

DR. AMITABH MITRA

By Ravi Naicker

I have known Dr Amitabh Mitra, an orthopaedic surgeon at Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in East London, since 2007. I happened upon him through an article I read in the local Durban Newspaper. After I telephoned him I was pleasantly surprised by the amicable manner in which he spoke to me. I purchased his Poetry CD entitled, 'A Slow Train to Gwalior' which I thoroughly enjoyed. His love of poetry and his own voice against the backdrop of the beat of African indigenous instruments enhances the CD and makes it worth listening. Dr Mitra's early years spent in libraries and amongst royalty cannot be expunged from his memory as he reminisces through his poetry and paintings.

Through our regular correspondence via the telephone and emails, Dr Mitra inspired and accepted me into his circle of Poets. Poetry is and remains the highest form of expression in any language. Dr Mitra is multi-talented – he admits that he de-stresses by writing poetry, painting, singing, editing, publishing and simply chilling out in local taverns where he socialises with the simple and ordinary folk. His utter humility has earned him the title of 'People's Doctor' at the Trauma Unit at the hospital where he is as old as the furniture. He has over the years rubbed shoulders with the affluent and the ordinary and has not lost the common touch. People of all race groups and ages take well to him knowing that he will do his very best to assist them. His passion for his work is unparalleled. However, it is not surprising that both his son and daughter have chosen careers in the medical field.

To this day, Dr Mitra remains a dear friend who visited me at my home in KwaZulu-Natal on many occasions. Owing to his encouragement and unstinting support, he brought out the poet in me and managed to publish a few of my poems. That was indeed the breakthrough a struggling writer like me waited for. He is known to my family and friends and continues to remain an inspiration to all of us.

His sterling work in the publishing world is remarkable. Dr Mitra is selfless and continues to execute his work with gusto. A Doctor-cum Poet who serves on many executive committees and still has time to read for his Doctor of Medicine through one of South Africa's most prestigious Universities (Cape Town University).

Dr Mitra worked in various parts of Africa and finally settled in South Africa, a country he has grown to love and cherish. He has imbibed the philosophy of a few illustrious leaders the world over and genuinely draws inspiration from them. He had the esteemed privilege of meeting with South Africa's first democratically elected President, the honourable Nelson Mandela and continues to come into contact with other leaders as well.

The various Anthologies published by Dr Mitra have found places in international libraries. Some of them are: Poems for Haiti, Unbreaking The Rainbow, An Anthology of Love Poems and his latest work which is due next year is, Trainstorm. He subscribes to the fact that literature holds a mirror to life and is intrepid in his ventures to do so. 'Unbreaking The Rainbow' which contains a foreword by Ms. Ela Gandhi (the grand daughter of the Mahatma), explores the sentiments by the young and the old alike regarding the New South Africa since democracy.

I would like to conclude by wishing Dr Mitra strength in all his endeavours.

Bio:

Ravi Naicker is Senior Educator at a High School in KwaZulu-Natal. He likes reading, watching good movies and writing poetry.