



The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna

By John Stratton Hawley

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No Hindu god is closer to the soul of poetry than Krishna, and in North India no poet ever sang of Krishna more famously than Śrīdhara or Śrī, for short. He lived in the sixteenth century and became so influential that for centuries afterward aspiring Krishna poets signed their compositions orally with his name.

This book takes us back to the source, offering a selection of Śrīdhara's poems that were known and sung in the sixteenth century itself. Here we have poems of war, poems to the great rivers, poems of wit and rage, poems where the poet spills out his disappointments. Most of all, though, we have *the memory of love*-poems that adopt the voices of the women of Krishna's natal Braj country and evoke the power of being pulled into his irresistible orbit. Following the lead of several old manuscripts, Jack Hawley arranges these poems in such a way that they tell us Krishna's life story from birth to full maturity.

These lyrics from Śrī's *Ocean* (the *Śrīrāgar*) were composed in the very tongue Hindus believe Krishna himself must have spoken: Brajbhāṣā, the language of Braj, a variety of Hindi. Hawley prepares the way for his verse translations with an introduction that explains what we know of Śrīdhara and describes the basic structure of his poems. For readers new to Krishna's world or to the subtleties of a poet like Śrīdhara, Hawley also provides a substantial set of analytical notes. "Śrī is the sun," as a familiar saying has it, and we feel the warmth of his light in these pages.

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This book takes us back to the source, offering a selection of S?rd=as's poems that were known and sung in the sixteenth century itself. Here we have poems of war, poems to the great rivers, poems of wit and rage, poems where the poet spills out his disappointments. Most of all, though, we have *the memory of love*-poems that adopt the voices of the women of Krishna's natal Braj country and evoke the power of being pulled into his irresistible orbit. Following the lead of several old manuscripts, Jack Hawley arranges these poems in such a way that they tell us Krishna's life story from birth to full maturity.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The songs of S?rd=as are presented here with a radiant lyricism that gives the reader a direct encounter with the 'sun' of Hindi's poetic firmament. Each poem is given the space to stand alone as a fine lyrical moment, while being discreetly supported by Hawley's perceptive annotations. An added title contextualizes each song, and an authoritative introduction helps the reader understand the complex background from which this sublime poetry has emerged."

--Rupert Snell, Associate Director, Hindi Urdu Flagship, University of Texas at Austin

About the Author

John Stratton Hawley is Professor of Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jacob Keys:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the time or they will get lot of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , once we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely sure. People is human not only a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the book you have read is definitely The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna.

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