

Book Reviews by a Pioneer: Charu Majumdar, The Dreamer Rebel by Ashoke Mukhopadhyay

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PIONEERS OF MODERN INDIA



CHARU MAJUMDAR

The Dreamer Rebel

ASHOKE MUKHOPADHYAY

I first came across the term Naxalite when I was a young boy of 17 and had just started college. I read in some film magazine that the popular movie star Mithun Chakraborty was involved with the movement in his younger days. But it was a gossip journal; and besides it was too far removed from my consciousness, having been born and brought up in north India.

A few years later, when I started government job in east India, I heard about many violent incidents in the past against senior colleagues by members of the movement. It was also around this time that I heard about Charu Majumdar, who was considered the originator of the movement. But it was still too far back in the past for me to really explore further.

With this background, I could not resist the temptation of reading this book about Charu Majumdar, who, besides calling for an armed revolution, taught many to dream, as described by the author on the back cover of this small book, which is only a little bigger than a pocket book.

The biography is based on official documents and writings from that period. It is a well researched account of Charu Majumdar and the Naxalite movement. It explains the reasons for the movement to catch the imagination of the contemporary youth, who were dissatisfied with the living conditions of the poor farmers, and felt that all political parties were only interested in exploring them for political gains. The movement spread like wild fire.

The writing style is such that it makes this biographical book written with excerpts from official papers, documented speeches, and letters, more like a well-narrated story. I remained invested in the book till the very end. My only complaint is a one-sided tendency to eulogise the violence against the state machinery, and calling the counter offensive as repression.

The book is an attempt to highlight the contributions of a not so well-known personality, who in his own way contributed in shaping the country as we see it today. I look forward to reading more books under this series titled by the publishers as Pioneers of Modern India.

The review is by Sanjay Chandra, author of [The Gymnast](#).

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