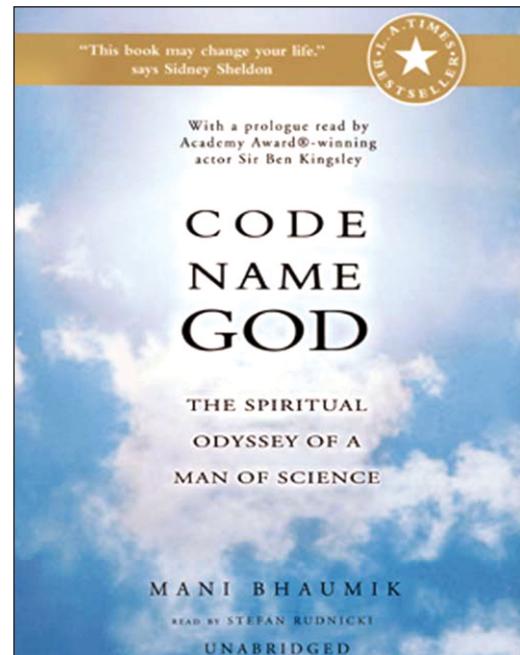


Mind-boggling concepts made easy?

Nerun Yakub is quite intrigued by a work that seeks to explore the idea of science with the larger concept of Creation



Code Name God
The Spiritual Odyssey of a Man of Science
Mani Bhaumik
Penguin Books India

Dr Mani Bhaumik's tantalizing bestseller is dedicated to 'Seekers of Truth of All Times', setting the

core theme with Einstein's famous words, 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.' Then follows a passionate prologue on the need to heal the 'wound of spiritual despair' in today's world, through a new kind of faith, a re-vision of humankind's place in the universe vis-a-vis God, Allah, Brahman, Yahweh, Tao. Call it what we may, the author's belief in the 'one source of creation' and his search for empirical validation in the realm of advanced physics takes us on a tour of awesome, unfathomable, bizarre, beautiful abstractions.

Although God as One is at the heart of all great religious traditions, most human beings still perceive of the idea as anthropomorphic and muddle through life blind and lame. Bhaumik thinks it is this that turns many thinking people away from institutionalized religion. Perhaps we need to call God by a new name, he suggests. Indeed, with science moving closer to the very heart of human spirituality, do we need God at all? Or can science restore this great idea as what it is ----- the Primary Source of the known and unknown universe? Bhaumik clarifies the point: God is akin to that of a potentiality rather than a definable state. Such a potentiality existed at the beginning of time and exists today at the foundation of space. The discoveries of quantum physics indicate that "I" and the universe somehow participate with one another. Mind affects matter and matter affects mind.

Bhaumik's mission in his book is clearly to make God knowable, one might say, and he employs popular, simple language to get across even supremely esoteric ideas. Beginning with the story of his birth and boyhood in Bengal during Gandhi's

Quit India movement, Bhaumik tells us that he had an innate spiritual longing and it was strengthened by both experience and the influence of his heroes. Among them were his grandmother Sharada, Karamchand Mohandas Gandhi and an extraordinary woman called Matangini Hazra, a poor middle-aged widow who gave her life to rid India of British rule.

He went on to win scholarships and shine academically, acquire great fame, friends, wealth and social status in the United States. But he was profoundly unhappy with life in the 'fast lane'. Something was obviously missing. It did not take him long to realize what was ailing him. He had lost touch with "the undeniable presence of that living web from which all things are born and continually unfold. That presence, which the Vedic rishis called Brahman, and that Tao-Tzu called the Tao; He that the prophets of the book called Yahweh or Allah, and that later in my own life would come to call the one source."

One of the pioneers of the laser technology that made the corrective eye surgery LASIK possible, Bhaumik's book is unabashedly motivational. It wants readers to participate, delve deep, go beyond the surface of institutionalized religions, beyond the anthropic symbolism, to access the power of the One Source behind all existence, 'that underlies and enfolds all orders, that unifies all field and forms, as well as consciousness'.

In other words, it is an invitation to tap humanity's innate spirituality and merge with the Universal One. Deep meditation is the key, he suggests, a revival of the ancient art through which the 'quantum leap' of consciousness can be made. Mystics of all faiths and

cultures have been doing this throughout the ages. Mani Bhaumik reminds us that many paths of deep and genuine belief converge. Then he attempts to explain "as painlessly" as possible some very mind-boggling concepts from advanced physics to show us how mind and matter are entwined. He does grant however, that even scientists, especially teachers of science, are still struggling to fathom these 'knots of abstraction'!

Einstein's revelation that every thing is made of energy and his famous equation which effectively does away with the sharp line between the material and the immaterial suddenly strike Bhaumik with a new meaning. The equivalence of mass and energy, by which a 'concrete' thing is presumed to consist of an abstract substance, means mind and body could comprise a whole that was simultaneously material and spiritual. As the old rishis said, we really might be 'souls with bodies rather than bodies with souls'!

Mani Bhaumik sees himself as a spiritual unifier wishing to heal humanity through a new understanding of science. Today we have the means to see in dimensions beyond the familiar, even into realms of invisible reality where we find that everything is interconnected. This is something that Zen monks seemed to have known long before quantum physicists came along. Bhaumik recommends tuning in to God's 'frequency' to experience the presence of the infinite, the eternal One.

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Nerun Yakub is a senior journalist and teaches at Dhaka University.

Beyond death arises poetry pure and poignant

Junaidul Haque reads a posthumous collection of Abul Hasan's poetry and recalls the genius of a Keats-like artiste

Megher Akash Alor Surya (The Sky of Clouds, The Sun of Light) is how a lovely book is known. Within its covers it holds forty four unpublished poems of Abul Hasan. These are poems of his adolescence.

The book was published in February, 2004 by Pathak Samabesh, which deserves our heartfelt thanks for this wonderful book of elegant get-up. Promising young painter and writer Selim Ahmed has designed the smart and beautiful cover. The book has been edited and its foreword written by Abdul Mannan Syed, creative writer, researcher and editor par excellence. He is a widely respected name in the literary circles of both Bangladesh and West Bengal.

Abul Hasan was in his time one of our finest poets. He is very popular with young readers and is also admired by the generation preceding theirs. As in the case of John Keats and Sukantha Bhattacharya, untimely death has given him extra popularity.

Abul Hasan was a student of the Department of English of Dhaka University. In June or July of 1966 he gave a diary to his friend and classmate, Shehabuddin Ahmed. It contained the poems of his early youth. It was Abul Hasan's wish that the poems would never be published. Many years after his death, Shehabuddin Ahmed decided not heed his friend's wishes, went to Pathak Samabesh with the diary and so made us grateful for the offering we have in hand. We remember that Franz Kafka's friend had also refused to listen to him and had thereby made us immensely grateful to him.

Abul Hasan was born on August 27, 1947. He died of a heart ailment on 26 November 1975 at the age of 28 only. He wrote for slightly more than a decade and earned the reputation of being one of our best poets. Abul Hasan portrayed the loneliness of man, his fond-

ness for the past and his sorrows with great skill.

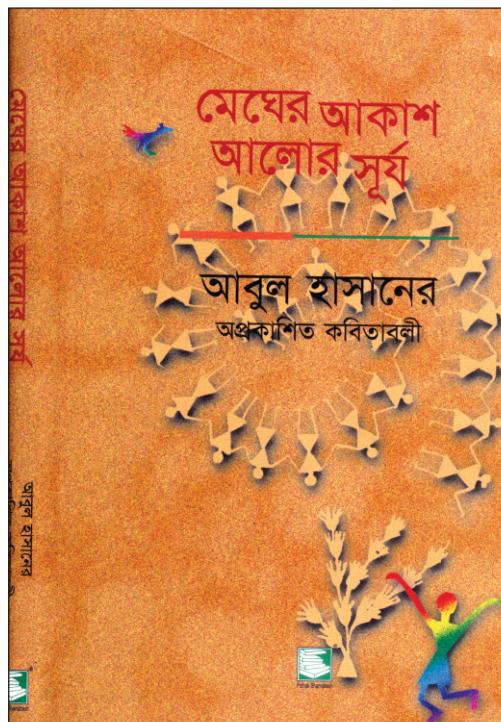
Abul Hasan published only three volumes of poetry during his short life. They were 'Raja Jay, Raja Ashey' (1972), 'Jei Tumi Horon Koro' (1974) and 'Prithik Palonko' (1975). 'Abul Hasan's Unpublished Poems' was published in 1985, edited by Mohammad Nurul Huda, Fakhrul Islam Rocky and Zafar Wazed. His play in verse, 'Ora Koyekjon', was edited by Tarik Sujat and was published in 1989. The same editor published his 'Collected Stories' in 1988. 'Megher Akash Alor Surya' allowed us to read the poems of his early youth, the poems of his growth, the poems of his budding years.

Abdul Mannan Syed's introduction is as well-written as ever. 'Some people are born to belong to poetry. They can think of nothing other than poetry'. One can't really disagree with Syed. He has bracketed Abul Hasan with John Keats, Sukantha, Rimbaud and Mayakovskiy. All of them were deeply immersed in poetry and were quickly gone. Very true.

Born in Barisal, Abul Hasan was a born bohemian. He never had a fixed source of income. He worked for newspapers. He wrote innumerable poems on newsprint and with ball pens and threw them around. Many of his poems were printed in booklets and magazines which had a short life. These poems will now be difficult to find.

The title of the book is the first line of a poem in it. These poems of a youth indicate his years of blossoming. Abdul Mannan Syed writes that young Hasan appears to be swimming in dreams but occasionally he returns to hard reality.

The book has 44 poems. 'Pakhiy Tui' is the first poem. The storm to the bird is like life to the poet. A beautiful analogy, no doubt. In the last poem, 'Shabd-



Megher Akash Alor Surya
Abul Hasan
Unpublished Poems
Pathak Samabesh

Hoy', the poet wishes to escape to the land where the big tree's shadow smiles and wipes away his pain. Abul Hasan had pain in plenty. Occasionally the tree's shadow comforted him no doubt.

The book has two articles by Nirmalendu Goon and Mahadev Saha, reminiscing about their poet-friend. 'Abul Hasan: O Friend of Mine' by Goon is a touching essay. We feel happy to learn about their close friendship and that Hasan was buried beside unfortunate but valiant freedom fighters. A short story by Abul Hasan, published in 1970 in 'Rupam', testifies that he was not a bad storyteller either. Late poet Anwar Ahmed, the editor of 'Rupam', also edited 'Kichudhawani', a magazine of poems. The latter's January 1976 issue was on Abul Hasan. Suraiya Khanam's article has been reprinted from there.

Khanam was Hasan's friend and well-wisher, a poet of great beauty and elegance. She called Hasan a controversial personality, a saint and a powerful young voice. She called him a poet of life and a lively poet. 'My Friend Abul Hasan' by Mahadev Saha is emotional, utterly readable and touching. Two letters of the poet, written from Berlin to his friend Mahfuzul Haque Khan, are there too. They are deeply sad letters. Quite a few photographs are there, mostly of Hasan in Berlin, going through treatment. A suffering poet is gracefully fighting death. Photos of the covers of his books are also there.

Abul Hasan will haunt Bangladeshi readers of poetry for a long time to come. His genius is what the world of Bengali literature has missed since his youthful passage into death.

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Junaidul Haque is a novelist, literary critic and political commentator.

Love through a search for identity

Jackie Kabir sifts through a tale and brings enthusiasm into her observations

I started reading *The Inheritance of Loss* with a lot of enthusiasm as Kiran Desai became the Man Booker winning writer of 2006. The book has in some ways reminded me of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. This is another story set against the backdrop of a troubled community of Kalimpong, a small Indian town in the Himalayas. The struggle for independence, the processions of the Gorkha National Liberation Front resonate with the Marxist revolution depicted by Arundhati Roy in her novel.

The *Inheritance of Loss* unfolds with the arrival of a young girl named Sai at her anglophilic grandfather, a retired judge Jemubhai's house in Cho Oyu. Jemubhai who has rejected everyone and everything precious in life is very disturbed by his granddaughter's arrival at Cho Oyu. Not only does it bring back the painful memories of his past which had been in oblivion for so long, the past starts glaring at him with an accusatory tone.

Set in the 1980s, Desai's novel depicts the post-colonial dilemma personified by characters like Jemubhai, Lola and Noni of the neighbouring house Mon ami. Lola is proud to have a daughter working for the BBC and is driven by irrational admiration and love for the English way of life. Mrs Sen's daughter's CNN job is a kind of counter-balance to Noni and Lola who have always demonstrated an air of superiority towards her.

Jemubhai's cat Matt is the embodiment of all his emotions. The adolescent love affair of Sai with her mathematics tutor Gyan is the theme on which the story evolves. Gyan is an active member of GNLF who later sends some miscreants to rob Jemubhai Patel's house one afternoon. The parallel story is of Biju, son of the cook of Cho Oyu, an illegal immigrant to the US. Biju has a lot of difficulties in immigrating to a land which he can never call his homeland. It is thus that the immigrant theme is woven in Desai's work. During Biju's stay in the US, a number of other immigrants are portrayed, such as Saeed who believes that the West lawfully owes Indians food and shelter. He gets married to a

westerner in order to get his legal papers.

"It was horrible what happened to the Indians abroad and nobody knew about other Indians abroad. It was a dirty little secret. But Biju wasn't done. His country

homeland he had dreamt of no longer exists.

Biju's state of mind may remind the readers of Chanu in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. Ali's Chanu is an English literature graduate from the University of Dhaka (compared to Biju, who is ill-educated, being the son of a cook) who has always wanted to go back to Bangladesh, rejecting all the amenities the western world has to offer.

Kiran Desai addresses issues like multi-

culturalism as well as acts of terrorism with a question mark.

She tries to show feelings of

negligence by the upper class as being the

main cause for the not so rich to revolt.

Jemubhai's love for his dog but total lack of

interest in his family members, especially his wife, is somewhat a reflection of Asian

feelings of awe of westerners in contrast to

their feelings for their fellow countrymen.

The parallel portraiture of both these

narratives, one in the US and the other in

Kalimpong, is drawn with superb dexterity by this award-winning young writer. An

immigrant society's plight and its eagerness

to gain the green card are aptly portrayed.

The town of Kalimpong is virulent with slo-

gans and posters demanding a home land

for the Gorkhas. This novel about love and passion

turns into a demand by Nepalis for a home-

land of their own, for their right to have the

Nepalese language taught in schools.

"The Neps have been encouraged by the

Sikhs and their Khalistan, by ULFA, NEFA,

PLA, Jharkhand, Bodoland....."

Kiran Desai has drawn both the narra-

tives in Kalimpong and New York with

unflinching details. The tragedies and pain

of class distinction leading to the betrayal

of love, pain of exile, urge to have a home-

land within the homeland all these titbits

are sewn together with extraordinary

expertise, making *The Inheritance of Loss* a must read.

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Jackie Kabir teaches English language and is

currently doing her M.Phil. in diaspora litera-

ture.

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called him again...."

So Biju gets back home where he really

feels that he belongs, but as soon as he

comes near Kalimpong and is robbed off all

his belongings, he realises that the imaginary

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The Inheritance of Loss

Kiran Desai

Atlantic Monthly Press

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