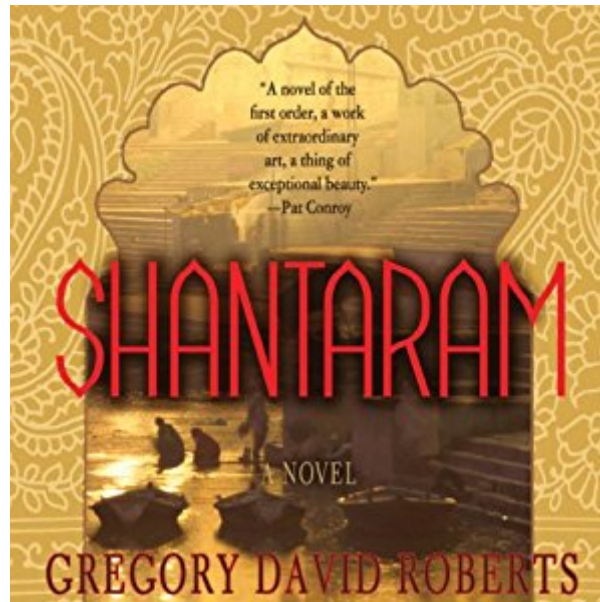




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Shantaram: A Novel



Synopsis

"It took me a long time and most of the world to learn what I know about love and fate and the choices we make, but the heart of it came to me in an instant, while I was chained to a wall and being tortured." So begins this epic, mesmerizing first novel set in the underworld of contemporary Bombay. Shantaram is narrated by Lin, an escaped convict with a false passport who flees maximum-security prison in Australia for the teeming streets of a city where he can disappear. Accompanied by his guide and faithful friend Prabaker, the two enter Bombay's hidden society of beggars and gangsters, prostitutes and holy men, soldiers and actors, and Indians and exiles from other countries, who seek in this remarkable place what they cannot find elsewhere. As a hunted man without a home, family, or identity, Lin searches for love and meaning while running a clinic in one of the city's poorest slums, and serving his apprenticeship in the dark arts of the Bombay mafia. The search leads him to war, prison torture, murder, and a series of enigmatic and bloody betrayals. The keys to unlock the mysteries and intrigues that bind Lin are held by two people. The first is Khader Khan: mafia godfather, criminal-philosopher-saint, and mentor to Lin in the underworld of the Golden City. The second is Karla: elusive, dangerous, and beautiful, whose passions are driven by secrets that torment her and yet give her a terrible power. Burning slums and five-star hotels, romantic love and prison agonies, criminal wars and Bollywood films, spiritual gurus and mujaheddin guerrillas - this huge novel has the world of human experience in its reach, and a passionate love for India at its heart. Based on the life of the author, it is by any measure the debut of an extraordinary voice in literature.

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Customer Reviews

writing the book. In the other main characters, there is his lover, Karla, who simply cannot fall in love but can love. She uses the term like. Karla though she has taken on lovers she never deviates from her short coming. Shantaram/Linbaba's mentor, KadarKahn, is a Bombay mafia don. Kadar takes on a father role as he teaches Linbaba the meaning of life. KadarKhan speaks to the complexity theory in that man's moving his expression to the universe through to higher levels of complexity of the from one generation to the next. That which move towards complexity is good. The highest level of complexity is found in Love, and the forgiveness that gets you there. Kaderkahn falls just short of the goal. Kadabahi's love like Karla's was intellectual. The reader comes to realize (for me that was two weeks after I finished the book) that the only character in the book that finds that higher level is Probaker, He is the portal to and the DNA of the soul of India. The author makes the point many times about the character of Indians. Probakers love came from the heart and ones he 'feels' his way into love for a person, he is one hundred percent dedicated to that person despite any flaws along the way. If you accept my assessment of characters, Probaker's death is the climax of the book. All other main characters, coincidentally not Indian, remain flawed. Who are we to judge? Ironic haugh? Yes it is the allegory, the whole novel is a metaphor with quips of wisdom that the author expresses through the inner thoughts of Shantaram, that puts this book on the very top of my list of favorite books. Yes, finally a modern day author has dethroned Victor Hugo. He has yet to replace Hugo as the best author ever as you cannot do that in one book. So I look forward to more from Gregory David Roberts. Below is a bibliography of the passages and quips of wisdom. On their own I am sure you would take a few notes. In the context of the story, their reality takes on an exponential proportion. Each quip could stand alone. Everything as itself by itself) Each quip could be incorporated into the fabric of your being. In the end is the singularity and the oneness the same? I leave that up to you. key word cigarroomofbooks and you will find my review with the bibliography.

Book has lots of insights into the Indian culture and people. With the crowds of people there, the people have to accommodate to each other and maintain a sense of self. It was interesting to read about what some people thought was important. The interaction of the Australian escapee with Indian people was very different than what I expected he would encounter. There was enough action to make it interesting. The ending was a surprise.

This is a wonderful autobiographical novel, extravagantly written with authenticity, passion and

insight. Shantaram is full of wisdom and exotic mystery, featuring a raft of beautifully drawn characters. Among the very most compelling is protagonist Lin's surprising mentor, Afghan-born Bombay-mafia-don, Abdel Khader Kahn, whom the book's publisher properly describes as "criminal-philosopher-saint." Khader is among the most engaging -- and oddly endearing -- fictional figures I've ever encountered. Another most fascinating of Shantaram's characters is the sometimes mesmerizing and beautiful, sometimes sordid, darkly terrifying city of Bombay, itself. Through Roberts' narrative, we are introduced to layer upon layer of this complex city. The hero, Lin, is full of seeming contradictions - the convicted robber, prison escapee and organized crime operative who - with no medical training - ministers to a whole community of Bombay's slum inhabitants. Roberts claims to have written this book several times while in prison, only to have it confiscated almost every time. Thankfully, the author and this work survived. This book is one of my all-time favorites.

The story of Lin, an Aussie living in exile in Bombay, is rich and full of twists and turns, love and betrayals, violence and tenderness. It was an intriguing tale, long and engrossing. Perhaps inevitably, at the writing does get a bit redundant and too many of the characters remain 2-dimensional and therefore difficult to really develop much real context for their actions and motivations. Even Karla, the main love interest, remains aloof and shallow. Other characters, like Didier and Prabu, develop deep and complex, but understandable histories and contexts, and their characters are satisfying and endearing. The chaotic pace of life in Bombay comes across viscerally, and the music of "Hinglish" is delightful. I bit the bullet and am reading his follow-up "The Mountain Shadow".

If you've ever traveled to an extremely poor country and inexplicably fallen in love with the people and it's culture - you will Love Shantaram. Roberts creates Lin, an intelligent and clever character - right from the first page. Lin (name on counterfeit passport) has just escaped from an Australian prison and is on the run. Lin learns several of the local languages, well enough to fit in with his new neighbors. Language is not perfectly translatable though - as he finds out by experiencing Bear Hugs. At one time, Lin describes himself as interested in everything. Lin's curiosity immerses him in wild adventures. To me, Shantaram is a love story. Love of India and it's people and learning to love oneself. Accepting responsibility for horrible, stupid mistakes and believing in Hope - Forgiveness - Possibility. Roberts is so talented. Each page was filled with life. I felt like I was in the scene, observing everything. I feel like much of it is a memoir, although in a YouTube interview, Roberts denies it. I plan to reread Shantaram many times.

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