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A Renewed Look into the ‘Naxalbari’ Spirited Movement in India: From a Biographical Outlook

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**The First Naxal: An Authorized Biography of Kanu Sanyal, by Bappaditya Paul, New
Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2014, pp xiv+248, Rs 550/-**

The author of this pioneering volume Bappaditya Paul, got well attracted towards Kanu Sanyal's life history upon knowing about his immense and intense background entwined with the India's most challenging internal security threat, in the form of 'Naxalbari movement'. By all means, Naxalbari movement stands as a most recognized and challenging treat to the Indian democratic establishment, which spread to various parts of India, cross-cutting cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Naxalbari is a small hamlet in the north-western region of the West Bengal provisional division of India (i.e., state). The word 'Naxalbari' became a synonym for dissent and pushed the Indian democratic polity to reconsider itself from various folds and forms. This movement is widely spread and limited to the rural areas; same time failed to get well connected towards achieving desired and targeted goal. The Indian state perceived this problem on various folds. A few among them includes; from development outlook, class-caste perspective, international politics and relations dimension, left political ideological extremism scope, etc.

I

This work best captures the attention of the readers by showcasing, primarily; how this Kanu Sanyal got attracted towards this Naxalbari movement, in what kind of activism he was involved as part of this challenging episode, what kind of strengths and weaknesses this movement left out, above all how to understand the life of his activism in this entire intense political movement?

Naxalbari can be regarded as a failed ideological and political movement, when seen, observed and analyzed on a broad spectrum; yet, this movement has its own achievements to note and consider at some other level. The broad achievement of this movement lies at spreading to vast territory of India, cutting across cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The prime common phenomena observable for sudden, sporadic spread of this movement among poorer sections of the society lied at their challenge faced from the landlords and their perceived class oriented nature of the State.



Since lot of literature and knowledge already exists on communist, Marxist, Leninist, Mao, etc modes of political movements, targeted to bring about ‘total revolution and reorient the nature of the State’; the readers may best analyze such by-gone and well analyzed dynamics with renewed lenses after going through the pages of this volume. Thus, this work could be a well stimulating exercise to both the lay readers and specialized scholars on this ‘communist movements and politics’ domain.

II

Methodologically this work can be considered as a stimulating source. This work saw the light of the day, at a time, when various misconceptions grown over the years about this movement. In this direction, this work attempts to clear such misperceptions and clears the air. Methodologically, the author Bappaditya Paul took immense care in having prolonged interviews with Kanu Sanyal at various points of times and even went-on to record a few interviews. At some level, Bappaditya Paul also explored various secondary sources for bringing clarity and cohesiveness to this maiden venture. On the whole, Bappaditya Paul worked for three consecutive years since 2007-2010 in a constructive manner to bring light to this source. The dedication of Paul is also immense towards this end.

Though, at various times, various persons attempted to unpack the life history of Kanu Sanyal and Naxalbari movement from his perspective, such attempts failed to see light. But, Kanu Sanyal, obliged this time to the author Bappaditya Paul to explore and pen this work in a systematic manner. The other uniqueness of this volume lays at Kanu Sanyal himself authorizing almost this entire work’s contents; expect the last concluding section. Kanu Sanyal unfortunately passed way without authorizing the last concluding section of this volume.

Apart from presenting the life sketch of Kanu Sanyal in a lucidly well divided, articulated and analyzed form in a total of nineteen chapters; Bappaditya Paul incorporated a few unique photos of the Kanu Sanyal, especially related to his political activism and life. And also, continuing the same symbolic visual sources incorporation, a few important news paper clippings and historic documentary evidences were also presented over a few pages. In order to bring more authenticity and clarity to this entire work; glossary, select bibliography and the chronological trajectory of the Kanu Sanyal’s life and times was incorporated towards the concluding pages.

Conclusion

This work can be considered as a rare primary source of contribution to the existing stock of literature. Since this communist or Marxist, etc movement’s histories and trajectories are well documented and analyzed; the uniqueness of this entire work lies at bringing a personalized tone of a high-profile person in this entire Naxalbari and Naxalite movement in India, i.e., Kanu Sanyal.



This work hopefully may stimulate the readers; to ponder over how an Indian dimension exists to this entire Naxalite movement process? Why this kind of movement failed in India, while these kinds of spirited movements got successes in other parts of the world like in Russia, China, etc?

At last, but not the least, this whole work exposes how Kanu Sanyal led a spirited, hopeful life towards achieving desired ambitions, goals and targets; but, how he failed to see light of such aspirations. This work could be an inspirational insight to understand committed activists life style and analyze their positive and negative shades on a broad spectrum, through the lenses of Kanu Sanyal's life. When seen, in this direction, unfortunately, Kanu Sanyal had a tragic life end, due to his chosen life style for achieving desired goal. But, somehow, it sounds, towards the end of his life times, Kanu Sanyal seemed to have realized certain things; which he should have done or should not have done, etc. Thus, this nature of his 'intro and retrospections' projects and brings in certain lessons to learn from a passed away experienced person, primarily to those who are involved and aspiring to have this kind of dimension in their lives.