

Balachandra Rajan
1920-2009



Dr. Balachandra Rajan BA, MA, PhD (Trinity College, Cambridge), Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Western Ontario, died January 23, 2009. He was 88.

Dr. Rajan was born March 24, 1920, in Toungao, Burma, when it was a province of India. He was fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge from 1944–1948, where he earned his BA, MA, and PhD and served as a lecturer in modern poetry. He then left England to return to his native India, where he served in the Indian Foreign Service until 1961. During that period, he served on the Indian Delegation to the United Nations, working extensively with UNESCO and UNICEF, and chairing an international anti-malaria effort.

Leaving his diplomatic career to return to academe, Rajan taught at the University of Delhi until 1964 when he immigrated to Canada to take up a position at the University of Western Ontario. He taught at Western for 19 years until retiring in 1985.

Rajan was renowned for his books and essays on the work of John Milton and particularly Milton's *Paradise Lost*. His 1947 book *Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader* is primarily a response to Milton's apparent interest in Arianism and argues for a distinction between private and public meaning in Milton's poetry. The book quickly established Rajan as a leading critic in Milton studies.

Along with this, he wrote numerous critical essays on English poetry, including: *W.B. Yeats: A Critical Introduction* (1965); *The Lofty Rhyme: A Study of Milton's Major Poetry* (1970); *The Overwhelming Question: A Study of the Poetry of T.S. Eliot* (1976); *The Form of the Unfinished: English Poetics from Spenser to Pound* (1985); *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (1999); *Milton and the Climate of Reading: Essays by Balachandra Rajan* (2006).

Rajan also wrote two novels: *The Dark Dancer* (1958), about the conflicts of the Partition; and *Too Long in the West* (1962), a light-hearted satire about a girl's return to her home village after an emancipating education in New York.

His scholarly accomplishments earned Rajan the Royal Society of Canada's Chauveau medal in 1983, eight years after his election to fellowship in the Society. He was also Honored Scholar of the Milton Society of Canada, and winner of the Milton Society of America's Irene Samuel Memorial Award.

Rajan's daughter is the scholar and literary theorist Tilottama Rajan, who also teaches at the University of Western Ontario.