



BOOK REVIEW
“KHOMA KORO HE PRABHU”

Written by Rupak Saha,
Published by Deep Prakashan, Kolkata. Price: Rs: 300.
The Novel was published in 2013

REVIEW OF THE BENGALI NOVEL

AN ASTOUNDING NARRATIVE

Review By
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In the realm of contemporary Bengali Literature, Rupak Saha has carved a niche for himself. Though he is basically recognized as a sport journalist yet his imaginative fiction has earned applause from critics and general readers. He has shown his expertise in the genre of sports journalism, short story and novel. In the field of Bengali sports journalism Moti Nandy was a pioneering figure and Rupak Saha followed in his footsteps. But that doesn't mean that he is a servile imitator. He has an independent aura that has enabled him to move into different parts of the world to cover various sports events. His fictional range is also astounding and the book under review reveals his trademark traits as a novelist.

The Book under review is titled “Khoma Koro he Prabhu” (Forgive, Oh God) is based around the life of the saint Shri Chaitanya who was one of the foremost religious and social reformers of India during the later medieval period. Chaitanyadeva originally belonged to Nabadwip but later on the migrated to Orissa, especially to Puri because of the fear of religious persecution from the Muslim rulers of region. Rupak Saha starts his novel “Khoma koro he Prabhu” (Forgive, Oh God) published in 2013 in such context and makes a wonderful mixture of history, myth and contemporary life. This novel is basically a result of painstaking research about Chaitanya's life but Rupak Saha doesn't merely show his erudition to exhibit his learning or to take the readers by awe and fear. He has shown that a good research- based novel can also be a highly interesting one as the contemporary setting of the 21st century gives it another dimension. There is dearth of good research based books, particularly novels on Chaitanyadeva and this emptiness has been somehow filled up by Rupak Saha and that is also one of the reasons why he deserves credit.



Saha has exhibited a successful blending between subject matter and style and these complement each other. Saha has been able to impart Polyphonic voice to the novel in the Bakhtinian sense of the term. The dialogic discourse manifests itself in the novel as Saha weaves a tapestry of rich narrative. The basic theme of the novel is the mystery of the disappearance of Chaitanyadeva during his time. There is a group of researchers who believe that Chaitanyadeva was murdered by Oriya people as he was bringing a large section of people under his fold because of his reformative zeal.

Many people in Orissa could not tolerate him because they believed that Chaitanyadeva was responsible for the degradation of religious and political life in Orissa.

Rupak Saha chooses four major characters from contemporary 21st century and their names are Gora, Jaydeep, Upasana and Purandar. Gora initially appears as a Dalit leader who wants equality and democratic rights for the Dalits and that is why he has joined a political unit and this fact created some distance between Gora's mother and him.

As the novel proceeds we find the metamorphosis of Gora from a political leader into a religious avatar. Many people take him to be the reincarnation of Chaitanyadeva as he bodily resembles the saint and performs a few miracles that trigger off a huge group of followers to take him into their custody. There is also a group in Orissa which does not like anyone to go for research regarding Chaitanyadeva's life and it is precisely this group that wants to murder Jaydeep and Upasana who are researching about Chaitanyadeva. They are initially followed by the professional murderer Purandar who, however, understands later on that he has been pushed into doing wrong things or has been used as a toy. He does penance and atones for his crime by saving the lives of Jaydeep and Upasana a number of times.

The Novel is full of details about Chaitanyadeva's life but Rupak Saha makes an aspect very transparent - and it is that anybody who does any research about the great medieval saint would run the risk of being eliminated. The glaring example of this fact in the novel is the brutal murder of Upasana and the mysterious death of Sushovon and a few other good people who wanted to unearth Chaitanya's life and the reason of his death. Jaydeep and Upasana are co-researchers and fall in love with each other but before they get married, Upasana is murdered. Upasana's friend Swati consoles Jaydeep but to remind him of pragmatic affairs appears futile. Rupak Saha makes a very curious, interesting and mysterious case study regarding the transformation of Gora from an ordinary individual into a great saint who is even revered by the chief minister of the State.

The characters in the novel have motivation of their own and each works according to his or her design. The four major characters live out their predestined lives and there is no escape route for them. The novel divides the characters into two specific groups- one group reveres Chaitanyadeva and another wants to take revenge upon people who show even any minute interest on Chaitanyadeva's life.



There is intense political rivalry and different groups including foreigners take active role in the narrative of Chaitanyadeva's life. Rupak Saha's credit lies in the fact that he transforms an ordinary narrative into extraordinary heights through a perfect blending of fact and fiction. Saha dramatizes the narrative but he is never out of control. Rupak Saha ends the novel on a passive note but there is transformation and mystery till the very end. Rupak Saha has shown that Chaitanyadeva's life, death and the mystery of his being is still relevant today. Kudos to Saha for constructing such an interesting novel. This novel must be translated into English and various other Indian languages to make it available to a wide spectrum of readers.

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