

Classic Poetry Series

Ishwar Chandra Gupta
- poems -

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Ishwar Chandra Gupta(March 1812 - 23 January 1859)

Ishwar Chandra Gupta was an Indian Bengali poet and writer. Gupta was born in the village Kanchanpalli or Kanchrapara, 24 Parganas district (currently in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, India).

Early Life

Ishwar Chandra Gupta was brought up in his uncle's house after the death of his mother. Gupta spent most of his childhood in Kolkata. At that time, poets were named Kobiwala and the kobiwalas were not so civilized in language. Sexual words and clashes were common. But Ishwar Chandra Gupta created a different style of poetry.

He started the newspaper Sambad Prabhakar with Jogendra Mohan Tagore on on January 28, 1831. which finally became a daily on June 4, 1839. Many Bengali writers of the 19th century started their career with that magazine. He reintroduced into Bengali poetry the mediaeval style with double meaning (already seen in Sandhyakaranandi and Bharatchandra):

"Ke bole Ishwar Gupta, byapta charachar,
Jahar prabhaye prabha paye Prabhakar.."

'Ishwar' means God, 'Gupta' means hidden and 'Prabhakar' is the a translation runs:

"Who says God is hidden? He is omnipresent
From Him the Sun gets its luminescence."

Also, Ishwar (Chandra) Gupta ran the journal 'Prabhakar'. So a second meaning of the poem, making a tongue-in-cheek reference to the author, runs:

"Who says Ishwar (Gupta) is hidden? His reach touches the world
For his brilliance makes the Prabhakar luminiscent."

Literary Style

He brought modern era of poetry in Bengali. He did not describe the life of Gods and Goddesses, but the daily life of human beings. He also wrote biographies of

many Bengali poets and musicians.

Ishwarchandra Gupta always satires the so called modern class who blindly followed the colonial British power.

"Tumi ma kalpataru
Amra shob posha goru
Shikhi ni shing bankano
Khai kebol khol-bichuli-ghash
Jano ranga amla
Tule mamla
Na bhangе gamla
Ma!
Pele bhushi
Tatei kushi
Ghushi khele bachbo na!"

His literary works were included in the curriculum of school level, secondary and higher secondary Bengali Literature in Bangladesh.

Political Views

In the early days he was a conservative, opposing the Young Bengal movement as well as frowning on widow remarriage. His views on widow remarriage put him at odds with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He was one of the earliest advocates of a Hindu view of Indian society. Later in his life, his views began to change and he championed the cause for the remarriage of virgin widows and women's education.

Ishwar Chandra was a nationalist, with strong feelings for his land and his language. He started a movement for the improvement of Bangla and also made it a point to use Bangla words unaffected by English.

Among his other important contributions are his biographies of [Bharatchandra](http://www.poemhunter.com/bharatchandra-ray/), [Ramprasad Sen](http://www.poemhunter.com/ramprasad-sen/), Ramnidhi Gupta, Haru Thakur, and other poets. The credit for creating a proper climate for writers such as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Dinabandhu Mitra, Rangalal Banerjee also goes to him.

Works

Apart from Sambad Prabhakar, he also edited a number of other journals including Sangbadratnabali, Pasandapidan, and Sangbadsadhuranjan. He also edited Kalikirtan (1833) and Prabodh Prabhakar (1858) by Ramprasad Sen. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay edited some of Ishwar Chandra's writings in Ishwar Chandra Guptar Kavita Sanggraha (Collected Poems, 1885) and Satyanarayan Vratakatha (1913).

Duryodhan At Dvaipayan

In the far horizon streaks of blood
merge into the black gloom;
Below, on the darkling solitary plain
whose form sprawls, alone?

--Know you not who I am? That name have I not
forgotten-- king am I-- Raja Duryodhan!
Kuruksheetra, is it over?--
Where am I-- is this Dvaipayan?
O Queen, queen Bhanumati--
where are you, my wife, in calamity?
--Chariot; my chariot,-- driver, charioteer--
Where, where are the guards gone?
Oh! the pain-- torment agonising--
who calls the royal surgeon?
Royal valour, hero's fortitude--
will even they give way today?
--Yet, yet I do not fear,
alone will I fight undeterred;
Yet, in unfair battle defeat
I spurn!--
Alas, my fate! even that I cannot,
shattered these thighs in dust lie;
Refuge-less my valour only
cries out its impotence!
Vrikodara, wolf-waisted, Pandavas' shame,
you blackened Pandu's face--
like a thief in the night
dharma you burnt,
firing it with your own hands;
Un-Kshatriya in Kshatriya clan--
proof aright of Wind-god's son--
On that tarnished Pandava name
of yours shame, shame,--
a thousand shames.

*

Did none have eyes in this world?
Alas, who is left in this wide world?
Bhishma, Drona, Karna gone--

Who will punish whom?
All, that deceiving Krishna's work,
cruel intriguer's evil counsel--
'Dharma-rajya', righteous rule,
confusing words ever on his lips.
With Krishna a band of rogues
call him 'friend', serve as slaves.
That shame of Yadava clan
manipulates them, smiling.

*

Where's Balarama, generous, valorous,
radiant-white Raivatak?
And where the clan's shame, his brother,
partisan and cheat!
Oh-- that pain, again, again!
Who's there?

Come near, O Sanjaya,
See your invincible Duryodhan's
calamitous condition!
Kuru clan-is it uprooted then--
Kuruksheetra-- is it annihilation?
Speak, Counsellor, why silent?
What is left to realise!
--You muse, to Duryodhan you won't
relate that inauspicious news,--
Alas! at death's throes now
has that any worth?

*

Today I recall in that assembly hall
Uncle's folded hands-
Had then I known of today,
Would've I berated him so bitterly?
Yet, considering royalty's honour,
I repent not--
Who among his enemies is unaware
of Duryodhan's sense of honour?
His morals, his acts, all,
all befit the King of kings--
The noble were honoured, genius welcomed,
bounty seeker returned with wealth.

*

Oh! That incident?
Kshatriyas' right to gamble's well known--
Who calls it sin? No tearful remorse
touches these eyes!
If violence you regard a crime,
you're a coward;-- proof of it:
Perpetual strife of god and titan
though brothers-
What say you to that?
Violence's natural to creatures,
violence--bred food nurtures life--
Time's desire mirrored in violence
is figured forth in the dynasty.

*

Panchali? Mention not, Counsellor!
Who marries five husbands,
as bride-price wins perpetual right
to mockery as fate's boon!
King's duties are grave, profound,
Desires, wishes, aren't for him,
All life a one-pointed dedication,
you well know, O Sanjaya.
Kunti's sons, Draupadi's husbands-
too harshly treated?
Kuru patriarch, in his kingdom,
is impartial, adamant!

*

Needlepoint's land I refused
Pandavas? Because I was miserly?
Duryodhan's munificent hand
who knows not on this earth?
It's not that, Counsellor,--
Justice's just an excuse
of enemies to demand rights!
Were it a prayer? Gifting kingdom away
the forest would receive Duryodhan.

*

Only one thing I cannot forget,
Counsellor, which even today
pierces my heart,--
Abhimanyu's heinous murder

by seven chariot-heroes!

*

--Oh, that agony! Shooting up
from thigh to skull
blacks all out!
Blind eyes, frenzied mind,
doomsday roar drumming in ears!
No physician left? Send messages
summon, call them-
this necklace as prize.

*

Dusk deepens in skies o'erhead
at plain's end forest-skirted,
after lake waters grow black
in deepening darkness!
Hundreds of will-o'-wisp eyes light up
thronging Kurukshetra-plain;
Ravening carnivores roam roaring!

*

Sanjaya, stay awhile,
perhaps my last night this!
Defeat, victory-- not the issue,
they're life's partners I know.
Regrets have I none in this life,
by nature King is this Duryodhan;
above blame and fame
his all-ruling throne!

*

Only, a hundred pranams convey
at my father's feet, Counsellor,--
tell him-- I am that great father's
renowned dynast.
Death I own proudly, easily,
my constant servitor,--
Life he steals,
steal he cannot fame
that is eternal.

*

What if father's eyes are blind-
what can't fate do?

Love for his son--I know,
is limitless. Yet not blind.
Desiring progeny's welfare
shackling in chains of state-rule
in war he could've been party
following conventional advice;
--Of counsellors there was no shortage,
--Krishna, Vidura, heroic Bhishma,--
Yet with faith in his son
that head high-held bowed in respect.
--Better than cowardly peace
is even war eternal,--
In paternal love that kingly ethic
never forgot, that ruler of men.
--For proud son's befitting father he,
supernal radiance in mind's eyes;--
At his feet, hence, again and again
I bow today with body and soul.

*

Night deepens,--farewell, friend,
return home with pranam;
May Duryodhan's glorious fame
live, constant companion!
As nearby Dvaipayana ripples,
hallowed by Vyasa's holy name;--
may Kshatriya valour's radiant star
shine in the gloom-- Duryodhan.

[Transcreated by Pradip Bhattacharya]

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