

Classic Poetry Series

Chandidas
- poems -

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Chandidas(1339 - 1399)

Chandidas (Bengali: চন্দিদাস) was a flourished medieval poet of Bengal, whose love songs addressed to the washerwoman Rami were popular in the medieval period and were a source of inspiration to the Vaishnava-Sahajiya religious movement that explored parallels between human and divine love. Over 1250 poems related to the love of Radha and Krishna in Bengali with the bhanita of Chandidas are found with different sobriquets.

 Short Biography

There were at least four poets with the name of Chandidas: Baru Chandidas, Dwija Chandidas, Dina Chandidas, and Chandidas. It is not clear whether these different names found in the bhanita (autobiographical lines in poetry mentioning the name of the poet) refer to different individuals or to the same person. Only Baru Chandidas has been more or less identified. But many questions still remain unresolved, creating the Chandidas mystery.

It is believed that Baru Chandidas was born in the village of Nanur in Birbhum district, son of Durgadas Bagchi, a Varendra Brahmin. Chandidas, who was a priest in the temple of the goddess Bashuli (Bishalaksi), fell in love with a washerwoman named Rami and was excommunicated.

Baru Chandidas is known mainly as the writer of the lyrical srikrishnakirtan, the manuscript of which was discovered by Basantaranjan Vidvadvallabh at Bankura. Basantaranjan, who published the manuscript in 1916, believed that Chandidas was born in 1339 and died in 1399. However, other scholars, suggest a somewhat earlier date.

The poems ascribed to Chandidas have been popular in Bengal through the centuries. The first humanist poet in Bangla, he believed that 'sabar upare manus satya tahar upare nai' (The supreme truth is man, there is nothing more important than he is). The verses that bear his name approximate 1,100.

A school and a hospital have been established at Nanur village in Birbhum as memorials to Chandidas. Countless people visit the village to pay homage to the poet.

Appeal

Thy youth is but a noon, of night take heed, —
A noon that is a fragment of a day,
And the swift eve all sweet things bears away,
All sweet things and all bitter, rose and weed.
For others' bliss who lives, he lives indeed.
But thou art pitiful and ruth shouldst know.
I bid thee trifle not with fatal love,
But save our pride and dear one, O my dove,
And heaven and earth and the nether world below
Shall only with thy praises peopled grow.
Life is a bliss that cannot long abide,
But while thou livest, love. For love the sky
Was founded, earth upheaved from the deep cry
Of waters, and by love is sweetly tied
The golden cordage of our youth and pride.

Chandidas

I Am Buried In Shyam

Whatever the elders at home may say
I can never leave my treasure, my Shyam,
His beauty and charm have eaten my heart.
I constantly fear that someone will come
And cut my ribs open to take them away.
Forever I am conscious, awake day and night,
Even when in lassitude I close my eyes.
I am buried in Shyam, the shape of my loves.

Who could ever wish me to leave my loving,
I would rather eat poison than hear such words.
I have explored his beauty and found no shores,
But the god at last is standing by me.
I will fulfil my dream and let the rest go.

[From 'Love songs of Chandidas']

Chandidas

The Confidante Loquitur

That gay one who is the abode of virtue
Incessantly murmurs thy name,
On hearing a word of thee
His limbs are pervaded by a thrill,
Bending down lowly his head
Tears pour from his eyes,
If one should ask him a word
He waves (him) away with his hand,
If one should speak concerning thee
Thou wilt see there is nothing else in his mind.
There is no firmness (left) in him;
A serious matter Cha.n.dî Dâs sings.

[From 'Sacred Texts']

Chandidas

The Confidante Loquitur (Modern Translation)

Ah lady! ah lady! hear a word,
At length having seen (him) I have come again;
Looking, looking, (my) pain increased,
Whatever was done profited not.
He binds not his hair, he girds not his waist,
He eats not food, he drinks not water.
The colour of gold Śyâm has become,
Constantly remembering thy name.
He does not recognize any one, his eye does not wink,
He remains with fixed look like a doll of wood.
I placed a piece of wool to his nose,
Then only I perceived that he breathed,
There is breath, but there remains no life,
Delay not, my happiness depends on it!
Cha.n.dî Dâs saith (it is) the anguish of separation
In his heart, the only medicine is Radha.

[From 'Sacred Texts']

Chandidas

The Night Is Dark

The night is dark,
the sky is filled with teeming clouds.
Friend, what can I say to you?
By virtue of many lives, Him I have won.

Chandidas