

1968: A Global Perspective

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Naxalbari and its Aftermath

Terror, violence, police brutality, midnight raids, possibilities of freedom ... these are some of the pervading images and ideational categories through which Calcutta continues to respond in powerful yet variegated ways to the year 1968. What ties the year and the cityscape was the eruption of anti-state Maoist political mobilization in the city under the rubric of the Naxalbari movement.

Nabarun Bhattacharyya's Bengali novel *Harbert* (1993) speaks of the complex and compelling ways in which the Naxalbari movement continues to pervade ways of thinking about the category of the 'political' in the quotidian life of the city and its inhabitants. However, the proximity between the events of 1968 and the contemporary moment does not repose in linear contiguity or passive cultural memory that is transposed across time. What is at stake in the novel is the socio-cultural affect of the Naxalbari movement whose traces remain embedded within the city, circulating in altered contexts and diverse temporal instants. This is because the Naxalbari movement and the year 1968 has become a template in Calcutta for anti-statist Maoist politics. Through a reading of the novel *Harbert* as well as through ethnographic field work, this paper seeks to capture the affective dimensions of the 1968 Naxalbari movement that permeates the present cultural and socio-political landscape of Calcutta. In doing so the paper will also address the issue of the neo-liberal trajectory assumed by the Indian nation-state that lends a particular urgency to the political forms of negotiation between the Indian state and its national-subjects ushered in the wake of 1968 Naxalbari movement.