

EDITED BY  
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# THE ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

ROUTLEDGE



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Krishnan is depicted as torn between tradition and modernity, East and West. He faces the life before him with uncertainty and dread, unable to grasp his role in the approaching struggle as he tries to forge an intimacy with his newly acquired wife. The inability to achieve a satisfactory relationship with his wife is further intensified by the arrival of a beautiful English girl Krishnan knew at Cambridge. The novel is one of the early explorations in Indian English fiction of the newly emerging Western-educated middle-class individual attempting to negotiate the colonial legacy with an independent India. Rajan also touches upon Gandhism and the idea of nonviolence as a way of life rather than just a political tool used for anti-colonial resistance. The novel ends on a grim note as Krishnan witnesses firsthand the chaotic violence of the partition, turning ordinary people into people lusting for bloodshed and revenge.

Rajan's second novel, *Too Long in the West*, attempts a more humorous approach to the experience of dislocation and diaspora. Nalini, the protagonist of Rajan's novel, returns home to India from America, where she has been studying at Columbia for three years. Her hometown is Mudalur, a small forgotten village in South India, where her father has settled for several misplaced reasons. The father's villa, Hillview, becomes the scene of a comedic house party involving suitors who respond to an advertisement placed by her father in the paper for Nalini's hand in marriage. Nalini, like Krishnan from *The Dancer in the Dark*, struggles between tradition and modernity, being an obedient daughter to her parents and her own independence and accomplishments acquired through a Western education. The suitors themselves are presented as caricatures of different types of Indian men, the orphaned Satyamurti, the researcher of arranged marriages Kalyanasundaram, and the handsome Kubera. In an almost Wodehouse comedy of errors, Hillview at Mudalur becomes the setting for humor rather than romance even as torrential rains cut off the inhabitants from the outside world.

Rajan's literary fiction articulates the anxieties of the educated class of young Indians, perhaps drawn from his own personal experiences of being at home and abroad. Marriage becomes a site of negotiation for the individual in his novels, for Krishnan ending in tragedy and Nalini, a happy resolution to the comic tension that Rajan's second novel explores. Thus, both his novels present Krishnan and Nalini as symbols of India's tragicomic postcolonial situation after freeing itself from colonial rule, an apt subject to explore in Indian English fiction.

### Further Reading

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NITYA DATTA

### RAJENDRAN, ARJUN (1979–)

Arjun Rajendran was born on June 24, 1979, in Colaba, Bombay, to Rajendran and Padma whose English poems (under the pseudonym of Padmasundari) have appeared in the *Chandrabhaga* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. He attended Our Lady of Salvation High School, Dadar, acquired a master's diploma in journalism from the Xavier Institute of Communications (2002) and an MBA from Missouri State University (2007). A Charles Wallace Fellow in Writing at the University of Stirling, Scotland (2018), Rajendran teaches French, is a former editor of *The Four Quarters Magazine* and *The Bombay Literary Magazine*, and the founder of the

writers' collective, *The Quarantine Train*. Drawn to sci-fi, comics, the occult, and to antiquarian books, he currently lives in Pune with his parents and his dogs, Misha and Joan.

Rajendran's poems have been widely featured in magazines and anthologies including *The Penguin Book of Indian Poets*. He is the author of a poetry chapbook titled *Your Baby is Starving* (Aainanagar/Vayavya 2017), and three full-length collections titled *Snake Wine* (Zaporogue, 2014), *The Cosmonaut in Hergé's Rocket* (Paperwall, 2017), and *One Man Two Executions* (Westland, 2020).

Rajendran's very first book *Snake Wine* established him as a confident poetic voice uncomfortable with labels. Wry, vulnerable, caustic, and intensely emotional, his deftness with words and his ability to suggest more through less strikingly make their mark here. The poems in this collection document love, loss, travel, experience, memory, and nostalgia while traversing a wide range of moods – lyrical, questioning, amused, sensual, and elegiac. Its clarity of approach to poetry and its shifts of thought and perspective, along with its fresh unencumbered language, make it a notable debut collection.

In his second book, *The Cosmonaut in Hergé's Rocket*, Rajendran's poetry, animated by a desire for greater architectural compression, is more dens and allusive. The structural idea of the collection was inspired by the American physicist Richard P. Feynman's diagrams and the poems concoct a cultural cocktail in which Feynman's quantum theory, the numbers of Ramanujan's Taxicab, Anna Karenina, Tintin, Archie, P.C. Sorcar, Olympus Mons, and beetroots – all become intellectual conduits for the readers' imagination to approach a wide array of emotional significations. Though the intellectual space that this collection orbits is staggering, its pop epistemological bricolage is held together by the poet's acute consciousness of belonging to each realm of experience and his deep faith in language as resurrection.

Rajendran's chapbook, *Your Baby is Starving*, was part of an experimental poetry project in which five poets worked together for two years, critiquing and editing each other's work in solidarity. The title is drawn from a ransom note written by Raghunandan Yandamuri who kidnapped and murdered a baby and her grandmother and was the first Indian to be sentenced to death in the United States. Weaving anxiety, paranoia, fear, and deep psychological friction, it makes a bold statement for stylistic condensation through a pregnant symbolic method.

*One Man Two Executions* is Rajendran's most ambitious poetry collection to date. Introduced by his numismatist father to the diaries of Ananda Ranga Pillai, interpreter for the French Governor General of Pondicherry, Jean François Dupleix, its first part involves a dynamic, post-colonial retelling of the 18th-century life of Pondicherry with its Carnatic wars and its many-hued politics, commerce, and conspiracies. The second part of the book contains love poems of exquisite tenderness and the third section, crisp philosophical reflections on our workaday world, what holds the book together is its feisty cosmopolitan spirit – as sharp in its irony as it is fluid in its connections – and its textured linguistic bravura.

Rajendran's work is distinctly avant-garde in its form, style, and themes. His multiple intellectual tastes and polylingualism work together to give his best poems a postmodern faithfulness and an aural sharpness that appeals equally to the eye and the ear.

## Further Reading

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BASUDHARA ROY

## RAMA RAO, PEDAPUDI GANGA (1935–)

Pedapudi Ganga Rama Rao was born in the year 1935 and spent his childhood, college, and initial teaching years in Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh). He rendered long innings as a teacher of English in degree colleges in Andhra Pradesh (1953–1962), Kendrapara College (1962–1983), and Utkal University (1983–1995). He retired from the post graduate dept. of English, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. As a Fulbright Professor of English, he lectured and gave readings from his creative writing at several American universities. On a British Council Grant, he visited Oxford and Edinburgh Universities in 1986 and delivered a series of lectures there.

Rama Rao participated in several national and international conferences. Now, in his late 80s, he is focused on writing poetry. Apart from his large body of academic writing, he has published notable creative work. His major breakthrough as a writer came with his book *The Poetic Rapture, A Study in Comparative Poetics* (1963) that gained limelight and popularity. It was revised and reissued as *Aesthetic Ecstasy* (2016).

*My Days in Tulasi Kshetra, A Memoir* (2009), voices his conversations with his students. The portrayal of his thoughts and spirit in a chronological sequence reflects the spectrum of his real-life experiences. The account is an accurate depiction of his difficult moments, lessons learned, and overall tenacity. The memoir was revised and reissued in 2016.

Rama Rao's novel, *The Ocean and the Waves* (2016), gained impetus due to its metafictional element. He dramatizes the dissolution of an affluent extended family whose sole child turns into a saint and resides in a bungalow on a hill. The second part of this book accurately describes the horrific cyclone and killer wave of November 19, 1977, which claimed thousands of lives in Andhra Pradesh Narayan. A skilled yogi serves as the focal point of the book. He inspires the narrator and teaches him how to hear his inner voice and establish a regular connection with it.

In the years 2017 and 2018, Rama Rao published two memoirs, *On the Other Side of the Globe* and *Humble Beginnings and Stumbling Blocks*. Rama Rao has also been appreciated for his anthologies of poetry. The renowned ones are *An Enduring Picture* (2014), *My Divine Hippocrene* (2015), *Whispers of Immortality* (2016), *The Garden of Eden* (2017), *It Is a Beautiful World* (2017), *My Magic Tree* (2018), *Where My Father Dwells* (2019), *Space Divine* (2020), and *The Great Wall of India* (2021). His poetry is both joyful and inviting as it exemplifies a creative approach that takes the reader on an imaginative journey. His writings echo the abundance of life and wellness.

The Global Jury of Dr. Yayati Madan G. Gandhi International Awards conferred on Rama Rao the *Poet Laureate Award* and *The Lifetime Achievement Award* in 2016. Philosophique Poetica and Grand Productions, Canada, has also honored him with the Philosophique Poetica International *Master of Metaphor, Creative Genius Award* and *Lifetime Achievement Award* at the World Poetry Conference, Bathinda (Punjab, India), in October 2019.

The novels and collections of Pedapudi Rama Rao are relevant today because they are intense, ecstatic, and soulful. His profession as a teacher overshadows his undeniable creative ambition. He delves deep into the beauty maxim within himself, passing it on to his readers in leaps and bounds.