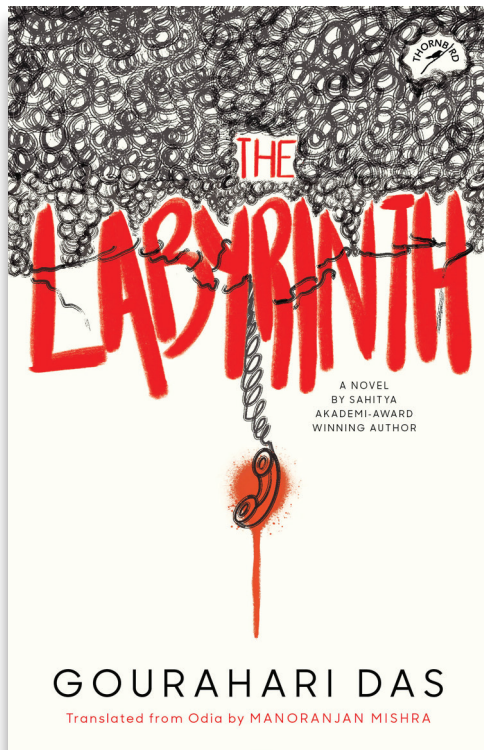




Atmospheric novel dramatising anxiety, psychological conflict and the inherent struggles of listening to mind over heart.

Explores profound moral dilemmas, challenging readers to ponder the implications of courage and complicity in the face of violence and corruption.

Aims a critical lens on bureaucratic systems, showcasing the challenges faced by individuals navigating red tape and blackmail.



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The Labyrinth

Gourahari Das

Translated from Odia by Manoranjan Mishra

How do you determine the price of conscience?

Middle of the week, in front of the school where she drops off her son every day, Draupadi witnesses something grotesque. The ludicrous ways of fate leave the ball in her court—should she inform the police, or hold on to the safety of her little boy, her husband miles away in a forest battling his own demons? Does one dare explore the limits of courage when the stakes are life and safety? From the pen of one of Odisha's most inventive writers comes a novel of quiet perseverance and struggle for a better life within the parameters of genteel norms and bureaucracy.

Taut with atmospheric tension in Manoranjan Mishra's artful translation, *The Labyrinth* is an immersive tale of the price of one's difficult choices in fidelity to familial responsibilities and the intimate, hallucinatory voice of conscience.



Gourahari Das is a Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author of more than 75 books which include collections of essays, novels, short-stories, plays, travelogues, poetry and vignettes. Many of his writings have been translated into Hindi, English, Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, Punjabi and other Indian languages, and he himself operates as a translator (into Odia) as well, winning the Sahitya Akademi Award for Translation. His work has also been adapted into television series, plays, and films.



Manoranjan Mishra is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Government Autonomous College, Angul, Odisha, with a career spanning 18 years of teaching experience. He is a prolific translator of Odia literature into English, with a penchant for short stories and novels.

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Extract from the book

Draupadi was never so timid, not even in her childhood.

As a child, she would cross dark streets alone in the evening hours quite comfortably to reach their neighbour's house.

During sunny summer afternoons when the streets were deserted, and the chirp of crickets shot through the air from the fields surrounding the village, creating dread in the minds of mischievous children, mothers would force them to lie down for a nap warning them that otherwise ghosts would appear. Draupadi dared crossing the streets alone to reach the pond at the end of the village. She would sit under the shadow of the gulmohar tree and throw pebbles into the pond. An intelligent student, she never hesitated to answer the teachers' questions, whether they were aimed at her or not.

She wondered how this sense of dread, which couldn't deter her during her childhood, overpowered her after she had grown up.

Draupadi felt there was a strong connection between responsibilities and dread, just as there existed one between wealth and hazards. During childhood, she was not smothered under the weight of responsibilities. Those days, her parents took all her responsibilities upon them. Her elder brother's twin assurances, 'Don't worry. I'll replace whatever you demolish; I'll get you what you need,' always comforted her. These days, she lives in a city alone. The responsibilities of raising a small child rests on her. Concerns about her husband, who lives far away, hang heavy on her mind. Were not these enough to constrict her?