



*Footprints in the Bajra* by Nabina Das, Cedar Books, New Delhi, 2010, Pp.263, Rs.175/-

and

*Luck* by Dhruva Hazarika, Penguin India, New Delhi, 2009, Pp. 156, Rs.199/-

Contemporary fictions on Maoism and state violence have taken on a new shape with respect to our times of assimilations and subversions of literary production and market strategies spread around them. What needs to be understood is the fact that how many of such fictions carry the issues of the subalterns when the question of representation acts as a benchmark that involves Maoists as state terrorists and as a class to be discarded at all costs. The writer's spirit here is also radically divided into two camps: the one in full support of the causes for which the fight of Maoists is going on and the other, very interestingly, the way by which this class needs to be represented before a target audience. The South Asian resistance against the state is not the only one of Maoism; it is multi-faceted and heterogeneous. However, the resistance of the Maoists which has recently sprung up in many parts of India, Nepal and other countries do not have a uniform agenda except the anger they keep inside them against the state as the ultimate power mechanism which suppresses them. The book under review *Footprints in the Bajra* by Nabina Das is a good example of this anxiety. The author's attempt here is very balanced, and therefore, is subtle enough to mark any political agenda in that, but apt enough to raise certain questions of the need to carry the revolution forward. The story of Muskaan we encounter in *Footprints in the Bajra* is that of isolation and loosely connected strands of power equations. Outlined in the innards of Bihar where revolutionaries, lumpen elements and counter

revolutionaries assemble, this life has much in common with the encounter of the alien—this alien, who is a sympathizer at all costs from the urban space. The conjunction here seems more philosophical rather than merely ideologically oriented since it has its elements of doubts and dangers lurking in them. In the long run, it is impossible to predict who becomes a prey for what. The realization of Muskaan comes when her dear partners are dissociated. Nora, lovingly called *shehrewali* by Muskaan, is the central character in the text and the real other—from the urban background who intends to do a Creative Writing course from the U.S., a student activist recruited to Maoist struggles and who has a lot sympathy for the cause of Maoists in India. But her sympathies make her more an individual to work with them and encounter dangers which are narrated by Das as more mundane than the duped and media-hyped terrorist attacks in the cities or the derailing of the tracks and the dangers after that. In villages the real fight finds its expression in all forms. The fight assumes certain ethical platforms here.

The text has different narrative strategies. Mainly through the first person narration of Nora the various Naxal gangs including Avadhut's and others are narrated. Then the third person narratives which coalesce with the first elaborate the inner conflicts and psychological condition of characters more powerfully. The first person narrative sometimes paves its way for the other voices to come into the trajectory and by doing so, Das has extensively portrayed the conflicts between the landlords and the landless, or rather those who had become Naxals in the context of the story. The urban J.N.U. student who is innured into this becomes an item for study herself. The clash between the local and urban is the central theme of Das's fiction. The local aspirations portrayed by Suryakant Sahay, a village Head Master and further by the angry sporadic actions of Avadhut and the urban indulging by Nirav, Nora-*shehrewali* and others. What made Nora realize the fate of Naxalism is still a question of wonder as far as the Chinnamasta operation and the fate of the Chabutara landlords are concerned. Her spirited notion of liberation is in one way a step towards her own identity formation in a perplexed world of duping, honour killings and treachery. Though the text has its own voice of the underprivileged, a conflation of different issues of Naxalism concerned with the