

Classic Poetry Series

Bhattacharya Chandan

- 2 poems -

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Bhattacharya Chandan (1944 -)

Vattacharja Chandan (also known as Chandan Kumar Bhattacharya), is a bilingual (Bengali and English) writer, poet, composer and mail artist.

Early Life

He was born in the small town of Tamruk (now in Purba Medinipur District), which was the ancient Indian port of Tamralipta in West Bengal. Chandan came to Kolkata after finishing his high-school studies at Tamruk Hamilton High School. After graduating from Asutosh College, he obtained his master of arts degree in political science from the University of Calcutta. He hoped to become an experimental scientist like Jagadish Chandra Bose, Newton or Edison. Although Chandan did not accomplish this, he expresses his love of experimentation in art and literature.

Literary Life

In 1968 and for several years thereafter, he participated in poetry readings at the Saturday open-air MuktaMela fairs at the Kolkata Maidan grounds with other contemporary poets like Tushar Roy, Rabindra Bhattacharya, Bablu Roy Choudhury, Satya Ranjan Biswas, Pranab Basu Ray, Samar Bandyopadhyay and Abu Atahar; this taught him how to perform his poetry in later life. It was the launch-pad where he could mobilize his associates when, after editing a few hand-written magazines, he was trying to begin a new literary movement. At the MuktaMela he discovered Dilip Gupta, Ashis Deb and Shukla Mazumder, with whom he launched the Prakashana Movement in Bengali literature with the countercultural magazine Swatotsar in 1969.

Prakashana and Chetanavyas

Chandan coined the word prakashana (meaning "proper imagination"), an amalgam of pra from prabandha (essay), ka from kabita (poetry), lpa from galpa (story) and na from natak (drama). Later, he expanded its origins more globally: P for prose, poetry and graphics; R for story; A for art, Chetanavyas and essay; K for kinema; L for novel, culture and play and N for song. Although the word prakashana is found in some Indian languages, Chandan used it as the name of a new form of composition and movement. That eventually led him to begin his ongoing magnum opus Atiprithibi 1. The first part of the Bengali version as well as the English version, Cosmosphere 1, have been published.

Chandan authored the first prakashana book, Porimandal, which was published on Prakashana Day (6 September 1975). In the early 1970s he

developed the philosophy underlying the Prakaalpana Movement and its counterpart (the Sarbangin Poetry Movement), which he called Chetanavyas. According to Chandan, what is seen everywhere is change (in the outer world of matter and in the inner world of sense and consciousness). This is Chetanavyas, which is the conflux and interaction of chetana (sense) and abvyas (wont, or custom). "Sense" is assigned the widest conceivable meaning here, as the feature differentiating a living object with a lifeless one, and includes attributes of the conscious and subconscious mind. "Wont" (abvyas) is used here as the habit of living objects and the nature of non-living ones. As habit may be considered as "second nature", that second nature evolves over time; the smallest unit of a living organism works and perishes faster than that of a lifeless object like a granite stone. Thus the universe, which is perceivable only through the higher form of sense that is consciousness, is composed of sense-full and senseless matters acting, reacting and interacting internally and externally in accustomed ways during their respective spans of time. After this they degenerate, decompose and dwindle to dust or particles, to be regenerated and recomposed again in some form. Apart from Chetanavyasism and Prakaalpana, Chandan's other teachings (part of the Prakaalpana Movement) include Sarbangin poetry, flow verse, visual effects, "golden language", "proverse", mathematical dimensions and sonorous, musical and repetition effects. Appraisals of his prakaalpana include:

"The bizarre but compelling language is given an enhanced weirdness by the slightly awkward obviousness of its trans from Bengali sometimes resulting in an enjoyable ...effect."

" I enjoyed the most....the experimental fiction piece Aurora On The River Gour, which bordered on inaccessible at times but was interesting nonetheless..."

Sarbangin Poetry

Some critics label Chandan's writings as concrete or visual poetry, because he uses his drawings and symbols in his writings. Concerning this belief, Steve LeBlank (who interviewed Chandan in the early 1990s) commented:

"The visual element is important but not crucial. Chandan, for example, has developed his own key of signs and symbols which he routinely uses in writing. Symbols which, he says, help distinguish Prakaalpana from other forms of writing.....Chandan takes care to distinguish his symbols, and the way they are used from other types of writing and poetry which also rely on symbols, including visual and concrete poetry."

Dilip Gupta, critiquing Chandan's Posh Paakhhi Hobona: I Won't Be a Pet Bird, observed:

".....he is the inventor and propagator of a separate, distinctive genre of literary forms.....Chandan says that it's quite needless to knock on the head and pain it, it's equally needless to read the stony book of prosody — prepare your ear's ability and do not stop the flow of words coming ahead in your mind, let those come spontaneously. Then the inner inspiration will bestow a particular form, a particular meter, which suits you and the poem most, in which the theme of the poem will come out in a very easy and spontaneous style and meter— this is Flow Verse, verse that flows without having any pressure made by the poet's intellect.....All these poems demands listening, not only reading — and these should be hearkened from Chandan's voice— it's a fantastic experience! I can say it with affirmation, as I have myself heard it. When Chandan from a stage recite these poems with music or modulation of tones, we don't know what a game he then plays, whole audience becomes undulating.....he does it with the help of many objects and symbols— symbols may be in rhymes, may be in pictures, may be in music, the word-symbols or rhythmic orchestra, may also be mathematical— Chandan extends the dimension of the poem, its inner substance with the help of those scattered elements—scene-touch-taste-scent, every emotion coming out of those sensuousness suggested in a poem— and the poem becomes a Sarbangin Poetry (total poetry), which is the sole quest and

attainment of Chandan”.

He employs his unique "golden language" – mixing refined language, archaic words, spoken language and the repetitive use of compound portmanteau words (like "wikipedia") coined by him, as noted by Paul McDonald:

"You get the impression that Chandan is just having fun with language - chasing it around in the hope that it will lead him somewhere significant. As always, of course, significance resides in the chase itself.... His writing brightened up my day considerably."

Career

Chandan received an Alpha Beta Honorary Mention Award in 1971 for his first book of poetry, *Byabiloner Shunya Baagaane*. His literature and mail art have been published in magazines and online media in India, the US, Italy, Bangladesh and Brazil. Chandan has been indexed in *Who's Who of Indian Writers* (published by Sahitya Akademi), *Asian Writers Who's Who*, *The International Authors and Writers Who's Who*, *Reference Asia: Asia's Who's Who of Men & Women of Achievement*, *Asia/Pacific Who's Who*, *Asia-Men & Women of Achievement* (published in Malaysia), *Asian/American Who's Who*, *Who's Who in Asia* and *Who's Who in the World* (published by Marquis in the US). As an Indian delegate (with Sunil Gangopadhyay and others) writers to the Asian Literary Leaders Conference in Washington, DC in 1997, he met Nobel laureate Derek Walcott and other renowned poets and writers. Chandan was feted at the World Bengali Personality Conference Bangladesh at Dhaka in 2000 and 2004, and by Madhusudan Academy and the Bangladesh Poets Foundation in 2004 in Sagardanri. He has visited Europe, Africa and elsewhere in Asia, frequently performing a collection of his poetry entitled *Chandan Gaan (Chandan Songs)*. Chandan's album of musical poetry, *Jug Jug Jio (Music Millennia, Kolkata)* was released in 1999. His poetry has been included in *The Sound of Poetry*, a CD published by the International Library of Poetry in the US in 2002.

He has also introduced the concepts of Prakalpana art and Western mail art in India through the Prakalpana Movement. Chandan's bilingual (Bengali-English) magazines *Kobisena* and *Prakalpana Sahitya: Prakalpana Literature* have attracted readers, writers, mail artists and critics worldwide, including avant-garde writers and mail artists Richard Kostelanetz, Sheila Murphy, John Light, John M. Bennett, Don Webb, Brett K. Fletcher, Carla Bertola, Norman J. Olson and Jose Roberto Sechi. Interviewer Steve LeBlanc said:

"...a revelation, a fragile literary missive lovingly produced, a message from one human being to another."

Chandan's work, theories and role as a harbinger of the experimental and avant-garde literary movement in India have surrounded him with controversy. However, he continues to march to his own drummer:

"I Can't Say"
What day will you go?

I can't say
Where will you go??

I can't sayy
When will you go???

I can't sayyy
Why will you go????

I can't sayyyy
How will you go?????

I can't sayyyyy
Only when you'll not find me

realize I'm gone"

Works:

Byabiloner Shunnya Bagane (poetry). Kolkata: Alpha Beta Publications, 1971.
Sara! Karo: Vaalobashaa (poetry). Kolkata, 1974.
Posha Paakhi Hobonaa : I Won't Be a Pet Bird (poetry). Kolkata, 1998.
Swaadhikar Sanad (essay). Kolkata, 1974.
Prakalpana Andoloner Ishtahar (manifesto on the Prakalpana Movement). Kolkata, 1974.
Porimandal (prakalpana). Kolkata, 1975.
Atiprithibi 1 (prakalpana). Kolkata: Quark, 2009

Broadway

Broadway
still for many from off the narrow way
unknown abroad
In broad daylight drama
sexotic model !! live naughty
nudies

+
lots of funtasy
24 x 7
that tells all shows all
But sorry a deferer for the dreama in a hurry
aboard
i couldn't afford to be funtastic

Bhattacharya Chandan

Love or Leave

If you belove me I am your heartizen
If you delove me I am your heartburn
Then relieve me

Love me
or
Leave me alone

Bhattacharya Chandan