

## The Partition of Bengal

The trauma of India's partition in 1947 played out differently in Bengal than in Punjab. The division of Punjab in the west happened at one go and was sudden, cataclysmic and violent. On the other hand, the partition of Bengal was a slower process, the displacement happened in waves and the trauma took a metaphysical and psychological turn, though no less violent than in Punjab.

This book contends that the vast trove of literature that partition has produced amongst the Bangla-speaking peoples of West Bengal, the Northeast and Bangladesh has not been studied together in an organic manner. This study lays bare how whole communities felt, remembered and tried to resist the horrifying division and growth of sectarian hatred over a period of time. The narrative takes the reader through the continued migrations and resettlements over cycles of time and their affective impact on cultural practices. The text is woven with rich literary archives of the 1947 partition in the Bangla language across generations and borders that interrogate the absences in our memories and in our national histories in the subcontinent.

From the Calcutta riots and the Noakhali communal carnage to post-partition refugee settlements in Dandakaranya and Marichjhapi and the enclaves in the Indo-Bangladesh border, the partition of 1947 in Bengal has played out over diverse geographical sites that render diverse meanings to the movements of people. This study contends that there is not one partition but many smaller ones, each with its own variegated texture of pain, guilt and violence faced by different people flecked by caste, gender and religion.

**Debjani Sengupta** teaches at the Department of English at Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi. She has been reading and working on the 1947 partition in Bengal for some years now and this is her first full-length study on the subject. Sengupta completed her doctoral work from Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has contributed translations from Bangla to various anthologies like the *Essential Tagore* and the *Oxford Anthology of Bengali Literature* and her publications also include an anthology of partition short fiction titled *Mapmaking: Partition Stories from Two Bengals* (2004) and articles on Bangla science fiction, Bangla theatre and the partition of 1947 in various scholarly volumes.

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## Fragile Borders and New Identities

Debjani Sengupta



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*To Ma and Baba*  
and  
*To Ritwik, chroniclers past and present*

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