



JACARANDA
Literary Agency



TRANSLATION
RIGHTS CATALOGUE
2025



Table of Contents

Author Spotlight

Humayun Ahmed
Translated by Arunava Sinha and Shabnam Nadiya.....4

Manoranjan Byapari
Translated by Arunava Sinha.....9

Americani Musafiri, or Travels in America
by Sheth Pirojshah Pestonji Meher-Homji
Translated by Tulsi Vatsal and Aban Mukherji.....12

An Account of the Tangled Stories and Gossip About Pony Masud
as Narrated by the People of Roop Nagar
by Mashiul Alam
Translated by Shabnam Nadiya.....14

Beloved Rongomala
by Shaheen Akhtar
Translated by Shabnam Nadiya.....16

I Named My Sister Silence
by Manoj Rupda
Translated by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar.....19

Khwabnama
by Akhtaruzzaman Elias
Translated by Arunava Sinha.....21

Kita Pergi Hari Ini
by Ziggy Zezsyazeoviennazabrizkie.....23

The Man Who Wasn't There
by Sakyajit Bhattacharya
Translated by Arunava Sinha.....25

The Meat Market and Other Stories
by Mashiul Alam
Translated by Shabnam Nadiya.....27



My Sister, Life by Mahmudul Haque Translated by Mahmud Rahman and Shabnam Nadiya.....	30
Pages and Margins: Diaries of a Dalit Schoolteacher by Madhav Kondvilkar Translated by Prasad Deshpande.....	33
Pakhi Hijrer Biye/'The Wedding of Pakhi, the Hijre by Minal Kanti Dutta Translated by Arunava Sinha.....	39
Paper Marriage: A Novel by Chen Ruoxi Translated by Scott E. Myers.....	44
People from Bloomington by Budi Darma Translated by Tiffany Tsao.....	46
Qabar by K.R. Meera Translated by Nisha Susan.....	48
The River of Ryejeong Kim by Wonshik Woo and Cynthia Jee Yoon Kim Translated by Cynthia Jee Yoon Kim.....	50



HUMAYUN AHMED

All translation rights available, World English ex. Indian Subcontinent sold to Penguin Classics US.

Humayun Ahmed was the most famous and popular author-dramatist-filmmaker in 51 years of Bangladesh's history, including the 10 years following his death. As a novelist, his writing and oeuvre can be compared to Haruki Murakami, having been a wildly popular and best-selling author in his own language. Ahmed too writes about seemingly easily identifiable, "everyday" people, but with a quirky hand that makes things go out of control in ways that defy logic and rationale. His characters are often loners, set on their paths that flow against the social grain, in compelling stories that elude neatly tied up explanations.

Humayun Ahmed wrote in so many different forms and genres that he cannot be boxed. Only individual or groups of works of his can be likened to other work from around the world, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Murakami's *1Q84*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

His family shares that "Humayun Ahmed's work has brought magic to the world of Bengali-reading people for over three decades. Now readers around the world will get a taste of the magic too. As his family, we couldn't be happier."

About the Books

The Misir Ali Series

Two novellas and one short story

1. Debi
2. Another World
3. Brihonnola

This series is the perfect introduction to Humayun Ahmed's work. The Misir Ali series includes the first three books (Debi; Another World; Brihonnola). Misir Ali is one of the most memorable and most popular characters created by Bangladeshi writer Humayun Ahmed. He was introduced to readers in 1985 through the novel Debi (Goddess) and became a stalwart of Ahmed's vast oeuvre appearing in over 20 books.

Misir Ali is a professor of psychology at the University of Dhaka, who dabbles in parapsychology. An eccentric, grumpy man with an abidingly kind heart, he is an uncompromisingly rational person who places his faith in science and logic. He is routinely approached by people who come to him with their odd, often unexplainable problems. Ali spends much of his time debunking supernatural experiences and attempts to solve the problems that are brought to him by his 'clients' by applying the laws of rationality; however, at the same time, he is deeply aware and in awe of the unknowability of the universe. An atheist living in a predominantly religious society, he is not afraid of what others call the supernatural.



Many of his encounters with such incidents end up open-ended, neither proven nor disproven to be supernatural.

The Misir Ali novels are both accessible and perplexing, compulsively readable while making the reader feel rather uneasy, without necessarily going into the territory of genre horror fiction. They gesture towards the unknowability of the human mind, especially the subconscious and unconscious, and create a response of unsettled amazement.

The three books selected here showcase the three streams flowing through the Misir Ali narratives; *Debi* operates solidly in the supernatural sphere, *Another World* introduces some sci-fi elements via the alien planet and its inhabitants that visit the little girl, and *Bribonnola* is seemingly a story of the supernatural until Misir Ali uses his rationalist acumen to present a horrifying but prosaic explanation of what happened.

About Debi

Debi (The Goddess) was published in 1985 and is often referred as one of Humayun Ahmed's notable works. The story has been adapted into numerous stage plays and television dramas by various directors. Most recently, in 2018 the story was adapted into a motion picture by the same name directed by Anam Biswas.

Seventeen-year-old Ranu is married to Anis, who is almost twenty years her senior. She is exceptionally good-looking, which makes her uneasy and melancholy.

Anis dotes on Ranu and they are a happy couple except for one thing; Ranu often wakes up in the middle of the night trembling with fear—she can hear footsteps outside, or someone talking, often gets a whiff of an unusual fragrance or sees silhouettes moving. She seems to forget about the entire episodes once these moments pass.

Anis discusses this with a colleague, who refers him to Misir Ali, a teacher of psychology who investigates the paranormal with sheer reason and no belief in the supernatural. On her first meeting with Misir Ali, Ranu tells him that she gets premonitions in her dreams and these came true in many instances.

What follows is an increasingly baffling journey down repressed memories and desires, and the navigation of inexplicable incidents and experiences. All of it leading to a stunning climax that is both terrorising and hopeful, and open to several interpretations.

About Another World

Misir Ali is visited by a businessman from Mymensingh. His young daughter is having strange dreams/visions and is also behaving very strangely. She is telepathic and, to some extent, can control people's minds. She also has a strange affinity for trees. He asks Misir Ali to come to his house to observe her and figure out how to "cure" her. Misir Ali gradually discovers that her mother, who died soon after she was born, used to claim that the child wasn't human, she was a tree. She is an "experiment" being conducted possibly by an advanced species of tree-like creatures from a different world. In the end she sort of turns into a tree. She, however,



wipes Misir Ali's mind of what he has discovered/pieced together and makes him leave. The twist at the end is that Misir Ali is surprised when he's informed that a man he doesn't know has bequeathed him a house in Mymensingh for some reason. He begins living there with his wife and they have a child. One day, out of nowhere, his wife tells him their son isn't human, he's a tree.

About Brihonnola

The narrator is a university professor called Humayun (as is the case in several Misir Ali books). He visits a rural town for a family wedding and through certain circumstances ends up having to spend the night at a stranger's house. His host, Shudha Kanto is a lifelong bachelor. Shudha Kanto tells him an awful story about finding the dead body of a young girl by the river, who looks exactly like his fiancée who died of a snake bite. The dead body then comes to life and attacks him.

This becomes the narrator's dining-out story; he tells it to great effect at various social events. Eventually the story reaches Misir Ali via a mutual acquaintance. He is so intrigued by the story that he tracks Humayun down with the goal of hearing the story from Humayun himself and wanting to meet Shudha Kanto.

Misir Ali persuades Humayun to take him to Shudha Kanto. He solves the mystery based on several details in the story, but the key detail is that the dead girl bit Shudha Kanto on his ankle, from behind. Misir Ali deduces that she bit him instead of grabbing at or scratching him because the girl's hands were tied behind her back. What had really happened was that Shudha Kanto had abducted a child, raped and killed her, and concocted this terrifying supernatural story to explain the body. Shudha Kanto confesses to them and eventually surrenders himself to the police. The whole story is told in a very low key, no drama manner--very Humayun Ahmed.

February 21 (popularly known among Bengalis as Ekushey) can be considered as a prospective release date for the first book in the Misir Ali series. Recognized by UNESCO as International Mother Language Day in 1999 ("to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world"), the date is of particular significance to Bangladeshis.

In 1952, Pakistani law enforcement opened fire on a protest rally in Dhaka (then part of East Pakistan, which would become Bangladesh after the Liberation War of 1971), killing several people and injuring hundreds. The protest rally was led by Dhaka University students, part of the Language Movement that had coalesced since 1948 when the Pakistani government had declared the West Pakistani language Urdu as the 'state language', ignoring Bengali, the language of East Pakistan, who happened to constitute the majority of the Pakistani state. Since 1972, the first Language Movement Day after Bangladesh became a sovereign nation, February marks the biggest book festival that takes place in Bangladesh. This month-long book fair is when most publishers bring out new books and the venue—the Bangla Academy grounds—is swarmed by readers. Since the eighties, the book fair also became an eagerly awaited rendezvous for Humayun Ahmed fans, as his publisher released his new work this month.



About the Author

Humayun Ahmed (13 November 1948–19 July 2012) was a Bangladeshi author, dramatist, screenwriter, playwright and filmmaker. He was the most famous and popular author-dramatist-filmmaker in fifty-one years of Bangladesh's history, including the ten years following his death.

He wrote over 250 books, almost all of them bestsellers. He enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, a cult following in his country. His fiction ranges over a variety of themes: from the liberation war that led to independence for Bangladesh from Pakistan, to its earlier colonisation by the British; from the dilemmas of individuals, when faced, especially, with love and death, to the unique trajectories of eccentric and comical characters trying to live their lives on their own terms; from a hugely popular series of novels featuring a professor of psychology confronted with seemingly paranormal events, to a detective who works on intuition rather than reason.

After his death, The Times of India wrote that “Humayun Ahmed was a custodian of the Bangladeshi literary culture whose contribution single-handedly shifted the capital of Bengali literature from Kolkata to Dhaka without any war or revolution.” Sunil Gangopadhyay, the popular Bengali writer from West Bengal, described him as the most popular writer in the Bengali language for a century.

About the Translators

Arunava Sinha translates classic, modern and contemporary Bengali fiction and nonfiction into English, and English fiction, non-fiction and poetry into Bengali. He also translates from Hindi into English and Bengali. Ninety-six of his translations have been published so far. Twice the winner of the Crossword translation award, for Sankar's *Chowringhee* (2007) and Anita Agnihotri's *Seventeen* (2011), respectively, the winner of the Muse India translation award (2013) for Buddhadeva Bose's *When The Time Is Right*, and the winner of the Kalinga Literary Festival Book Award for translation (2025), he has also been shortlisted for The Independent Foreign Fiction prize (2009) for his translation of *Chowringhee* and for the Global Literature in Libraries Initiative Translated YA Book Prize for his translation of Md Zafar Iqbal's *Rasha*, and longlisted for the Best Translated Book award, USA, 2018 for his translation of Bhaskar Chakravarti's *Things That Happen and Other Poems*. In 2021, his translation of Taslima Nasrin's *Shameless* was shortlisted for the National Translation Award in the USA. His translation of Sanya Rushdi's *Hospital* has been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and The Stella Prize in Australia in 2024. Besides India, his translations have been published in the UK, the US, and Australia in English, and in several European and Asian countries through further translation. He is a professor of the practice in the Creative Writing department at Ashoka University, and Co-Director, Ashoka Centre of Translation.

Website: <https://arunavasinha.in/>





Humayun Ahmed's works are beguilingly deceptive. On the surface it is all people and their stories, but there is always much more going on, stepping into the uncanny and the unknowable. Translating him for a world readership is both a joy and a challenge.

—Arunava and Shabnam

Shabnam Nadiya is a Bangladeshi writer and translator, settled in California. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, she is the recipient of the Steinbeck Fellowship (2019) for her novel-in-progress *Unwanted*; a PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2020) for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short fiction entitled *The Meat Market and Other Stories*; and the 2019 Himal South Asian Short Story Prize for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short story *Milk*. Nadiya's translations include Shaheen Akhtar's novel *Beloved Rongomala* (Eka/Westland, January 2022), Leesa Gazi's debut novel *Hellfire* (Eka/Westland, September, 2020), and Moinul Ahsan Saber's novel *The Mercenary* (Seagull Books, 2018).

Her original work as well as her translations have been published in: SAAG Anthology, Harpur Palate, The Offing, Joyland, Amazon's Day One, Gulf Coast, Copper Nickel, Wasafiri, Words Without Borders, Asymptote, Al Jazeera Online, Flash Fiction International (WW Norton). Nadiya also served as juror for the PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2017), the National Endowment for the Arts Translation Grant (2018), and the Nevada Arts Council Literary Arts Fellowship (2022).

Website: www.shabnamnadiya.com

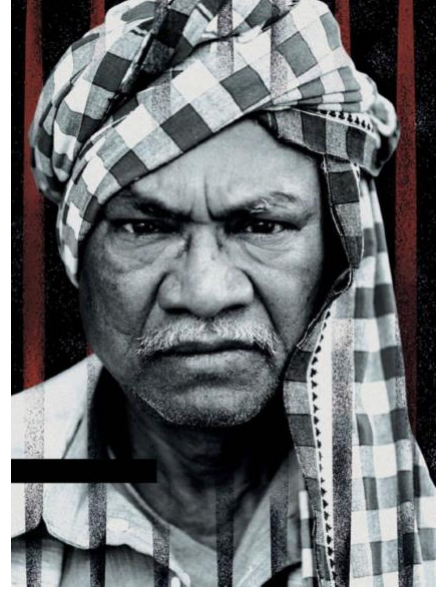




MANORANJAN BYAPARI

All rights available, except Bangla language rights and Indian Subcontinent English rights.

Manoranjan Byapari was born in the mid-fifties in Barishal, former East Pakistan. His family migrated to West Bengal in India when he was three. They were resettled in Bankura at the Shiromanipur Refugee Camp. Later, they were forced to shift to the Gholadoltala Refugee Camp, 24-Parganas, and lived there till 1969. However, Byapari had to leave home at the age of fourteen to do odd jobs. In his early twenties, he came into contact with the Naxals and with the famous labour activist Shankar Guha Niyogi. Byapari was sent to jail during this time, where he taught himself to read and write. Later, while working as a rickshaw-puller in Kolkata, Byapari had a chance meeting with the renowned Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi, who urged him to write for her journal Bartika. He has written twenty-six books since. Some of his important works include Chhera Chhera Jibon, Ittibrite Chandal Jibon (memoir), the Chandal Jibon trilogy (novels) and Motua Ek Mukti Senar Naam. Until 2018, he was working as a cook at the Hellen Keller Institute for the Deaf and Blind in West Bengal.



In 2018, the English translation of Byapari's memoir, Ittibrite Chandal Jibon (Interrogating My Chandal Life), received the Hindu Prize for non-fiction. In 2019, he was awarded the Gateway Lit Fest Writer of the Year Prize. Also, the English translation of his novel Batashe Baruder Gandha (There's Gunpowder in the Air) was shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Literature 2019, the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2019, the Crossword Book Award for Best Translation 2019 and the Mathrubhumi Book of the Year Prize 2020. He was appointed chairman of the newly instituted Dalit Sahitya Akademi in Bengal in 2020. The English translation of his novel Im was shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Literature in 2022. In 2021, Byapari was elected a member to the Bengal Legislative Assembly as a Trinamool Congress candidate.

About the Books

In these two novellas, Manoranjan Byapari draws on his own time in jail to imagine characters and narratives whose origins are in prison. In one, a group of revolutionaries plan a jailbreak even as human relationships play out around them involving the other convicts. In the other, a young man steps out of prison, which he entered as a baby, into the free world outside only at the age of 18, and encounters violence and uncertainty on a scale that makes him wish he was back in jail.

There's Gunpowder in the Air (Batashe Baruder Gandha)

It's the early seventies. The Naxalbari Movement is gathering strength in Bengal. Young men and women have left their homes, picked up arms to free land from the clutches of feudal landlords and



the state, and return them to oppressed landless farmers.

They are being arrested en masse and thrown into high-security jails. In one such jail, five Naxals are meticulously planning a jailbreak. They must free themselves if the revolution is to continue. But petty thief Bhagoban, much too happy to serve frequent terms for free food and shelter, has been planted by Jailor Bireshwar Mukherjee among them as a mole. Only, Bhagoban seems to be warming up to them.

There's Gunpowder in the Air is a searing investigation into what deprivation and isolation can do to human idealism. And Manoranjan Byapari is perhaps the most refreshing voice to emerge from India in recent times.

Praise

'Telling the story of a jailbreak during the Naxal days in Bengal, this novel reminds us of the power of writer-as-witness. Beginning as a series of vignettes in a prison, it builds up, through a narrative of controlled anger and humour, into a devastating critique of what it means to be free. It leaves us with no answers, but just a sense of dread.'

—The Jury



MANORANJAN
BYAPARI

**THERE'S
GUNPOWDER
IN THE AIR**

TRANSLATED BY ARUNAVA SINHA

DSC Prize
South Asian
Literature

There's Gunpowder in the Air

"Written in a crisp prose, at times evocative, the *Gunpowder* is not only a fine work of fiction... equipped with sparks of wit and dark humour... deftly translated by Arunava Sinha, it heralds the re-emergence of the third-person realistic narrative, which, as Byapari demonstrates, can still be explored in many different ways."

- Jury Panel, DSC Prize 2019



Imaan (*Chhera Chhera Jibon*)

SHORTLISTED FOR THE JCB PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2022

Imaan enters Central Jail as an infant—in the arms of Zahura Bibi, his mother, who is charged with the murder of his father and who dies when he is six. He leaves twenty years later, having spent his time thus far shuttling between a juvenile home and prison. With no home to return to, Imaan ends up at the Jadavpur railway station, becoming a ragpicker on the advice of a consummate pickpocket.

The folk of the railside—rickshaw-pullers, scrap dealers, tea-stall owners, those who sell corpses for a little bit of money—welcome him into their fold, but the world of the free still baffles him. Life on the platform is disillusioning, and far more frightening than the jail he knew so well. This free world too is a prison, like the one he came from, only disconcertingly large. But no one went hungry in jail. And everyone had a roof over their heads.

Unable to cope in this odd world, Imaan wishes to return to the security of a prison cell. He is told that, while there is only one door out of prison, there are a thousand through which to return. Imaan—whose name means honesty, conscience—is he up to the task?

Written in Manoranjan Byapari's inimitable style, where irony and wry humour are never too far from bitter truths, this new novel is a searing exploration of the lives of the faceless millions who get by in our towns and cities, making it through one day at a time.

About the Translator

Arunava Sinha translates classic, modern and contemporary Bengali fiction and nonfiction into English, and English fiction, non-fiction and poetry into Bengali. He also translates from Hindi into English and Bengali. Ninety-six of his translations have been published so far. Twice the winner of the Crossword translation award, for Sankar's *Chowringhee* (2007) and Anita Agnihotri's *Seventeen* (2011), respectively, the winner of the Muse India translation award (2013) for Buddhadeva Bose's *When The Time Is Right*, and the winner of the Kalinga Literary Festival Book Award for translation (2025), he has also been shortlisted for The Independent Foreign Fiction prize (2009) for his translation of *Chowringhee* and for the Global Literature in Libraries Initiative Translated YA Book Prize for his translation of Md Zafar Iqbal's *Rasha*, and longlisted for the Best Translated Book award, USA, 2018 for his translation of Bhaskar Chakravarti's *Things That Happen and Other Poems*. In 2021, his translation of Taslima Nasrin's *Shameless* was shortlisted for the National Translation Award in the USA. His translation of Sanya Rushdi's *Hospital* has been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and The Stella Prize in Australia in 2024. Besides India, his translations have been published in the UK, the US, and Australia in English, and in several European and Asian countries through further translation. He is a professor of the practice in the Creative Writing department at Ashoka University, and Co-Director, Ashoka Centre of Translation. Website: <https://arunavasinha.in/>





AMERICANI MUSAFIRI or, TRAVELS IN AMERICA

by

Sheth Pirojshah Pestonji Meher-Homji

Translated by
Tulsi Vatsal and Aban Mukherji

All rights available except Gujarati language rights.

About the Book

Americani Musafari (*Travels in America*), a diary written in Gujarati by Sheth Pirojshah Pestonji Meher-Homji, records his two-month sojourn in America in 1862. This is one of the earliest records of American life as seen through Indian eyes. Meher-Homji gives us a fascinating glimpse of America during the Civil War, and an idea of its technological, industrial, and educational progress.

In the preface, the publisher (Daftar Ashkara Press) bemoans the fact that “the people in our country do not know even half as much about this part of the world as they do about Europe,” and hopes that this book will serve as an inspiration to Indians and Americans alike.

Hardly anything is known about the author of *Americani Musafari*, one of the earliest Indians to record his travels in America. The diary he kept of his two-month journey to the U.S. in 1862 was published anonymously by the Daftar Ashkara Press in Mumbai in 1864. It is only through a brief report in Parsee Prakash of January 21, 1864, that we learn that the author of the diary was a Parsi gentleman, Sheth Pirojshah Pestonji Meher-Homji, and that he travelled on the “gigantic steamer Great Eastern” from Liverpool to New York, along with his companion, Dossabhai Framji Cama, on July 1, 1862.

The diary gives us a rare glimpse of America, seen through Indian eyes, at a time when the Civil War was raging. Meher-Homji’s travels took place while the war was in its second year, and the visitors were caught up in the feverish excitement that had gripped the land. They attended a war meeting in Milwaukee; and heard Colonel Corcoran’s address to a gathering of ten thousand in Washington.

Meher-Homji was so struck by the speech delivered by Governor Yates in Chicago, on August 1, which was reported the following day in The Tribune, that he translated it into Gujarati. It is surprising with what ease he and his companion were able to get permission to visit the Arsenal at Pittsburgh, and even obtain an audience with President Lincoln at the White House in the middle of a raging Civil War. Impressed by the President’s unassuming manner, Meher-Homji remarks: “In one part of the world, it is almost impossible to meet even the lowest official, while in another, we were easily able to meet the highest official of the land.”



Meher-Homji's diary reveals that he was wealthy. He travelled first-class on the luxury liner, Great Eastern; took a servant with him, and stayed at hotels like Fifth Avenue in New York, and Donegan's Hotel in Montreal, where, he tells us, Prince Jerome of France once stayed.

The travellers visited tourist sites such as Niagara Falls that left them in awe, and made Meher-Homji exclaim: "We gave our thanks to God for all the wondrous sights we had seen and wondered how much would it cost humans to create such a waterfall?"

Meher-Homji and Dossabhai Cama took a particular interest in the technological and industrial advancements made by the Americans. They spent hours at the Patents Office in Washington, and the iron foundry in Pittsburgh. Meher-Homji also describes at length their visits to charitable institutions such as the Remand Home in Philadelphia, the Perkins Institute for the Blind, and the School for the Deaf and Dumb. He ruefully confides to one gentleman that "our poor deaf-and-dumb countrymen are not as fortunate as you; in fact, even those who have no disabilities do not get the same kind of education as you do." He is very impressed with the fact that 'in this country, education for both girls and boys is widespread.'

Both travellers were impressed by the advanced means of transport. Meher-Homji describes the Swing Bridge between Davenport and Rock Island that "can be raised for passing ships," and is amazed by how an entire train is shunted onto rail tracks on a roll-on roll-off ferry and taken to the other side of a river or lake.

The diary entries are often frustratingly brief and matter-of-fact. Yet they are peppered with telling observations, often tinged with a sense of humour. In Saratoga, while the travellers waited at the railway station, a "Christian priest came up and asked our servant whether he knew any padres in Mumbai. He then asked in Gujarati, 'What brings you here?' Our servant replied, 'You padres in Mumbai are busy converting everyone to Christianity, so we are going from country to country to find a safe place to hide.' The priest burst out laughing."

About the Author

Apart from the fact that Meher-Homji travelled to America, there seems to be very little information about Meher-Homji's life. From an entry dated March 3, 1877 in *Parsee Prakash* (which quotes *The Times of India* of March 5, 1877), we learn that Meher-Homji was an entrepreneur. On March 3, Pirojshah Pottery Works, a factory to manufacture a variety of enamel ceramic vessels and other decorative items which he had set up, was inaugurated by Sheth Behramji Jijibhai C.S.I. in the presence of a large crowd. Jijibhai applauded the efforts of Sheth Pirojshah and his partners. Speeches were then delivered by Sheth Muncherji Camaji, Dr. Thomas Balennyand others, wishing the company success. A few days later, on March 20, Sir Philip Wodehouse, Governor of Bombay, visited the factory and was very pleased to see it running so well. He urged the citizens of Mumbai to encourage such enterprises in the future. Meher-Homji was one of the first three trustees, along with Ardeshtir Cursetji Wadia and Dadbhai Naoroji, of Europena Zarathostinu Dharamnu Khatu, the present-day Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.



**AN ACCOUNT OF THE TANGLED STORIES
AND GOSSIP ABOUT PONY MASUD
As Narrated By The People Of Roop Nagar**

by

Mashiul Alam

Translated by
Shabnam Nadiya

All translation rights available except Indian Subcontinent English rights and Bangla rights.

About the Book

“Pony Masud’s mother Laili Begum dreamed that her son’s chest was riddled with bullets; hot air was pulsing out of the holes in his lungs, and she could hear the call of, “Ma! Ma!” coming from that air.”

Daybreak dreams—supposedly—come true. So is Pony Masud dead or not? There is his mother's dream, and then there are the newspaper reports of “Pony Majid” being killed by RAB, the law enforcement agency known for its extrajudicial killings or “crossfires.” It’s too much of a coincidence that there are *two* political thugs with the moniker Pony and Majid is close enough to Masud; it’s probably a typo and the crossfire death in the news is really for Pony Masud, small time political goon grown bigger than his small town roots.

From there, the story backtracks to the formation and rise of Pony Masud, his personal history as well as his professional one, presenting us with a brutal but accurate snapshot of the violent, vicious, and corrupt world of Bangladeshi politics, and the simultaneously apathetic and helpless complicity of the average citizen. This fable-like novella, originally published as *Ghora Masud* (Horse Masud) documents the rise of a small-town thug through the corrupt practices of power hungry local elites including the local officials, politicians and others; but the apathy and helpless anger voiced by the regular townspeople resonate to his interview-based pieces with shopkeepers, farmers, and everyday folks from the rural reaches.

All of these stories are set in our everyday world yet are shot through with magical and/or surreal elements. The approach his non-realist fiction takes, by creating a sense of unease, of disruption, is unique in Bangladeshi literature. Mashiul Alam is a writer who, whether in his journalistic work or in his fiction, is sounding an alarm to allow us to see the shadows hidden by the shining story of the rising GDP. Alam’s writing wanders varied genre territory, straddling the literary and genre divide, which is not very common in Bangladesh. Alam moves with ease between the real, the unreal, the



magic real, and the surreal. All of it in service to the visceral and brutal reality of the contemporary world. His is a unique voice, one which deserves to gain a much wider readership.

About the Author

Mashiul Alam was born in northern Bangladesh in 1966. He graduated in Journalism from the Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow in 1993. Currently he works at Prothom Alo, the leading daily in Bangladesh. He is the author of a dozen books including *Second Night with Tanushree* (a novel), *Ghora Masud* (a novella), *Mangsher Karbar* (*The Business of Flesh*) (short stories), and *Pakistan* (short stories).

He has written short stories, novels, journalistic pieces, and YA books. His work has a broad range—from science fiction to surreal fantasies to political satire. His characters exist with the same ease in a dystopian futuristic Bangladesh with strictly controlled reproductive practices, to a Bangladeshi small town beset with corrupt local politics, to the claustrophobic days during an army coup and assassination (i.e. the killing of President Ziaur Rahman in 1981), to South Asian student communities in the Soviet Union during Perestroika.

About the Translator

Shabnam Nadiya is a Bangladeshi writer and translator, settled in California. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, she is the recipient of the Steinbeck Fellowship (2019) for her novel-in-progress *Unwanted*; a PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2020) for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short fiction entitled *The Meat Market and Other Stories*; and the 2019 Himal South Asian Short Story Prize for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short story *Milk*. Nadiya's translations include Shaheen Akhtar's novel *Beloved Rongomala* (Eka/Westland, January 2022), Leesa Gazi's debut novel *Hellfire* (Eka/Westland, September, 2020), and Moinul Ahsan Saber's novel *The Mercenary* (Seagull Books, 2018).

Her original work as well as her translations have been published in: SAAG Anthology, Harpur Palate, The Offing, Joyland, Amazon's Day One, Gulf Coast, Copper Nickel, Wasafiri, Words Without Borders, Asymptote, Al Jazeera Online, Flash Fiction International (WW Norton). Nadiya also served as juror for the PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2017), the National Endowment for the Arts Translation Grant (2018), and the Nevada Arts Council Literary Arts Fellowship (2022). For more: www.shabnamnadiya.com





BELOVED RONGOMALA

by

Shaheen Akhtar

Translated by
Shabnam Nadiya

All rights available, except Indian Subcontinent English rights and Bangla rights.

About the Book

Beloved Rongomala is Bangladeshi writer Shaheen Akhtar's third novel. Akhtar's position in Bangladeshi literature was cemented with her award-winning second novel *Talaash* which gave voice to the rape survivors of the War of Independence. The rape survivors are typically presented as victims, their lives defined by their trauma. *Talaash* moved beyond that to portray a more nuanced and complex story. Mariam, the survivor, is a fully-realized, flawed character, instead of a glorified type, and her situation—before her abduction and after her rescue—is more complicated than the usual evil-Pakistanis/good-Bangladeshi-liberators war narratives.

Akhtar's work overall takes the approach of giving voice to those who historically have had none, and making those voices subtle, far-reaching, and human in ways that defy stereotypes or mere victimhood. In the short story *The Makeup Box*, a young woman scours the city towing the corpse of her sex-worker sister because no graveyard grants a sex-worker permission for burial; in *The Atheist*, a young woman realizes she has never known her grandmother's name—her failure in discovering the name leads an exploration of the loss of self that traditional marriage is for most women; *She Knew the Use of Powdered Pepper*, through a precise rendering of how trauma can compromise a person's ability to recall, blurs the lines of consent, coercion, categorizations, and raises urgent questions regarding tidy histories of war.

In *Beloved Rongomala*, Akhtar turns the assassination of the mistress of a small king, a footnote in the history of eighteenth-century Bengal, into an exploration of class, caste, and gender. The story of Rongomala and Raj Chandra Chowdhury, mostly ignored by formal historians, lives on in local traditions. Akhtar discovered several versions (in the forms of pala gaan (a call and response musical form), rural theatre, and others) during her research for her three volume compilation of representations of women in Bengali literature, as well as the lake still named after Rongomala, and the ruins of the Chowdhury palace, now no more than rubble. Akhtar chose one version of events, based on the pala gaan Chowdhury Lorai (Chowdhury's Battle), but in a characteristic twist, turned it into Rongomala's story, so instead of the high-ranking men taking centre stage, it is the women who come to the fore.



Synopsis

The novel follows the rise and fall of Rongomala, a beautiful and charismatic low-caste woman who becomes the mistress of Raj Chandra Chowdhury, a zamindar or high-caste feudal landlord. The zamindar's womanizing allows his uncle Rajendra Narayan Chowdhury to rob the small kingdom of Babupur blind and allows him to conspire towards a takeover. Between the zamindar's obliviousness and the sly uncle's avarice, Babupur becomes enmeshed in inevitable war with a neighbouring kingdom. Rongomala gets caught in the palace conspiracy that eventually leads to her assassination.

Shokhi Rongomala is peopled with unforgettable characters: the autocratic queen- mother Sumitra trying to save the kingdom from the vagaries of the menfolk; the young queen Phuleswari with her bird menagerie and generous soul; Heera Dashi, high ranking maid in the royal household, who becomes a key player; feckless zamindar Raj Chandra, courting destruction; the larger than life Muslim zamindar Inga Chowdhury, who promises support to Raj Chandra; and, of course, Rongomala, whose aspirations are forever stymied by her low birth. All these women learn to rise beyond their circumstances to wield power in different ways. Traveling from the feuding fiefdoms in southern Bengal, to holy sites in the east, to the flamboyant matriarchal society of Burma, Shokhi Rongomala is a story of identity and connection: even in the face of Rongomala's assassination and Phuleswari's loss of all, what endures is Phuleswari's sense of sisterhood with Rongomala.

The translator, Shabnam Nadiya's introduction to Akhtar's writing was through *Talaash*; She was immediately enamoured of her prose style as well as the deftness with which she flouted expectations. The protagonist, Mariam, a wartime rape survivor, had a sexual life before and outside of marriage which is presented sans any moral judgment—unusual enough in Bangladeshi literature, but especially noteworthy in that the book offered no hapless virginal victim to ease the reader into sympathy. Nor does it offer easy villains: the first man to help her could easily be termed a collaborator; the first man to betray her is a freedom fighter. The book raised uncomfortable questions, as does *Beloved Rongomala*. For instance, both Rongomala and Raj Chandra flout social conventions related to caste and marriage. Yet it is Rongomala, and Phuleswari, who pay the ultimate price—one loses her life, the other her sanity. Society is quite willing to look away when Raj Chandra beds Rongomala, the low-caste woman; it is only when she forgets her place, by asking to go on a grand pilgrimage, by asking to have a pond cut in her name, that morality is outraged.

In translating Nadiya seeks to find a balance between meaning and ease: she tries to hew close to the text while making it accessible to a non-Bengali audience. *Beloved Rongomala* in particular, is steeped in the diverse local traditions of southern Bangladesh. This is more than a question of mere language; at times it is necessary to translate cultural cues and contexts. For instance, in a scene where the chief handmaiden brings in a Mullah to perform a 'cure' on the ailing young queen, to the majority of source language readers, merely the name of the man and his presence is weighted and fraught with the several layers of transgression: a man in the women's quarters, a Muslim man in the inner quarters of a Hindu household, a low-class Muslim man in the inner quarters of a Hindu royal household. For the Western reader, cues are given through careful tweaking of the text, e.g. the Mullah is 'smuggled in' instead of 'brought in,' windows are 'quickly shuttered' instead of merely shut.



About the Author

Shaheen Akhtar is the author of five novels and four short story collections. In 2004, her novel *Talaash* won the Prothom Alo Book of the Year award. The English translation of *Talaash* (The Search, trans. Ella Dutta) was published by Zubaan in New Delhi in 2011.



Akhtar was presented with the Sera Bangali 2014 award in the field of literature by India's leading Bengali news channel ABP Ananda. She received the Akhteruzzaman Elias Katha Shahitya Prize for her novel *Moyur Shinghason* and the Bangla Academy Literature Award for fiction. Her work has been translated into English, German and Korean. She has just received the Asian Literature Award.

About the Translator

Shabnam Nadiya is a Bangladeshi writer and translator, settled in California. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, she is the recipient of the Steinbeck Fellowship (2019) for her novel-in-progress *Unwanted*; a PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2020) for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short fiction entitled *The Meat Market and Other Stories*; and the 2019 Himal South Asian Short Story Prize for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short story *Milk*. Nadiya's translations include Shaheen Akhtar's novel *Beloved Rongomala* (Eka/Westland, January 2022), Leesa Gazi's debut novel *Hellfire* (Eka/Westland, September, 2020), and Moinul Ahsan Saber's novel *The Mercenary* (Seagull Books, 2018).

Her original work as well as her translations have been published in: SAAG Anthology, Harpur Palate, The Offing, Joyland, Amazon's Day One, Gulf Coast, Copper Nickel, Wasafiri, Words Without Borders, Asymptote, Al Jazeera Online, Flash Fiction International (WW Norton). Nadiya also served as juror for the PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2017), the National Endowment for the Arts Translation Grant (2018), and the Nevada Arts Council Literary Arts Fellowship (2022). For more: www.shabnamnadiya.com





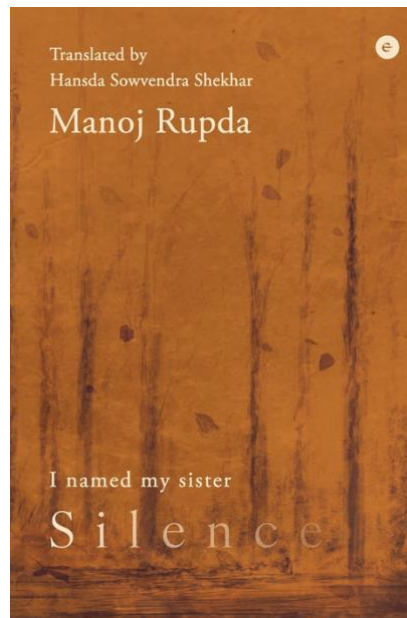
I NAMED MY SISTER SILENCE

by

Manoj Rupda

Translated by
Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar

All translation rights available, except Indian Subcontinent English rights and Hindi language rights.



About the Book

**Translated from the Hindi original *Kaale Adhyaay*
Shortlisted for the 2023 JCB Prize for Literature**

Irma Madavi is a young, Gond woman who lives in a village in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. The Gond are one of the largest Adivasi communities in India. The land where Irma Madavi has her roots is in a crossfire. On one side, there are atrocities upon Adivasis by the corporate-government nexus; on the other side, there is armed rebellion by Adivasis to protect their land and lives from the said corporate-government nexus.

Irma Madavi is a silent, unassuming girl who does household work and collects fruits, leaves, and other produce from the forest. She works hard and saves enough fund to send her half-brother, who is seven years younger than her, to study at an engineering college in Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh state.



When the brother has completed his education and is capable of standing on his own two feet, he learns that his sister has left the house and gone into the forest. When the brother rushes to the village, he hears rumours about his sister and sees their community broken and divided between two factions: one faction siding with the corporate-government nexus, the other with the rebels.

Determined, the brother goes looking for his sister; and, in doing so, witnesses sordid incidents of injustice and deception, and learns about the various types of violence.

About the Author

Manoj Rupda is based in Nagpur (Maharashtra) and writes in Hindi. He is the author of the novels, *Kaale Adhyaay* (of which *I Named My Sister Silence* is a translation) and *Pratisansaar*; the collections of stories, *Dafan tatha Anya Kahaniyan*, *Saaṛ-Naasaaṛ*, *Aamaazgaah*, *Tower of Silence*, and *Dus Kahaniyan*; and a book of essays, *Kalaa Ka Aaswaad*. He is a recipient of the Indu Sharma Katha Puraskar and the Vanmali Katha Samman.

About the Translator

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar has written fiction and non-fiction in English — including the novels, *My Father's Garden* (shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Literature and a Sahitya Akademi Award) and *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey* (longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award, shortlisted for a Crossword Book Award and The Hindu Prize, and winner of a Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar); the collection of short stories, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* (#1 bestseller on Amazon India and shortlisted for The Hindu Prize); and pieces published in *The New York Times*, *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, *The Times of India*, *The Asian Age*, *The Caravan*, *Mint Lounge*, *OPEN*, *Outlook*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Indian Quarterly*, *Fifty Two*, *Scroll*, and other places — and translated fiction, non-fiction, and poetry from Santali, Hindi, and Bengali to English, the translations having been published in *Asymptote*, *Usawa Literary Review*, *Indian Literature*, *Poetry at Sangam*, and other places. “Tower of Silence”, a story by Manoj Rupda, translated from Hindi by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, has been accepted for publication in *The Dalhousie Review*.

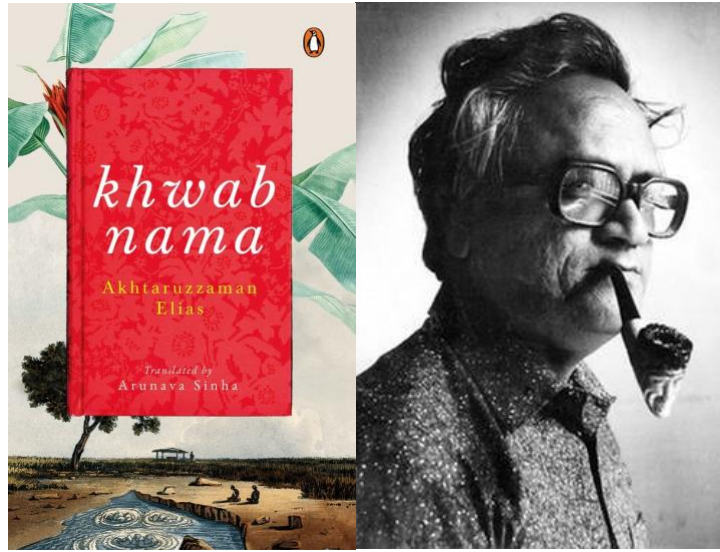


KHWABNAMA

by

Akhtaruzzaman Elias

Translated by
Arunava Sinha



All translation rights available except Indian Subcontinent English rights and Bangla language rights.

About the Book

Bengal in the 1940s. Having overcome the famine and the revolt of the sharecroppers, Bengal's peasants are uniting. Work is scarce and wages are low. There is barely any food to be had. The proposal for the formation of Pakistan, the elections of 1946, and communal riots are rewriting the contours of history furiously. Amidst all this, in an unnamed village, a familiar corporeal spirit plunges into knee-deep mud. This is Tamiz's father, the man in possession of Khwabnama.

At first glance, Khwabnama is the tale of a harmless young farmhand who becomes a sharecropper and dreams of a future that has everything to do with the land that he cultivates and the soil that he tills. The fabric of his dreams, though, have as much to do with the history of the land as its future, and as much to do with memories as with hope. In this magnum opus, which documents the Tebhaga movement, wherein peasants demanded two-thirds of the harvest they produced on the land owned by zamindars, Akhtaruzzaman Elias has created an extraordinary tale of magical realism, blending memory with reality, legend with history and the struggle of marginalized people with the stories of their ancestors.



About the Author

Akhtaruzzaman Elias (1943–97) was a Bangladeshi novelist and short-story writer who, despite writing only two novels, is regarded by most critics as being part of the pantheon of great Bengali authors. Chilekothar Sepai (1987) detailed the psychological journey of a man during the turbulent period just prior to Bangladeshi independence in 1971, and offered an unrivalled depiction of life in Puran Dhaka, the old town.

Khwabnama (1996) depicts the sociopolitical scene in rural pre-partition Bangladesh. His many awards include the Bangla Academy Award for Literature (1983), the Kazi Mahbubullah Gold Medal (1996) and the Ekushey Padak (posthumously, 1999).

About the Translator

Arunava Sinha translates classic, modern and contemporary Bengali fiction and nonfiction into English, and English fiction, non-fiction and poetry into Bengali. He also translates from Hindi into English and Bengali. Ninety-six of his translations have been published so far. Twice the winner of the Crossword translation award, for Sankar's *Chowringhee* (2007) and Anita Agnihotri's *Seventeen* (2011), respectively, the winner of the Muse India translation award (2013) for Buddhadeva Bose's *When The Time Is Right*, and the winner of the Kalinga Literary Festival Book Award for translation (2025), he has also been shortlisted for The Independent Foreign Fiction prize (2009) for his translation of *Chowringhee* and for the Global Literature in Libraries Initiative Translated YA Book Prize for his translation of Md Zafar Iqbal's *Rasha*, and longlisted for the Best Translated Book award, USA, 2018 for his translation of Bhaskar Chakravarti's *Things That Happen and Other Poems*. In 2021, his translation of Taslima Nasrin's *Shameless* was shortlisted for the National Translation Award in the USA. His translation of Sanya Rushdi's *Hospital* has been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and The Stella Prize in Australia in 2024. Besides India, his translations have been published in the UK, the US, and Australia in English, and in several European and Asian countries through further translation. He is a professor of the practice in the Creative Writing department at Ashoka University, and Co-Director, Ashoka Centre of Translation.



Website: <https://arunavasinha.in/>



KITA PERGI HARI INI

by

Ziggy Zezsyzaeoviennazabrizkie

All rights available, except Indonesian language rights.

About the Book

Nobody likes children. Yet, people keep making them. In a desperate attempt to find childcare, Mr & Mrs Mo employed Nonna Gigi, who's a nanny and also a Cat. Mi, Ma, and Mo find themselves in a magical childhood filled with dancing shadows, visits to the moon, buttery baguettes, train rides and popcorns, and secret island of the Cats.

But, as it's been said, nobody likes children.

Based on the living superstition that progeny means prosperity, this novel telescopes into the social, economic, and psychological effects of natalism in Indonesia. Belying its light-hearted tone and playful treatment of the subject, KPHI expands the scope of the novel beyond a single household, or a single story, especially in an urban setting. Examining the societal pressures of reproduction and parenthood and the consequent victimisation of children as an effect, this story, in the vein of Reda Gaudiamo, Dee Lestari, and Lee Pamuntjak, offers a sobering reality turned on its head.

Synopsis

Mr and Mrs Mo of Boisterous Borough are at their wit's end. They have three young children, jobs, and no childcare. Their parental leaves are ending, and no solution is in the horizon—until it presents itself at the very last second in form of an Out-of-Ordinary Cat who calls herself Nonna Gigi.

From then on, the three children of Mo family—Mi, Ma, and Mo—grow under the care of their strange and magical cat nanny. One day, she invites the three children and their new friends, Fifi and Fufu, to visit her hometown in the Out-of-Ordinary Floating Island of the Out-of-Ordinary Cats. They take a trip in the Train of Thoughts and visits the Sad Circus where they witness gruesome and gory acts and acrobats, and nearly drown themselves in the tent. The children survive and take one final trip before arriving at the capital of the Floating Land.

In the Floating Land is a civilisation built by Out-of-Ordinary Cats, where they live as humans do. Amused by the magical land, the children spend a night at Nona Gigi's tavern and set to venture the city the following morning. Mi and Fufu discover an abandoned train that's littered with children's bones. Ma and Fifi find taxidermy of humans. Mo finds himself in a trading dock that sells fried human ears as a snack. The children realise the horror of the Floating Land and attempt to return to



their homes in Boisterous Borough. During the escape, Fifi is captured, but the other four children successfully return home, only to have their story dismissed as a dream, and to discover that their parents have plotted to leave them in the Floating Land all along.

About the Author & Translator

Ziggy Zezsyzzeviennazabrizkie is an Indonesian writer. She won Jakarta Arts Council Novel Writing Competition in 2014 and 2016, was longlisted for Khatulistiwa Literary Awards 2015, won Prose of the Year 2017 from Ministry of Education and Culture, received Rolling Stone Indonesia Editor's Choice Award in 2017, and was nominated for Tempo Magazine Book of the Year 2022 and 2023. Her short stories have been translated into English and Japanese. In 2023, she won PEN Presents from English PEN for her work *Kita Pergi Hari Ini*.





THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

by

Sakyajit Bhattacharya

Translated by
Arunava Sinha

All rights available except Bangla language rights.

About the Book

A whodunit in not one but three senses...

In 2018, Tanaya, an investigative journalist in New Delhi, is concluding her popular series on unsolved Indian crimes with a mysterious murder from 44 years ago in Darjeeling, West Bengal. The murder stemmed from a feud between two childhood friends, both writers. Arun, a crime novelist, was suspected after the other writer, Amit, a poet who accused him of paying to publish his work, was found dead. Despite being arrested, there wasn't enough evidence to convict Arun, and the murder remained unsolved.

Tanaya's work doesn't aim to solve the crime but to recreate the incidents. She tries to meet Arun, who initially refuses but eventually agrees. The narrative reveals Tanaya's personal connection to the case through her late father and her upbringing in Kolkata.

Darjeeling, with its foggy, rain-soaked atmosphere, blurs reality and truth. In a dramatic confession, Arun admits to the murder but withholds details, urging Tanaya to solve it for herself using a manuscript from an unfinished detective novel by Amit. This subplot, set in an undefined earlier time, echoes the real-life mystery, involving a closed-door murder and a feud between estranged friends.

While initially reluctant, Tanaya reads the manuscript, gaining insights. She interviews those connected to the old case, including a former police chief, Daniel, notorious for brutally killing political radicals. She is joined in her exploration by Arun's intrigued nephew Siddhartha who is visiting from Dublin.

As Tanaya pieces together possible scenarios, she is under constant surveillance, hinting at ongoing danger for her. A personal connection emerges as it turns out she discovered Amit's poetry in Kolkata, which ties her to the case in more than one way.

The novel operates on three levels: the present investigation, the historical crime with its political and literary undertones, and the fictional detective story, which provides crucial clues. Progressing through twists and turns, Tanaya drafts a solution, only to discover inconsistencies forcing her to rethink.



Eventually, she unveils a shocking truth: Amit wasn't the murder victim. He was an earlier victim of Daniel's extrajudicial police killings, and Arun orchestrated an elaborate hoax, murdering a hired gardener and falsely identifying him as Amit, aiming to expose the police chief.

The novel combines a gripping murder mystery against the atmospheric backdrop of Darjeeling with richly drawn characters whose actions reveal intricate motivations shaped by personal and historical contexts.

About the Author

Born in 1982 and a statistician by profession, Sakyajit Bhattacharya started writing in 2002, mainly in Bengali "little magazines." He has published some forty short stories and nine novels in Bengali, including *Ekhane Derek Bose Ache*, *Ekanore*, *Shesh Mrito Pakhi*, and *Rakkhoser Ghorbari*, a collection of short stories. He is interested in horror, detective and weird literature along with Catholic art. *Ekanore*, translated into English as *The One-Legged*, was shortlisted for the 2024 JCB Prize for Literature.

About the Translator

Arunava Sinha translates classic, modern and contemporary Bengali fiction and nonfiction into English, and English fiction, non-fiction and poetry into Bengali. He also translates from Hindi into English and Bengali. Ninety-six of his translations have been published so far. Twice the winner of the Crossword translation award, for Sankar's *Chowringhee* (2007) and Anita Agnihotri's *Seventeen* (2011), respectively, the winner of the Muse India translation award (2013) for Buddhadeva Bose's *When The Time Is Right*, and the winner of the Kalinga Literary Festival Book Award for translation (2025), he has also been shortlisted for The Independent Foreign Fiction prize (2009) for his translation of *Chowringhee* and for the Global Literature in Libraries Initiative Translated YA Book Prize for his translation of Md Zafar Iqbal's *Rasha*, and longlisted for the Best Translated Book award, USA, 2018 for his translation of Bhaskar Chakravarti's *Things That Happen and Other Poems*. In 2021, his translation of Taslima Nasrin's *Shameless* was shortlisted for the National Translation Award in the USA. His translation of Sanya Rushdi's *Hospital* has been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and The Stella Prize in Australia in 2024. Besides India, his translations have been published in the UK, the US, and Australia in English, and in several European and Asian countries through further translation. He is a professor of the practice in the Creative Writing department at Ashoka University, and Co-Director, Ashoka Centre of Translation.



Website: <https://arunavasinha.in/>



THE MEAT MARKET

Ten stories and a novella

by

Mashiul Alam

Translated by
Shabnam Nadiya

All rights available except for Indian Subcontinent English rights (Westland India) and Bangla language rights.

About the Book

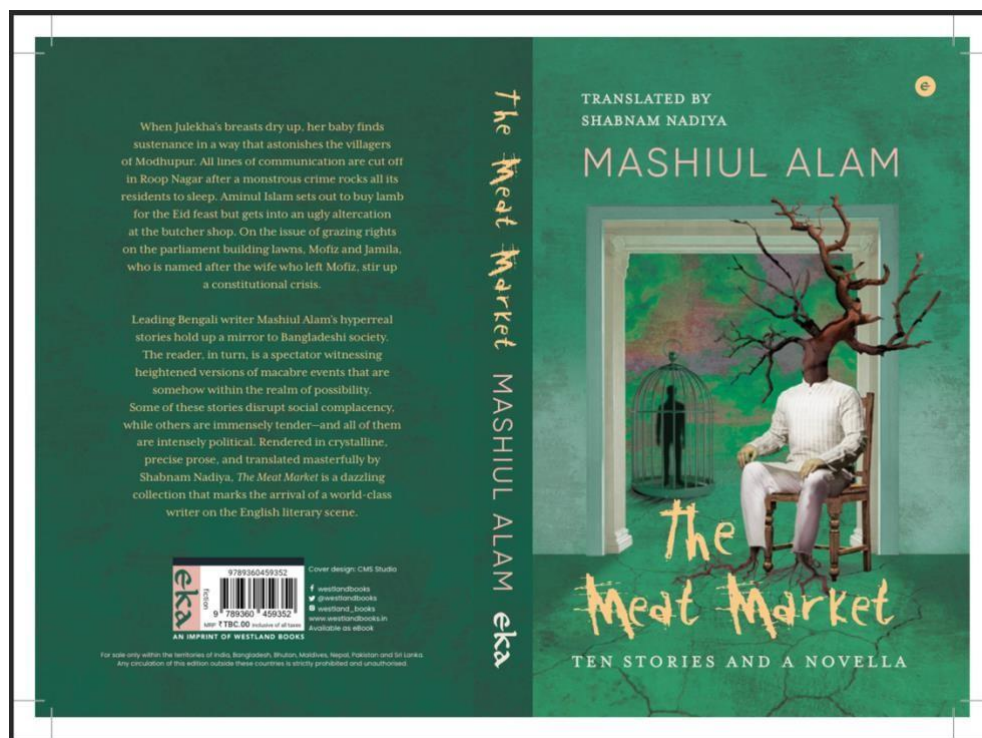
The Meat Market exemplifies the brutal, base nature of contemporary consumerist society: people only know how to slaughter, how to eat, how to belch. Yet alongside that, he has a story like *Milk*, which, despite the abject lives described, propels the reader towards a sense of wonder. The approach his non-realist fiction takes, by creating a sense of unease, of disruption, is unique in Bangladeshi literature. Alam's writing wanders varied genre territory, straddling the literary and genre divide, which is not very common in Bangladesh. Alam moves with ease between the real, the unreal, the magic real, and the surreal. All of it in service to the visceral and brutal reality of the contemporary world. His is a unique voice, one which deserves to gain a much wider readership. His work is quite unique in how they move with ease among the real, the unreal, the magical real, and the surreal.

All of these stories are set in our everyday world yet are shot through with magical and/or surreal elements. This volume includes: *Jamila*, who braves the jeers and the ogling of people as she runs desperately searching for food for her child, until the reader realizes that Jamila is a cow, and her murder precipitates a political crisis; in *Akali's Journey*, a farm laborer from the famine-ridden northern region of Bangladesh, travels to a district which has jobs and an abundance of rice; in *Field Report from Roop Nagar*, an oddity of widespread somnolence is a result of brutal crime; in *Underpass*, a young man leaves his house to go somewhere and three men begin walking with him; it's never clear whether he's being abducted, where he is headed, whether he intends to return or who the men are, but his journey continues. The fable-like novella, originally published as *Ghora Masud* (Horse Masud) documents the rise of a small-town thug through the corrupt practices of power hungry local elites including the local officials, politicians and others; but the apathy and helpless anger voiced by the regular townspeople resonate to his interview-based pieces with shopkeepers, farmers, and everyday folks from the rural reaches.

Leading Bengali writer Mashiul Alam's hyperreal stories hold up a mirror to Bangladeshi society. The reader, in turn, is a spectator witnessing heightened versions of macabre events that are somehow within the realm of possibility. Some of these stories disrupt social complacency, while others are immensely tender-and all of them are intensely political. Rendered in crystalline, precise



prose, and translated masterfully by Shabnam Nadiya, *The Meat Market* is a dazzling collection that marks the arrival of a world-class writer on the English literary scene.



The Meat Market and Other Stories was awarded a PEN/Heim Grant in 2020 and one of the translated stories from the collection (title: Milk) won the 2019 Himal Short Story Competition. The PEN/Heim jury said in their statement, “The encounters between ordinary people in these stories career into the unexpected and surreal in ways that leave the reader speechless, while also strangely comforted by the possibility of alternate realities in everyday life.”

Published stories from this collection:

- Milk, Himal Best Short Story contest
- The Underpass, Aleph Review
- The Cuckoo Keeps Calling, SAAG Anthology
- An Indian Citizen Came to Our Town, Words Without Borders
- The Meat Market, Asymptote

About the Author

Mashiul Alam is a writer and translator who was born in northern Bangladesh in 1968. He studied journalism at the Peoples’ Friendship University in Moscow during the late eighties and early nineties. A journalist by profession, he worked at Prothom Alo, the leading Bengali daily in



Bangladesh, for many years. He is the author of over a dozen books including *The Second Night with Tanushree* (novel), *Ghora Masud* (novella), *Mangsber Karbar (The Meat Market)* (short stories), and *Pakistan* (short stories). He has also translated Dostoevsky (from Russian to Bengali) and Bertrand Russell. Alam was awarded the debut Sylhet Mirror Prize for Literature (2019), the IFIC Bank Literature Prize (2020) for his fiction, and the Panjeri-BTF Literary Translation Award (2024) for his translation of Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground*. His short story *Doodh*, translated as *Milk* by Shabnam Nadiya, was awarded the 2019 Himal Southasian Short Story Prize and Shabnam Nadiya's translation of his work entitled *The Meat Market and Other Stories* was awarded a 2020 PEN/Heim Translation Grant. He was also a Resident Fellow at the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. He is currently working on *Laal Akash (Red Sky)*, a novel set in the Soviet Union during Perestroika. His short story "An Indian Citizen in Our Town" (translated by Shabnam Nadiya) was published in Words Without Borders' 2013 Bangladesh feature.

He has written short stories, novels, journalistic pieces, and YA books. His work has a broad range—from science fiction to surreal fantasies to political satire. His characters exist with the same ease in a dystopian futuristic Bangladesh with strictly controlled reproductive practices, to a Bangladeshi small town beset with corrupt local politics, to the claustrophobic days during an army coup and assassination (i.e. the killing of President Ziaur Rahman in 1981), to South Asian student communities in the Soviet Union during Perestroika.

About the Translator

Shabnam Nadiya is a Bangladeshi writer and translator, settled in Philadelphia. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, she is the recipient of the Steinbeck Fellowship (2019) for her novel-in-progress *Unwanted*; a PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2020) for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short fiction entitled *The Meat Market and Other Stories*; and the 2019 Himal South Asian Short Story Prize for her translation of Mashiul Alam's short story *Milk*. Nadiya's translations include Shaheen Akhtar's novel *Beloved Rongomala* (Eka/Westland, January 2022), Leesa Gazi's debut novel *Hellfire* (Eka/Westland, September, 2020), and Moinul Ahsan Saber's novel *The Mercenary* (Seagull Books, 2018).



Her original work as well as her translations have been published in: the W.W. Norton collection *Flash Fiction International*, *The Best Asian Poetry 2021-22*, the New York Public Library's *Pocket Poems* series, *SAAG Anthology*, *Harpur Palate*, *The Offing*, *Joyland*, Amazon's *Day One*, *Gulf Coast*, *Copper Nickel*, *Wasafiri*, *Words Without Borders*, *Asymptote*, *Al Jazeera Online*, *Flash Fiction International* (WW Norton). Nadiya also served as juror for the PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2017), the National Endowment for the Arts Translation Grant (2018), and the Nevada Arts Council Literary Arts Fellowship (2022). For more: www.shabnamnadiya.com



MY SISTER, LIFE

by

Mahmudul Haque

Translated by

Mahmud Rahman and Shabnam Nadiya

All translation rights available except for Bangla language rights.

About the Book

Mahmudul Haque's novel *Jibon Amar Bon* is one of the most significant works of fiction from Bangladesh. The title of the novel was a tribute to Pasternak's poem, "My Sister, Life."

Jibon Amar Bon was written in 1972 right after Bangladesh became independent in December 1971, and it was first published in the Eid supplement of the magazine Bichitra in 1973. It came out in book form in May 1976 and has always remained in print.

The importance of this book is consistently recognized by writers and scholars in Bangladesh—and now abroad. This year, the translation-in-progress was awarded a National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) Translation Grant in the US. In Bangladesh, reviews published in Bengali attest to the significance of this novel. As a recent example, [Roar Media](#), an online cultural initiative for South Asia launched in Sri Lanka, carried a review of the book by Naholy Akashlina on May 28, 2021. It observed, "Though *Jibon Amar Bon* is a novel about the time of the liberation war, it is not a novel about the war. Rather it goes beyond the borders of time and country and becomes a narrative of eternal freedom." In conclusion, the review states, "Above all the novel presents a new vision against traditional consciousness and beliefs. That vision succeeds in opening our third eye. It teaches us to think anew about the country, about the real independence of the country."

Over a decade ago, the writer and critic Ahmad Mostofa Kamal compiled a list of the Bangladeshi novels he considered as essential reads. This list included Mahmudul Haque's novels *Kalo Borof* (Black Ice, trans. Mahmud Rahman, Harper Collins India, 2012) and *Jibon Amar Bon*. He placed these books alongside better-known ones like Syed Waliullah's *Lalushalu* and Akhteruzzaman Elias's *Khwabnama*.

Written right after the war, the unsentimental approach to the Bangladesh liberation movement adopted by the book is striking. Mahmud Rahman writes, "*Jibon Amar Bon* has a special place in my heart because I lived in Dhaka during the March days depicted in the book; I was one of



those young activists in the movement that Khoka the narrator treats with scorn...I was keen about exploring the persona of a character like Khoka in those tumultuous days of 1971. Mahmudul Haque focused much of his writing on the alienated self of the Bangladeshi male in the landscape of independent Bangladesh, both those who engaged in the war and those who did not. This book provides a glimpse of the psyche of a self that did not take part in the war, a glimpse that would be more developed in his novels set in the post-independence times.”

About the Author

Mahmudul Haque (1941-2008) was one of Bangladesh’s premier prose stylists, the author of ten novels and dozens of stories. He spent his childhood in Barasat near Kolkata and moved with his family to Dhaka soon after the British left and the subcontinent was partitioned. In 1977, he won Bangladesh’s premier literary prize, the Bangla Academy Literary Award, and in 2023 the Academy published the complete works of Mahmudul Haque in four volumes.

Note from Translator

Shabnam Nadiya wrote about this novel in an essay published in the Translation Review (Volume 80, 2010 - Issue 1):

“For each novel, Haque meticulously crafted a prose style suited to the story. *Jibon Amar Bon* is lyrical, depending on the internal music of the spoken word to communicate the protagonist Khoka’s inner world to the reader; a language that contrasts sharply with the external world of turmoil.

“Post-war disillusionment is perhaps inevitable; but the delineation of Khoka’s pre-war apathy was the first attempt to capture a consciousness that ran counter to the glorious nationalist narrative being constructed. With the world around him exploding in the passion of protest against Pakistani domination, Khoka remains disdainful. Seemingly oblivious, Khoka fits in nowhere and his choice is to remain enmeshed in his life of friends (whose impassioned debates make him think of the futility of humans); his beloved sister Ranju; Nila Bhabi, the woman of his desire. Yet hinted through the mirror of this detachment is a dire imagining of post-war Bangladesh of easy money, elaborate corruption, and a burgeoning middle-class bent on grabbing opportunities provided by “public sentiment.”

“Khoka’s detachment is destroyed when he loses his sister to war; life leaves none untouched, despite our illusory distance. We don’t know how Ranju dies, for Khoka’s recall lacks clarity. All we know is Khoka’s mistake: “All he had wanted was for Ranju to survive... His sad country could never have given Ranju the right to live.”



“The novel’s power lies in its uncertainty: if Khoka’s choice allowed no escape, what is the value of that choice? But in post-war Bangladesh (a fearful vision culminating in his later novel *Matir Jahaj*, *The Earthen Ship*), what difference could any choice make? The book leaves the reader with a deep sense of discomfort and no answer; perhaps in the world that Mahmudul Haque constructs, there can be none.”

About the Translators

Mahmud Rahman was born in Dhaka, in what was then East Pakistan. His writing life began at twelve when he hammered out — with the help of a jerry-rigged Royal typewriter — six carbon copies of a newspaper and pasted them on the walls of his school in old Dhaka. He came of age in the midst of the upsurge of the late sixties that led to the creation of Bangladesh. During the 1971 war, he was a refugee in Calcutta. In his adult life, he has lived in US cities including Boston, Detroit, Providence and Oakland. He has worked as a factory worker, data entry operator, community organizer and database support techie. Since the early nineties his writing focus has shifted largely to fiction. The stories in his first book *Killing the Water* were mostly completed between 1996 and 2008. During part of that time, he completed an MFA in creative writing from Mills College.

Shabnam Nadiya is a Bangladeshi writer and translator, settled in Philadelphia. A graduate of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, she is the recipient of the Steinbeck Fellowship (2019) for her novel-in-progress *Unwanted*; a PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2020) for her translation of Mashiul Alam’s short fiction entitled *The Meat Market and Other Stories*; and the 2019 Himal South Asian Short Story Prize for her translation of Mashiul Alam’s short story *Milk*. Nadiya’s translations include Shaheen Akhtar’s novel *Beloved Rongomala* (Eka/Westland, January 2022), Leesa Gazi’s debut novel *Hellfire* (Eka/Westland, September, 2020), and Moinul Ahsan Saber’s novel *The Mercenary* (Seagull Books, 2018).



Her original work as well as her translations have been published in: the W.W. Norton collection *Flash Fiction International*, *The Best Asian Poetry 2021-22*, the New York Public Library's *Pocket Poems* series, *SAAG Anthology*, *Harpur Palate*, *The Offing*, *Joyland*, Amazon’s *Day One*, *Gulf Coast*, *Copper Nickel*, *Wasafiri*, *Words Without Borders*, *Asymptote*, *Al Jazeera Online*, *Flash Fiction International* (WW Norton). Nadiya also served as juror for the PEN/Heim Translation Grant (2017), the National Endowment for the Arts Translation Grant (2018), and the Nevada Arts Council Literary Arts Fellowship (2022). For more: www.shabnamnadiya.com



PAGES AND MARGINS: DIARIES OF A DALIT SCHOOLTEACHER

by

Madhav Kondvilkar

Translated by **Prasad Deshpande**

All English and translation rights available, except for Marathi language rights.

About the Book

Madhav Kondvilkar's Maharashtra State Award-winning autobiography, *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane*, is a magnum opus that not only portrays his life and career as a young Dalit teacher in a rural Indian town, but is also a feat of form and narrative, producing a literary autobiography that is entirely composed of diary entries.

The narrative blends personal experiences with sharp social commentary, offering a poignant exploration of caste discrimination, rural life, and human resilience, especially the plight of Dalit women through hunger and systemic neglect. The diary format lends an immediacy and intimacy to the storytelling, drawing readers into the protagonist's world and vividly depicting the psychological toll of caste-based oppression.

This book masterfully combines three literary forms autobiography, diary, and novel into a seamless and innovative narrative. Presented as a diary, it functions as an autobiography while adopting the depth of a novel. In essence, it is a Dalit's autobiographical novel, but there is nothing fictional about the events it narrates. The book portrays the life of a Dalit primary school teacher with stark realism and unflinching honesty. The narrator's experiences of humiliation, suffering, and resilience are so vivid and real that one literary critic remarked, "He seems to write, not in ink, but in his own blood".

The protagonist's journey is marked by despair, humiliation, neglect, and acute emotional pain. Particularly poignant is the pain of being ostracised by his own caste members. While the upper-caste villagers reject him, the envy and hatred he faces from his own community cut even deeper. As a result, the narrator becomes an outsider in his own hometown, doubly marginalised by both upper-caste society and his own people.

The book vividly portrays the hardships faced by a Dalit family. It documents the protagonist's struggles to read, write, and pursue his creative aspirations amid poverty and systemic discrimination. The diary also captures the nauseating reality of the cobbler's trade, including carrying and tanning animal skins. The psychological and sociological insights into caste-ridden rural society are



devastatingly realistic, offering a raw and unfiltered view of the enduring legacy of caste in independent India.

As one literary critic aptly noted, “The narrator takes the torch of protest in his hand but holds himself in check; he does not let the torch in his mind burn to fight against the age-old customs and traditions around him.” This tone of restrained despair permeates the entire book, embodying the authentic Dalit experience during the early phase of Dalit literature in India.

Upon its release, *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane* was lauded for its groundbreaking portrayal of Dalit life. The book received the Maharashtra State Government Award and garnered rave reviews from acclaimed authors and critics in Marathi literature. Its enduring significance lies in its ability to blend artistic expression with an unvarnished depiction of systemic injustice, making it a cornerstone of Dalit literature.

About the Author

Madhav Kondvilkar (1941–2020) was a celebrated writer in Marathi literature whose illustrious career spanned nearly five decades. His life and work remain an enduring testament to the power of storytelling as a tool for social justice and representation. Tragically, he passed away in 2020 due to a COVID-19 infection.

Kondvilkar’s literary journey began with his groundbreaking autobiographical novel, *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane*. Published in 1979 by Majestic Prakashan, Mumbai, this work holds the distinction of being the first autobiography of an Indian Dalit writer in Marathi. Structured as a diary, it chronicles the author’s life from 1969 to 1977, providing a deeply personal and unflinching portrayal of the struggles faced by Dalits in India. Initially serialized in the Diwali magazine Tanmay in 1977, the novel received widespread acclaim, earning the prestigious Maharashtra State Award for Best Literature in 1984.



The book’s impact extended far beyond Marathi literature. It was translated into Hindi (Antyaj) and French (Inde: Journal d'un Intouchable), the latter by Dr. Guy Poitevin. *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane* continues to resonate with readers and scholars alike, forming part of the MA curriculum at



Indian universities and inspiring numerous PhD dissertations. Kondvilkar also authored four sequels to this novel, each of which received critical acclaim.

Born into the Chambhar (Cobbler) caste in the Konkan region, Kondvilkar experienced the systemic injustices of casteism firsthand, despite the legal abolition of the caste system. These experiences deeply influenced his writing, particularly during his early career as a schoolteacher in his hometown, where he faced caste-based discrimination.

Over his lifetime, Madhav Kondvilkar authored approximately 60 books, spanning a variety of literary forms, including novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and children's literature. His works often highlighted the pain and resilience of marginalized communities, including Dalits, labourers, and the working class. His portrayals of life in Mumbai and Konkan remain vivid and poignant.

Among his notable contributions are biographies of influential figures such as Samrat Ashok, Gautam Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Swami Chakradhar, and Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde. Many of his writings continue to be published posthumously, ensuring his legacy endures.

Here are some of Madhav Kondvilkar's most notable works, which have received significant recognition:

- Mukkam Post Devache Gothane – Maharashtra State Government Award for Best Literature
- Kalaa Tya Kalachya – Mumbai Marathi Granthsangrahalay Award
- Haatachi Ghadi Tondavar Bot – Best Novel of the Year Award (Maharashtra State Government) and Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad Award (Pune)
- Dale – Maharashtra State Government Award for Best Literature
- Mukkam Post Devache Gothane: A Play – Best Drama Award by Janasaraswat Public Library, Amravati

Through his evocative poetry, gripping stories, and deeply impactful novels, Madhav Kondvilkar gave voice to the struggles and aspirations of India's most marginalized communities, leaving an indelible mark on Marathi literature and beyond.

Full Synopsis

Mukkam Post Devache Gothane is the first autobiography by an Indian Dalit writer, published in Marathi. Chronicling the author's life over seven years and three months, from November 17, 1969, to February 2, 1977, the book is presented in diary form. Initially published in the Diwali magazine Tanmay in 1977, it was later published as a book by Majestic Prakashan, Mumbai, in July



1979. Notably, this preceded the publication of Daya Pawar's *Baluta* (1978), often regarded as the first Dalit autobiography in Marathi.

The narrative begins with the protagonist, Madhav, returning to his hometown, Devache Gothane, in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra's Konkan region. The town consists of twelve small wadis (settlements) located close to one another. Madhav, a primary school teacher with over ten years of experience, is finally transferred to his hometown, which fills him with joy as he can now live with his family: his parents, younger brother Tukaram, sister-in-law, and niece. However, his happiness is short-lived. Madhav belongs to the Chambhar (Cobbler) caste, traditionally engaged in leatherwork and historically treated as "untouchable". Despite 25 years of Indian independence and the legal abolition of untouchability, caste discrimination remains deeply entrenched in the social fabric of rural Konkan. Madhav's family endures extreme poverty, and the stigma of their caste shadows their daily lives.

Amidst these struggles, Madhav finds solace in his passion for reading and writing. He eagerly collects books and magazines and spends whatever little he can spare to pursue his creative aspirations. However, his circumstances provide little peace of mind, stifling his creative impulses. His job requires him to walk 10-12 miles daily to school, leaving him physically drained. At school, the headmaster records his caste in the register, making him feel alienated. Assigned to a local school in Sogamwadi, his own settlement, Madhav faces a particularly humiliating form of caste discrimination. Students, believing their teacher's touch pollutes them, bathe in the stream after school to "cleanse" themselves. Deeply hurt, Madhav writes about this practice in a newspaper, sparking outrage among the townspeople. Instead of supporting him, his own Chambhar community criticises him for challenging entrenched caste norms.

In an attempt to ease his daily struggles, Madhav searches for rental accommodation near the school, but no upper-caste family is willing to rent a room to a Dalit. Eventually, a Chambhar family agrees to house him, but with ulterior motives - they want Madhav to marry their illiterate daughter. When he refuses, the family begins harassing him.

Despite these hardships, Madhav finds a literate bride, Usha, who shares his passion for literature and supports his aspirations. However, even after their marriage, the landlord's harassment intensifies, prompting Madhav to seek a transfer away from his hometown.

Amidst these personal and professional struggles, Madhav and Usha welcome their daughter, Sonia. During a visit to Mumbai, Sonia falls critically ill, and only Madhav's upper-caste friends come to his aid, arranging urgent medical care for the child. This incident underscores the complex intersections of caste and humanity, as Madhav continues to grapple with systemic discrimination while forming meaningful relationships across caste lines.



Ultimately, Madhav's relentless efforts to transfer out of his oppressive hometown bear fruit. After seven years of enduring humiliation and hardship, he secures a transfer to a larger town, where he hopes to find a life imbued with human dignity and cultural richness. Despite the bitterness of his experiences, the book concludes on a cautiously optimistic note, with Madhav holding onto the hope of a better future.

Note from the daughter of the author

I grew up watching my father, Madhav Kondvilkar, pour his heart and soul into writing. Balancing his day job as a primary school teacher and the responsibilities of caring for our family, he still found the time and energy to devote himself to his true calling - writing. Day in and day out, he would sit with his pen and paper, channeling his thoughts and emotions into words. My father was born and raised in a small Indian village called Devache Gothane in the Indian state of Maharashtra in 1941. He was born into a poor cobbler family, whose assigned duty was to serve the so-called upper-caste villagers by repairing or making shoes. His humble beginnings and firsthand experience of systemic caste-based discrimination deeply shaped his worldview and fueled his lifelong mission to fight against social inequalities. Writing became his way of making sense of the world and advocating for change.

He firmly believed that books were not just companions but teachers, and that education was the key to rising above poverty, ignorance, and injustice. He instilled in me and my elder sister Sonia the values of humility, independence, and awareness. Over a span of 50 years, my father wrote 59 books, dedicating his life to literature until his final breath. His autobiography, *Mukkam Post Devache Gothane*, gave him recognition as an author and earned the Maharashtra State Award for Best Literature in 1984. Notably, it is the first-ever autobiography of an Indian Dalit writer published in Marathi. This landmark work has also been translated into Hindi and French languages, reaching audiences beyond its original linguistic and cultural boundaries.

One of my father's greatest wishes was to see this work translated into English so it could reach a wider audience. He wanted readers across the globe to experience his journey and decide for themselves the merit of his writing. Unfortunately, he passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving this dream unfulfilled. I promised my father that I would carry his legacy forward and ensure his autobiography is translated into English, published, and shared with the world. This is not just a project for me - it is a deeply personal mission to honour my father's life, his struggles, and his dream.

The experiences portrayed in this book, rooted in the painful realities of the Indian caste system, date back 50 years. Yet, the book remains strikingly relevant today, as caste-based discrimination persists - not only in Indian villages but also at institutional level in India and abroad, as documented and critiqued in the public domain. This autobiography can serve as a thought-provoking tool for Indian



and non-Indian readers alike, offering a lens to assess and reflect on the deep repercussions of the caste system on the functioning and mindset of individuals and communities. It carries the potential to act as a lighthouse for those who may carry the caste system's divisive ideologies with them, wherever they go across the globe.



PAKHI HIJRER BIYE
or THE WEDDING OF PAKHI, THE HIJRE
The Novel

by

Minal Kanti Dutta

Translated by
Arunava Sinha

All rights available except Bangla language rights.

About the Book

Pakhi Hijrer Biye is an unique and important book. It details the crisis in transgender rights, while highlighting important issues and raising awareness about the same. While it does not mince words about the aggressive transphobia that is widespread throughout society, it does not confine transgender people to the status of victims. They are depicted, instead as complex characters who persevere and seek to mould their own agency in the face of great adversity. It neither romanticises nor pathologises the transgender experience, but provides a detailed and intimate picture of transgender life. It is also laudable for its unflinching discussions on transgender sexuality, with important ramifications for LGBTQI+ activism at large. Many of the views on gender and sexuality vocalised by the characters display the confusion in ideas even within the community.

This novel is a neglected modern classic.

Synopsis

The novel starts with the birth of the eponymous Pakhi, named Bipasha by her family; and the time leading up to her birth. Bipasha is born intersex, and assigned “transgender” at birth. Although her family is initially distraught by the revelation, they are protective of her and are determined to raise her well. The family is wary of the possibility that their child might be taken away by members of the *hijre* community.

As Bipasha grows up, her first encounter with discrimination occurs when she is nine, and wins a gold medal at a national running competition. This medal is taken away because she is outside the gender binary. Despite her family’s best efforts, details of her gender identity are gradually revealed to other people. Among these people are a *hijre* community, whose members are determined to claim Bipasha for themselves. Their efforts are foiled with help from the police, but they still hover around.

Still, Bipasha remains shielded from the reality of her gender identity, through her mother’s careful manoeuvring. She is simply told that there is an issue with her genitalia, which impedes her ability to



run by affecting her lungs, and that she will need surgery later. Her parents do actually seek medical help to consider the possibility of corrective surgery, but abandon their plans when they are told that this could put their daughter's life at risk.

The first part of the novel gives us a picture of Bipasha as a beloved child in a conventional middle-class Bengali family, whom her parents try their best to protect. The depiction of Bipasha's childhood ends with the birth of a baby brother.

The story picks up again ten years later, when Bipasha is a student of Sociology at Presidency College. Her boyfriend Shouvik asks her to marry him before he goes off to England for further studies. She agrees, and even meets his parents. When she tells her own family, however, they finally inform her of her gender identity, and how her indeterminate genitalia would keep her not only from having children, but also from sex with her husband.

Although Bipasha is confident Shouvik will not call off the wedding over the former, he walks away from her when he gets to know. Members of the *hijra* community who had wanted to claim Bipasha ten years ago catch wind of the news, and show up to her house to explain to her and her family how she can still participate in conjugal life. Her grandmother is particularly horrified at the details of queer sexuality revealed to her, and Bipasha is advised to stay celibate. She, however, finds this life unbearable. Alongside the revelation, she undergoes a sexual awakening, and ultimately runs away from home to join the *hijra* community. This is because they inform her she can easily find a husband once she lives with them. Bipasha's separation from her family is painful to both her and them. She leaves behind a note, and her mother considers herself to have failed in her mission to keep her daughter with her.

Bipasha enjoys a privileged position in her new community. She is appointed disciple to the *gurumaa*, Dinu. Her entry into their life is celebrated through a grand party, and she is relieved of many of the responsibilities that characterise the life of the younger members of the community. This section of the novel is full of detailed insight into the lives of the members of the community – their customs, their parlance, their societal codes and organisation, their mythology, their syncretic religious practices and the like.

Various members of the community also reveal their life histories to Bipasha, now named Pakhi. Most members of the *hijra* community are transgender women, who were assigned male at birth. Those like Pakhi, born without "male" genitalia, are considered a precious rarity. The stories of the other members reveal accounts of horrific abuse, both within and outside their own community. Within the community, it is the hierarchal organisation that makes them vulnerable to abuse from their elders. Abuse also occurs at the hands of their male lovers, where even the eldest and most respected members of the community find themselves victimised. One's appearance also significantly impacts one's prestige within the community, as it affects the ability to generate income. Details of the members' lives outside the community are rife with episodes of sexual exploitation, trafficking and societal humiliation.

For a while, Pakhi finds herself entrusted with the charge of the *hijra* quarters, as the elderly Dinu embarks on a much awaited pilgrimage to Ajmer Sharif. In her absence, one of the members, Binita, undergoes castration and ends up dying. This heart-wrenching episode, and the abuses that the



community members hurl upon their dead to keep them from being re-incarnated in the same state, provide closure to the second part of the novel.

In the next section, we see Pakhi performing at the Mona Lisa bar. She had received training in singing and dancing from teachers appointed for her by her *gurumaa*. Pakhi is growing increasingly displeased at not having found a lover yet. She had been told by another member that they were not allowed by the elders to have lovers, but that she might expect an exception in her case. Dinu tries to brush away Pakhi's concerns, but ultimately says that she, like the other members, was also not supposed to have lovers.

Pakhi falls in love with a musician named Arjun at the bar where she performs. Arjun proposes to her after a show, and she accepts. While they are together, Dinu shows up with her group members and beats them up. They lock them up inside the room where they had been found. Pakhi and Arjun end up contacting the bar owner, and ultimately the police, to save themselves.

At the police station, Dinu and her community members are made to promise to never attack, or seek to capture, Pakhi again, after which Pakhi and Arjun elect to arrive at a truce with them. The couple has an impromptu wedding at a temple, and then he takes her home to his family. They are told that the impromptu wedding was necessitated by Pakhi's parents' determination to marry her off to somebody else.

Dinu, meanwhile, vows to trouble Pakhi wherever she goes. So she shows up at Pakhi's in-laws' place when her husband is away, and reveals Pakhi's gender identity to them. When Arjun returns home, his parents tell him to either leave Pakhi, or leave with her. He chooses the latter, and the two go to Pakhi's maternal grandmother's house. While Pakhi's paternal grandmother had disdained her sexuality, her maternal grandmother had been supportive, and told her that she could come to her house with her husband once she was married.

Dinu had, long ago, stealthily obtained details about this grandmother's residence. She shows up to threaten Pakhi and Arjun with legal action, while also abusing the grandmother who had remained supportive to Pakhi all along. Dinu tells the police how Pakhi's conjugal life was in violation of Article 377. A police officer calls the couple to the station, but Pakhi makes an excellent case for herself and wins his sympathies. She explains that the law was made in ignorance of queer sexuality, and with the presumption that sexual union should necessarily be for conception of children. Given Dinu's repeated attacks, Pakhi and Arjun decide they need to leave the city. They move to the slums of Mumbai, where they continue performing at bars. Dinu and her group make show up there as well. They demand a large sum of money, and publicise Pakhi's gender identity, leaving her vulnerable.

After this Pakhi and Arjun decide they need to not only move cities again, but also change professions. Arjun takes up driving and the two move to Delhi, living in the slums there as well. However, Dinu also comes to know of this, and engineers an accident to attack Arjun. Arjun survives, but the two are so tired of living in constant fear that they decide to die by suicide. They even celebrate the end to the reign of terror before they are supposed to hang themselves to death. However, Pakhi has a sudden brainwave and returns to Kolkata with Arjun. She goes off to meet Achintya, Dinu's lover, and unleashes Dinu's tactics on him, demanding money not to disclose the



affair. Asked why she was acting like this, Pakhi relates the harassment that Dinu had been subjecting her and her husband to. Achintya has previously been contacted about this once, but had refused to intervene. The new threat forces him to act this time around.

He tries to convince Dinu to make peace with Pakhi. Dinu is, however, unrelenting and brushes off the threat of his being jailed if things come out in the open. Achintya is furious, and a physical fight follows. He severs all ties with Dinu, which causes her immense grief. He also demands that their quarters be shut down.

Pakhi, however, intervenes here, and expressed her objections. She says because of Article 377, these quarters were the only safe space for members of the *hijra* community. She suggests instead an improvement in living standards, a relaxation of the hierarchical structure, and a more democratised and inclusive space. Dinu admits that the years of running the quarters had hardened her and made her cruel. She offers Pakhi the position of the *gurumaa*, which she declines.

Pakhi proposes, instead, that the quarters be made two-storied, and that all members be allowed to live with their lovers. She also asserts that the quarters were the one place that members of their community could possibly live in peace. The novel concludes with the community members testifying to their own ability to build a better future for themselves within the confines charted out for them by a deeply discriminatory society.

About the Author

Mrinal Kanti Dutta was born in 1962. The son of a sex worker of the Kalighat area of Kolkata, he completed his school education but had to drop out of the college because of his mother's profession. From the age of 30, he was involved with social work for sex workers. Although he did not acknowledge it, he was a transgendered person, who used his personal experiences to write this novel, which is his only published work. He died in 2015 at the age of 53.

About the Translator

Arunava Sinha translates classic, modern and contemporary Bengali fiction and nonfiction into English, and English fiction, non-fiction and poetry into Bengali. He also translates from Hindi into English and Bengali. Ninety-six of his translations have been published so far. Twice the winner of the Crossword translation award, for Sankar's *Chowringhee* (2007) and Anita Agnihotri's *Seventeen* (2011), respectively, the winner of the Muse India translation award (2013) for Buddhadeva Bose's *When The Time Is Right*, and the winner of the Kalinga Literary Festival Book Award for translation (2025), he has also been shortlisted for The Independent Foreign Fiction prize (2009) for his translation of *Chowringhee* and for the





Global Literature in Libraries Initiative Translated YA Book Prize for his translation of Md Zafar Iqbal's *Rasha*, and longlisted for the Best Translated Book award, USA, 2018 for his translation of Bhaskar Chakravarti's *Things That Happen and Other Poems*. In 2021, his translation of Taslima Nasrin's *Shameless* was shortlisted for the National Translation Award in the USA. His translation of Sanya Rushdi's *Hospital* has been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and The Stella Prize in Australia in 2024. Besides India, his translations have been published in the UK, the US, and Australia in English, and in several European and Asian countries through further translation. He is a professor of the practice in the Creative Writing department at Ashoka University, and Co-Director, Ashoka Centre of Translation.

Website: <https://arunavasinha.in/>



PAPER MARRIAGE: A NOVEL

by

Chen Ruoxi

Translated by **Scott E. Myers**

All rights available except Mandarin language rights.

About the Book

Paper Marriage is a 1986 novel written by Taiwanese author Chen Ruoxi. To English readers, she is best known for her short story collection, *The Execution of Mayor Yin*, which was published in English translation in 1978. Written in the first-person voice, Paper Marriage takes the form of a diary written by a woman from Mainland China who emigrates to the United States and enters into a marriage of convenience with a gay American man named Sean. The writer of the diary, Pingping, is an artist from Shanghai, while the story takes place in the San Francisco Bay Area, especially Berkeley and Oakland.

The year is 1985 and Pingping and Sean have recently met through mutual friends at a social event. When Sean, who owns an art supply store in the East Bay, learns of Pingping's immigration problems, he proposes that the two of them marry. Sean's motives are altruistic: he wants to help her resolve the immigration problem that arose after she had been fired from her restaurant job by a manager who had been sexually harassing her. Pingping hesitates, but finally agrees to enter into this "paper marriage" with Sean.

Sean had been active in the UC Berkeley student movement of the 1960s. He compares this movement to Mao's Cultural Revolution, a period of time that Pingping herself had lived through. Attracted to the Hare Krishna movement, Sean had previously spent time practicing yoga in India. His friends, as well as his on-again, off-again lover Hugh, know that he is gay, but after the wedding, some members of his community, including his mother, are overjoyed by the news that he has "changed" and is no longer homosexual. For a short period of time at the beginning of their marriage, Pingping herself is hopeful that Sean might develop feelings for her, and that the "fake marriage" might turn into a real one.

In the time that they live together, Pingping gradually meets other gay and lesbian people, coming to see the great diversity of class, religion, nationality, race and desire among members of this community. She also faces judgment from the Chinese immigrant community, who are at times appalled by the choices she makes while living in the United States. When Sean becomes sick with a new disease called acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), Pingping wonders if the world is on the verge of a global pandemic. By this time, she and Sean have developed a close friendship. She sees the way that he is shunned by those who do not understand his illness, and devotes herself to



caring for him until his death. After losing Sean, she casts her diary aside, saying goodbye to it as she now must say goodbye to the friend she has come to love.

Paper Marriage is a story for our time. In an age of widespread uncertainty, concern about global pandemics, and unprecedented political and ideological division between people everywhere, the story makes a compelling case that our differences can be overcome if we will only see our common humanity. In 1993, filmmaker Ang Lee released a loose cinematic adaptation of the novel titled *The Wedding Banquet*. Lee's film differs from the novel in significant ways that ensure that *Paper Marriage* will be new and engaging to any reader who picks it up.

Today, eighty-four-year-old Chen Ruoxi lives in Taiwan. The translator is in direct contact with her. She has told him that she is delighted that after more than thirty-five years after its Chinese publication, *Paper Marriage* will finally be available to readers in English.

About the Author

Born in 1938, Chen Ruoxi is a Taiwanese writer. She graduated from National Taiwan University and helped found the literary journal *Xiandai Wenxue* (Modern Literature). Among Anglophone readers, her most famous work is her short story collection, *The Execution of Mayor Yin*, which was published in English translation in 1978. Other works include *The Old Man and Other Stories*, *The Short Stories of Ruoxi Chen*, and *Spirit Calling: Five Stories of Taiwan*. In the 1960s at the height of the Cultural Revolution, she made the shocking decision to leave Taiwan and move to Mainland China to support the Maoist project, but became disillusioned by this and left in 1973. Today, the eighty-year-old Chen Ruoxi lives on Taiwan.

About the Translator

Scott E. Myers is a translator of Chinese who focuses on contemporary queer fiction from Sinophone societies. He holds a B.A. in philosophy from Hampshire College and master's degrees in Comparative Literature from New York University, in Chinese Translation from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, and in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago.

Scott is a former union organizer with experience in China's workers' rights movement, his translation of the diary of a retail worker in China appears in the book *Walmart in China* (ILR Press, 2011). His English translation of one of China's earliest queer novels, *Beijing Comrades* by Bei Tong, was published in 2016 by The Feminist Press. His translation of contemporary Chinese avant-garde poet and novelist, Mu Cao's 2003 novel *In the Face of Death We Are Equal* will be published by Seagull Books in Fall, 2019. His third book-length project is an English translation of Taiwanese author Chen Ruoxi's 1986 novel *Paper Marriage*.

Scott currently lives in California, where he teaches in the Chinese Translation program at The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.



PEOPLE FROM BLOOMINGTON

by

Budi Darma

Translated by
Tiffany Tsao

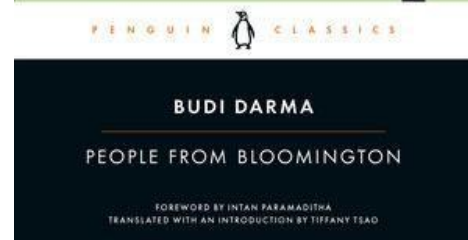
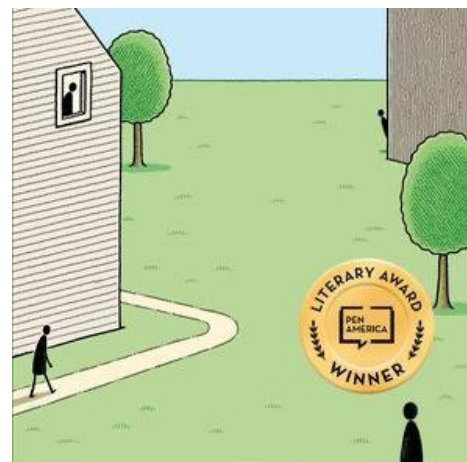
All translation rights available, except Indonesian and Malay language rights.

About the Book

Winner of the 2023 PEN Translation Award

An eerie, alienating, yet comic and profoundly sympathetic short story collection about Americans in America by one of Indonesia's most prominent writers, now in an English translation for its fortieth anniversary, with a foreword by Intan Paramaditha.

In these seven stories of *People from Bloomington*, our peculiar narrators find themselves in the most peculiar of circumstances and encounter the most peculiar of people. Set in Bloomington, Indiana, where the author lived as a graduate student in the 1970s, this is far from the idyllic portrait of small-town America. Rather, sectioned into apartment units and rented rooms, and gridded by long empty streets and distances traversable only by car, it's a place where the solitary can all too easily remain solitary; where people can at once be obsessively curious about others, yet fail to form genuine connections with anyone. The characters feel their loneliness acutely and yet deliberately estrange others. Budi Darma paints a realist world portrayed through an absurdist frame, morbid and funny at the same time.



For decades, Budi Darma has influenced and inspired many writers, artists, filmmakers, and readers in Indonesia, yet his stories transcend time and place. With *People from Bloomington*, Budi Darma draws us to a universality recognized by readers around the world—the cruelty of life and the difficulties that people face in relating to one another while negotiating their own identities. The stories are not about “strangeness” in the sense of culture, race, and nationality. Instead, they are a statement about how everyone, regardless of nationality or race, is strange, and subject to the same tortures, suspicions, yearnings, and peculiarities of the mind.



Praise “First published in Indonesia 40 years ago, this story collection from celebrated author Darma gets a second life—and an English translation—as a Penguin Classic. Across seven stories set in the gridded streets and rented rooms of Bloomington, Ind., Darma’s characters navigate their morbidly funny lives in this meditation on alienation, failed connection, and the universal strangeness of the human mind.” —**The Millions**

About the Author

Budi Darma was a novelist, short-story-writer, and literary critic. Budi Darma received several national literary awards and his international honors include the Southeast Asian Writers Award (or S.E.A. Write Award) and the Mastera Literary Award. He held a PhD in English literature from the University of Bloomington, Indiana, and was a professor at the State University of Surabaya.

About the Translator

Tiffany Tsao has authored three novels: *The Oddfits* (Amazon Crossing 2016), *The More Known World* (Amazon Crossing 2017), and most recently, the standalone book *The Majesties*. *The Majesties* has been published in Australia (Viking 2018), the US (Atria Books 2020), the UK (Pushkin Vertigo 2020), and translated into Italian (Astoria Edizioni 2020). Her writing has been published in outlets such as *Electric Literature*, *The Margins*, *CrimeReads*, *Korean Literature Now*, and *Sydney Review of Books*. She was longlisted for the 2019 Ned Kelly Award—Australia’s leading prize for crime fiction.



In addition to being a writer, she is an acclaimed translator of Indonesian fiction and poetry. She has translated three published books to date, was awarded the PEN Presents Prize and PEN Translates grant in the UK, and was shortlisted for the biennial NSW Premier’s Translation Prize—Australia’s foremost prize for literary translation, and was longlisted for the 2022 International Booker Prize for Norman Erikson Pasaribu’s *Happy Stories, Mostly*.

She spent her formative years in Singapore and Indonesia before moving to the United States, where she completed her B.A. in English from Wellesley College and her Ph.D. in English from UC Berkeley. In 2011, she moved to Sydney, Australia, where she now lives with her husband, two small children who claim they are dinosaurs, and the family’s faithful sourdough starter, Mr. Fizz.

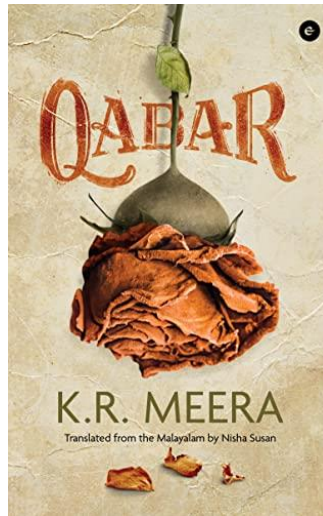


QABAR

by

KR Meera

Translated by
Nisha Susan



All translation rights except Indian Subcontinent English and Malayalam language rights available.

About the Book

As a temple is slated to rise in the site of Babri Masjid, voices rise from a qabar in a small town in Kerala. A judge presiding over the property dispute is hypnotised. Is the petitioner the jinn-summoning sorcerer he is reputed to be? Or is she having a mental breakdown from loneliness? Why else would the spectre of a long-forgotten ancestor and his handmaidens appear before her? How is she supposed to make a ruling when her self is profoundly divided? A hypnotic novella from KR Meera full of the dizzying knowledge that verdicts are not solutions.

Praise

“Qabar is an unabashedly political narrative and finds excellent synergy in the politics of its translation. There are no glossaries, no attempts at removing all traces of the source language in the pursuit of a mythic perfect equivalence, and yet, nothing in the narrative is inaccessible to the reader. There is a playfulness to the novel’s structure that counterbalances the seriousness of its content.”

[—Scroll.in](http://Scroll.in)



“The surefootedness of the plot and the brilliant translation from Malayalam by Nisha Susan weave together something altogether magical... Meera gives us a hero who can read minds, and what we know soon enough is that it is she as a writer who can read our minds. Telling us a story we needed to hear right now.”

—[The New Indian Express](#)

“This book is a journey unbound by the usual markers and the usual answers — it’s where the real and the illusory come together and take us along in their everlasting tide.”

—[The Hindu](#)

About the Author

Author of more than a dozen books in Malayalam including novels, novellas, short story collections, essays and children's literature. Her novel *Aaraachaar* which won the Kendra and the Kerala Sahitya Akademy Awards was translated by J Devika as *The Hangwoman* and was shortlisted for the DSC literary prize. Her translated works include *Yellow Is The Colour Of Longing*, *The Gospel Of Yudas*, *The Poison Of Love*, *The Unseeing Idol of Light* and *The Angel's Beauty Spots*.



About the Translator

Nisha Susan is the author of *The Women Who Forgot to Invent Facebook and Other Stories* (Context, 2020). Her fiction often explores the intimacy and strangeness that the internet brought to India. Her translation of Meera KR's novel *Qabar* from the Malayalam is forthcoming (2022, Westland). Her non-fiction is focused on culture, gender, digital media and politics. She is also the co-founder of two award-winning media companies, The Ladies Finger and Grist Media.





THE RIVER OF RYEJEONG KIM

by

Wonshik Woo and Cynthia Jee Yoon Kim

Translated by
Cynthia Jee Yoon Kim

All translation rights and World English rights available except for Korean language rights.

About the Book

An intergenerational memoir about a Korean family torn by Japan's 35-year annexation and the Korean War, this book brings together writing by three generations of the Kim family. Wonshik Woo, South Korean politician in the liberal Democratic Party of Korea, and Assemblyman since 2012, writes both from his perspective as well as that of his mother's: Ryejeong Kim, the daughter of an independence activist, Mr. Han Kim, but also a wife who stepped up during 1930s and 1940s Korea against the status quo as a female entrepreneur to support her family.

The mother of an independence activist, she also lost two daughters in North Korea—a partition that happened before she could bring her daughters with her. Korea still remains as the only divided country in the world today, with separated family members in North and the South who live not knowing what each other looks like.

The third generation is the youngest: Cynthia Jee Yoon Kim—Wonshik Woo being her great-uncle, and Ryejeong Kim her great-grandmother—both translates the original Korean and contributes to this genealogy of the history of South Korea by writing from her perspective. A three-generational story, this book takes us through each generation's perspective and memoirs, from Cynthia's 21st century grappling with her Korean identity and the lasting impact of the War and the partition, to Wonshik Woo's extensive political career and first-hand impressions of his mother's life, and then a first-person retelling of Ryejeong Kim's heart-wrenching story, as narrated to Wonshik.

The book highlights the reunion between Ryejeong and her daughter from North Korea she hasn't seen for 60 years since being separated from them during the Korean War.

Ryejeong's father, Mr. Han Kim, was a lawyer who studied in Tokyo, Japan but gave up his life as a lawyer to fight for the independence of his country during Japan's annexation of Korea. After being an accomplice to a bombing attack against the Japanese, he was on a constant run from the



Japanese men in black suits trying to chase him down. He was arrested and released to eventually die alone in an unfamiliar country of Russia.

As a wife, Ryejeong endured hardships to support her family by starting a restaurant as well as setting up a stall to sell American goods and dollars, and operating a snacks bar in movie theatres for her family of 11 to live on when her husband fell ill. As a mother, she suffered heartbreaks from losing her own child and being separated from her two children in another country, North Korea where the same language is spoken. Hardships for Ryejeong continue on when her youngest son, Wonshik is arrested for his student movement, protesting against dictatorship regime and fighting for democratization in Korea.

On August 15th, 2006, on Korean Independence Day at 90 years-old, Ryejeong was invited by the Former President of South Korea, Moo-hyun No to receive the Patriot Independence Medal by the Order of Merit for the National Foundation for her father, Mr. Han Kim's patriotic work for the country.

A story that brings the tragedies of displacement and dislocation, *The River of Ryejeong Kim* is a history that makes tangible the realities of intergenerational trauma, and brings to the surface the impact of seemingly distant national and international politics on the intimate family unit.

About the Author

Born in 1957 in Seoul as the youngest out of 9 siblings, [Wonshik Woo](#) has two elder sisters, Jeonghye and Deokhye who had been separated from the family during the Korean War when Seoul was taken over by North Korea. No one imagined this separation would last a total of 70 years. Wonshik's mother took the burden of taking care of the entire family due to her father, Mr. Han Kim being an independent activist who was fighting for the freedom of Korea during the Japanese annexation. Even after getting married, Wonshik's mother would roll up her sleeves to survive and lead the family whenever they would get in trouble. Growing up, Wonshik learned to have strong will and convictions like his mother.

In 1977 when Wonshik was a sophomore at Yonsei University, in memory of the April 19 Revolution, he was handing out blank papers and was arrested for 'disseminating false information.' Thereafter, once he was discharged as an army sergeant in 1981, he was involved in the withdrawal movement against the President Chun Doo-hwan regime and was arrested again and imprisoned for two years and eight months.





In June 1987, the 13th presidential election was held after a pro-democracy movement but democratic candidate Mr. Daejoong Kim was defeated and this prompted Wonshik to join the political party to get involved in real politics. In 1995, he ran for the Seoul City Council and was elected for the office. He has since then served as the 17th, 19th, 20th, and is today, the 21st member of Congress. His political belief has been based on the foundation of ‘politics is the weak’s strongest weapon’ and with this, he created the ‘Euljiro Committee’ to carry out parliamentary activities to protect the weak from tyranny. After serving as a spokesman, a deputy leader and a supreme council member of the party, he also held the position as the first leader of the party in President Moon Jae-In’s government.

About the Translator and Contributor

Cynthia Jee Yoon is the eldest great granddaughter of Ryejeong Kim. Born and raised in Japan, Korea, and Canada, Cynthia is a Canadian of Korean ethnicity and currently resides in Singapore as the Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer of a technology software startup. Having had an upbringing that crosses multiple continents, she never had as close a connection to her ancestral heritage and to Korea, having spent only 6 years there.

Having completed her studies with a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Cynthia has always had a passion for learning the sociological explanations to the links between the society and the individual as well as the influence of social location, ethnicity, and gender on an individual. Throughout the pandemic, she was able to reflect and have the chance to learn more about her ancestors and read the original book published by her great uncle, Mr. Wonshik Woo. She knew then and there after reading the book that the story needs to be shared internationally with a global audience to not only learn of the history of Korea and the independence movement but also the moving life story of her ancestors. Since then, she has devoted her time to translating and restructuring the book to be able to share it with the world.



Note from Cynthia

My great uncle, [Won-shik Woo](#), is a prominent figure in South Korea’s political and historical landscape and currently serves as the Head of the National Assembly, a role comparable to the head of Congress in the United States. In Korea, the three most important figures in terms of power and authority are the President, the Vice President, and the Head of the National Assembly.



His role has gained worldwide recognition recently due to his leadership in rallying 190 legislators of the National Assembly to vote against and oppose the martial law declared by President [Seok Yul Yoon](#) on December 3, 2024, during a televised press conference. This act of leadership and courage underscores his unwavering commitment to democracy and justice.

[The martial law crisis in Korea](#) was equivalent to a "legislative dictatorship," prohibiting political activities, suspending gatherings of the National Assembly and local legislatures, and silencing the free press. South Korea is currently experiencing a turbulent political climate, with President Seok Yul Yoon impeached, arrested, and replaced by an acting president. The official ruling on his impeachment is expected soon, likely removing him from office and triggering a new presidential election, which must be held within two months by law.

This is where my great uncle comes into the picture. For the critical role he has played and continues to play, he has been widely recognized by both the media and the public as a strong candidate for the presidency. Internal discussions are already underway to prepare for his potential candidacy.

Meanwhile, the head of the same Democratic Party, Jae-myung Lee, is facing imprisonment after being found guilty in the first trial for corruption involving misappropriation of presidential campaign funds for property development, which he later denied on television. His second and final trial, expected to conclude within two months, is likely to affirm the initial guilty verdict, effectively disqualifying him. This positions my great uncle as the Democratic Party's most eligible candidate, further underscoring the urgency of moving forward with this book before the presidential election begins in two to three months.

This timeline is *crucial*, as April marks the selection of presidential candidates, with my great uncle emerging as a leading contender within his party. If Jae-myung Lee is disqualified due to his legal issues, the likelihood of my great uncle's candidacy **exceeds 90%**. However, should he secure the candidacy, publishing this book afterward would be politically constrained and risk being perceived as a campaign tool, detracting from its historical and cultural significance.

This book offers profound insights into Korea's complex history and evolution, connecting deeply with immigrants and global audiences while celebrating the resilience of its people. The urgency of publishing it now lies in preserving its essence as a historical and cultural narrative, untainted by the political implications that will inevitably arise after April. This timely release ensures that its universal message of democracy, justice, and the immigrant experience reaches the world at the perfect moment.



JACARANDA
Literary Agency