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| Ghosh, Sankha (b. 1932) |
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| Sankha Ghosh is a major figure in Bengali poetry from the 1950s. Son of Manindra Kumar and Amalabala Ghosh, he was born at Chandar, now Bangladesh, the ancestral home district of Barisal. Manindra Kumar was an eminent School Headmaster and an ardent Tagore lover. Sankha’s early education was in Chandraprabha Vidyapith at Paksi, Pabna. The ambience of this school was a strong influence in Sankha Ghosh’s early development. He was later educated at Presidency College and Calcutta University and taught literature in several universities, finally retiring from Jadavpur University as Professor of Bengali. |
| Sankha Ghosh is a major figure in Bengali poetry from the 1950s. Son of Manindra Kumar and Amalabala Ghosh, he was born at Chandar, now Bangladesh, the ancestral home district of Barisal. Manindra Kumar was an eminent School Headmaster and an ardent Tagore lover. Sankha’s early education was in Chandraprabha Vidyapith at Paksi, Pabna. The ambience of this school was a strong influence in Sankha Ghosh’s early development. He was later educated at Presidency College and Calcutta University and taught literature in several universities, finally retiring from Jadavpur University as Professor of Bengali.  Sankha Ghosh’s first collection of poems *Dinguli Raatguli* (The Days the Nights) was published in 1956. This was a period when Bangla poetry took an inward turn, shifting from the socially and politically oriented poetry of the forties. The young poets of the fifties were less cynical than their predecessors, although perhaps inwardly more critical. Some of them showed signs of Baudelairean *ennui* and anguish. Not Sankha Ghosh. Many of his eminent contemporaries took to a kind of urban life practice that bordered on crossing socially permissible limits, as a metaphor of protest. Sankha Ghosh’s protest was of a different kind: his celebrated poem of this period was *Jamunabati*, written in the backdrop of a police firing on a food procession, which led to a young girl’s death.  Sankha Ghosh, though close to the *Krittibas* group, did not share their life practices, nor did he explore city life in its bare physicality; his was a search for identity. In a long-ish poem invoking the ancient theme of *Jabal Satyakam*, he explores the question:  what is my identity, mother? Boats are all unleashed, knots are cut with cruel axe. The Christmas party goes on. The woman leaves her glass on the table and lures someone for a stint of twist. The poison of my tongue gives the old beggar woman a nudge. All the cars, stop before the gory nails of the woman. What is my identity mother?  The beggar woman in these lines becomes a haunting image in Ghosh’s work, accumulating layers of meaning ranging from one’s own daughter to the entire motherland. His search for identity reaches new heights in the Gandharva poems (1994). This cycle of 36 poems is woven around the image of a plunge from the void above to the watery earth below. The poet as subject meditates between the poles of the high and the low. This has artistic implications as well: at a personal level, this poet often comes down to the streets to raise funds in aid of the flood victims of a neighbouring country or to organize aid programmes for riot victims there and Aila victims here. Through this multi-leveled existence, the poet seems to explore his personality.  Sankha Ghosh is a major essayist and a foremost Tagore Scholar, as well as a writer for children, and a translator. Some of his best-known writings on Tagore are *Kaaler Maatraa O Rabindra Naatak* (Dimension of time and Tagore play, 1969), *Aamir Abaran* (Veil over this Self, 1980) and *Nirmaan Aar Smriti* (Construction and Creation, 1982).  In his long career Ghosh has been awarded many honours. This includes Sahitya Akademi Award, 1977, Rabindra Purashkar, 1989, KamalKumari Puraskar, 1982, Kabir Samman, 1998, Saraswati Samman, 1998, and the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 2011. Timeline 1951 Passes BA from Presidency College, Calcutta  1954 Passes MA from University of Calcutta  1956 Publication of first collection of poems  1976 *Baabarer Prarthana*  1977 Sahitya Akademi  1992 Retires from the Department of Bengali, Jadavpur University, Kolkata  1994 Gandharva Poems  1998 Awarded Saraswati Samman  1995 *Ratnakalyaan*, translation of Girish Karnad’s play *Tale-Dande*  2011 Awarded Padmabhushan  2013 Prati Prashne Kenpe Jaay Bhite |
| Further reading: Poetry *Dinguli Raatguli* (The Days The Nights), 1956.  *Nihita Paataalchhaayaa* (Shadows Deep in the Nether World), 1967.  *Aadim Lataagulmamay* (In Ancient Creepers and Shrubs), 1972.  *Murkho Baro, Saamaajik Nay* (Great a Fool, Not Sociable Enough), 1974.  *Baabarer Prarthana* (Babur’s Prayers), 1976.  *Tumi To Tamon Gouri Nao* (You are not that Gouri), 1978.  *Paanjare Daanker Sabda* (Sound of Oar in Ribs), 1980.  *Praharjoraa Tritaal* (Three-beats Round the Whole Hour), 1982.  *Raag koro na Raaguni* (Don’t be Angry, You Anger Yourself), 1983.  *Bandhuraa Maati Tarjaay* (Friends Mired in Encounters), 1984.  *Mukh Dheke Jaay Bijnaapane* (Face Burries in Advertisements), 1984.  *Dhum Legechhe HritKamale* (Gala Festivity in the Heart-Lotus), 1987.  *Sabkichhutei Khelnaa Hay* (Everything Turned into Playthings), 1987.  *Aamar Dhaaner Chaara* (Strips of Aman Paddy), 1991.  *Laanei Chhilaam Baabaa* (Hey, I too was in the Queue), 1993.  *Gaadharva Kavitaaguchchha* (Gadharva Poems), 1994.  *Shabar Upare Shaamiyaanaa* (Shamiyana Over the Corpse), 1996.  *Aaman Jaabe Laattu Paahaar* (Aaman goes to Lattu Hills), 1996.  *Chhander Bhitare Eto Andhakaar* (This Darkness within Rhythms), 1999.  *Baro Haoaa Khub Bhul* (To Grow up is a Great Mistake), 2002.  *Ore O Baaynaabati* (O You Nagging Sweety), 2003.  *Jali Paashaan Haye Aachhe* (Water Turned into a Stone), 2004.  *Gotaadeshjoraa Jaughar* (The Whole Country a House of Lac), 2010.  *Sur-Sohaagi* (Lover of Tunes), 2010.  *Haashikhushi Mukhe Sarbanaas* (Disaster in Mirthful Face), 2011.  *Prati Prashne Kenpe Jaay Bhite* (The Homeland Trembles in Every Question), 2013. Further Reading Amiya Dev, ‘In Praise of the New’, *Indian Literature,* volume 49, No. 4 (228), July-August 2005, pp. 17-22. |