



Gitanjali and Songs of Kabir (Annotated)

Rabindranath Tagore

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This is an annotated version of the classic with relevance of the book in the last decade, a bio of the author and a table of content. The annotations are detailed cultural references that put the book in the context of subsequent reception. They include references to the book in pop culture, movies and other artistic creations.

Gitanjali (Bengali: গীতঞ্জলি) is a collection of poems by the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. The original Bengali collection of 157 poems was published on August 14, 1910. The English Gitanjali or Song Offerings is a collection of 103 English poems of Tagore's own English translations of his Bengali poems first published in November 1912 by the India Society of London. It contained translations of 53 poems from the original Bengali Gitanjali, as well as 50 other poems which were from his drama Achalayatan and eight other books of poetry — mainly Gitimalya (17 poems), Naivedya (15 poems) and Kheya (11 poems).

Songs of Kabir is a 1915 book consisting of 100 poems of Kabir, the 15th-century Indian poet and mystic, translated to English by Rabindranath Tagore. In this book Kabir has combined the philosophies of Sufism and Hinduism. The book had an introduction by Evelyn Underhill and was published by Macmillan, New York. This book has been translated to Persian and Kurdish by Leila Farjami and Sayed Madeh Piryonesi, respectively.

New English translations of Songs of Kabir is done by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra . "It is Mehrotra who has succeeded in capturing the ferocity and improvisational energy of Kabir's poetry".

The translations were often radical, leaving out or altering large chunks of the poem and in one instance fusing two separate poems (song 95, which unifies songs 89,90 of Naivedya). The translations were undertaken prior to a visit to England in 1912, where the poems were extremely well received. In 1913, Tagore became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, largely for the English Gitanjali.

The English Gitanjali became very famous in the West, and was widely translated.[3] The word gitanjali is composed from "gita", song, and "anjali", offering, and thus means – "An offering of songs"; but the word for offering, anjali, has a strong devotional connotation, so the title may also be interpreted as "prayer offering of song".

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