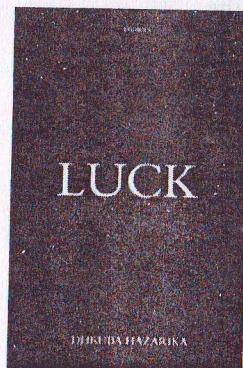


interior regions of Bihar and Nepal has made it a less understandable one of any particular class or ideological positioning.



The second book under review *Luck* by Dhruva Hazarika is a collection of stories, each one of them has an intense message of loneliness and survival; the human territories of imagination are crossed and a visual, animal kingdom wherein everyone becomes the cause of all happenings is offered. Hazarika's characters range from a solitary bachelor who minces his imagination and constructs an alternate life for himself by engaging with the pigeons, to a group of school children who go for their trips. The interplay between the lives of animals, birds and humans is meant to create an auspicious environmental space of living inhabitants and this attempt is a step forward to the rewriting of man/animal existence in our quarters.

*Luck* is the pigeon that undeniably creates another imaginative trope in the mind of the solitary bachelor who loves him. What this bachelor is attempting is the creation of another way of his own life by looking, treating and even absorbing the traumas of existence of *Luck*. A difference between the mundane NGO life, the compressed existence with others including the fisherman Chandan and the pigeons is well brought out in this story. Finally, what makes the solitary bachelor live and love his very existence is the fact that how *Luck*'s descendents surround him. If "*Luck*" is a story of retrieving more into isolation by realizing the life of pigeons and finding meaning in that, "*The Leopard*" is a story of loss. A plain narrative written from the perspective of children who come across the dead leopard, this story brings into focus the disappearance of animals and the incapacity of the forest rangers and others to prevent the death of many such engendered species.

The story of Rattan Deb Barman who has to undertake several challenges to satisfy the insatiable desire of his wife's eating habits is a satire on the public morality of our time. "*Chicken Fever*" is a story in which more than the human indulgence of environmentalism, the subconscious attitudes of flesh and return back to where one stood becomes important.

The 'one-eyed mongoose' and the 'single-barrel gun' of Deb Barman are testify to the inhuman attempt to rule the kingdom of both animal and man. However, this psychological twist of Hazarika is well-expressed in the story "*Asylum*." The distinction between who is kept inside—human or animal is very indistinctive here and the message that all of them will have the same fate is suggested. Dhaniram Dutta's sudden slip towards insanity is his gradual movement toward understanding a better world of words and existence. His passion for everything is centered very much on his imagination of animal kingdom. The story poses the question that whose asylum are we seeking for or who are we supposed to free from the asylum?

Both texts reviewed above have a special message in the recent fiction writing in English. *Footprints in the Bajra* is a serious attempt to engage with the regional as well as the national questions of our time and the perspective followed by Das to study Maoism from the urban attitudes towards villages is a serious matter to discuss when we look at how the elite conflates and mixes with the subaltern class in their struggle toward identity formation and assertion for land. Such an attempt, it seems, is a first in Indian writing in English and must be considered very seriously. Hazarika's stories focus more on the lives of the neglected, where humans themselves are a matter for study and introspection. These stories, despite their insipid portraying of the urban middle class, tend to organize the disorganized rhythms of the same class at the pedestal of communication, which has at its centre, incontrovertibly, the unequal combination of desire and destruction. To read Hazarika, is therefore, like reading Darwin from the last page to the first. Both books need to be taken up for serious reading and discussions.

Krishnan Unni P.