



Binodini

Crimson Rainclouds

Literature / Translations

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In *Crimson Rainclouds*, a Manipuri play from the 1960s, an artist determined to uphold his freedom is torn between his two loves, both only too gentle in their demands, and yet deeply caring. A sensitive man, he chooses art, knowing full well that he lets them down. While Indu would like him to change his lifestyle just a little bit, for recognition and comfort, Keinatombi would be happy to give him the little care and comfort that she thinks he needs for his art. For the time being at least, Gautam would go with her. The play draws on the playwright's interactions with Ramkinkar Baij (1906-80), the eminent sculptor, with whom she studied in Santiniketan, and who has left behind a whole suite of sculptures and paintings of Binodini.

The English translation of the play appears for the first time, followed by the original, now out of print, in both the Bangla and Meitei Mayek scripts; along with stills from two productions of the play and a couple of paintings of Binodini by Ramkinkar Baij, and a self-portrait by Binodini.

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Born a princess, Maharajkumari Binodini Devi (7 February 1922–17 January 2011), broke free from the constraints of royalty to live to the full—the life of an enlightened commoner, and emerge as an iconic pioneer in the evolution of Manipuri modernism, through her outstanding contributions to fiction, theatre, cinema, poetry, visual arts and dance. Collaborating with filmmaker Aribam Syam Sharma, she wrote the original scripts for his award winning films, *Imagi Ningthem* (*My Son, My Precious*, 1982) and *Ishanou* (*The Chosen One*, 1992), and the ballet film *Sangai* that won the British Film Institute's Outstanding Film of the Year Award in 1984. Binodini Devi, who wrote under the name of Binodini, was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award given by India's national academy of letters in 1979 for her novel *The Princess* and the *Political Agent*. She completed her memoirs, *Maharaj Churachandgi Imung* (*The Maharaja's Household*) in 2009.

L. Somi Roy is a US-based film curator and arts producer who has organized film exhibitions for major American museums. His writings on film and culture have appeared in *Artforum*, *Asian Culture*, *Wide Angle*, *Black Film Bulletin*, *International Documentary*, and *The Drama Review* and *Persimmon*. The son of M K Binodini Devi, his translations of her works from Manipuri to English include her short stories, the screenplay *My Son, My Precious*, and the forthcoming *The Maharaja's Household*. He lives in New York City.