

India. By the 1960s, as we read in chapter 11, marketers from Britain and India determined that tea had to be made “young” and new again, even as sanitized associations with plantation life and the Raj lingered on packages and in advertising to older consumers.

Rappaport’s book provides a refreshing new take on questions first asked by Sidney Mintz, about how pleasure and exploitation can coexist, and even fuel each other, in imperial commodity capitalism. Her approach—attuned at once to the economic and sensory registers of capitalist value—highlights that “The tea party has never been...a private affair” (p. 409). Even decades after decolonization, the tea party—and the botanical medium that sustains it—are still products of, and productive of, empire.

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*Nightmarch: Among India’s Revolutionary Guerrillas*. By ALPA SHAH. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 320 pp. ISBN: 9780226590165 (cloth). doi:10.1017/S002191182000056X

This book is a “meditation on the contradictions” of India’s Naxalite movement framed artfully through the title’s “Nightmarch,” a foot journey undertaken by Alpa Shah with a group of underground guerillas in eastern India in 2010.

*Nightmarch* begins with useful material covering the introduction of Maoist theory in India in the 1950s and 1960s and the subsequent history of the Naxalite movement, including its various splits and consolidations and its shift in the 1990s from focusing on lower-caste communities to focusing on *adivasi* (indigenous or tribal) regions. The book consists of a series of fairly short chapters covering the phases of Shah’s introduction to the guerillas and the journey itself. Each phase of the journey is used as a stepping off point for discussion of key analytical questions about the Naxalites, which draw on the author’s previous, more strictly academic work on the topic.

Perhaps the most important and original contribution of this book is its exploration of how the Naxalites reached out to tribal communities in eastern India, who became their “core” constituency. The Naxalites were able to provide tribal communities with “governmental” services that the Indian state had failed to provide (such as basic health and literacy), a reformed political economy in which outside middlemen were replaced with locals, and a basic redistribution of access to forest resources. However, a contradiction arose from the way that Naxalite leaders were unable to recognize or build on the egalitarian potential of tribal society—for example, the greater equality between the sexes in tribal villages and norms of sharing and cooperative work. Instead, the mainly upper-caste Naxalite leaders imposed a top-down and rather dogmatic view of “equality,” including anti-alcohol campaigns that were better suited to caste Hindu communities. Put in other words (not Shah’s), the Naxalites were one vector (among others) by which upper-caste puritanism and patriarchy transmitted themselves to tribal villages, echoing much older traditions of caste “improvement” and upper-caste renunciation. This deep analysis is based on Shah’s previous immersive field work in tribal villages.

The book covers other, more familiar contradictions of the movement. I will describe three of them. First, its activities brought about government repression (for example,

Operation Green Hunt) that ended up undermining the movement's goals by enabling the state to remove unwanted tribal people from potential mining sites. In effect, it ended up unintentionally promoting a brand of exploitative resource extractive capitalism. Second, the movement's rigid ideology, insisting on the "semifeudal" nature of Indian society, led leaders to ignore the dynamic nature of work and marginalization among Adivasi and Dalit communities, including their reliance on seasonal work in the brick industry for example. Although mostly unstated, the implication is that the Naxalites could have formed more encompassing coalitions rather than focus on local "class enemies" and "informers." Third, the movement's utopian goals (Shah interestingly links these to traditional Gandhian and renunciatory tropes) inevitably set it up for failure. "Purity" of motivation was hard to maintain for many guerillas as opportunities arose for skimming funds from "taxation" and "protection" schemes (such as threats to blow up pipelines), and in other cases, less scrupulous fighters hived off from the movement to form gangs with no ideological motivation at all. Shah artfully (perhaps too artfully?) uses two characters from the nightmarch to illustrate the "pure" and "impure" tendencies among guerilla leaders.

The book ends with an extremely useful bibliographic essay covering the main trends in the study of the Naxalites over the last few decades. In this essay, it is clear that Shah is trying to occupy a space between those (such as Arundhati Roy) who tend to romanticize the Naxalites as a bottom-up movement of *adivasi* communities and those who see the Naxalites as basically exploitative and parasitic on the real suffering of the marginalized. By focusing on the contradictory nature of Naxalism, Shah avoids these extremes and, ironically, fulfills the demand of one of her Naxalite interlocutors to "be more dialectical" in her understanding of the movement.

This book is aimed at a more popular audience, given its central framing device of the "nightmarch" and its use of vivid and memorable personal descriptions to illustrate broader themes. As such, the book is the only one on the Naxalites that might be appropriate to assign to an advanced undergraduate class. As well as teaching about the Naxalites, it would also introduce students to the contradictions of India's developmental state and to aspects of Indian rural society that are often underrepresented in textbooks. On the other hand, the book is not a comprehensive scholarly account of Naxalism, nor is it intended to be. For example, it does not include much data or comparison of the impacts of Naxalism in different locations or across time. But it may be the most impressive theoretical synthesis on the dynamics and contradictions of Naxalism of the last twenty years.

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*Privileged Minorities: Syrian Christianity, Gender, and Minority Rights in Post-colonial India.* By SONYA THOMAS. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018.

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Contemporary scholars working on Indian Christianity focus almost exclusively on Dalit and other lower-caste communities, which are rightfully framed as marginalized and oppressed. In studies of such communities, the topic of conversion, frequently framed as a response to or protest against oppression, comes naturally to the fore.