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Title of the Book: *One Year for Mourning*

Author: Ketaki Datta

Publisher: Partridge Publishing House USA

Year of Publication: 2014

Price: not mentioned

Reviewed By:

Rajeev Moothedath

Asst. General Manager,

Learning and Development,

Hyundai Motor India Ltd.,

Tamilnadu.

I had the pleasure and privilege of attending the 7th Guntur International poetry festival in September and reciting my poems before an august audience of eminent poets. Soon after the inauguration, we had a book release ceremony wherein the latest books of some of the writers were released. That is how I became aware and was introduced to the book under review, "One year for mourning" by KetakiDatta published by Patrick publishing. This is the author's second novel. She is an accomplished poet & short story writer.

The novel starts in a hospital with the protagonist's mother, Tapati fighting cancer. Mithi, the protagonist goes down the memory lane and all the characters associated with her mother's and her own life are brought alive before the readers. The life circumstances & deep innermost thoughts of the characters are all captured in the novel with a lot of detailing. So you have the story of a very talented sitar player, Tapati who does not pursue music big time in order to be home maker for her doctor husband and two children. Readers also get a peep in to the lives of her friend Rani, a doctor's wife who is frustrated that her husband cannot give her a child and gets involved with the sitar teacher. Her colourful past, the rejection & later acceptance by the husband on the condition that she give up her child (put in an orphanage) all provide for dramatic moments and interesting reading.

The lives- happiness, trials & tribulations of many other characters including that of the protagonist, her neighbour Sreejitha and her father are well etched out in the novel which gives the readers a feel of the Bengali culture and their way of life throughout the narrative. Being a poet, the author has included many beautiful lines of poetry, spontaneously merging in to the plot of the novel. Her literary background finds expression in the discussions on Rabindranath Tagore & Shakespeare. The novel has all the ingredients to ensure the attention of the readers- romance & love, passion & sex, boredom, pain in its various forms, family ties & obligations etc.

With her background of English literature, the author has enriched the novel with some sublime descriptions: To quote just a sample

" The tunes seemed to have wings on which they floated over the ripples of the river, the soothing breeze around and got wafted far off to spiral up to the mid sky, I felt"

"Days were calm. The sultriness of long sunny afternoons got washed off in the drizzle at night. Quite refreshing it was. In this hick town, days were divided into hot afternoons and mysterious rainy nights. My father used to take us to the river bed almost every Sunday to get a touch of the soothing breeze that would get transformed in to a heavy downpour by night. I was writing poems, taking a peek at my notes on Macbeth and Hard times and again the sadness infused by mom's sitar notes was laying its spell on me."

Some of the aspects of the novel that distracts the free flow of the narrative are use of words like "My mother" or "my father" number of times when it is clear from the context as to who is being referred to. Just the word "mother" or "father" would have been sufficient. The same can be said of use of the term "hick town" number of times instead of simply stating the name of the town, Hridayapur. The words 'forty winks' is used too many times, some times as a substitute for the word 'sleep ' although the former is meant to be used for a nap. In a novel format simpler words could have been preferred in place of 'loquacious', 'soliloquizing' 'vapid' and similar words requiring a dictionary nearby. KetakiDatta, however is an amazing story teller with a lot of promise and one can expect even better creations from her pen in future.

Over all it is a fast paced novel that moves through various seasons of spring, summer, autumn, winter and spring once again, after "One year of mourning" with an interesting last line climax.