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Mircea eliade maitreyi english pdf

Maitreyia va ramane cartea de capatai a indragostitorilor de dragoste, poemul adolescentei, in primul rand al acelei adolescente specifice veacului nostru, incitat de evadare si exotism. Maitreyia realizeaza in literatura noastra o eroina comparabila eroinelor tragice, universale. Izbutind, cu diversele sale insuriri si in somptuasa geografie a Indiei, aceasta carte de mare simplicitate, d. Mircea Eliade a sporti cu unul seria miturilor erotice ale umanitatii. Persepicusius 1933 Romanian novel by Mircea Eliade Bengal Nights First editionAuthorMircea EliadeOriginal titleMaitreyiCountryRomaniaLanguageRomanianGenreAutobiographical Romance novelPublisherCultura naționalăPublication date1933Published in English1993Media typePrint (Hardback & paperback)Pages175ISBN9789735004101 La Nuit Bengali (transl. Bengal Nights) is a 1933 Romanian novel written by the author and philosopher Mircea Eliade. It is a fictionalized account of the love story between Eliade, who was visiting India at the time, and the young Maitreyi Devi (protégée of the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, who became a famous writer herself). The novel was translated into Italian in 1945, German in 1948, Spanish in 1952, Bengali in 1988, Esperanto in 2007 (as Fráulino Maitreyi as part of the Serio Oriento-Okcidento), Catalan in 2011 and Georgian in 2019. Its most famous translation is the one in French, published as *La Nuit Bengali* in 1950. For many years, Maitreyi Devi was not aware that the story had been published. After reading it, she wrote her own version of the relationship in 1974. Entitled *Na Hanyate*, it was originally published in Bengali. It was published in English as *It Does Not Die*. In fulfillment of a promise Eliade made to Maitreyi that his novel would not be published in English during their lifetimes.[1] an English translation, of Mayitreyi, Bengal Nights did not appear until 1993. In 1994, the University of Chicago Press published the two works in English as companion volumes. Plot Allan is an employee of the company run by engineer Narendra Sen. When sent to work in a rain-abundant region of India, Allan becomes ill with malaria. He is returned to Calcutta and admitted into a hospital. After treatment, Sen invites Allan into his own house. Shortly after the young guest falls in love with the host's daughter (Maitreyi), their forbidden love gradually grows, resulting in Maitreyi and Allan ending up together. Chabu, Maitreyi's sister, unwillingly witnesses the lovers hugging thus banishing Allan and isolating Maitreyi. Both suffer immensely. To rid himself of the suffering, Allan retreats into a bungalow in the Himalaya mountains where he meets Jenia Issac. Film, TV or theatrical adaptations *La Nuit Bengali* is a 1988 film based upon the French translation of the same name. It stars Hugh Grant (Allan), Soumitra Chatterjee (Narendra Sen), Shabana Azmi (Indira Sen), Supriya Pathak (Gayatri), Anne Brochet (Guertie). References ~ Kamani, Ginu (1996). *A Terrible Hurt: The Untold Story behind the Publishing of Maitreyi Devi*. Toronto Review. The Untold Story behind the Publishing of Maitreyi Devi Passionate Fictions: Horizons of the Exotic and Colonial Self-Fashioning in Mircea Eliade's Bengal Nights and Maitreyi Devi's Na Hanyate External links Devi, Maitreyi It Does Not Die: A Romance Eliade, Mircea Bengal Nights: A Novel This article about an autobiographical novel of the 1930s is a stub. You can help Wikipedia by expanding it.vte Retrieved from " by Ginu Kamani Copyright notice. (c) 1996 by Ginu Kamani. This text previously appeared in the Toronto Review and appears on the University of Chicago Press website by permission of the author. This text may be used and shared in accordance with the fair-use provisions of U.S. copyright law, and it may be archived and redistributed in electronic form, provided that this entire notice, including copyright information, is carried and provided that Ginu Kamani is notified and no fee is charged for access. Archiving, redistribution, or republication of this text on other terms, in any medium, requires the consent of Ginu Kamani. India has always been a separate world, hard for any outsider, Eastern or Western, to penetrate. Such a culture becomes a projective test, revealing the interpreter rather than the interpreted. All interpretations of India are ultimately autobiographical. -- Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism Bengal Nights by Mircea Eliade and It Does Not Die by Maitreyi Devi were released in 1994 by the University of Chicago Press as companion volumes depicting two sides of a romance. The copies on the back of the two paperback editions read thus: Set in 1930's Calcutta, this semiautobiographical novel by the world-renowned scholar Mircea Eliade details the passionate love affair of Alain, a young French engineer, and Maitreyi, the daughter of his Indian employer. At once horrifying and deeply moving, Bengal Nights is also a cruel account of the wreckage left in the wake of a young man's self-discovery. Over forty years passed before the real Maitreyi Devi read Eliade's erotically charged novel and wrote her response. It Does Not Die. Maitreyi Devi was sixteen years old in 1930, the year Mircea Eliade, then twenty-three, came to Calcutta to study with her father. Over forty years passed before Devi read Bengal Nights, Eliade's fictionalized account of their romance. It Does Not Die is Devi's response. A counter to Eliade's fantasies, it is also a moving story of what happens to young love when enchantment and disision, cultural difference and colonial arrogance collide. I first saw a paperback version of Eliade's Bengal Nights in 1995. I recognized Eliade's name from texts assigned in a survey course on World Religions that I had taken as a university freshman, and I also recognized the title because I was aware that a French film with that same title had been made in 1987-88, in Calcutta. Seeing that the book was about a "passionate love affair" between a Western man and an Indian woman, I purchased the book. Inter-racial relationships pique my curiosity, as I navigate my own thriving marriage with a Westerner. Reacting to Eliade's book as though it were about a woman like myself, I felt flabbergasted and horrified at first, and then felt contemptuous and indignant that this book could be considered "literature." It appeared to be blatant colonial-era prejudice and appropriation veiled as romance, and seemed to have been published in North America to capitalize on the fame of "the world-renowned scholar." Eliade had perhaps come to India to transcend the Judeo-Christian sexual repression in himself, which experience he could only attempt to describe in fiction, rendering his object Maitreyi into a caricature of a tantric goddess, transforming her inexplicably from virgin to sex queen in his own unrealistic, self-indulgent fantasy. It took me weeks to finish reading the book; I would have abandoned it were it not for Maitreyi Devi's "response", which I was bent on reading. I read through Devi's It Does Not Die in one sitting. It overwhelmed me. An Indian woman had written a book with a very sure voice -- a book filled with accounts of her life, her desires, her interests, her biases -- without embarrassment, without regrets, and without any harm having befallen her. I was riveted by the boundary-less form of her narrative, dipping in and out of poetic prose and historical reminiscence. I was amazed by the frankness with which she described her passionate feelings, her critique of her father and family, and her strong sense of self. I was exhilarated by her single-minded goal of going halfway across the world to confront a European man she hadn't seen or heard from in forty two years, then just as passionately putting pen to paper and thoroughly discrediting his version of their relationship, without fearing the disparity in their "status." I was struck by her honesty in maintaining that she still loved the young Eliade whom she had once known, and whom she would love always. Na Hanyate, the original title of Bengal version of Devi's book, is a spiritual reference, alluding to the immortality of the soul, which does not die even when the body dies. I have never read such a book written by an Indian woman from India, and especially by one of her generation. I was deeply moved and troubled. More than a "counter to Eliade's fantasies," It Does Not Die delineates a complex character who embraced a complex experience without posturing, without apologies or excuses, and who, unlike Eliade, had the courage to contact an old friend after scores of years. Eliade's novel was first published in Romanian in Bucharest in 1933 under the title Maitreyi. It was written specifically for a literary picnic, following the years 1929-1931 which he spent in India as a student of philosophy under Maitreyi's father. Maitreyi was taken to be an autobiographical novel of Eliade's passionate, but failed, romance with a young Bengali girl. The book sold very well in Romania, garnering Eliade both fame and money. Eliade had published two novels before Maitreyi, both written while in India, but it was Maitreyi that propelled him into a literary career which ran parallel to his scholastic career for the rest of his life. As Eliade relocated himself first in Western Europe and then in the United States, interest in his novels grew alongside his scholastic reputation. Maitreyi was translated into Italian in 1945, German in 1948, French in 1950, and Spanish in 1952. An English version, however, was not commissioned until 1993, when Carcanet Press in England assigned a translation from the French. Maitreyi Devi was sixteen in 1930 when Eliade was invited to live in her father's house. Her "romance" with Eliade lasted a few months. When her parents realized that the two were tangling amorously, Eliade was asked to leave the DasGupta residence and ordered by Professor DasGupta never to contact Maitreyi again. At the age of twenty she was married to a Bengali man. She had two children, published volumes of poetry and prose, wrote many books on her mentor Tagore, and later in life set up orphanages for needy children. The first that Devi heard of Eliade's Maitreyi was from her father, who visited Europe in 1938 or 1939, informing her on his return that Eliade had dedicated a book to her. Beginning with travels in Europe in 1953, Devi ran into Romanians who, upon hearing her name, claimed to know who she was. But it was not until 1972, when a clerk Romanian friend of Eliade's, Sergiu de-George, came to Calcutta that Devi finally understood that Eliade had a sexual relationship between them in his book. She subsequently had a friend translate the novel for her from the French and was shaken by his depictions. Devi's first written response was a series of poems in the final months of 1972, published in a slim volume titled Aditya Marichi (Calcutta: Nabajatak Prints, 1972). From a personal letter she wrote to Eliade's translator Mac Linscott Ricketts, it becomes clear that the title, which means "Sun Rays" in Bengali, was an affectionate nick name given to Eliade by Devi's father. "Marichi" is a play on "Mircea." The poems reflect the turbulence she felt at dealing, at the age of fifty-eight, forty-two years after the fact of their involvement, with the old passions of her youth. The titles in this book include: "Many Times Have I Thought," "So Many Ages Have Passed," "Let Me See You Once," "Do Not Pull Me So," "If We See Each Other Again, Suddenly," "I Read Love Poems, Alone." In 1973, Devi arranged to be invited by the University of Chicago to give lectures on Tagore and showed up at Eliade's office unannounced. She had several meetings with him over the two months that she was there, condensing them into the one meeting described at the end of her book. In 1974, Na Hanyate was published in Bengali, the "response" to Eliade's book that became It Does Not Die. Confrontations directed by women at their male lovers interest me, as do interpersonal confrontations of most kinds. From my experience of being in a culturally mixed marriage, I know that cultural differences can have tremendous impact on behavior. My background is replete with strong taboos against confrontation -- my upbringing in India contained the tacit understanding that women didn't challenge or contradict those who held power over them. Two of the most bitter women in my life were my grandmothers. I didn't understand either of them as a child. I understand now that they had plenty to be angry about, plenty that made them hard-hearted and unpredictable in their affections. I fantasize about what might have been different in their lives if they had had the permission, or the option, to confront those responsible for the harsh constraints of their lives. Maitreyi Devi was a contemporary of my grandmothers. Born in 1914, she was seventy-six when she died in 1990. For her time, she was remarkably well-educated, and she was encouraged to express herself artistically. She was already attending university and was an accomplished poet at sixteen, and a favorite of Rabindranth Tagore, whom she referred to as Gurudev (sacred teacher), following the custom of other Indians. That she had a romance at the age of sixteen with a foreign man is remarkable enough for that era. That she may have had sexual intercourse with him or anyone else before marriage is sign of the permission that she felt she had, to take such a risk in the face of the kinds of horrors family and society routinely had in store for women who crossed that line. The early permission to explore must have been rooted in the same conviction that directed her, forty years later, to confront the man who claimed to have ruptured her virginity. Eliade strikes me as a solid colonial-era indologist. In spite of the disagreements he had with other indologists of the time. India and Indian philosophy became his personal mission, and he was rewarded throughout his lifetime for elucidating this culture to the West. He writes effusively in his autobiography (Autobiography Volume 1: Journey East, Journey West 1907-1937. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) on the meaning of India for him: "India fascinated me, it drew me like a mystery through which I seemed to foresee my destiny...to encounter the mystery that was waiting for me somewhere in India, that mystery of which I knew nothing except that it was there for me to decipher and that in deciphering it I would at the same time reveal to myself the mystery of my own existence. I would discover at last who I was and why I wanted to be what I wanted to be, why all the things that had happened to me had happened to me..." (p.153) A different perspective on the Eliade of those early years reveals a man obsessed with upstaging his male mentors "It was a tragic paradox that, although I had barely entered the university, I had criticized violently and alienated permanently the professor I most admired, the man I had chosen as my model and whose life and work had played an almost "magical" role in my life... it was this giant, the man in whose shadow I had yearned to grow, whom I had deeply offended." (p.115) "I told myself that there was something in my destiny driving me against my will to offend the very people I most admired and loved. I asked myself if it could be some strange demonic force. If I was cursed to repay with misfortune those I loved and who loved me." (p.126) Eliade set up the eminent scholar Professor DasGupta as his mentor in India, and then went on to offend him thoroughly by blatantly violating the guest-host and teacher-student relationship by first imagining, then acting on, the fantasy that DasGupta wanted Eliade to marry his daughter. Perhaps Maitreyi was only an incidental player caught in Eliade's pattern of seduction, betrayal and usurpation. When it was all over and Eliade was taking stock of his Indian encounter, this is how he rationalized it: "...I was beginning to understand the reason for the events that had provoked my breakup with Dasgupta. If 'historical' India were forbidden to me, the road now was opened to 'eternal' India. I realized also that I had to know passion, drama, and suffering before renouncing the 'historical' dimension of my existence and making my way toward a trans-historical, atemporal, paradigmatic dimension in which tensions and conflicts would disappear of themselves..." (p.189) Devi writes in a letter what I too might have felt if an old boyfriend showed up as an Indologist: "Though he seems to be a great Indologist to you he has not understood Indian society at all. I do not know how he has become such a legend in Europe, his base is very weak. His outlook is as mundane as a common Westerner." "He has a wonderful capacity to misunderstand and has always been shy to face the truth with the equanimity expected from a learned and wise man." Just out of curiosity, I decided to look through the reviews of the two books, to see if anyone else besides myself had been struck by the unusual nature of Devi's book. What I found in the reviews, instead, was a kind of "contest" made out between the two books to determine which of them was better written, more truthful, more virtuous, more worldly, and so on. Many of the reviewers champion one book over the other, saying of Devi's book, for example: "one-sided, self-absorbed," "anti-intellectual arrogance," (Carmel Berkson, "Lost Love in India", Far Eastern Economic Review, November 17, 1994); "Her angry response is naive, and rather Indian" (fan Buruma, "Indian Love Call", New York Review of Books, September 22, 1994). "Maitreyi Devi could have done with some editorial help" (Isabel Colegate, "Love in Calcutta, His and Hers", New York Times Book Review, May 15, 1994). "a distracted meditation on emotional transcendence," "rambling and anecdotal, often slack in prose style." (Philip Herter, "Both Sides Now", St. Petersburg Times, May 8, 1994). At the same time others have denounced Eliade: "The condescension of the Orientalist scholar is plain," (Anita Desai, "O Calcutta!" The New Republic, August 15, 1994); "typical of the broader history of colonialism is Eliade's denial of any culpability on his part...an Orientalist fantasy and a male fantasy" (K.E. Fleming, "He Said, She Said" The Nation, October 10, 1994); "a...desire to display his superiority, and to command possession of [Maitreyi's] entire culture - her language, her family, her literature" (Flottama Minu Tharoor, "Remembering Forbidden Love in the Time of the Raj" The Washington Post Book World, May 22, 1994) "unapologetically European male chauvinist assumptions about Indian women's customs and thought processes...the work of a bookish, rather arrogant youth with limited understanding" (Carolyne Wright, "It Does Not Die": getting to the truth behind 'Bengal Nights'", The Boston Globe, June 11, 1994); "A typical colonial tale of adventure and conquest, with too many fantastic edges to come across as being about actual human beings." (Kirkus Reviews, March 1, 1994). Hardly a single reviewer in the United States seems to have attempted any kind of research on the immense hurdles faced by a woman like Devi in writing a book like It Does Not Die. Hardly anyone, and certainly not the University of Chicago Press, has provided any background on how Devi's book was received in India, (though they don't fail to mention about Eliade's book that, "Translated into French in 1950, Bengal Nights was an immediate critical success") and what kind of infamy and respect accrued to the author. Only one American reviewer, who was a personal friend of Devi's, mentions that It Does Not Die was an overnight bestseller in India from its first Bengali edition. And she provided a brief, understated insight: "Dictates of modesty for Bengali women, and [Devi's] position as a person of no small standing in her society, compel her to circumspection, even 40-odd years later." (Carolyne Wright, The Boston Globe, June 11, 1994). Astonishing as it might sound given the slight-of-hand dictated by marketing decisions at the University of Chicago Press, Devi's "response" was written to stand on its own. There is little elaboration on the fact that Devi's book was out in India twenty years before its publication in the US, and that in all these years Eliade's book was not available in English, and therefore, for all intents and purposes, didn't exist for Indian audiences. A few copies of the French translation of Eliade's book might have been available here and there, but with little effect. Maitreyi Devi's book stood alone, succeeded on its own, was judged on its own, for twenty years with Eliade's book available neither as a reference, nor as a "version" of the romance. The book won an Indian Academy Award! The author drew over a thousand people a night to her readings. She gained fame and fortune! It Does Not Die has been translated into several European languages, including Eliade's mother tongue Romanian. Can any review of Devi's book in this country be complete without such basic information? Can the "world-renowned scholar" Eliade not be matched by the "internationally acclaimed, best-selling author" Devi? Why the stinky bio on the part of the University of Chicago Press? Instead of thorough reporting on the autonomous existence of her book, what we see in this country, as pointed out by Udayan Mitra in "The Imperialism of Culture" is that: "the reader is presented with the two volumes, with the history of difference erased from immediate consideration...the two-book publication implies a homogeneity, presenting the interweaving narratives of Eliade and Maitreyi Devi as 'He said, She said' versions of a single experiential reality...The publication coup thus empowers the First World readers/consumers to figure out 'the truth' for themselves from the two versions that are laid simultaneously before them, stripped of all baggage of history or cultural specificity." (Sunday Statesman Review, Calcutta, September 4, 1994) Another part of the story between Devi and Eliade that has not been illuminated is the effort made by Devi to ensure that no English translation of Eliade's novel be available within her lifetime. In 1973, in Chicago, as a consequence of her confronting Eliade about the lies he wrote about her in his book, Eliade promised Devi that an English translation of his novel would never be made in her lifetime. Thanks to the kindness of Eliade's translator Mac Linscott Ricketts, I can quote Devi's own words from a series of letters she sent him in the years 1976-1988: "[Eliade] promised to me that never never he will allow an English version to be published and he said he will also write that in his testament [sic] that this book shall never be published in English..." "When I met him in 1973 after forty three years I asked him why he has written such calamitous things about me. He said it was a fiction and that there are other persons of the same name as I! Well what can you say to this!"" My heart breaks to find Mircea so untruthful, disloyal and wrapped up in himself and I shall certainly punish him if he dares to publish this book in English where he mentions that in my maiden days I visited him at night! Such calumny!" "When I was in Chicago Mircea gave me his word of honour that he will never publish it in English." "I will sue him for libel. You may convey to me all my views and also remind him his word of honour. " I eventually he promised me that he will add an epilogue in the next edition of Maitreyi [the original Romanian title of his novel] saying that though some incidents described in the book are true some are not. He told me he will send me this epilogue to check. But as usual he has not kept this promise also. Now I know from your letter that he has omitted the whole episode from his memoir - why?...Here was his opportunity to say that most of the things he wrote about me were not true and absolve me of the guilt." "It is not true that I visited him at night. He promised that he will write this was a phantasy but he has not done so. He has kept the point deliberately hazy. Why does he not keep his word?" "We shall not take this lying down. If you are his well wisher you should warn him." "When I went to meet him after forty three years propelled by an undefinable force...he misconstrued my yearning to see him. He asked a friend of his whether I went to see him because he was a 'big man' who might get a Nobel prize!"" Realizing upon her return from Chicago that Eliade could not be trusted to keep his promise, Devi made it very clear to Eliade's translator, Mac Ricketts, that she would sue if his book ever came out in English. This is hardly the behavior of a woman whose "angry response is naive, and rather Indian" (fan Buruma, New York Review of Books). If anything, Devi was being savvy and assertively American, threatening with her right to legal action. If anyone was naive, it was Eliade, who writes of Maitreyi in his autobiography: "Not for a single moment did I stop to consider what an indiscretion I was preparing to perpetrate...I changed the names of the characters, of course, except for Maitreyi and her sister Chabu...It were to have been read by certain persons in Calcutta, the novel would have needed no key to have been deciphered. I never thought, however, about the possibility of its being read in Calcutta...I simply did not 'visualize' a public." (Autobiography, p.239) Too full of himself as a writer, he did not even have the courtesy to change Maitreyi's name in fictionalizing her. Eliade's book, unavailable in English until 1994, had no impact in India during the years when Devi's book flourished there. Devi writes in her letters to Ricketts of the fame and success the book brought her in India: "this contact with him after 43 years was very fruitful for me. I could write the book It Does Not Die which has brought me not only as big a fame as Mircea's Maitreyi but have [sic] made me dearer to our own people. "...every evening in a new town I faced an audience of one thousand or more some have travelled whole night to come to the meeting...It is unbelievable that in a vast country like India the book has taken grip over young and old. This is destiny. I am thankful to Mircea that he is the inspiration and cause of the book which has changed my life in a big way. Not only the popularity that might feed my pride but actually the love that I have received from all sections of the people is really unbelievable- which has made me humble and wise..." She also writes of the pain and anger of her family members. "Of course my relatives are very angry. "I was forced by an inexplicable inner compulsion to tell the whole truth. It was not an easy act for an Indian woman even today...Na Hanyate has been greatly appreciated by the general public but resented by my relatives for exposing myself and our family matters." "I had to go [to Chicago]. It was something so unusual that sometimes I feel ashamed of it. All this comes from my openness I behave in an unconventional way which is also very unindian." "...you should let Mircea know that though it is my ill luck that I love him still as I did once, my brothers and relatives do not feel the same way towards him. They will expose him before the world -- all the lies he has told." Her editor and publisher for the 1976 English edition in Calcutta wrote this about Devi: "Can the feelings of close friends and family members ever remain the same after such straight presentation of the domestic and emotional facts?" "I will not here go into the desperate attempts she made to establish contact by letter and other long-distances means; I can only say that I was partly involved...in helping her out of what seemed to be a black existential anguish that threatened to engulf her idealistic self. All these efforts failed; their failure forced her to go and meet Mircea face to face" (P. Lal, "Publisher On His Own Publication", The Illustrated Weekly of India, December 5, 1976). Though Devi did not live to see Eliade's book published in English, she was very much around when the film was being shot in Calcutta. In 1986, a young French film director named Nicholas Klotz contacted Eliade in connection with making his novel into a film. Eliade died that year, and Klotz completed his negotiation for the film rights for Les Nuits Bengali with Christinele Eliade, his widow. Financing to the tune of three million dollars was procured, and the following year, The Bengali Night was shot in Calcutta, from November 1987 to February 1988. The film was shot in English and stars a very young Hugh Grant as the European man and Supriya Pathak as the young woman Gayatri. According to Philippe Diaz, producer of the film, the character Maitreyi's name was changed to Gayatri upon request by Maitreyi Devi, in the first of several escalating challenges that she made to the film project, culminating in court cases against the film for insulting Hinduism and for being pornographic. The legal cases generated a lot of publicity and sympathy for Maitreyi Devi, and led to court-ordered stalls in shooting and threats of confiscation of exposed film footage. The producer, Philippe Diaz, promised that the film would not be released in India without government authorization. The story was covered steadily in the news for several weeks, and much debated in Calcutta. The film has been shown only once in India, at the Indian Film Festival in 1989. According to Diaz, half the audience loved it, and the other half hated it. Devi was bitter about the whole affair. She wrote in 1988: "Christinale has hurt me very badly. She gave permission to a French Co. to film La Nuit Bengali. They came to Calcutta for shooting and gave huge publicity pointing at me as the heroine. "It was a close enough breach of Eliade's promise that his book would not come out in English during her lifetime. But it is not known whether Mrs. Eliade was following her husband's wishes or her own. The film has never been released in India or the US. The producer is hoping for a US video release in a few months, no doubt because it stars Hugh Grant. Klotz' novice vision is without nuance, without understanding of the Indian atmosphere, and, most importantly, devoid of sensuality. The film was supported by francophile Statejyaji Raj, who showed up on the set to give his blessings, and whose technicians were employed in the shooting of the film. In all likelihood, Devi never saw the finished film. * Recently, I was approached by an editor of erotica, interested in having me submit a story with Indian themes. I sent in one, which she read with great interest but rejected, as it didn't quite fit the bill. I submitted a second story, which she again found very interesting, but not quite what she wanted for the anthology. Finally she stated that my stories did not fit the "formula" for erotica: seduction, climax, denouement. There were too many family members in the stories, she pointed out, whereas the erotic focus should be on the lovers themselves. Had she stated the "formula" at the outset, I could have told her myself that the stories wouldn't fit her needs. The Indians I'm familiar with have family members crawling all over their space and their lives. The erotic relationships delineated in my current stories happen in spite of family being ever-present. The United States in many ways represents the erotic space for female immigrants like myself to even begin fantasizing a privately enacted formula of pleasure. This erotic formula is one of the many individual-centered formulas of Western popular culture, such as one finds in adventure stories, detective stories, romance, which center around individuals in isolation from the social webbing of inhibiting responsibilities and controlling hierarchies, and contrary to the de-centered, "dividual" consciousness in which anticipating the needs of others is as ingrained as repressing the needs of the self. These formulas, depending as they do on enormous personal freedom, minimal constraints and few clear-cut obligations, are ignorantly assumed to be universal. The pervasive presence and controls exerted by family and community in India are too strong a force to be dispensed with. Add to it the roving eyes of friends, foes and strangers, and you have a frantic, anxiety-ridden scenario which effectively sabotages any formulaic erotic ideal. However, for a privileged European male such as Mircea Eliade traveling to India in 1929, the very fabric of society that circumscribes sexual union for Indians in India seems to have led to an astonishing sexual odyssey with a Bengali minor in a 1930 upper-class Calcutta home. Never mind that the plot presented within of seducing a sixteen-year-old Brahmin girl in her parents' house in Calcutta is ridiculously unlikely, or that the author's colonial-era arrogance is plainly depicted, or that the noble European comes through the tragedy unscathed except for hurt feelings, while his Bengali lover is depicted as being trashed by her family and community and forced into an unwanted marriage; the fact is that Mircea Eliade's novel Bengal Nights follows an expected structure as endorsed by Western literary formula. Worse still, it has the stamp of "semi-autobiographical" to validate the reality of his experiences and fits in with what Ian Buruma calls "a popular subgenre of confessional literature...young, romantic Westerner falls in love with mysterious Oriental girl, and through her with the mysterious Orient, only to bang his head on the prison wall of exclusive Oriental customs." ("Indian Love Call", New York Review of Books, September 22, 1994) This popular subgenre is long overdue for a name; I recommend "Colonial Fantasy" and a section bearing such a designation in our bookstores, so that these books can be seen for what they are, whether they are "autobiographical" or not. Along with Eliade one could imagine on this shelf M M Kaye, John Masters, E M Forster, Rudyard Kipling, and a whole host of other writers who, as David Rubin writes, perpetuate "the circular process -- preconception, failure to alter the preconception in the light of actual experience, and the subsequent regeneration and dissemination of the preconceived image -- explains in part the vitality and near-iradicability of the popular prejudices and myths about India." (After the Raj: British Novels of India Since 1947. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1986). In comparison, two Indian reviewers' honest reactions to the "unformulae" It Does Not Die: "I do not know how to classify the book. In a sense it is a novel...It is also a book of reminiscence...History and fiction have been deftly mingled...A strange amalgam but fully fascinating..." (Gopal Bhowmik, The Indian PEN Journal, July 1975). "Because this novel is based on life and truth, it seems stranger than any imaginary story...Even if she never writes another novel, Maitreyi Devi will be remembered by the Bengali reader for this extraordinary book." (Krishna Dhar) If Western reviewers and editors are to deal in any realistic way with books like Devi's which spring from a tradition that doesn't adhere to three-act formulas, then they need to educate themselves and move away from Eurocentric ideals. On my desk is a rosewood statue from Kerala, depicting a mongoose and a cobra, locked together body on body. The match-up of snake and mongoose is considered equal in India--neither animal wins consistently over the other. Each brings its own intelligence, physical capabilities, behaviors. The outcome is up to fate and circumstance. The statue is so masterfully carved that you cannot tell whether the two are locked in combat or in loving embrace. I brought this with me from India four years ago as a reminder of how combat and intimacy pose and pass for each other with relative ease, problems inherent to "falling in love." But let Maitreyi Devi have the last word: "I do realize that Mircea must have suffered a great deal because there was no physical culmination of this delightful never-ending love affair but I thank my stars that it was not. Otherwise it would have finished there. This everlasting yearning freshly grown gives me a glimpse of eternity..." 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