

THE BOOK REVIEW

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Languages In Translation

Assamese/অসমীয়া



Bangla/বাংলা



Gujarati/ગુજરાતી



Hindi/हिंदी



Kannada/ಕನ್ನಡ



Malay/Melayu

Malayalam/മലയാളം

Marathi/मराठी

Odia/ଓଡ଼ିଆ

Punjabi/ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Sanskrit/संस्कृतम्

Telugu/తెలుగు



Tamil/தமிழ்



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Assamese/অসমীয়া

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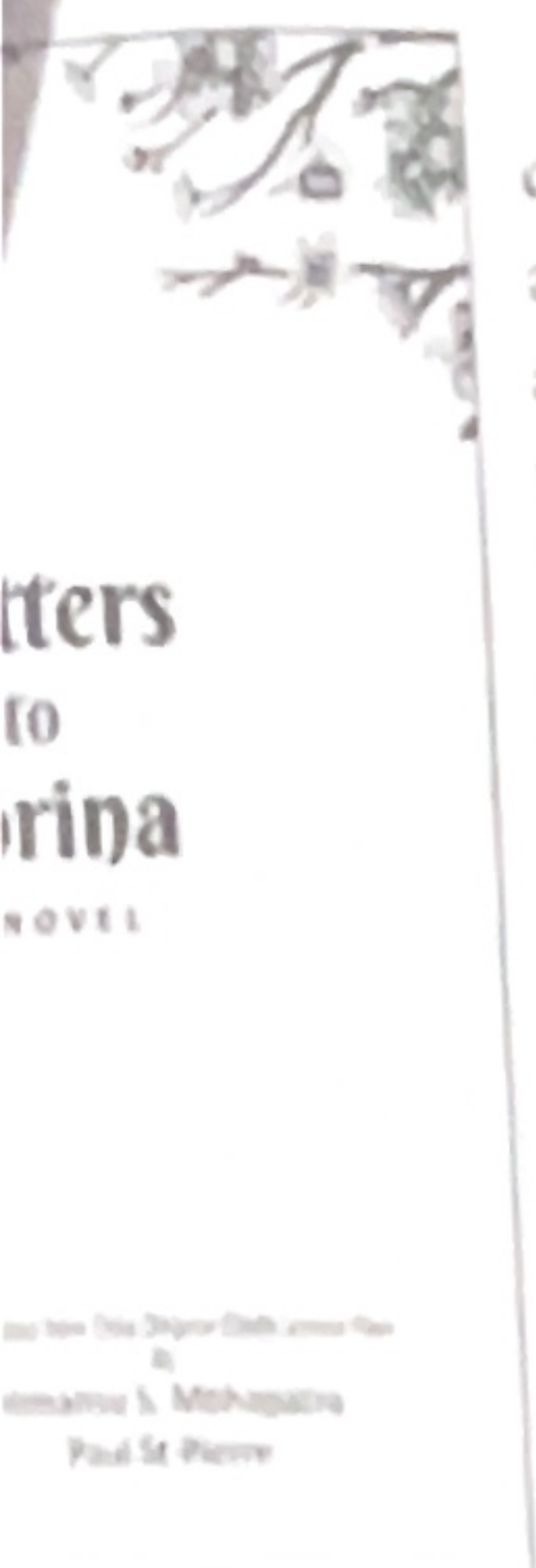
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The Book Review Literary Trust is a charitable, non-profit Trust, set up in 1989. One of its chief ongoing projects is the publish of the review journal *The Book Review* which completed its 44th year in December 2020.

The Book Review was the first review journal in the English language in India and has been in continuous publication for the last years. In this time, it has promoted scholarly debate, Indian writing in all languages, South Asia studies, cultural studies, gender studies and many other aspects of writing and publishing, becoming the benchmark, across the world, for critical reviews of works published in South Asia. Globally, leading experts in fields as diverse as international relations, Gandhian studies, and Indian history, regularly contribute to the journal. Covering a very broad array of subjects, this pioneering venture has rendered a unique service to the literary and academic community and the reading public.

The Book Review is brought out in a print edition, as well as a digital edition accessible on its website: <http://thebookreviewindia.org>. The journal's primary revenue for ongoing operations is from advertising revenue and subscriptions. As the journal is in the 45th year of publication, and The Book Review Literary Trust has completed 31 years, the Trustees have in place an agenda for the continuance of its activities in the coming decades. The Trust now seeks large grants/endowment/goodwill advertisements/subscriptions to enable the Trust to undertake infrastructure development, to widen the scope of its activities on the



Letters
to
Jorina
NOVEL

By Himansu Mohapatra
Translated by Paul St Pierre

'My childhood and adolescence were spent in Jahanpur and by now I am sure it's clear to you why I am so drawn to the place. The house people are born in—even if

thatched and made of mud—is home. Later houses can never be as alive as that first dilapidated patch and mud' (Letter 9).
g out from a train in England the green or dusty-grey sprawl on of the tracks has often made me about spending the rest of my life cluded English village' (Letter 7).
Wendel Holmes's perceptive 'Where we love is home, home that may leave, but not our hearts...' will help us to reconcile these seemingly tory sentiments of Alok Das.
riter's efforts in these letters seem ected at reshaping the relationship the East and the West by making ole from two widely separated places gether on an isthmus of common y freed from colonial baggage.
not only if one is born in a country can belong to it. You have left the an and made England your home, how strongly infatuated I am with land that ruled my country for two d years. In the twentieth century arrow minded nationalist and h ideologies falling into ruin like old es' (Letter 7)

is a character that does not intend short at initiating an emotional tion between the East and the West. isions a bias-free relationship with the Since he has experienced England, his n the letters is to sensitize his friend to the culture of Odisha, especially his town Puri, which goes by the fictional of Jahanpur in the text.

eel Hinduism is a living religion; aracters of the Ramayana and the harat circulate among us. Every Jahanpur we observe the birthday achandra; we rejoice in the death

Srikrushna did in the remote past...' (Letter 9).

Alok explains that religious consciousness is not limited to the observance of many festivals, as is illustrated in Letter 5, but is something mystical. It is a matter of faith, of an unwavering trust in the superhuman power of the gods and goddesses we turn to in the time of acute distress. He moves on to narrate his miraculous escape in a serious road accident when his scooter, lurching down a bumpy, uneven road, slipped into a hole dug in the middle of the road by the municipality people. He accredits this escape to his 'devoutly religious' grandmother's unflinching faith in her god.

'A thought came to my mind', he writes, 'that I had perhaps escaped with my life due to the merit my late grandma had accrued... My feeling was that I had escaped such a close shave on account of my grandma's virtue... My belief is that it was my grandma who rescued me from that accident, that it was her weak hands that lifted me out of that death hole' (Letter 7).

Letters to Jorina, as Himansu Mohapatra observes in the Afterword, is about inter-cultural relationships. It projects a holistic sensibility based on the synthesis of the East and the West rather than on their oft-talked about antithesis. As Mohapatra points out, 'The West and the East, England and India, England and Odisha: Mishra made the equations and interactions between these entities and modes of life the subjects of his thinking and writing...' The letters show the author engaged in a fine balancing act, dwelling more on their affinity than on the contrast, and thus going beyond the binary understanding of the relationship between the East and the West.

Professor Ganeswar Mishra, an eminent Professor of English, has chosen Odia, the language of his homeland, the language in which he 'was known and loved' as Jhumpa Lahiri says in her non-fiction narrative *In Other Words*, to write the letters. But a work like this is in need of global visibility and the excellent translation of the text done by two eminent Professors, Himansu Mohapatra and Paul St Pierre has fulfilled the need. The translated version reads like an original work in English. If translation is believed to be an act of linguistic bridge-building for the sake of transformational cross-cultural journey, then *Letters to Jorina* is a fine example of such a bridge.

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Insider/Outsider Conundrum in New Perspectives

Parvin Sultana

BLOSSOMS IN THE GRAVEYARD (*Kabor Aru Phool*)

By Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Translated from the original Assamese by Mitra Phukan
Niyogi Books, 2016, pp. 192, ₹295.00

Blossoms in the Graveyard by Jnanpeeth Awardee Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is set around the Bangladesh War of Liberation of 1971. While books in Assamese have dealt with the question of migration of people from across erstwhile East Bengal (before Partition) and East Pakistan (after Partition), very few literary works have dealt with the war of liberation of this neighbouring country in which India played a very crucial role.

Rupaborir Polosh by Syed Abdul Malik, *Ismail Sheikhok Bisari* (In Search of Ismail Sheikh)—a short story by Homen Borgohain, *Rupali Balir Xopon* by Kashema Khatun and *Kahibunor Malita* by Rudranee Sharma are some of the few noted works that deal with Muslims of East Bengal origin who have entered Assam at different points of history. While these works look at migration of people since the colonial times and also situate them in the current context, they don't focus much on the 1971 war which accelerated this movement as they fled their war-torn country.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's book written in 1972, just a year after the war, fills this void. The book is from the point of view of one Robin Babu, an Assamese who eventually got interested in what is happening across the border through the social activist Bagaitkar. They travel to Phulbari in Meghalaya which shares a border with Bangladesh. They plan to meet one

“Through the voice of Mehr,

Bhattacharyya has raised some larger questions. While introspecting, Mehr questions again and again the fate of women. She asks if liberation of her nation will mean liberation of women also. Her ruminations concern the predicament of livin