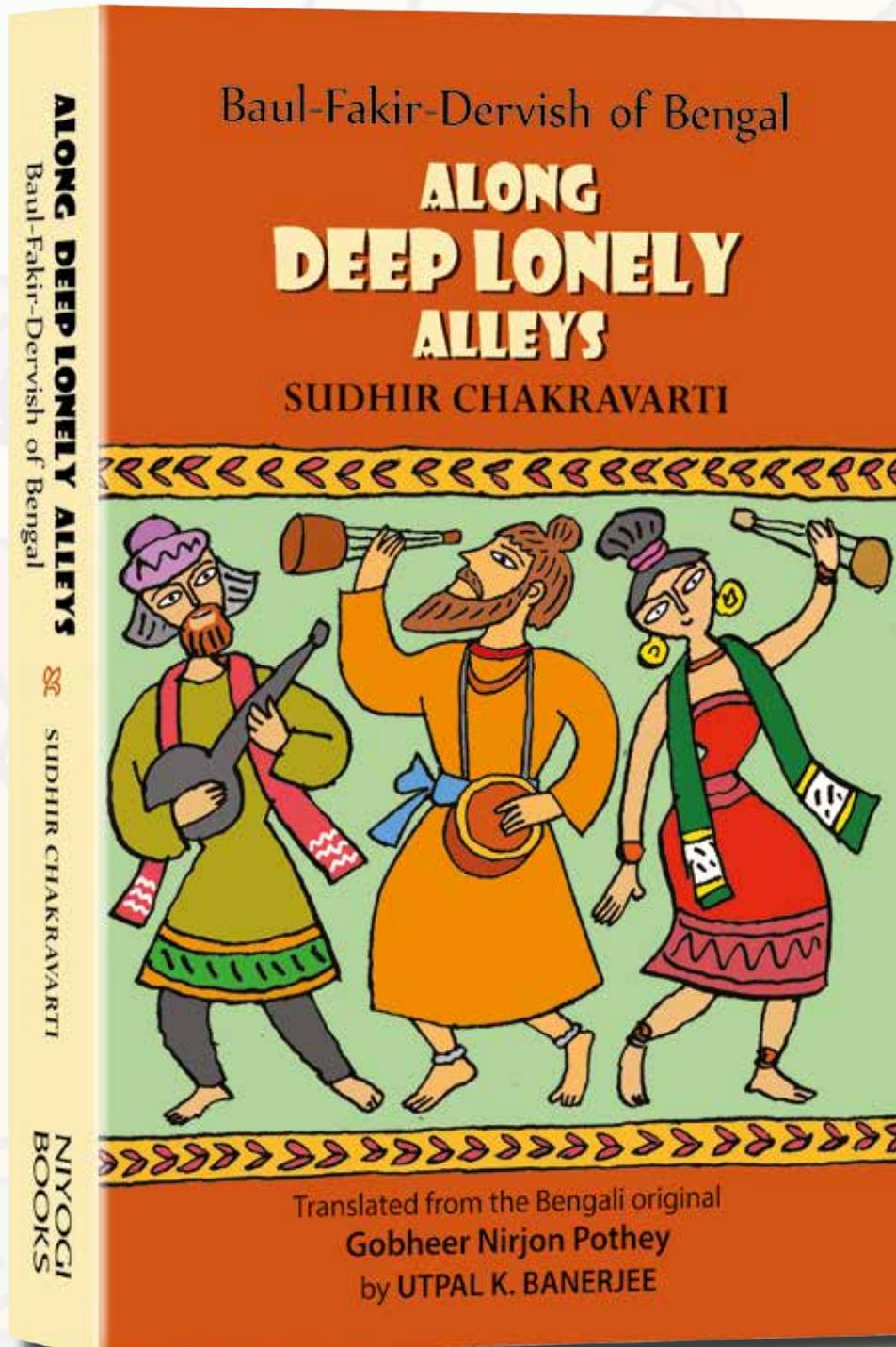


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Baul-Fakir-Dervish of Bengal

ALONG DEEP LONELY ALLEYS

Sudhir Chakravarti
Dr Utpal K. Banerjee

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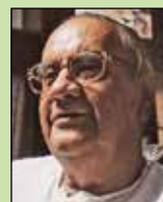
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Are we truly familiar with the deeper connotations of the terms 'Baul-bairagi-dervish, fakir-Sahajjiya' or for that matter the Sufi and the udasin—terms that we often loosely apply to certain people or sects while ploughing through the routine walks of life? H. A. Wilson (The Various Religious Cults of India) or Akshay Kumar Dutta had rightly spotted these people and produced seminal works on this community more than a century and a half ago. However, almost no further work of worth or in-depth study followed the first.

In the book *Along Deep Lonely Alleys: Baul-Fakir-Dervish of Bengal*, the author holds mastery over his pen and opens the doors to a new vision of this unique world of wandering minstrels, having travelled through the districts of Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Bardhaman – cutting across tiny hamlets and settlements tucked away in the farthest corners of Bengal – completing an intensive research over a period of time spanning two decades.

These spiritual communities and cults are unique as well as varied; the lingo they use and the norms of living they follow are remarkably mysterious and tinged with a certain rarity. The obscure mysticism in their songs, the cryptic and somewhat unintelligible and nuanced bends in their train of thoughts and philosophy have been portrayed in the book through an inclusive approach, with singular clarity and totality. A relatively unknown world thrives parallel to the extensive studies in the fields of folk sociology and rural cultural anthropology; tracing this distinctive strain of folklore, music and spiritual beliefs, this book throws up certain characters which have no archetypes, and lends a composite structure to it all.



Sudhir Chakravarti was engaged as a professor in three colleges and two universities from 1958 to 2014 and was also associated with the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata from 2010-14 as a guest professor. He had been awarded with the Ananda Purashkar in 2002 and the Sahitya Academy award in 2004 for his book, *Baul Fakir Katha*. He is the recipient of many awards for his academic writing.



Dr Utpal K. Banerjee has been an advisor on management and information technology for over thirty-five years. He was National Project Director for the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) relating to the UNDP project on Multimedia Database for Art and Culture Documentation and Computerisation from 1991-1993.



Visits the unique world of wandering minstrels from the districts of Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Bardhaman, from tiny hamlets and settlements tucked away in the farthest corners of Bengal.

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