



থ্যেপিয়ান
THESPIAN
An International Refereed journal
ISSN 2321-4805

THESPIAN

MAGAZINE

An International Refereed Journal of Inter-disciplinary
Studies

Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

DAUL A Theatre Group©2013-17

Editor of
Bengali New Year Edition 2017
Prof. Abhijit Sen
Professor, Department of English
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal

Title: The Hypocrisy of a God-Man & his fake Astrology: a Review of the
Jatrapala Somaj Shatru Ganak Thakur

Author(s): Bidhan Mondal

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63698/thespian.v5.1.SZRU1930>

Published: 09 May 2017

The Hypocrisy of a God-Man & his fake Astrology: a Review of the *Jatrapala Somaj Shatru Ganak Thakur* ©
2017 by Bidhan Mondal is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Yr. 5, Issue 9, 2017

Bengali New Year Edition
April - May



The Hypocrisy of a God-Man & his fake Astrology: a Review of the Jatrapala *Somaj Shatru Ganak Thakur*

Production: "Somaj Satru Ganak Thakur" (Enemy of Society: The astrologer, a God-man)

Produced by: Natraj Opera

Cast: Tridib Ghosh, Paddopriya, Kumar Nabab, Ms. Aparajita, Daliya Dey and others

Major Characters: Male: Biroja Mohanti (Ganakthakur), his son Debol Mohanti, Subol Mohanti (Vakti's son) and others; Female: Durga, Vabani (Durga's mother), Vakti (Ganakthakur's sadhika) & others

Story/ Lyrics: Tapasi Roychaudhury

Direction: Tridib Ghosh

----- Bidhan Mondal

Ph.D. Research Scholar,

Department of English, Visva-Bharati,

Santiniketan.

Natraj Opera of Kolkata staged *Somaj Satru Ganak Thakur* in Bolpur Dak Bangla Moidan on March 07, 2017, organised by Bolpur Adyashakti Sangha. The residents of Bolpur and its surroundings had the extra amount of pleasure of witnessing the performance of Tridib Ghosh, as the main focus of this jatra was the acting and the direction of this aged maestro in the field of jatra theatre. The open stage (muktamancha) with a three-storied dais, showing the decor and style of bygone era, was quite impressive in keeping touch with the conventional code of jatrapalas. The theme of this jatra questions the fake authority of the so-



called God-men or spiritual gurus especially the astrologers. This jatra exhibits a protest against Biroja Mohanty (Ganakthakur), who represents these astrologers, who have been deceiving the simple, superstitious villagers by playing with their faith with his hypocrite activities.

The first scene began at the house of Narayan Bhattacharya in the village of Behure with the religious fanaticism centred on Narayan's daughter Durga who had been considered since her childhood as "Devi" or goddess after being worshipped as Kumari. It is ironical in the context of the story that whereas people spend more than Rs 80 lakhs on constructing the world's tallest Durga idol—can stay sane and celebrate when news headlines scream the gruesome rape of young girls. The ashram or house of Ganakthakur in the village of Karnafuli is the microcosm of all the charlatan institutions where fraud God-men like Biroja Mohanti along with his disciples Bhakti Sadhika, Subal, Haridhan, Gurucharan, deceive naive families like that of the married couple Arnab and Manjushri Roy in this jatra. By the name of God, Ganakthakur goes on harming the honour of married women in their unconscious state with the promise of endowing them with the ability of giving birth to a child with the help of his spiritual power. Manjushri is one such victim who commits suicide, later his sadhika Vakti exposes the dark reality of this womanizer, disguised under the mask of a God-man.

Biroja Mohanti has also stained the role of a father when he settles the marriage of his son Debol with Durga only to appease his own sexual urge for her. According to his conspiracy, Ganakthakur claims his daughter-in-law Durga to be an incarnation of "Devi Durga" which is readily accepted by his docile son that led to their separation at the night of



their wedding reception. Eventually it is disclosed that the sinister Ganakthakur has even killed many with snake poison including his own wife, but at the end all the evil intrigue of Biroja has been disrupted by Durga and Arnab. The final scene is just like any other conventional happy ending as Biroja is punished for his crime by his own false creation Durga (in the disguise of Devi), on the other hand Debol accepts Durga as his wife, and Subol recognizes Vakti sadhika as his lost mother.

Lighting was minimal according to the conventional code of jatra with the recurrent use of red in the twists and turns especially during the climax, only to highlight what needed to be emphasised. The jatra began with the traditional high-pitched instrumentals of popular songs; gradually it turned into a medley of music as the musician incorporated marriage songs like “mukut mathai diye didi jabe sasurbari”, bhakti songs like “prabhuji dao darshan”, bengali songs like “ashay ashay”. The interesting musical portion is that when Debol and Durga was having courtship along with the mash-up of both bengali and hindi romantic songs. But the musician could have reduced the number of Bollywood songs like “main deewani ho gayi”, “ang jwala dey”, “dheere dheere” and others which had lengthened the time unnecessarily. Tridib Ghosh’s acting was outstanding in the role of Biroja Mohanti with some of his memorable dialogues like “Besi koutuhal ami pochondo kori na” [I don’t like curiosity in excess], “aloukik korte gele osot pathe jete hoy” [to do miracle one need to tread on the path of dishonesty].

Overall, it was an enjoyable performance especially I would appreciate the director for pinpointing the absurdity to compare women to goddesses and then expect them to remain confined to working within the domestic sphere, for which they are not even compensated. In



spite of being pious and educated Debol refused his wife Durga with his prejudiced dialogue: “Devi ke sahodhormini kora jay na” [one cannot accept a goddess as his life-partner]. A change of attitude is urgently required especially they need support, having a husband and being liked by his family is still seen as a greater achievement for a woman than being financially independent and having control over one’s money, body and mind. The overall feel among the audience is that they have enjoyed this jatra, although the director could have been more discriminating in pruning some of the critical scenes. Some of these scenes are complicated for the understanding of the village audience who are not habituated with this kind of intriguing plot.

But I must say the director deserves credit for bringing such a sensitive topic in commercial jatratala. It has come at a time when issues like religious dominance in the field of politics are being debated in the parliament and prominent God-men have been arrested on charges like murder and rape. When I walked out on that day after watching the jatra, I seemed to recall the key line from the movie PK—“Believe in God who created you, not the one you created”.