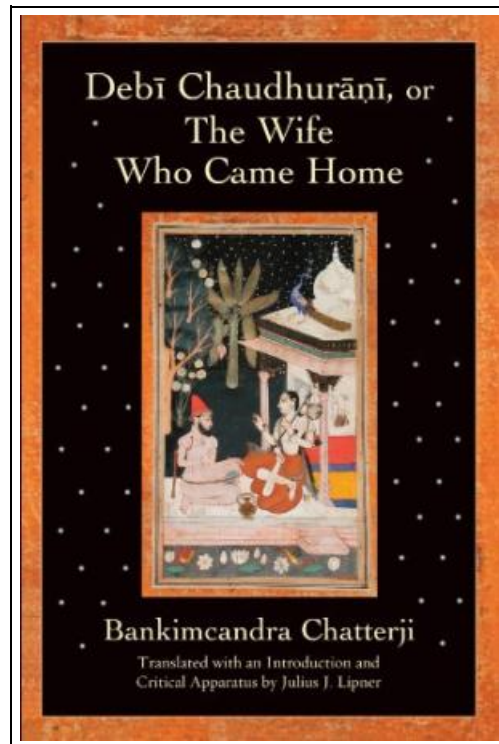


Debi Chaudhurani, or the Wife Who Came Home



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DEBI CHAUDHURANI, OR THE WIFE WHO CAME HOME



Oxford University Press Inc, United States, 2009. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 232 x 154 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. This is the second in a trilogy of works by the famed Bengali novelist Bankimcandra Chatterji (1838-1894), and the second to be translated by Julius Lipner. The first, *Anandamath*, or *The Sacred Brotherhood* was published by OUP in 2005. Bankim Chatterji was perhaps the foremost novelist and intellectual mediating western ideas to India in the latter half of the 19th century. *Debi Chaudhurani* is a didactic work that champions a particular interpretation of Hindu dharma and wifely duties reflective of the late 19th-century Calcutta context in which it was written. But the story is also compelling. Written in a conversational style, it features surprising plot twists and ideas that are, even today, revolutionary in their daring. Most notably, Bankim makes a woman the embodiment of Lord Krishna's salvific message, as originally enunciated in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The protagonist, Debi, is a complex figure who is a rejected wife, becomes a bandit queen, represents a goddess figure, and symbolizes the land of India. There is a creative tension between her strength as a leader and her correct role, from the perspective of the author, as a domestic wife. Bankim also focuses on caste and what it means to be a genuine Brahmin, who is transformed by the author into a man who executes responsibilities instead of demanding privileges. Within the context of the teachings of the *Gita*, the author shares his vision of social activism to improve India. Lipner's idiomatic translation is enhanced by his detailed commentary on the original Bengali text and by a readable introduction that sets the novel and its ideas in context.



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