




Price: Rs 800



**Sketches by Hootum the Owl: A Satirist's View of Colonial Calcutta**, a translation of the original text, **Hootum Pyanchar Naksha** by **Kaliprasanna Sinha**, translated and edited by **Chitralkha Basu**, with an insightful foreword by **Amit Chaudhuri**, and illustrations by **Sumitro Basak**, ostensibly documents Calcutta of the 1860s'.

While offering a witty critique of its social mores, it is also the story of a city in the making and the inevitable conflicts between the traditional and the modern, the bigoted and the liberal. Although the tone is that of self-deprecation and general contempt for all that seems to be falling apart in the city, *Sketches by Hootum* is the writer's tribute to its unending spill of life that exasperates even as it overwhelms.

 *Hootum Pyanchar Naksha*, where Kaliprasanna Sinha presents a series of sketches on life and society was once pilloried as obscene but has recently been acknowledged as the first significant title of modern Bengali prose. A literary experiment in terms of style, theme, and language that has no parallel, it contains elements from practically all available generic and linguistic models—from the classical European belles lettres to Calcutta cockney, besides the writer's own idiosyncratic neologisms. Amit Chaudhuri and Chitralkha Basu point to its continuing resonance today.

**Kaliprasanna Sinha** was playwright, publisher, and philanthropist. *Hootum Pyanchar Naksha* was written when he was twenty-one. Before his early death, aged thirty, he had been active in the Indigo Revolt, supporting the social reforms of his time. He published an eighteen-volume Bengali translation of the *Mahabharata* from original Sanskrit.

**Chitralkha Basu** is a literary critic and writer who has recently completed a three-year assignment with *China Daily*, in Beijing. Her writings appear in *Memory's Gold: Writings on Calcutta* (Penguin/Viking) and *First Proof: Penguin Book of New Writing from India*.

**Amit Chaudhuri** is an acclaimed novelist, a literary critic and an exponent of Hindustani classical as well as experimental music. His most recent book *On Tagore: Reading the Poet Today* (Penguin-Viking, 2011) has won the Rabindra Puraskar.

**Sumitro Basak** is a well-known painter who has exhibited in India and abroad.

**Stree-Samya** publishes in Bengali and English on gender studies, cultural studies, including women's and dalit writings.

*Samya*

16 Southern Avenue, Kolkata 700026

Phone: 033-24660812/65195737

[www.stree-samyabooks.com](http://www.stree-samyabooks.com)