

Prof Shiv Sethi in Conversation with Sourish Roy

Sourish Roy's book 'Tales From Bengal' has just released

1. How did you foray into the precinct of writing?

Answer: Well, to be true, it was not any single incident. Rather, a combination of some factors that worked behind it all. Of course, objective prose pieces, especially essays, have always been the thing that attracts me. But then, I thought why reading only; why not try at it myself through my own contribution in the form of writing but in a bit fictionalized form! Besides, as I felt, the way our society is moving towards disequilibrium of every kind, be it ethical, or social, or financial, something had to be done on my part to counter its propensity for follies. Also, I already had some real-life characters right in front of my eyes even who had their own stories of struggle which I could not avoid in the end. And, thus I took up my pen.



2. Your experiences while writing your debut book.

Answer: Experience while composing the stories for TALES FROM BENGAL has been an eye-opening one. Before I began I had only the surface-level concepts of how human society functions. But only after I started working on the book, did I realize that a far more confounding undercurrent exists beyond this mundane dispensation of human beings. That certainly required an insightful study into the problems preponderant in our society. As I moved along with my writing, I gradually got the idea as to what the actual reasons behind these differences among clans, sects, and even communities are. In some cases, I had to modify the stories even after having delved deep into the plot.

3. Do you think you have been able to justify all the diverse aspects of Bengal?

Answer: I think yes. My objective through this book has been to raise the issues that have kept our dear Bengal mired in the tussle for a healthy living. So, along with the basic traits of the beauty of the state I had to make explicit references to the problems that one underprivileged *Bangalee* is distraught with. And that is the reason that the book showcases a gullible youth misled to run away from the divine purpose of human existence, a man forced to forge his identity for livelihood, and another one struggling hard to get used to the changing pattern of the world. So, a hapless *Bangalee* is more engrossed with finding a way out of the stalemate

he has been thrust into. That's what I have dealt with in my book.

4. What have been your sweetest moments while writing or conceiving the stories in the book?

Answer: The most memorable moment so far is the days spent among the blacksmiths of Kumargram in Alipurduar. In the story 'Iron Irony' I had to describe the workshop of the blacksmith. But I had no concept as to how it looked like, what it consisted of. So, I used to go there and spend hours in their sheds. There I learned actually how tough it is to reshape the moulds of iron amidst extreme heat. One day, I even partook of the lunch of one of them. It was the moment that I can never forget.

5. Any such moment that seemed hard to cope with during the course of writing your debut book?

Answer: Yes. The eight toughest months from March to October in 2017 when my *Baba* was detected with intestinal cancer and a serious sort of congestion in his cardiac system. I had to see him die before my eyes. Could not do anything because any sort of treatment of any of the two diseases was going to worsen the other one. That moment I apprehended whether I would be able to finish my book. But then, I had to do it. At least for the man who would have liked me to see go into the world of writing. After *Baba* passed away, only one choice was now left open. I had to dedicate my book to him. At this point, I also would like to mention my *Maa, Bunu, Bhaai*, and *Moni*, my wife, *Ribhu*, my son, and some other precious

inspirational relations who have equally contributed to the making of the book in their own ways.

6. What message do you have for your fans and followers?

Answer: I would like to say that I am just one of them. Like them, I also dream and have responsibilities to the family and duties to society and the nation. I would like to suggest to them to not stop dreaming and doing their best to materialize the dreams. Hurdles and tough times are after all mere tests of character.

7. What message would you like to convey to the communities of the budding authors?

Answer: I am still learning. Learning never stops. It's a life-long process. We all come under its purview. So, my only words to my fellow budding authors are that they should try to acquire as much knowledge of reality as possible. For, only reality can make us realize as to how much potent we are as authors with regard to the world that craves for regeneration within.

8. How do you devote time to reading and writing despite your own fixed schedule at your workplace?

Answer: Actually, both my profession and workplace are a blessing in disguise. I am an assistant teacher of a high school that is situated in a remote village of northern Bengal. It takes a journey of about forty minutes to reach there. This eight-hour long span provides me with ample opportunities to observe things and occurrences around

me. The fact remains, I draw my characters on the basis of reality.

9. The author you draw inspiration from?

Answer: I would like to mention Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. The *Apu* trilogy by the former and the novel *Srikanto* by the latter have influenced me a lot. Other than these two stalwarts of Bangla literature, I have also been greatly inspired by the immortal works of Satyajit Ray and Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay.

10. Any special work would you like to recommend to the readers other than your book and why?

Answer: Well, I believe to be able to be a good writer, one has to know what literature actually is. And to know the true nature of literature one must go through the critical works done by the critics and reviewers. As for instance, there are so many comprehensive contemporary literary reviews by some of the modern reviewers like Prof. Shiv Sethi.(addressing the interviewer)

11. Tell us about your next book that you might be working on?

Answer: Yes, I am currently working on my next book that is going to enhance the views beyond the way we have known Bengal and her women... So, I can say women are going to play a significant role in my upcoming book. Events that have recently influenced our stereotype views on women, their desires till now kept reticent and passions suppressed for the fear of traditional values and

religious obligations, and the likes are some of the issues that I have tried to build my stories around. The dubious nexus of politics and intellectualism is also going to be a vital part of the anthology.

12. How do you think literature can be kept away from the materialistic urges of the current society?

Answer: Literature should be for its own sake. It must cater to free-thinking and enlightenment. It should not have religious obligations or any political bias. One author must take it this way. He should try to keep it safe from all the malicious elements that might contaminate it with all the baneful afflictions. The author should only concentrate on how he can do his best as to the regeneration of human beings. He should be true to his heart. His conscience should be the only judge of his work. For, I believe honesty never goes unpaid.

About the Author

Sourish Roy, an M.A. in English (*Burdwan University*) and B.Ed. (*North Bengal University*), took to writing at an early stage of his life with literary collaborations in the wall magazines and annual magazines in school and college. His stories have been previously published in local English and Bangla magazines and pamphlets. His critical essays have also been provided space in some academic books. His essay "Sports Education in India: A Culture in Consternation" had been published by *New Academic Publishers, New Delhi*.

TALES FROM BENGAL (Bigfoot Publications) is his debut attempt in the ambit of fictionalized composition. 'The Handyman', one of the nine stories of the book, has already been finalized to be adapted into a film. Also, another independent short story, 'Exoneration' published by Half Baked Beans, has been decided to be staged up into its theatrical adaptation by one of the renowned dramatic associations of West Bengal.

About the Interviewer

Dr Prof. Shiv Sethi is an international acclaimed columnist, literary critic and book reviewer. He has reviewed the works of the most famous authors all across the globe.



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