

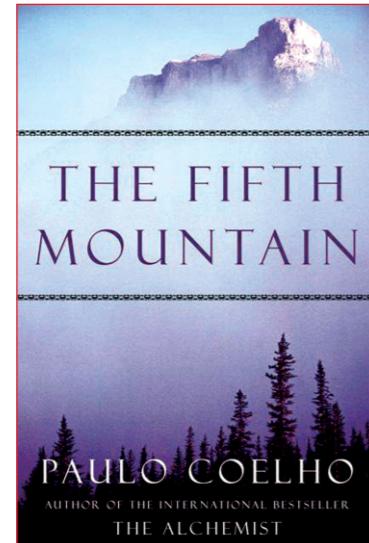
A universal message through the trials of a prophet

Karim Waheed reads a tale redolent of the biblical and finds it touching

A T the beginning of the year 870 B.C., a nation known as Phoenicia, which the Israelites called Lebanon, had marked almost three centuries of peace...An alliance made around the year 1000 B.C. with King Solomon of Israel had allowed the modernisation of its merchant fleet and the expansion of trade...Phoenicia had never stopped growing...A council of war was meeting in a distant place called Nineveh. A group of Assyrian generals had decided to send troops to conquer the nations located along the Mediterranean coast. Phoenicia had been selected as the first country to be invaded...Two men hiding in a stable in Gilead, in Israel, expected to die in the next few hours..." Paulo Coelho contrives the setting of *The Fifth Mountain*.

The Fifth Mountain, a translation of *Monte Cinco* (1996) by Clifford E. Landers, followed Coelho's "publishing phenomenon" *The Alchemist* (1988) and both share a theme the coming of age of the protagonist who must go on a quest to a distant land. Both books can be considered spiritual fiction, though *The Fifth Mountain* seems to be a more ambitious endeavour.

The novel is based on the story of Elijah, an Israelite prophet mentioned in the *Book of Kings (Old Testament)*, *Talmud* and the *Qur'an* (as Ilyas). According to the *Book of Kings*, Elijah raised the dead, brought fire down from the sky and ascended into heaven on a whirlwind.



The Fifth Mountain
Paulo Coelho
HarperCollins

According to Jewish beliefs, he is to return as precursor to the coming of the Messiah. According to Christianity, he is expected to arrive either before the Second Coming of Jesus, or is thought to have already arrived at the Mount of Transfiguration before the Crucifixion. However, given his significance, Elijah's story occupies remarkably modest space in the holy books.

The Fifth Mountain follows the prophet in his early twenties. In an attempt to establish the worship of her god, Baal,

Jezebel has ordered the execution of all Israelite prophets. Jezebel, a princess from Phoenicia, married King Ahab of Israel and manipulated him towards worshiping Baal.

An angel conveys God's warning to Elijah: "Tell Ahab, that as surely as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom thou standest, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to My word." The challenge is rather direct, as Baal is the Phoenician deity responsible for rain, thunder and dew.

Elijah appears at the royal court and is mesmerised by Jezebel's exotic beauty eyes like emeralds shining in a dark face, cascade of hair adorning a perfectly contoured body. The prophet delivers God's message, leaving the court smitten with Jezebel's splendour and convinced that he had carried out his mission. The next morning offered a rude awakening: Jezebel had convinced King Ahab that the prophets were a menace to the growth of Israel. Ahab's soldiers had orders to execute all who refused to abandon the God of the Hebrews. Elijah, however, had no right of choice: he was to be killed.

Coelho's depiction of the *nabi* is all too human with his vulnerabilities, desires and indecisiveness. Elijah escapes death and hides by the bank of Cherith (a brook), close to the river Jordan, surviving on food fetched by a crow. Days later he is instructed by God to go the Phoenician city of Zarephath, known to its residents as Akbar. He is taken in by a widow.

It is in Zarephath that Elijah comes of

age. The prophet discovers earthly love, yet he cannot get himself to voice his feelings for the object of his affection, the widow. To Elijah, "Love is dangerous". He had seen the king of Israel abandon the Lord because Jezebel had conquered his heart. Tradition said that King Solomon had come close to losing his throne over a foreign woman and King David had sent one of his best friends to death after falling in love with the friend's wife.

Like Jezebel, the widow is a worshipper of Baal, who is said to dwell along with other gods at the mist-shrouded crest of the Fifth Mountain. Elijah's faith is tested when the widow's sole offspring dies. The people of Zarephath hold him accountable for the death and he is made to climb the Fifth Mountain, from which no man returns.

Elijah descends from the mountain, unharmed, and performs a miracle: through God's power, he restores the widow's son to life. This convinces the city that he can be considered a sage and soon Elijah finds himself settling disputes among the townspeople, eventually becoming an adviser to the governor. Coelho makes an allusion to Santiago, the protagonist of *The Alchemist* as Elijah resolves the dilemma of a shepherd who had dreamt of a treasure buried near the pyramids of Egypt and needed money to journey there.

The story hits its climax when the Assyrian army, bent on conquering Phoenicia, set up encampment just outside the city walls. Elijah makes an

attempt to return to Israel, taking the widow and her son with him. But it is not God's will. The prophet has to endure a tragedy that discloses the central message of the tale: "The unavoidable is temporary; the lessons of the unavoidable are everlasting."

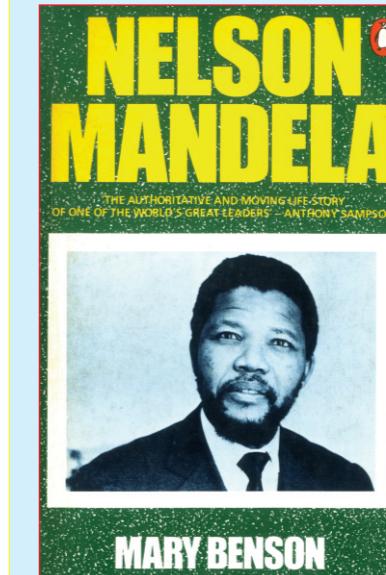
What makes this spiritual fiction more intriguing is a note from the author. According to Coelho, "On August 12, 1979, I went to sleep with a single certainty: at the age of thirty I was successfully making my way to the top of my career as a recording executive. I was working as artistic director for CBS in Brazil...Of course my great dream to be a writer had been set aside. After all, real life was very different from what I had imagined; there was no way to earn a living from literature in Brazil.

"When I woke up, I received a phone call from the president: I had just been fired, without further explanation. Although I knocked on various doors in the next two years, I never found a position again in that field.

"The unavoidable happened, at the very moment when I felt most secure and confident. I believe I am not alone in this experience; the unavoidable has touched the life of every human being on the face of earth. Some have rebounded, others have given up but all of us have felt the wings of tragedy brushing against us."

Karim Waheed is cultural reporter, The Daily Star

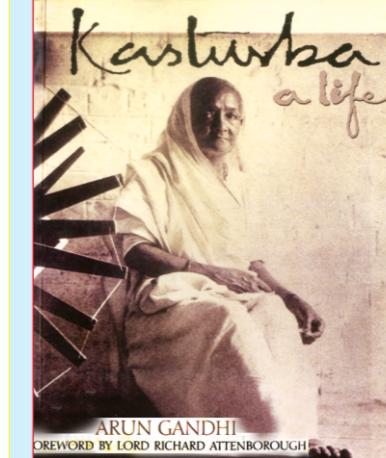
At a glance



MARY BENSON

Nelson Mandela
Mary Benson
Penguin Books

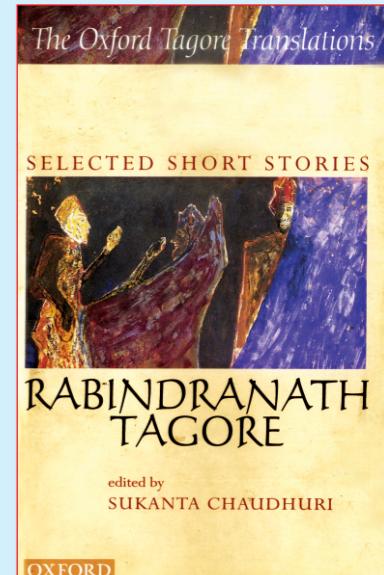
One of the best known works on South Africa's anti-apartheid crusader, it was published while Nelson Mandela was languishing in jail. There would still be four years before he would be freed, but the book makes it obvious why Mandela was clearly on his way to enjoying a moral victory over his tormentors.



ARUN GANDHI

Kasturba
A Life
Arun Gandhi
Penguin Books

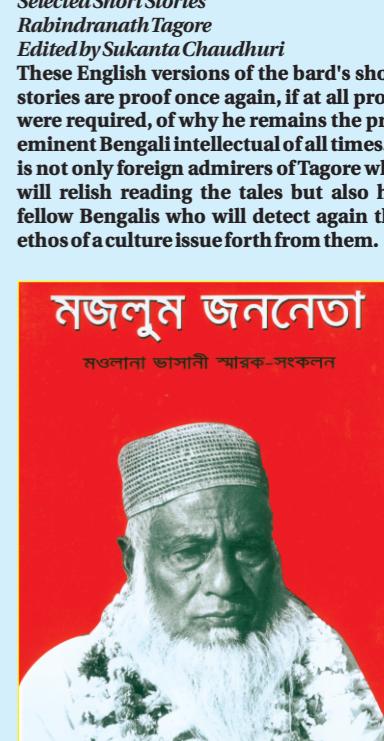
Perhaps the only detailed examination of the life of the woman who married Mohandas Gandhi, the book is an excellent account of her travails and sufferings and yet unbreakable spirit. It is a sympathetic grandson who pays tribute to her. But for her quiet fortitude, life for Gandhi could well have been different.



RABINDRANATH TAGORE

edited by SUKANTA CHAUDHURI

OXFORD



Mojlum Jononota

Moulana Bhashani Smarok Grantha
Edited by Mohsin Shastrapani Moulana

Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani Parishad

An insightful collection of writings on the man once known as the Red Moulana. The eventful career he led in politics and the verve and sheer energy he brought into the growing demand for Bengali self-expression are all brought alive here. More than thirty years after his death, a new generation will have plenty to learn about him through this work.

British tourism and all

Mohammad Shahidul Islam admires a different kind of book

UNLIKE other developing countries, Bangladesh cannot spell tourism as easily as the British can around the world. We can never be proud of our tourism owing to a lack of proper planning. Tourism is largely overlooked in the national budget though Bangladesh is a country rich in culture and heritage and natural resources. For a small country in South Asia that is only 144,470 square kilometers in area, there is definitely a lot to see, enjoy and do. Of late, Britons have been taking pride in their tourism development and they, as usual in all categories, have assembled their tourism's heydays in the book *British Tourism: The remarkable story of growth*.

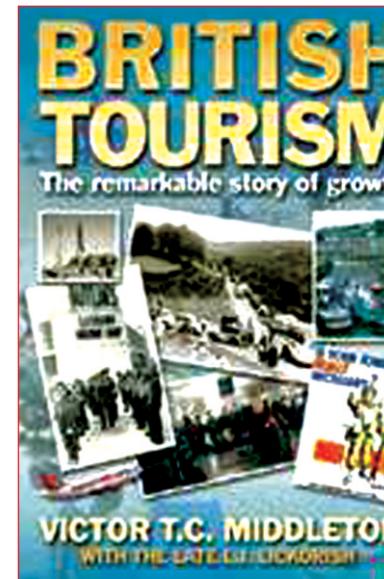
Covering Britain's tourism growth from 1919 to the present, this book makes an excellent research resource as well as a good read. Detailed information is provided regarding the impact of economics, politics and society on the expansion of British tourism.

The book tells the story of British tourism since the First World War; reviews the present situation and looks to the future. Growth, at an estimated tenfold increase in British tourism over 50 years since WWII, has seen political and media views of tourism shift from dismissive political jibes at a 'candyfloss industry' to growing recognition that tourism is a core part of the post-industrial and post-agricultural economy; is influential in all parts of the UK; a driver of the 'new economy' of the 21st century and a vital contributor to sustainable economic growth... Tourism remains firmly below the political stairs, however, the Cinderella of Government as noted by a House of Commons Select Committee in 2003.

Any story that covers so broad a sweep as a century of tourism inevitably involves judgments as to what to include and what to leave out. It also involves the principal author's selection and interpretation of events. The main chapters are divided into four post-war eras to make the changes more understandable and to locate them in their historical perspective. The contents give details and assess:

- The roots of post-war tourism growth - the interwar years
- Tourism in 1950 and today
- Developments in accommodation and attractions
- Developments in transport and regulation
- Marketing developments and trends the role of entrepreneurs
- National, regional and local organisation in tourism; Britain, Scotland and Wales
- Future trends and prospects
- Detailed appendices cover the problems defining and measuring tourism since the 1930s, noting that the basic thinking on which international tourism satellite accounting is now founded was first explained in England in 1944.

The book should be widely read by all concerned about tourism development in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi students of tourism management in different universities at home



Len Lickorish
Victor Middleton
Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann

and abroad are encouraged to read the book in order to be able to contribute to tourism development in Bangladesh. Through a comprehensive and insightful study of one of the great British success stories of the 20th century, young people can envision Bangladesh at that level of British progress in the tourism industry. The book may inject spirit into students, career minded people and others interested in this fascinating sector of modern society.

Butterworth Heinemann first published *British Tourism: The Remarkable Story of Growth* in May 2005. Selling out its first, hardback edition in a little over 12 months, the book has been revised and a new paperback edition launched this year. The new edition includes a brand new contributed chapter on tourism growth in Scotland and Wales, as well as a colour plate section. The late Len Lickorish, who was the originator of this book, Victor Middleton, who took on the task of editing and rewriting the drafts, joined the British Travel Association in 1968 and was a Founder Fellow, former chairman and vice chairman of the Tourism Society. A chapter on developments in Scotland and Wales is included in the new edition, contributed by Dr Brian Hay and Professor Elwyn Owen. In the book, professionalism has been highlighted to beautify the approach to British tourism development as it has manifested itself over the years. Professional experts in Bangladesh should also welcome and be encouraged by the work to help Bangladeshi tourism develop in the times to come.

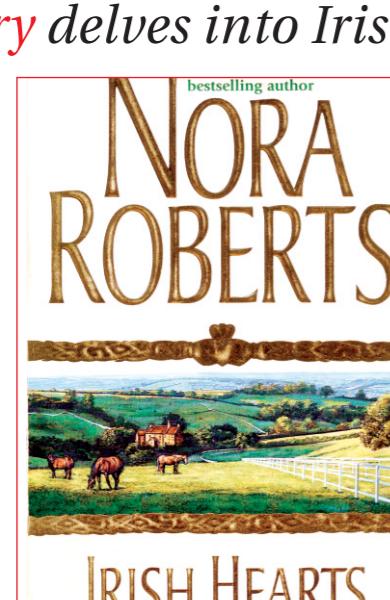
Mohammad Shahidul Islam is UNESCO Heritage Guide trainer, travel writer and works in Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.

Love, the heart and mellowness

Tulip Chowdhury delves into Irish romance and goes starry-eyed

ROMANCE mixed with adventure certainly makes the heart throb with excitement. And that is exactly what *Irish Hearts* does to the reader. The book is romance at its greatest height. Nora Roberts, a word artist, has painted the characters of the book with vitality and verve. Her description of the American countryside seems to present a picture perfect landscape through all the seasons. She has a warm feel for her characters and an eye for the evocative detail. The characters in the story touch the heart and set the readers into holding their breath, reading on, eager to know of the happenings in the story. You feel a close kinship to the characters whose images are drawn vividly, are so full of life. It seems as if you have known them for ages.

Irish Hearts has two wonderful novels of love and passion. One is the Irish Thoroughbred and the other is the Irish Rose. The main characters, two vivacious young women, are Irish. In the first story, Adelia Cumpane leaves Ireland to settle in Maryland, America. She leaves behind her childhood with dreams of a better life with her uncle on a horse farm where he works. Adelia has a way with horses and so settles



Irish Hearts
Nora Roberts
Silhouette Books

in quickly on the farm. Adelia is a person with a sweet disposition but has the typical Irish temper that the Irish are

known for. The owner of the farm, Travis Grant, is at once in love with the hot-tempered Adelia. But he is doubtful of Adelia's ability to work on the farm just because she happens to be a young woman of considerable beauty. But when she manages to tame the wildest horse on his farm, Travis has a change of heart and allows her to work with his best horses. Travis is known to be arrogant and proud. However, Adelia, with an Irish nose for seeing the truth, sees him below the skin. She does not miss the gentle soul that hides behind the facade of arrogance. The rising actions of the story begin here as Travis and Adelia get to know each other. The reader feels caught up with the minute details of the story as Adelia and Travis work out their differences. Adelia is determined that no one is going to order her around. Travis wants his farm to run according to his wishes. The reader gets caught in the dreams of the two people. Travis is determined to make Adelia his own and the unwavering Adelia is adamant that Travis should come down a notch before she yields. The readers enjoy the roller coaster relationship while wishing that they would settle down. The turning point of the story comes when

Margot, ex-girlfriend of Travis, turns up with the sure knowledge that Adelia is just a passing phase for Travis. The climax of the story is reached at this point.

Irish Rose is a sequel to *Irish Thoroughbred*. In this book Nora Roberts portrays another Irish woman, Erin McKinnon, who comes to America in the hope of escaping poverty in Ireland. Erin is a relative of Adelia. She wants to change her way of life for the better. In the process she comes to America as the bookkeeper of Burke Logan. Burke owns a ranch but spends most of his time on gambling. Erin is an Irish beauty and knows her ground. However, the Irish temper is there for Burke to reckon with. For Burke, Erin is a change from all the other women who have come across him. Whereas the other women move according to his wishes, Erin has a mind of her own. Burke falls for her beauty and pride. Burke, a man of sudden whims, decides to go ahead and propose to her. The climax of the story is reached when Erin decides to accept him, knowing well that she is gambling away her own life for a man's whimsical wants. But she is determined to go ahead as she learns of Burke's past life and gets a glimpse of the kind-hearted man beneath

the rough nature that he pretends to have. Erin and Burke get to know each other as they fall into the patterns of a married life. However, the turning points are there as Erin sails through a difficult pregnancy. This is a marvellous story of how a woman can earn the love of a man through her own kindness and imagination. This is also a story of how a man can change when a gentle woman comes into his life. Anyone who is a Nora lover will fall for the stories here. These are tales of how the human heart can respond to love and kindness. These are also the tales of how a soul becomes when love is missing in life. Although the stories are simply told, the twists and turns are there to keep readers guessing. Anyone who likes happy endings can relax and enjoy the stories. Nora Roberts is truly a storyteller extraordinaire. A bonus for the reader is that the book is a special 2-in-1 edition containing Nora Roberts' fabulous first book, *Irish Thoroughbred* and the sensational sequel.

Tulip Chowdhury is a teacher and writes short stories