicism, this 'historical mode of politics'[657] had been saturated in the lapse of three categories: nation, party and society; it ended with the formation of a Maoist Communist Party (2004) that retained the 'India' orientation (as did Suprakash Ray, despite heroically emancipating away in most of his key statements). In the sequence triggered by Suprakash Ray, Communist politics primarily said yes to the politics of secession (even otherwise than frontier regions like Kashmir or Mizoram) as the affirmative prelude to the disproportionately and irrationally large negation that was the Indian state's (more than adequately militarised) policy of 'national integration'. The Communist leadership ensured that

[653] See *Ibid.*

[654] "One divides itself into Two", in Bibliography IV.28, P-15. Hereafter, *Divides.*

[655] *Ibid.* The ordinary partisans attempt "to exhibit as the real point not the destruction of reality but a minimal difference…to purify reality, and not to annihilate it in its surface, by subtracting it from its apparent unity in order to detect the tiny difference, the vanishing term that is constitutive for it. What takes place hardly differs from the place where it takes place. It is in this 'hardly' where all the affect is, in this immanent exception." (*Ibid*)

[656] See passim in Bibliography I.B and Bibliography II.120, 121.

[657] This category, like many intellectual elements in this thesis, is drawn from Bibliography IV.48. It is a foundational work and will compel laborious engagements from all corners of humanities and politics in the coming years.

'party' was a bureaucratic response to the overwhelming national orientation of the Indian state; the Indian state ensured 'society' was the enumerative-administrative site of its national power; hence, without the 'nation' category the concepts of 'party'and the 'society' lapsed.[658] A Maoist Communist Party with an 'India' orientation is an untenable claim.

The categories that persist are commune or soviet or liberated zone and the red army. Factory committees, urban slum committees, sub-district committees, village squads, *janathana sarkars* (Maoist superstructural procedures in limited swathes of central and southern areas of the territory of Indian state) are the new subjective bodies that exist in as much as a commune or soviet or liberated zone does. The red army - for ordinary partisans like Ray – exists in local vanguard squads led and constituted by lower caste agricultural workers in rural areas and in politicizing the lumpenproletariat and finessing the mob decisionists otherwise providing force to the statist parties[659] – a primarily defensive mode activated for a dire and difficult task: "all that the bourgeois have acquired by wealth the proletarians have to conquer by hunger and with their bare bodies".[660]

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[658] See *JM*, *TS* and Bibliography I.B.1, 2, 33, 37, 39-41, 43, 48, 58-61, 68, 116, 136.

[659] See Bibliography I.B. 70-104, 116, 121, 125, 126, 136.

[660] Bibliography IV.35, P-178. The Communist revolutionary Karl Liebknecht's pronunciation was inventive in turning 'hunger' not only into a political category – but a figure of decision and intervention. Among other territories of the Indian state – in Bengal – as historian Janam Mukherjee has demonstrated in his impeccable (if somewhat aggressively pacifist) enquiry – the very tension proceeding from the confusion over whether 'hunger' was a moral or political category became the site of 'communal' riots and brutality – in 1940s and thereafter (see Bibliography IV.151). The ordinary partisans called for an inventive political encounter with the problem (Bibliography I.B.6, 7, 21, 31-35, 43, 49 and *TS*). Since 1947 the Indian state, its parliament and the Communist leadership had largely opted for the moral approach consonant with its ethical ideology (enabled of course by planned capitalist development and surgical charity) – what Bijan Sen called the 'Bhoodan Experiment'. The results are not cheerful – "the total number of farmer suicides in the country since 1995 crossed the 300,000-mark in 2014" (See Bibliography II.123) and: 'India ranks 100th out of 119 countries on the global hunger index'; 'hunger is not related as much to the production of food as to access and distribution'; 'given that three-quarters of South Asia's population resides in India, the situation in that country strongly influences South Asia's regional score. At 31.4, India's 2017 GHI score is at the high end of the serious category. According to 2015–2016 survey data, more than a fifth (21 percent) of children in India suffer from wasting. The regions of the world struggling most with hunger are South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara, with scores in the serious range (30.9 and 29.4, respectively)'. (see Bibliography II.124)

From the party letter of Andhra Marxists (late 1940s), through Suprakash Ray's *JM* (1969) to the recent Gauri Lankesh moment we study below, Maoist politics as a territorial procedure allying resolutely with various local/regional democratic and worker's politics that reel and fume under federalism (or defy the status of 'region' and prescribe it as a new, unprecedented unity) – a federalism as weak as it is coercive and parasitic[661] – seem to be the specific course of action[662]. Suprakash Ray – one has to remember – was an ordinary partisan to the very bitter end. His terminological melee with the leaders of Naxalbari militants[663] was a rare intervention where the leadership was not dubbed 'deviant' or inflicted with other diagnoses in the language of the revisionist leadership or Indian state (even the finest of Communist partisans like Promode Sengupta fell in this trap[664], a trap that the thinker of Naxalbari politics - Charu Majumdar[665] – identified and urged partisans to address).

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[661] See Bibliography I.B. and *JM*.

[662] In the statements of the ordinary partisans the basic demand to the Communist leadership (who always naturalized parliamentary elections and proscribed debates) was that the party had to carry out a rigorous enquiry into forms of struggle. This obviously meant an acceptance of politics in subjectivity, of the an-archic nature of 'action', and of the prescriptive and inventive work of politics, history and art – intrinsically and extrinsically hazardous for the statist national unity [or as Jawaharlal Nehru put it alarmingly well: 'tremendous impress of oneness' (Bibliography II.76, P-47)] fiercely defended by the Communist leadership. This implies that the ordinary partisans (for example, all Maoists today) are close to the avant garde rationalist and modernist linguistic and literary sequences of different areas in the Indian state's territory, and ordinary partisans will do well to relieve this subjective initiative from the thankless job of forever mitigating the fascist ideology of the Indian state [and many a time its brilliant and courageous intellectuals – like M.M. Kalburgi (1938-2015) and Govind Panasare (1933-2015) – murdered in the ordeal]. See the accounts of Saketh Rajan and Gauri Lankesh below to understand the exceptional and revolutionary nature of such alchemy.

[663] See Chapter III.

[664] See Bibliography I.B.113.

[665] Charu Mazumdar – unlike the Communist leadership – had an entirely non-clinical approach to subjective surges and breaking points. Instead of referring them to technocratic institutions (which fortified and embellished human finitude), he prescribed them as local revolutionary task, innovation and organisation. The tasks, in turn, were firmly a wager on immortality and infinity. In the India that the militants of Naxalbari enquired in, abolition of caste was a program that certainly demanded such a wager. An example: The program of the Paddy Producer's Association in Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu) was hardly liberal or centrist – it was decisively fascist and was partisan in its call for sacrifice and violence (wherein 42 lower caste agricultural workers – babies, old men and women – were burnt alive for supporting the politics of democratic revolution in Kilvenmani, Thanjavur, early January, 1969). Yet, it was

Ray merely pointed out that singularity - if surmised as an absolute singularity – could only result in sterile repetition which will then require i. state, history, language, and god to stabilise itself, and ii. an abandonment of the interiorized rational sequences of politics in subjectivity. The ordinary partisan sought to enquire and locate the place of the thought of singularity – and constructed/committed to an affirmative doctrine of politics. For Ray Naxalbari was indeed a singularity – but related to singularities in the rare and sequential politics of democratic revolution labored and thought on by ordinary partisans since the first revolutionary programmes were devised, related – also 'within the subjective domain' – to the 'specified objectivity of its situation' (or to what Lenin called a Communist partisan's 'absolutely historical examination'[666] of a proto- or proper liberated zone): "Relation is not itself ethical or oriented towards some inherent social good. The universal criteria by which relations are to be valued or inflected remain a matter of inter-subjective *decision.* The criteria of this decision cannot be simply immanent to the actualisation but must rather be prescribed and imposed across the field of relation as a whole."[667] The singular-universal was the primary weapon of the ordinary partisan – militancy was precisely a traversing of the singular and the universal at once. The temporary refusal (of the leaders of Naxalbari) to follow this trajectory was deleterious for Ray not because of the violence it supposedly caused – entirely irrelevant in Ray's mode of thinking – but as it

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legal, evidently inspired by the tenets of Indian constitution, led by the Indian National Congress and backed by the state police and judiciary (men with cars and property did not need to kill with their own hands – this was the logic of the judiciary to acquit the accused landlord). The proscription on partisanship was clearly partial, thereby rendering the Indian state a class-dictatorship pure and simple. It was this estimation of the horror of Indian state that had partisans like Charu Mazumdar and Suprakash Ray 'deviate' from the ordinary trail of life. Charu Mazumdar's statements – though generally diluted in mainstream press and academy as a figure of lunacy and foolhardiness - certainly had concrete resonance in Kilvenmani – if we affirm the proletarian woman's statement as a keen (and learned) understanding of contradiction in 'Indian' society, and certainly as a subtractive programme of non-destructive destruction: "Can you imagine that the landlord, that murderer, is still freely gallivanting in the streets of Thanjavur? How can such a brute be still alive? My heart won't be at rest until I skin him alive and make a roof for my hut with his skin." See Bibliography II.55 and Bibliography I.B. 71-104.

[666] "Guerrilla Warfare", Bibliography IV.11, P-214 and Bibliography I.B.37.

[667] Bibliography IV.58, P-330.

exposed the Communist politics of democratic revolution to an entirely pro-finitude and negative plotting: a 'human rights'-crisis to be resolved by modulating policies of the Indian state.[668]

"In a long article in *Deshabrati*[669] (21st August, 1969), Suprakash Ray was identified as an enemy. Because in the preface to his 'Peasant Struggle in Kakdwip, Sonarpur and Bhangar', he wrote: 'Telangana, Kakdwip and Naxalbari. These are three mounts of fire. The first two once spread that fire all over…Naxalbari is an incendiary place in time now.' These words are supposedly criminal, as 'bracketing Kakdwip with Telangana and Naxalbari created a lot of confusion'. Hence, 'we have to keep a watch on him'."[670] Promode Sengupta – a leading Naxalbari militant – called this "making enemies out of friends" and took Ray's side here: "It was in Telangana that peasants first wrested state power, Charu Mazumdar diminishes this incandescent truth of this country's history – this goes against the stand of both his party and the Chinese Communist Party. Outside China, Mao Tse-tung thought was first applied in Telangana. Following Mao's lessons, the peasants led by local Communists established liberated zones in vast areas of Telangana and in a true application of guerrilla warfare fought a powerful enemy.

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[668] This is unfortunately the effect that the noted citizens not hostile to Maoists (and writing empathetically yet non-clinically about them) – Arundhati Roy is an exemplary case – also have (despite their democratic and egalitarian intentions). See Bibliography II.77.a, b, c. The CPI (Maoist), rare in appearance and extent, holds – in the biography of Ray – as rational and theoretically consistent sequence of Communist politics as one can glean from the twentieth century. Its localization amongst the most oppressed sections of inhabitants in the territory of the Indian state – dispensable labour reserve for the state and the economy – does not make it an exotic anomaly or a radical alterity to be ethically or dialogically treated. The ordinary partisans had been militants of universalism from the 1930s – permanently disavowing the colonial/Indian public sphere for the 'commune' or 'federation of soviets'. Theirs is a politics of prescription that undermines the liberal-democratic consensus built on two theoretical axes: a. 'alignment with the general way of the world offers a reasonable chance of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect'; the cognates of availing this chance include 'communication, community, consensus, toleration, recognition' and dialogue; b. 'strategies of deferral or withdrawal; a determination to bear witness to…a...fundamental obscurity or paralysis – thought confronted by situations in which it is impossible to react; demands that cannot be met; needs that can never be reconciled; promises that can never be kept'. (in Bibliography IV.102, P-770) The immediately universalising imperative of the ordinary partisans meant (means) their intensity was (is) always local and partisan bodies were (are) exposed to permanent physical and psychological threat. The question was (is) about inducing thenceforth. (See Bibliography IV.55.a and Bibliography IV.53)

[669] The organ of leading Naxalbari partisans or CPI(M-L).

[670] Bibliography I.B.113, P-101.

Without underestimating the Naxalbari movement one can ask, did Naxalbari reach the level of Telangana? Was a liberated zone obdurate in Naxalbari? To protect that liberated zone, was there a protracted guerrilla war? Why this arrogance to place Naxalbari on top?"[671]

Yet, Suprakash Ray never evidently stated against the already hounded leadership of Naxalbari militants organising from underground. Sudhir Bhattacharya had enough partisan experience to understand that they were ridden in the 'anxiety of the void'[672] that their rigorous partisanship and commitment entailed. However, Ray also never directly supported any of the Communist party-forms emerging from the late 1960s and only predicted a 'true' Communist party. From the statements of ordinary partisans it becomes clear a true Communist party is most certainly *not* a 'national' or 'Indian' party. Committees, squads and self-defence units with a programme of secession and democratic revolution clamour to become the new organs of Communist politics. These assemble into what a party of 'ordinary partisans' carrying out dogged local work indifferent (or destructive) to the existence of 'Communist leadership' will appear as. The ordinary partisans grasped a complete measure of exploiters and oppressors as earthlings surviving on a manipulated topological framing (like, say, the heinous partition of Bengal in 1947) of the land-surface. For them, resistance was possible by prescribing a new nomos of space (area-wise seizure of power). Such ideas – even at present – make these partisans particularly intolerable to an Indian state that consolidates the second circuit of capital[673] (space) and promotes continuous primitive accumulation [674] in collaboration with imperialism. [675] Nationalism or nation-statism guarantees sitting ducks for these 'progressive' revelries.

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[671] *Ibid,* P-90-91.

[672]Bibliography IV.52, P-94.

[673] See Bibliography IV.61.

[674] See Bibliography II.67.

[675] See Bibliography II.78. The authors demonstrate the presence and pertinence of imperialism in a country like India in twenty first century following Lenin's thought of imperialism. But the active collaboration of the Indian state to retain the condition of imperialism (wherein a casteist, majoritarian feudal ethos is permanently dangling and striking) is not critiqued, rendering Lenin's thought of 'state and revolution' or 'what is to be done' (intricately consistent with his thought of imperialism) useless. This facilitates the Communist leadership's continuing assertion that till socialist revolution (withering away of class and state), only the Indian state can shepherd its inhabitant to the full limit of (national) capitalism in India (from its stunted petty producer-petty bourgeois character) – which

The academic obsolescence of Suprakash Ray had been declared with a fine air of legitimacy; it is not surprising then that we manage to locate only one contemporary historian in whose work Suprakash Ray's thought of history persists.

V

Ordinary Communist partisans had always stated democratic revolution as the only task of the Communist party in the territories of the Indian state. In their rigorous thought of the singularity of politics, a Communist could not unbind oneself from events of mass or class revolt (sharing the idea of democratic revolution) on account of their puny extent compared to the massive territorial domain and quasi-mythological (and quasi-colonial) unity of the Indian state. This risk was the unmistakable modality of the ordinary Communist militant's being. It was this risk that the Communist leadership always prohibited organisationally and intellectually. The radical minimal difference between the ordinary partisans and the Communist leadership that emerged in this trail resided in: i. annihilation of caste/landlessness led by vanguard subject-bodies of agricultural workers and women locally and ii. self-determination of the plethora of oppressed and mangled nationalities and regions under the colonial and Indian state. The partisans treated these as core and immediate Communist programme in colonial/national India while the leadership vetoed.

The register of these territorial topologies in the ordinary partisan's parlance was neither cultural nor communitarian (not linguistic, too), but the 'communist invariants' – revolts declaring political equality, revolts ending oppression and exploitation locally, revolts declaring abrogation of private property as the basis of organising human collectives – of local and micro-histories approached from the angle of singularity. This was the 'use' to which national histories were to

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may then be strong and magnanimous enough to sever ties with imperialism and allow the Communist leadership to complete a socialist or communistic revolution. The ordinary Communist partisans never accepted this plot and proposed new organs of power – indifferent to the nation-state – to revolutionise the anti-imperialist political and economic strategies. The untenable nature of the description of this work from the vantage of Communism or politics can be grasped from Bibliography I.B.28, 161 and Bibliography IV.20-31.

be put into by ordinary partisans – Suprakash Ray absorbed this lesson from Mao Tse-tung.[676] What Ray did for the Bengal region in these terms in his 1966 book, Saki did for Karnataka in 2002.[677] Reading the two books simultaneously will immediately reveal the similarity of political axioms and narrative modes – all the more significant because Saki had no knowledge of Suprakash Ray. Gokul Ghoshal from Khidirpur (and bourgeois culture of indigenous elite collaborating with colonialism) in *BKBGS* found exact equivalence in the 'puppet'[678] Wodeyar dynasty of Mysore in Saki's book, the insurgent Chowarhs of southern Bengal found solidarity in the uncompromising rebel Sangolli Rayannna of Nandagad.

Saki regretted that contemporary history-writing on the territories of the Indian state was subjugated to 'Gandhian ideology' which prohibited affirmative foray into the forms of 'creative violence'[679] that was the key subjective protocol of nineteenth century insurgents disavowing colonial state and society. The colonial state and the Indian state in Karnataka were seen as an unbroken armed occupation – bolstered by local elite collaborators – to continually destroy the region's obdurate and self-renewing democratic revolution(s). The ordinary partisan's simple adherence to the Communist manifestos of his territory – like in Ray's case – was the intellectuality of Saki's work. His bibliography was entirely indifferent to the works of SS – which is meaningful given their shared interest in peasant insurgency and anti-colonialism of nineteenth century. Unlike the academic practice (SS) hostile to Suprakash Ray, Saki did not co-present the subjective and objective or gift the 'subaltern' to (optimistically) benign state policies (or anti-colonial politics to nationalism). Saki could accomplish this task precisely because – like Suprakash Ray – he assumed a transparent partisan position. The singularity of peasant insurgencies did not curb the singularity of the present mode of being that Saki dwelled, did not paralyse Saki into an ethical or Gandhian ideology. If Suprakash Ray was ostracized by the 'left unity' whipped up to vivify CPI(M)'s ministerial collaboration with the Indian state in West Bengal, and if he was erased by a parasitically ambitious academic project in a manner most unjust, Saki was simply neutralised by the Karnataka police on February 6, 2005, near

[676] See Chapter IV.

[677] Bibliography I.B.147. The pioneering and inventive role in this regard was certainly played by Bibliography I.B.37.

[678] *Ibid,* P-17-41.

[679] *Ibid,* P-11.

Menasinahadya village of Koppa Taluk in the Western Ghats. Evidently, it is necessary to eliminate a few historians in the territories of the Indian state.

Saki was also a pseudonym. Saketh Rajan (1963-2005) was a Mysore resident who from his college years in the 1980s decided to become a Communist partisan committed to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought. He was instrumental in deepening the politics of democratic revolution in different areas of Karnataka organisationally and theoretically. A member of the People's War Group, he died as a leader of the newly formed CPI (Maoist). In the trail of Suprakash Ray, we have gathered that Maoist politics in colonial/national India was Communism under the condition of imperialism and a reactionary collaborative state that destroyed local anti-imperialist democratic politics (the latter was invariably an intervention against private property). One of the major roles that the Communist leadership played in its defence of the Indian state was disallowing liberated zones of anti-feudal, anti-imperialist politics (the soviet or commune principle) from becoming a concrete slogan of the factory-workers and the factory committees led by Communist party in urban areas (a protocol developed during the Tebhaga and Telangana revolutionary struggles, 1946-1951[680]), and persisted with the trade union-peasant association fork which consistently proved to be elitist, bureaucratic, statist and anti-struggle. In the Communist leadership's scheme, working class would remain the working class; peasants would remain peasants in a perpetually accursed habitus of economic wrangling and parcelled identities. With explicit support from the Indian state and press, the leadership – weary of contamination – banished the ordinary partisans from trade union spaces altogether[681], and then portrayed the partisans as mawkish ruralists and delusional militarists out of touch with modern proletarian socialism. Saketh Rajan was a Maoist who brought Communist politics to the wider and traumatic interfaces of people with state and capital. His political work – from People's War Group to the larger CPI (Maoist) – exposed the

[680] See Bibliography: I.B.25-61.

[681] See for a truly intense example of how the Communist leadership freed the trade unions in Calcutta from urban partisans of democratic revolution (the methods used posed insurmountable difficulty – however – in sticking to their own devastating commitment to 'peaceful transitions' in politics), Bibliography I.B.120. A contemporary and effective practice of the Indian state is noteworthy in this context: "policemen, perhaps for effect, throw the bodies of Maoist leaders they slay in areas where they are known and admired for their 'overground' work (in organising) the labourers into trade unions". See Bibliography I.B.146.

deep complicity of the Indian state's neoliberal restructuring (initiated by a Congress central ministry in 1991, marked by warlike cycles of primitive accumulation of land and labour) in the strengthening of Hindu majoritarianism and casteism (a direct continuation of the colonial ethos of nineteenth century he enquired as Saki). The areas of his political work coincided with the areas of insurrection he sequenced in his historical enquiry – the universal singularity of 'red political power'[682] abrogated the past-present divide. He also grasped the colonial and Indian state as an authoritarian arrest of multiple currents of democratic revolutions; Rajan sought in his historical enquiry and political work to reactivate these currents at once, immediately. It was no wonder then that he was tipped off to the state police by a local leader of Hindu supremacist organisation Bajrang Dal called Shesha Gowda. A liberal Congress ministry, a provincial fascist informant and a colonial police cooperatively executed Saketh Rajan. Only politics – in the sense Bijan Sen used the word – could render the magmatic errant excess of the Indian state momentarily measurable.[683]

The assassination of Gauri Lankesh (born. 1962) on September 5, 2017 in Bangalore had the long shadow of Saketh Rajan (or simply politics) all over it, though her martyrdom was steamrolled into making a case for ethical ideology and the reactionary apolitics of the Indian state and press.[684] Lankesh knew Rajan as her senior in Bangalore University and a Delhi journalism school, but their trajectories were separate. From 2000 onwards, Lankesh made a dynamic transition – from being an English-language journalist to a fierce Kannada-language interventionist – with all the rigour of declassing. Confronting the same nexus of money and power that Saketh Rajan faced in his political work, a chance encounter in June, 2004 (as one of the few chosen journalists attending a press address of the recently formed CPI-Maoist in Karnataka) opened new possibilities. Lankesh started countering the state-engineered myths surrounding Maoist politics. These Maoists in Karnataka were not substitutionist 'outsiders', not a 'ragtag gang of misguided youths'[685], but born and bred in Karnataka, fighting democratic

[682] See for the most rigorous formalisation of the category, "Scholium: A Political Variant of the Physics of the Subject-of-Truth", in Bibliography IV.53, P-493-593.

[683] All statements on Saketh Rajan drawn from Bibliography I.B.162: "Hail the Heroic Martyrdom of Com. Saketh Rajan (Prem) and Com. Shivalingu (Arun)!", P-18-19.

[684] Bibliography II.79.

[685] Bibliography I.B.163.

struggles with diverse people against a state equally indulgent in economic and extra-economic coercion. The ingeniously specific nature of Lankesh' reporting and analysis of contemporary events dispelled the need for obligatory (for Indian press) rejoinder on the moral superiority of non-violence in her statements, and started touching the most raw and concealed contradiction in the situation of the Indian state – a 'democracy' that thrived by crushing democratic revolution locally/regionally since 1947. Lankesh was a dangerous precedent from the vantage of the Indian state. She protested against the manner in which Saketh Rajan was brutally executed and hastily/secretly cremated. It was as if the world of radical solidarity between a Suprakash Ray and a Panchugopal Bhaduri in 1951 was being resurrected, flouting the centrist norms that the Communist leadership – loyal to the Indian state – had instituted since 1951. Hindu chauvinists certainly murdered Lankesh, but that distinguished the former in no way from the standard procedures of Indian state, Indian nationalism and the clinic of Communist leadership towards deviant inhabitants like Rajan and Lankesh.

VI

This had indeed been a biography of a deviant in the territory of Indian state. However, the approach in interiority made a certain freedom available to the biography: the freedom of eschewing clinical, therapeutic, correctional or retributive disposition to the 'deviant'. It also ensured that the concept of 'deviation' itself became immaterial to the biography. Overstaying on the concept of 'deviation' leads to a depoliticizing celebration of 'subversion' or 'revolt' and an inadvertent affirmation of the state-constructed fear of politics proper as hazardous and futile. Thus 'revolt' becomes a category co-extensive with the vitality of life and bourgeois creatural individualism.[686]

For a partisan like Suprakash Ray an individual had no particular value, for it held nothing other than life. Both individuation and politics in Suprakash Ray's thought was a matter of orientation,

[686] For such docile outcome of well-intentioned rumination, see Bibliography IV.117. For a critique of such outcomes, see Bibliography IV.96.

action, decisions, and principles. Decisive, voluntary and constructive actions indexed a Communist partisan-subject: "it's only from the perspective of the possible emergence of the category of the subject that the question of the individual's value even arises, because the individual, as such, constitutes no value other than the perseverance of his/her life." [687] 'Transfixed by an immanent break'[688] – exception and truth outside of knowledge and repetition – the partisan exhaustively enquired (in an ever-investigative fidelity) the situation of its appearance. The partisan-subject was always precarious and weak because of this resistant and (in itself) exceptional commitment to truth and exception, yet it had the will or courage to force a truth. The summons of the intractable question 'what is to be done' had the partisan come face to face with a loss of ground, foundation, arche or ultimate referents [689], but also "the comprehensive possibility of a prospective metaphysics capable of enveloping today's actions and drawing strength, tomorrow, from what these actions will produce"[690]. The individual for the partisan was nothing but the irreducible support of subjective construction (for the subject is never a given, while the individual is merely the 'there is') linked to truth procedures.

This biography has been in perennial crisis on account of the enquired subject's secession from life. This withdrawal was – however – 'revolutionary suicide', not 'reactionary suicide' or 'self-murder'[691]. In Huey Newton's absorption of Friedrich Nietzsche, a revolutionary suicide was 'an arrow of longing for another shore'[692]. The Communist partisan saw 'his death and his life as one piece'.[693] This immanentisation of death (which was a creature's local and valiant move towards infinity, immortality and subjectivity) allowed the ordinary partisan a rare understanding of state, family, private property and nation-state not as genealogy of institution, but as necrology of destitution.[694] This was not a negation, but a thoughtful denial. The impress of such thought on the familial and domestic environ was perhaps the most immediate and intense. It was

[687] See Bibliography IV.2.h, P-2-11.

[688] Bibliography IV.49, P-60.

[689] See "Deconstructing Action", in Bibliography IV.107, P-2-11.

[690] Bibliography IV.53, P-7.

[691] Bibliography IV.71.b, P-38-39.

[692] *Ibid,* P-760.

[693] *Ibid,* P-48.

[694] See Bibliography IV.108; for these two categories, see P-612.

no surprise then that the respectful colleague who visited the ailing Suprakash Ray in his house a while before his death failed to comprehend the fecund decomposition he encountered in terms of poverty/disenfranchisement and only unconvincingly asceticised Ray.[695]

Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) from Borishal district of Bengal (also the district of Sudhir Bhattacharya) can help us understand the thought of a militant inserted in the decay/declassing of petty bourgeois habitus and the invention of new forms (or 'another shore') in equal measure. Das defied easy categories. From the late 1920s till his death (under a Calcutta tramcar, possibly an accident) he was carrying out in his poetry and prose profound enquiries into being, history, time, nature and writing. He withheld the publication (even public knowledge) of the majority of his poetry and all of his prose (around fourteen novels and hundred short stories) in his lifetime. A heroic and singular modernist, for Das literature was simultaneously a 'monumental construction' and a 'creative force of the weak'.[696] Insistent on the generic autonomy of art, he was defiant toward any general orientation (instituted on art) articulated in terms of sociological and biological interests (the crux and horizon of Indian nationalists and the allied Communist leadership with stake in 'culture'). His axiom was: "A poem is not an editorial-affirming statement."[697] He was transparently antagonistic to editorial boards and critics' cartels, much like the Suprakash Ray rebellious towards the Communist leadership and the academy. Unemployed or employed with very meager salary as an on-and-off school and college teacher, Das' primary struggle was being able to write (or invent) unrelentingly in a place which was no longer a site of time (or servitude). Suicide was a recurring category in his writing (both in prose and poetry); yet – since it was never self-murder conducted by exterior or objective factors – his literature was able to enquire the folds of life with no concession to either ethical singularity or an all-pervasive organicity of life. Known primarily as a major poet, his prose (in themselves massive and intricate artworks) also assumed (on account of its non-disclosure and use of autobiographical devices) the nature of meditation on (but never description of) the very conditions and places of inventive writing and thought. In some of these complex manifestos of art, survival and reproduction of the human animal were not dealt with simple destructive intent.

[695] See Introduction.

[696] Alain Badiou, "Third Sketch of a Manifesto of Affirmationist Art", in Bibliography IV.57.b, P-133.

[697] Jibanananda Das, "Keno Likhi" (Why do I write), 1944, in Bibliography II.16, P-220.

Let us read from a short story on an artist called Subodh[698], roughly the age of the poet in the year of composition:

i. "Subodh is certain that his old father will manage to sustain, like he always has; with very meager income, he has protected this growth for long. He had to slog a lot in his life, a lot. Sterile labour, with absolutely no respite. His life has become sordid, unremarkable, attributeless – a big sack of discards. His strength was perhaps no less than that of Subodh. Subodh had grasped signs of that strength many times in the past; but that strength is reluctant, or perhaps, the very meaning of consciousness is different – protecting a homestead, carrying the weighty familial world of a donkey caravan for half a century and other such tasks of certainty, patience and faith. Not bad, but for an artist such life is base cattle-fodder. Will Subodh dissolve his life in such profound waste?"[699]

ii. "Perhaps, the outcome will precisely be as such. Subodh will write repetitive and derivative textbooks, manuals and primers to earn some money, produce children, conserve a crumbling homestead, evaporate into the sonorous aspirations and lamentations of his mother, wife and children. He will fail to become a dark, deep firefly ensconced in the bluish leaves of a shrub around his semi-rural home. He will also fail to be a Calcutta artist. In the crack between these two profoundly segregated poles, he will become ordinary. Very few understand the massive measure of the extraordinary required in this task. History constructs itself in a strange manner; it collates, accumulates and expands the records of those who lay the world to waste, those who escape from life – no space is adequate for these piles of records. New information emerges from museums, from offices and libraries of the government; from all possible and impossible places, relentless documents gush out in the service of escapists. There are those who encircle life for eternity and a day, protect one and a few lives – indifferent to the destructive choreography of the figure of apocalypse, indifferent to the domineering maelstrom of pure potentiality. Their task is also not located in the soft desire, vulnerability and excess of the honey and wax that the bees of full moon exude – they merely conjugate, reproduce, and nurture children. These lives thrive within the thoroughly difficult effort to retain a sleepy peace within a brood – an effort

[698] Jibanananda Das, "Sesh Pachonder Somoy" (The Time of Decision), April, 1932, in Bibliography II.80. Hereafter *Decision.*

[699] *Decision*, P-202.

despised by the people. Through the entire night Subodh was thinking about whether he can muster the courage to grasp the consciousness of an ignored, unrewarded life. It is a very difficult task. In the morning Subodh started writing a biography of his father. He will – however partially – assuage the legitimate demands of the ordinary denigrated by the world. But he stopped after writing a little. The bearers of such life are ineffable. There is no need to teach the world. The world never has to learn. There is no need to reward the unrecognized figures. Perhaps, the latter do not think – at the very least not as intensely as Subodh does – that they need recognition. All of them already are aware of their strength, advancement and victory. Or perhaps they wait to be rewarded in some other place. They reject history in this world."[700]

iii. "Gradually, Subodh may become what his father is. That will neither be a defeat, nor self-sacrifice. Miles away from indolence, in absolute disjunction with soft transgressions and greed, devoid of oppressive envy and crude apocalyptic onslaught. This strength, victory and advancement in life only wait for some extraneous reward, or, consider reward itself as base. World and history are puny for such lives. The bearers of life ripen and mellow by working doggedly to keep the inexhaustible link to pure exception intact: i.e., to reproduce, to let children grow, to retain a motionless peace within one brood – against the wish of the people – with disproportionate courage and tolerance. Beyond all futility, indifferent to the charting of astronomic distances, they are countless and heightened like stars in the firmament. They do not have a moment to spare for poking fun at grey and ragged history."[701]

Sudhir Bhattacharya was unfailingly attentive to his seriously ailing adult progenies and the daily chores of his house even after the implications of his partisan stand had driven him into a corner – bereft and precarious. Yet, he subtracted his work on life into a scale that ensured an anti-evolutionary, clock-choking, natural-historical volitation from metal to clay in the 'frenetic topicality'[702] that was the interior of his house.[703] His cremation was unceremonious enough to

[700] *Decision*, P-203.

[701] *Decision*, P-204.

[702] Walter Benjamin quotes T. W. Adorno, in "Convolute I", Bibliography IV.118, P-220-221.

[703] See Introduction. Ray's domestic condition bore some resemblance to the two rooms on 28, Dean Street, London where Karl Marx and family lived between 1851 and 1856, described by a Prussian spy thus: "The one looking out on the street is the living room, and the bedroom is at the back. In the whole apartment there is not one clean and solid piece of furniture. Everything is broken down, tattered and torn, with a half inch of dust over everything and

not exhaust the three hundred rupees donated by his organised colleagues.[704] A partisan invited and inhered the full multiplicity of being and the world while retaining an interiorized place for thinking multiplicity – thus Ray and Das in their creative fields could grasp the thought of the 'Calcutta artist', the 'dark, deep firefly in the bluish leaves' of a Borishal shrub and certainly 'ignored, unrewarded lives' while rejecting critical or positivist or hermeneutic resolution that fetishize archive-mining, document-building, historicism and pure empiricism. Both – despite penury – never actually wrote 'repetitive and derivative textbooks, manuals and primers', and wagered on inventive writing. In both Ray and Das' monumental constructions, 'people' intervened as a 'certain indistinct'[705] that had – though rarely – abrogated life's immanent power. This denied secrecy to the creatural arrangements that these writers were entangled in as bodies. There was no shame, guilt or inscrutability in the thought of artists and partisans. Survival and reproduction certainly nourish the master of populations and productions – the state. But a biography like Ray's proposes life as a horror vacui, and attempts to short circuit the state's access to life by demonstrating life exclusively as a support that keeps 'the inexhaustible link to pure exception intact'.

Suprakash Ray thus is an intense vicissitude for the Indian state; this pseudonym is neither agreeable nor dialogic. His hasty burial in some academic projects does make sense, then. In Theo Angelopoulos' film *The Hunters,* a pack of elite tourist-hunters in northern Greece found a snow-cocooned dead body on New Year's Eve, 1976. They understood it was the body of a Communist partisan (of the democratic war against U.S imperialism and its nationalist collaborators of the late 1940s[706]) and brought it back to their lavish vacation quarters. What followed was a series of 'stylized tableaux'[707] of an inquest carried out by the hunters. All of

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the greatest disorder everywhere. In the middle of the living room there is a large old-fashioned table covered with an oilcloth, and on it there lie his manuscripts, books and newspapers, as well as the children's toys, and rags and tatters of his wife's sewing basket, several cups with broken rims, knives, forks, lamps, an inkpot, tumblers, Dutch clay pipes, tobacco ash – in a word, everything topsy-turvy, and all on the same table..." Bibliography IV.1.h, P-317-318.

[704] See Introduction.

[705] Bibliography IV.48, P-7.

[706] This war was to Angelopoulos what Telangana Revolution (1946-1951) was to Kafi Khan. See for solid general treatments, Bibliography IV.119.a,b.

[707] Michael Wilmington, "Theo Angelopoulos: landscapes, players, mist", in Bibliography IV.120, P-64.

them had betrayed the politics of the democratic war, and struck deals with the pro-imperialist Greek state to attain money and fame, and certainly to retain – unlike the partisan - life. Incapable to mourn the dead, they festered in embarrassment and guilt. The cinema dreamt forth an execution of the hunters by contemporary partisans, but it proved to be a collective paranoiac nightmare of the traitors. They reburied the inauspicious body by dawn. In the cinema the living hunters were – under the weather of the dead partisan's body – 'cold' and failed to 'reflect a distinct personality'[708]. It was the dead partisan's body that exuded heat and offered a lively wound after it was disinterred. The partisan's doggedness to subtract from life and to work towards 'pure exception' forced – even after decades of statist normalcy and throttled threat – a radical, unprecedented and new life in an artwork's construction, that all the mundane achievements and material resources of the breathing, full-blooded hunters could not propose. Overwhelmed by this truth, one of the hunters had to admit: 'the fact that he is here is a historical error'. Appearing against the laws of appearance instituted by history and historical consciousness, i.e., state, such errors are hazardous. In this biography, Suprakash Ray certainly appears as a hazard, an illegal appearance that had only incompletely been swatted null as a figure of error.[709]

[708] Theo Angelopoulos interviewed by Francesco Casetti, "Rhythms of Silence to Better Underline the Scream: The Hunters", (From Cinema e Cinema, no. 13, Oct.-Dec. 1977), in Bibliography IV.1.i, P-24.

[709]The public sphere and press in India have been adequately critical of the increasing degree of authoritarianism (in government and in personnel/followers of the ruling party) after B.J.P managed to wrest electorally the executive power of Indian state in 2014. But these draw a line when it comes to the murder of Communists who read Mao Tse-tung seriously. There is a refusal to see the link between a government that has overseen an expansion of dictatorial ethos and a government that has in two years eliminated close to hundred Maoist partisans – perhaps because the link is the unassailable Indian state and its forms of indecision/knowledge. The success and innovations of the repressive arms of the state (even its exercise of draconian monetary policy) are celebrated in the 'c' variant of reporting, the ideological basis of which can be sought in the 'b' variant of literature where an ethical urgency abruptly joins the supposedly prelapsarian population of the liberated or semi-liberated zones with the righteous civil society – the latter distrustful of the fanaticism of Maoists and vigilant towards the local remediable excesses of Indian police and paramilitary in equal measure. The 'a' variant maintains a strategic reticence on the core politics of Maoist Communists and holds the Indian state's key colonial-authoritarian pillars in a prolonged close-up. Thought of politics is more or less repressed in discourses that circulate. a. Bibliography II.81.i b. II.81.ii c. III.81.iii.

Sudhir Bhattacharya's well-wishers lament that he is a dead man without a photograph. The possibility of finding (or at least imitating, or replacing) a lost photograph was a surreptitious stimulus in attempting this biography. The irony and naiveté of that excitement become glaring as our enquiry into Suprakash Ray's interiority reinstates at the end that very preliminary fact, albeit in the form of an axiom: Ray cannot have a photograph. His texts written in language were destined to be outmoded right from the time of its appearance – internalised by his comrades intuitively-immediately-exhaustively beyond a will to enquire his specific singularity, devoured by the academy and 'leftist unity' for riskfree nourishment. We cannot *rescue* a pseudonym from anonymity; we cannot render a partisan's body graphematic. Beyond body and language, Ray was an exception pure and simple. Exceptions evade being caught in light and flesh, and can only be decided on. Ordinary partisans like Suprakash Ray certainly indicated how and from where such decisions must proceed rationally.

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