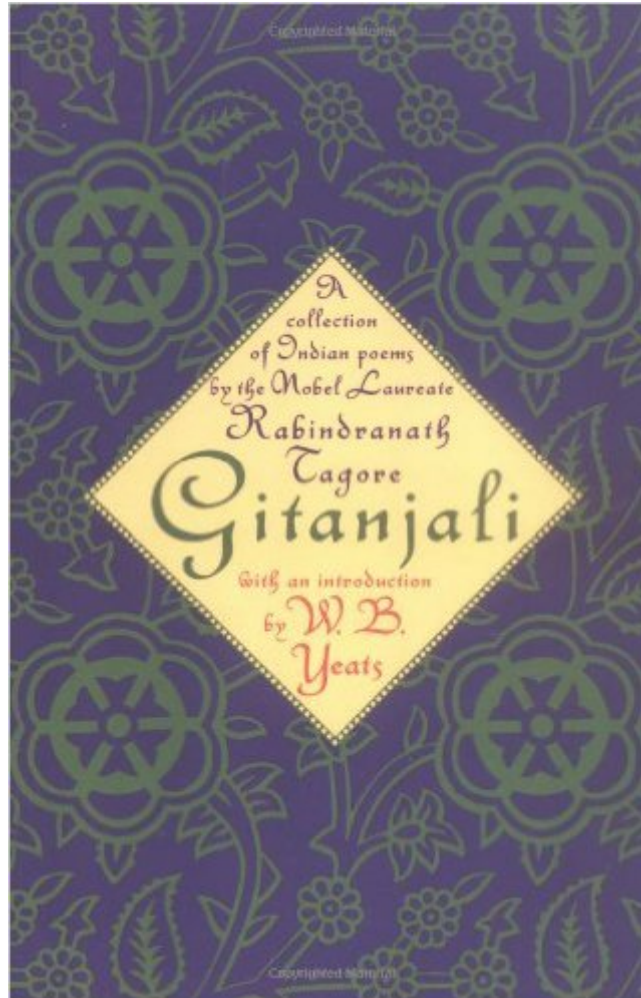


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Gitanjali: A Collection Of Indian Poems By The Nobel Laureate



Synopsis

An illuminating collection of inspirational poems by a Nobel Laureate While traveling through one of the poorest regions in India, W. B. Yeats was amazed to discover the women in the tea fields singing the songs and poems of Rabindranath Tagore. This striking scene led the great Irish poet to appreciate the depth of India's far-reaching tradition of poetry and the fame of this one Indian poet. Tagore's work is without equal and plays an eminent role in twentieth century Indian literature. The publication of the English edition of Gitanjali in 1911 earned Rabindranath Tagore the Nobel Prize in literature. A collection of over one hundred inspirational poems, Gitanjali covers the breadth of life's experiences, from the quiet pleasure of observing children at play to a man's struggle with his god. These are poems that transcend time and place.

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Customer Reviews

"Gitanjali" is a collection of prose poems by Indian author Rabindranath Tagore. The Dover Thrift Edition contains an introductory note on the life of Tagore, who lived from 1861 to 1941. According to this note, Tagore, who wrote poetry in Bengali, translated "Gitanjali" himself into English. The Dover edition also contains a 1912 introduction by William Butler Yeats. This English version of "Gitanjali" is a series of prose poems that reflect on the interrelationships among the poet/speaker, the deity, and the world. Although Tagore had a Hindu background, the spirituality of this book is generally expressed in universal terms; I could imagine a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim, or an adherent of another tradition finding much in this book that would resonate with him or her. The

language in this book is often very beautiful. The imagery includes flowers, bird songs, clouds, the sun, etc.; one line about "the riotous excess of the grass" reminded me of Walt Whitman. Tagore's language is sensuous and sometimes embraces paradox. Like Whitman and Emily Dickinson, he sometimes seems to be resisting traditional religion and prophetically looking towards a new spirituality. A sample of Tagore's style: "I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever and the secret recess of its honey will be bared" (from section #98). As companion texts for this mystical volume I would recommend Jack Kerouac's "The Scripture of the Golden Eternity" and Juan Mascaró's translation of the Dhammapada.

The word and the deed were never far from each other in Tagore's life and not surprisingly he advocated the Universal Man. He was a polymath: a poet, fiction writer, dramatist, painter, educator, political thinker, philosopher of science. He was also a genius in music, choreography, architecture, social service and statesmanship. Over six decades Tagore gave the world some 2,500 songs, more than 2,000 paintings and drawings, 28 volumes of poetry, drama, opera, short stories, novels, essays and diaries and a vast number of letters. I would enthusiastically recommend this book by my favorite author. Like the Psalms of David, Gitanjali is a soothing balm to the spirit. I read this entire book in less than two hours and has been my long-trip travel companion ever since. The introduction to the book by W. B. Yeats is magical and all the poems in this book transcend your imagination. The variety and quality of the poems are unbelievable!

With Tagore, very little can go wrong if you're looking for some poetry to heal your heart and soul. Tagore's poetry appeals to the highest spiritual plains yet at the same time appeals to the human heart to the highest order. To achieve something like this will require a person of high spiritual attainment. Gitanjali, or 'Song Offerings', is a collection of prose written with the Creator in mind, reflecting Tagore's wish to be united with the Creator. In his poetry one cannot miss his show of devotion and his pure love for the Creator, using various metaphorical subjects like flowers, rivers etc. One cannot but admire the beauty and art in it. To give you a feel of his poetry, the Gitanjali starts with this: "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life..." W. B. Yeats, who contributed greatly to the exposure of Tagore to the Western world and subsequently to Tagore's award for the Nobel prize in Literature, has this to say, "...these prose translation from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years..." Highly recommended.

A magnanimous spirit's spiritual legacy. It made me close my eyes and ruminate on the world as it was meant to be. Reading just one or two poems might be unfulfilling or even boring. The reader has to allow himself to be drawn in and read 7-8 of them and then perhaps re-read them. That's when the magic truly sets in. It then indulges the nooks of the mind that daily routines tend to push out of sight. The poems are easy to read since they are fairly short (9-10 lines often), but they put forth a lot more than that. The original version in Bengali is supposed to be even better, but the English translation was special enough for me. Brilliant is an understatement.

Gitanjali is a sweet collection of poems and songs from Nobel Prize winning poet Rabindranath Tagore. These are songs that touch on love, faith, truth, life in general. Tagore has written from the heart. The wisdom contained in these works is startling. This is Eastern poetry that is a wonder to behold. Tagore embraces the personal as well as the universal. He encourages his people to transcend. I refer to this book variably over the years. Its alluring beauty has not faded in any way.

Rabindranath Tagore offers the discerning reader "manna for the spirit". In truth, this small volume of poetry consists of English translations of Bengali songs of worship. My well worn copy from 1971 (MacMillan and Company, New York) has stood the test of time, being read and reread many times in the past 24 years. Surprise (!!!) the price only went up by 5 cents! Tagore is my favorite poet, he approaches the deepest most spiritual aspects of life with simplicity, grace, and reverence. Using the imagery of nature, he connects the reader to the truth of living, being, experiencing this world in all its myriad of forms. His poems touch depths within the soul of the reader in unexpected and unimaginable ways ... Perhaps at the end of the day, the reader can concur with the words of Tagore in poem # 16: "I have had my invitation to life's festival, and my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard. It was my part to play upon my instrument, and I have done all I could. Now, I ask, has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my salutations." Excerpts from Poem # 57 "The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light. The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems into profusion. Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure." Poem # 90 "On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer him?" Erika Borsos (erikab93)

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