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THE KING OF THE DARK CHAMBER

Rabindranath Tagore



Introduction By:
Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee

Sales Agents for UK & Ireland, Europe, Africa

Kodansha Europe Ltd.

40 Stockwell Street, Greenwich, London SE10 8EY, United Kingdom
T: +44 (0)20 8293 0111 E: info@kodansha.eu www.kodansha.eu

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THE KING OF THE DARK CHAMBER

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Raja or *The King of the Dark Chamber* was the first of Rabindranath Tagore's plays in the allegorical symbolical genre which was a complete novelty in the then Bengali literature. The spiritual quest, depicted through a soul's adventures in life, makes this book fascinating to a sensitive reader.

So far as the present English translation is concerned, its first draft was made by Kshitis Chandra Sen, then a student of Oxford and an ICS aspirant, under the title *The King* in 1912. This draft was corrected and modified by Tagore on the text itself. Kshitis Chandra Sen translated only two songs of the play, but Tagore discarded both and himself translated the 11 songs that are found in the revised version. A typed copy of this changed version first appeared in the quarterly magazine *The Drama* published from Chicago under the new title *The King of the Dark Chamber* in May, 1914.

Orders, Distribution & Invoicing:

PGUK

orders@pguk.co.uk

T: +44 (0)20 8804 0400

About the Author:

Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861-7 August 1941), was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his region's literature and music. Author of *Gitanjali* and its 'profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse', he became the first non-European Nobel laureate by earning the 1913 Prize in Literature.

Surangama: *The large door has opened... he is coming; my King is coming in.*

Sudarshana: *How can you perceive when he comes?*

Surangama: *I cannot say: I seem to hear his footsteps in my own heart. Being his servant of this dark chamber, I have developed a sense—I can know and feel without seeing.*

Sudarshana: *Would that I had this sense too, Surangama!*

Surangama: *You will have it, O Queen... this sense will awaken in you one day. Your longing to have a sight of him makes you restless, and therefore all your mind is strained and warped in that direction. When you are past this state of feverish restlessness, everything will become quite easy.*

Sudarshana: *How is it that it is easy to you, who are a servant, and so difficult to me, the Queen?*

Surangama: *It is because I am a mere servant that no difficulty baulks me. On the first day, when he left this room to my care, saying, "Surangama, you will always keep this chamber ready for me: this is all your task," then I did not say, even in thought, "Oh, give me the work of those who keep the other rooms lighted." No, but as soon as I bent all my mind to my task, a power woke and grew within me, and mastered every part of me unopposed. ... Oh, there he comes! ... he is standing outside, before the door. Lord! O King!*