



Shantaram: A Novel

By Gregory David Roberts

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Shantaram: A Novel By Gregory David Roberts

"It took me a long time and most of the world to learn what I know about love and fate and the choices we make, but the heart of it came to me in an instant, while I was chained to a wall and being tortured."

So begins this epic, mesmerizing first novel set in the underworld of contemporary Bombay. *Shantaram* is narrated by Lin, an escaped convict with a false passport who flees maximum security prison in Australia for the teeming streets of a city where he can disappear.

Accompanied by his guide and faithful friend, Prabaker, the two enter Bombay's hidden society of beggars and gangsters, prostitutes and holy men, soldiers and actors, and Indians and exiles from other countries, who seek in this remarkable place what they cannot find elsewhere.

As a hunted man without a home, family, or identity, Lin searches for love and meaning while running a clinic in one of the city's poorest slums, and serving his apprenticeship in the dark arts of the Bombay mafia. The search leads him to war, prison torture, murder, and a series of enigmatic and bloody betrayals. The keys to unlock the mysteries and intrigues that bind Lin are held by two people. The first is Khader Khan: mafia godfather, criminal-philosopher-saint, and mentor to Lin in the underworld of the Golden City. The second is Karla: elusive, dangerous, and beautiful, whose passions are driven by secrets that torment her and yet give her a terrible power.

Burning slums and five-star hotels, romantic love and prison agonies, criminal wars and Bollywood films, spiritual gurus and mujaheddin guerrillas---this huge novel has the world of human experience in its reach, and a passionate love for India at its heart. Based on the life of the author, it is by any measure the debut of an extraordinary voice in literature.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Crime and punishment, passion and loyalty, betrayal and redemption are only a few of the ingredients in *Shantaram*, a massive, over-the-top, mostly autobiographical novel. *Shantaram* is the name given Mr. Lindsay, or Linbaba, the larger-than-life hero. It means "man of God's peace," which is what the Indian people know of Lin. What they do not know is that prior to his arrival in Bombay he escaped from an Australian prison where he had begun serving a 19-year sentence. He served two years and leaped over the wall. He was imprisoned for a string of armed robberies performed to support his heroin addiction, which started when his marriage fell apart and he lost custody of his daughter. All of that is enough for several lifetimes, but for Greg Roberts, that's only the beginning.

He arrives in Bombay with little money, an assumed name, false papers, an untellable past, and no plans for the future. Fortunately, he meets Prabaker right away, a sweet, smiling man who is a street guide. He takes to Lin immediately, eventually introducing him to his home village, where they end up living for six months. When they return to Bombay, they take up residence in a sprawling illegal slum of 25,000 people and Linbaba becomes the resident "doctor." With a prison knowledge of first aid and whatever medicines he can cadge from doing trades with the local Mafia, he sets up a practice and is regarded as heaven-sent by these poor people who have nothing but illness, rat bites, dysentery, and anemia. He also meets Karla, an enigmatic Swiss-American woman, with whom he falls in love. Theirs is a complicated relationship, and Karla's connections are murky from the outset.

Roberts is not reluctant to wax poetic; in fact, some of his prose is downright embarrassing. Throughout the novel, however, all 944 pages of it, every single sentence rings true. He is a tough guy with a tender heart, one capable of what is judged criminal behavior, but a basically decent, intelligent man who would never intentionally hurt anyone, especially anyone he knew. He is a magnet for trouble, a soldier of fortune, a picaresque hero: the rascal who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. His story is irresistible. Stay tuned for the prequel and the sequel. --Valerie Ryan

From Publishers Weekly

At the start of this massive, thrillingly undomesticated potboiler, a young Australian man bearing a false New Zealand passport that gives his name as "Lindsay" flies to Bombay some time in the early '80s. On his first day there, Lindsay meets the two people who will largely influence his fate in the city. One is a young tour guide, Prabaker, whose gifts include a large smile and an unstoppably joyful heart. Through Prabaker, Lindsay learns Marathi (a language not often spoken by gora, or foreigners), gets to know village India and settles, for a time, in a vast shantytown, operating an illicit free clinic. The second person he meets is Karla, a beautiful Swiss-American woman with sea-green eyes and a circle of expatriate friends. Lin's love for Karla—and her mysterious inability to love in return—gives the book its central tension. "Linbaba's" life in the slum abruptly ends when he is arrested without charge and thrown into the hell of Arthur Road Prison. Upon his release, he moves from the slum and begins laundering money and forging passports for one of the heads of the Bombay mafia, guru/sage Abdel Khader Khan. Eventually, he follows Khader as an improbable guerrilla in the war against the Russians in Afghanistan. There he learns about Karla's connection to Khader and discovers who set him up for arrest. Roberts, who wrote the first drafts of the novel in prison, has poured everything he knows into this book and it shows. It has a heartfelt, cinemascope feel. If there are occasional passages that would make the very angels of purple prose weep, there are also images, plots, characters, philosophical dialogues and mysteries that more than compensate for the novel's flaws. A sensational read, it might well reproduce its bestselling success in Australia here.

From [Booklist](#)

A thousand pages is like a thousand pounds--it sounds like too much to deal with. Nevertheless, Roberts' very long novel sails along at an amazingly fast clip. Readers in the author's native Australia apparently finished every page of it, for they handed it considerable praise. Now U.S. readers can enjoy this rich saga based on Roberts' own life: escape from a prison in Australia and a subsequent flight to Bombay, which is exactly what happens to Lindsay, the main character in the novel; once in Bombay, he joins the city's underground. Roberts graphically, even beautifully, evokes that milieu--he is as effective at imparting impressions as any good travel writer--in this complex but cohesive story about freedom and the lack of it, about survival, spiritual meaning, love, and sex; in other words, about *life* in what has to be one of the most fascinating cities in the world. One's first impression of this novel is that it is simply a good story, but one soon comes to realize that Roberts is also a gifted creator of characters--not only Lindsay but also Prabaker, who becomes Lindsay's guide, caretaker, and entree into various elements of Bombay society. Soon, too, one becomes aware and appreciative of Roberts' felicitous writing style. In all, despite the novel's length, it is difficult not to be ensnared by it. And, be forewarned, it will be popular. *Brad Hooper*

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Users Review

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Harrison Bowman:

The book *untitled Shantaram: A Novel* contain a lot of information on the idea. The writer explains her idea with easy approach. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read this. The book was compiled by famous author. The author will take you in the new era of literary works. It is easy to read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book throughout anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can start their official web-site and order it. Have a nice read.

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