

EDITED BY
MANJU JAIDKA AND TEJ N. DHAR

THE ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

ROUTLEDGE



Designed cover image: © Getty Images

First published 2024

by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2024 selection and editorial matter, Manju Jaidka and Tej N. Dhar;
individual chapters, the contributors.

The right of Manju Jaidka and Tej N. Dhar to be identified as the authors
of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters,
has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright,
Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or
utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now
known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in
any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing
from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or
registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation
without intent to infringe.

ISBN: 978-1-032-24557-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-24558-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-27927-3 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003279273

Typeset in Galliard
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

era, and also witnesses firsthand the brutality and then the demise of Communism as well as the effects of privatization and the free market that replaced the old order in Eastern Europe. *Solo* won Dasgupta the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for the best book in 2010.

In 2014 Dasgupta published his third book, *Capital: A Portrait of Twenty-First Century Delhi*, a nonfiction account of the stupendous changes engulfing the city of Delhi as a result of globalization. Not only does it cover the vast social-economic spectrum of its inhabitants, it also traces the history of water sources down till the imminent water crisis in India's capital city. The book engages with Delhi's displaced refugees who settled there after the partition, the evolving role of middle-class women, and the disappearance of linguistic plurality. *Capital* won the Ryszard Kapuscinski Award for literary reportage and the Émile Guimet Prize for Asian Literature. The book was also short-listed for the Orwell Prize and the Ondaatje Prize.

Dasgupta's articles and essays have appeared in *New Statesman*, *Granta*, *The Paris Review*, *The Guardian*, *Prospect*, and *The New York Times*. Some of his notable essays are "Maximum Cities" (*New Statesman*, March 27, 2006), "Capital Gains" (*Granta* 107, Summer 2009), "The Demise of the Nation State" (*The Guardian*, *The Long Read*, April 5, 2018), and "The Silenced Majority: Can America Still Afford Democracy?" (*Harper's Magazine* 341, no. 2, 047 December 2020, pages 47–56).

In 2018 Dasgupta was instrumental in establishing the JCB Prize for Literature and served as its founding literary director for two years. It recognizes the need to foster literary talent in India's regional languages and promote translations of novels written in regional languages to showcase contemporary Indian literary talent to the rest of the world. The winning entry receives prize money of twenty-five lakhs, and if it is a translated work, the translator is awarded an additional ten lakhs.

Dasgupta's books have been translated into twenty-one languages. In 2014 *Le Monde* named him one of the top seventy people who are making the world of tomorrow. Dasgupta was awarded the prestigious Rabindranath Tagore Literary Award in 2019 for his novel *Solo*. In 2010, he made it to the list of leading British novelists under forty in *The Daily Telegraph*.

Further Reading

De Loughry, Treasa. *The Global Novel and Capitalism in Crisis: Contemporary Literary Narratives*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Mendes, Ana Cristina. "The Eruption and Ruination of 'Rising India': Rana Dasgupta's *Capital* and the Temporalities of Delhi in the 2010s." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2018, pp. 1–25. *Cambridge Core*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X17000464>.

Mendes, Ana Cristina, and Lisa Lau. "The Conjunctural Spaces of 'New India': Imagined Geographies of 2010s India in Representations by Returnee Migrants." *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2018, pp. 57–72. *Sage Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474018786033>.

AATEKA KHAN

DASGUPTA, SANJUKTA (1952–)

Sanjukta Dasgupta was born on August 27, 1952, in Calcutta to Santiranjan and Suprabha Sengupta. Educated at Auxilium Convent School, she studied English literature at Presidency College and Calcutta University where she received her doctoral degree in 1985. A Fulbright scholar, she taught at Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose College for over a decade before joining the Postgraduate Department of English at Calcutta University in 1994. She retired as Head and Dean, Faculty of Arts, CU in 2017. Currently, she lives in Kolkata, is the president of the

Intercultural Poetry and Performance Library (IPPL) and the convenor of the English Language Board of the Sahitya Akademi.

A feminist scholar, critic and translator, Dasgupta is the author of seven poetry collections and two volumes of short stories. Her poetry comprises *Snapshots* (1996), *Dilemma* (2002), *First Language* (2005), *More Light* (2008), *Lakshmi Unbound* (2017), *Sita's Sisters* (2019), and *Unbound: New and Selected Poems* (2021). Her two collections of short stories are *Abuse and Other Short Stories* (2013) and *It Begins at Home and Other Short Stories* (2021). Dasgupta's work evinces a deep engagement with marginality and postcolonial issues, raising significant questions of power, rights and social justice.

Dasgupta's first four poetry collections establish a firm voice questioning the world's errors. Not to be separated from her socio-cultural milieu, she interrogates the injustices inherent in ideologies, representations and relationships. Memory, domesticity, love, compromise, and poetry as an alternative to life's dissonances emerge as dominant themes here with the kitchen being projected as a potent space of both empowerment and victimization. Irony, sarcasm, satire, and humor surface from time to time, but it is only in her later work that these transform themselves into weapons of dissent in the poet's arsenal.

In her later collections, *Lakshmi Unbound* and *Sita's Sisters*, Dasgupta's satire attempts a strategic feminist attack on mainstream mythology through radical mythological revision. Dasgupta's Lakshmi, reluctant to be bound to the hearth, domesticity and prosperity, is restless to exchange her goddess-hood for the ordinary but rare human privilege of freedom. To the idea of patriarchal complacency that Lakshmi, the angel in the house stands for, Dasgupta posits the idea of Alakshmi – the rogue and truant who finds it hard to muster obedience or stay still. Her Sita, too, is far from being the submissive and devout wifely ideal that she is supposed to embody. Determined to offer more empowered myths for womanhood, Dasgupta rewrites mythological postures inserting greater choices and agency for women everywhere.

Unbound: New and Selected Poems (2021), edited by Jaydeep Sarangi and Sanghita Sanyal, is Dasgupta's latest poetry collection offering a careful selection of her best work from her active engagement with poetry. Showcasing her lyricism, her control over language, her metaphors, and her empathetic socialist spirit, this collection draws attention to the thematic concerns and theoretical vitality of Dasgupta's feminist poetry.

In her two books of short fiction, Dasgupta's intersectional feminism finds a wider base and interrogates more complex social positions. Set in the familiar space of Kolkata, these stories configure the humdrum lives of ordinary women who in their negotiations between workplace, domesticity and social obligations must traverse multiple role-relations, defy gender reductionism, and sift through traditions to discover themselves and their place in society. Dasgupta's plots are realistic, precise, and vitally pivoted on emotional conflicts. Her theater of action is psycho-sociological as her characters remain in situ, offering extended resonances on social malpractices and hypocrisies. The language is sharp, the dialogues crisp, and the irony pointed. The narratorial stance is intimate and estranged by turns, enabling these stories to register empathy while strictly avoiding over-sentimentalism.

Further Reading

Dasgupta, Sanjukta. "In Conversation with Sanjukta Dasgupta." Interview by Jaydeep Sarangi, and Antara Ghatak. *Writers in Conversation*, vol. 6, no. 1, Feb. 2019.

Jaidka, Manju. "Indo-American Connections: The Impact of American Poetry on Indian Women Poets." *Aspects of Modernism: American Women's Poetry*, edited by Sukanya Dasgupta. Jadavpur UP, 2014, pp. 116–130.

- Mallick, Saptarshi. "Debriefing the Satanic Gyres of Patriarchy: A Bengali Gynocritic and Her Daughters." *Meridian Critic*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2019, pp. 49–63. *Meridian Critic*, http://meridiancritic.usv.ro/uploads/mc_2_2019/05.%20Mallick%20Saptarshi.pdf.
- Mandal, Somdatta. "Refusing to Be Pigeonholed." *The Statesman*, 11 Nov. 2021, p. 11.
- Mohanty, Sachidananda. "Sounds of Silence." *The Statesman*, 16 Apr. 2017, p. 11.
- Sarangi, Jaydeep, and Sanghita Sanyal. "Introduction." *Unbound: New and Selected Poems (1996–2021)*, edited by Sanjukta Dasgupta. Authorspress, 2021, pp. 15–23.

BASUDHARA ROY

DATTA, RABINDRANATH (1883–1917)

Rabindranath Datta was an Indian poet and teacher who lived a short but productive life as a man of letters. Born in Calcutta, Datta belonged to a well-known upper-caste Hindu family that had the resources to send their sons to England for a liberal education. At Oxford University, Datta received his bachelor's degree in 1906 and subsequently completed his master's degree in 1910. Although he trained in law, he never practiced the legal profession. His interest lay elsewhere, and he was to become a teacher of comparative philology and English literature at the University of Calcutta. It was this twin preoccupation with the complexities of language and literature which propelled Roby Datta, as he was known, toward a kind of experimental poetry to which his book *Echoes from East and West* stands testimony.

Echoes from East and West: To Which Are Added Stray Notes of Mine Own was published in 1909. Its preface outlines Datta's resolve to make it a pioneering contribution to the genre of comparative poetry. He collated specific sections from literary masterpieces written in sixteen Indo-European languages and rendered them in his own poetic voice. In this endeavor the English language became a vehicle for translation, or a metaphorical gramophone which, in the poet's words, would elicit a fine record of existing songs written in other languages. He further describes the unifying agenda of this philological exercise as an effort to revive the music at its very source in Mid-Asia from which it branched off and spawned or adopted the Indic, Italic, Hellenic, Teutonic, and Romance forms of poetic language. By combining the aesthetics of East and West, Datta hoped to reach an audience unencumbered by racial, temporal, and geographical divisions.

As both a poet and a comparatist Datta's work follows an exact methodology of dividing the book into poems which retain a sense of the original in his own voice and poems which are more directly translated, in that they follow the order of words and meter as found in the original piece. However, he is particular about elevating the English language which he recognizes as a vital medium with a rich literary history, while tempering it with the inspired voice of the original poet. Beyond the linguistic, metrical, and content-specific interest of the book, Datta foregrounds his philosophy of art, which involves a triadic notion of life where the insular aspects are balanced by the universal and transcendental goals of humanity. Rendering an extract from Michael Madhusudan Dutt's epic *Meghnad Badh Kavya* ("The Slaughter of Meghnad") in his own distinctive poetic voice, Datta concludes with a short note on the unifying theme of fate and his metrical choice for the piece. This format is then followed throughout the book.

Echoes carries intertextual references to Datta's other work, *Sakuntala and Her Keepsake*, from the Sanskrit play of Kalidasa. Using poetic prose and verse, he invigorates Kalidasa's work both in this book and in *Echoes*. Several of his writings which had earlier appeared in periodicals were published as *Poems, Pictures and Songs to which is Prefixed The Philosophy of Art*. Here too Datta's preoccupation with the question of artistic inspiration assumes significance. Another publication titled *Stories in Blank Verse to which is added An Epic Fragment* continues with the