

A Glimpse into 'Niranjana' - A Work of Translation by Sanjeet Kumar Das

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**Name of Book: Niranjana Author: Bijay Mishra Translation: Sanjeet Kumar Das
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'Niranjana' is a work of translation of the Odia masterpiece titled 'Tata Niranjana' by Dr Bijay Mishra. It has been translated into English by Sanjeet Kumar Das, published by Black Eagle Books, and printed and bound in India by Atlantic Print Services in the year 2023 with ISBN no. 978-1-64560-361-0.

The original Odia text is a mid-length drama focusing on the growth and evolution of Lord Goutam Buddha and Buddhism. The author very tactfully divides the entire play into two parts, taking characters from the spheres of contemporary life as well as history. It talks of a time when Buddhism was fairly new, and was trying to establish itself as a prominent religion. It had already garnered enough followers to form several sanghas. The action of the play takes place in one such sangha near the river Niranjana - where Buddha or Lord Goutam had attained enlightenment. Goutam is generally considered the divine entity who had the power to detach himself from all the material and carnal desires of the living world, and attain salvation. Through this play, the writer brings to the forefront another face of the Lord - one that is plagued by questions. To create a perfect harmony between historical facts and modernism, Bijay Mishra places three women - namely, Ichhamati, Sujata, and Gopa - at poignant junctures in the play who have the courage and boldness required to raise questions that others are too scared to ask. They do not fear to challenge the institutionalised beliefs of the Buddhist system, the most important of them being 'The end of desire is the end of suffering'. The original Odia text was very well-received by the Odia readers. The poignancy and popularity of the text led major theatre houses in Odisha to stage the play. One of the most popular production is by the Abhinaya Jagruti Institute of Theatre which was directed by Ajit Das and staged in the year 2020.

When reviewing a work of translation, one question that comes to mind is - how much of the work has been lost in translation? If one is being very critical of the translation, then yes, the brilliance of Bijay Mishra's word choices, thought deliveries, and style of expression are a few aspects that the Odia reader will be missing here. But the manner in which the translator - Sanjeet Kumar Das has been able to maintain the integrity and sentimentality of the dialogues and carried forward the principal thought and matter of the original Odia text, is deserving of praise. He has made skillful use of words in the dialogues of the characters and tried his best to uphold the mood and tone of the original literary work. The translation of the dialogues of the three female characters in particular, are impressive. Whether it is Ichhamati fighting against the sangha with logic - "...the end of desire is possible when you are very much with its all conditions and existences. The discussion about the end of desire is only a farce, a pretention, when one stays away from desire", or Sujata mocking Goutam - "But they say, you are the solution of all questions and the answer to all inquisitions", or Gopa trying to reason with her son saying, "...the Buddhas are unable to satisfy the Gopas", the readers will derive the same sort of emotional pleasure from Das's '*Niranjana*'.

'*Tata Niranjana*' by Dr Bijay Mishra is a seminal Odia work of art and Sanjeet Kumar Das has done a commendable job in being the first person to translate it into English. The task was no doubt a demanding one, but Das has managed to bring forth the essence of the original text through his masterful handling of English. The translated book was so well-received by Sanjeet Kumar Das's students that they even staged it at the cultural evening of their 3-day International Conference. One can get hold of a copy of '*Niranjana*' on Amazon.

Author's Profile

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