

Classic Poetry Series

Amiya Chakravarty
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Amiya Chakravarty(10 April 1901 - 1986)

Amiya Chandra Chakravarty was a literary critic, academic, and Bengali Poet. He was a close associate of Rabindranath Tagore, and edited several books of his poetry. He was also an associate of Gandhi, and an expert on the American catholic writer and monk, Thomas Merton. Dr. Chakravarty was honored for his own poetry with the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1963. He taught literature and comparative religion in India for nearly a decade and then for more than two decades at universities in England and the U.S. In 1970, he was honored by the Government of India with the Padma Bhushan award.

Education and Career

He studied in Hare School, Calcutta and graduated from St. Columba's College, Hazaribagh, which was then under Patna University. He joined Visva-Bharati University in 1921 as a student. Later, he became a teacher there.

He was literary secretary to Rabindranath Tagore from 1924 to 1933. During this time, he was a close associate of the poet. He was Tagore's travel companion during his tours to Europe and America in 1930 and to Iran and Iraq in 1932.

He was also a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, walking with Gandhi in the Salt March of 1930.

Following his 1933 journey with Tagore, he left India to study at Oxford University, and in 1937 earned a . He worked at Oxford as a Senior Research Fellow from 1937 to 1940. During this time, he also taught in Selly Oak College in Birmingham as a lecturer. He moved back to India in 1940 to become a Professor of English at the University of Calcutta.

In 1948, Chakravarty moved to the USA to join the Department of English in Howard University. He was a visiting fellow in English at Yale University, and a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton during 1950-51.

In 1953, he became a Professor of Comparative Oriental Religions and Literature, Boston also held professorships at Smith College and later the State University of New York at New Paltz.

He wrote both poetry and prose and a number of articles in journals of India, England and the USA. He wrote many verse collections in Bengali, most notable among these are Chalo Jai and Ghare Pherar Din.

His poetry reflects idealism, humanism and a great love in nature and beauty.

He was awarded the Unesco Prize for his book, Chalo Jai. In 1963, he received the Sahitya Akademi Award for Ghare Pherar Din. He authored the book Dynasts and the Post-war Age in Poetry, which is a critical work on Thomas Hardy's poetry.

Chakravarty met with many of the notable figures of his time, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Albert Schweitzer, Boris Pasternak, Albert Einstein and Thomas Merton.

He visited Merton in November 1966 at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Merton later dedicated his book, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, to Chakravarty.

He served as a delegate to the United Nations for India. His presence contributed to the growing interest in Eastern philosophies and religion.

Chakaravarty edited a number of English translations of Tagore's works. Most well-known among these are: A Tagore Reader (1961) and The Housewarming and other Selected Writings (1965). He was also a consulting editor for The Asian journal of Thomas Merton by Thomas Merton.

Recognition

Padma Bhushan from the Govt. of India (1970)

The Deshikottama from Visva-Bharati

Sahitya Akademi Award (1963)

Calcutta

Warm noon's joy spreads under the big leaved trees
Beyond the garden hedge,
The honeysuckle waves in the grey wind
On the wrought iron gate.

And in my eyes this lovely picture goes
With me as I fare along the lane.
Piano-notes, unmindful on the wind
Fill the spring sky with pain.
Along a lane in South Calcutta.

Amiya Chakravarty

Petition To The Boss

Sir, the list is ready --
things you cannot take away
from this exile, your humble clerk.
This ancestral earth, its plain existence,
of which a part is this I, your servant's self.

[...]

Cool water from the well, an eye for books
the sudden shower in summer afternoons.
Love of one's kind, the pang of memory
shot through with the hope of going home to Bengal.
Send me away, O World --
yet linked with the shade of ancient trees
immemorial joys are stored in my heart --
the courtyard tulsi altar, the rained riverside temple, the charm
of the native tongue.

Amiya Chakravarty

The Traveler

A mountain village in Iran:
Our car halts under linden trees,
The heart of a poppy field
Opens with a red silky sky, and a warm mild scent.
Stepping out on the road, between Qasvin and Kerman
A dusty traveler, I open the thermos bottle, take the mountain scene
And busily look at the map: Where am I?

Unknown clusters of homes, strange life, alien tongue,
Kindliness in eyes, blue domed mosque,
Life blossome a desert rose.

Where am I?
Spreading heart's harvest, and blue wind on the hills,
The children's looks from under pulled-down caps,
Some voice reached my receding ears, across the heavy car's horn
---Hardly did I hear---
'Amid willow's murmur and the voice of waterfall in houses,
With the green rug of grass spred under trees,
And gradens with tea served in noonday's light,
Rest awhile,
For you are HERE:
In this World, your home.'

Amiya Chakravarty