

Classic Poetry Series

Jaishankar Prasad
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Jaishankar Prasad(30 January 1889 – 14 January 1937)

Jaishankar Prasad (Hindi: जैशंकर प्रसाद), one of the most famous figures in modern Hindi literature as well as Hindi theatre.

 Biography

Jaishankar Prasad was born on January 30, 1889, in an elite madheshiya vaisya family in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. His father Babu Devki Prasad, also known as Sunghani Sahu (सुंघनी साहू), was a tobacco dealer. After, he lost his father at an early age, he had to encounter some family problems at a relatively young age, and left school after class eight. However, he remained interested in literature, languages, and ancient history, and continued studying at home; thereafter he developed a special inclination towards the Vedas and these interests are innately reflected in the deep philosophical contender/content of his works.

 Language and influence

His initial poetry (Chitraadhar collection) was done in the Braj dialect of Hindi, but later he switched to the Khadi dialect or Sanskritized Hindi.

In his earlier days, he was influenced by Sanskrit dramas, but later the influence of Bengali and Persian dramas is evident on his works. Prasad's most famous dramas include Skandagupta, Chandragupta and Dhruvaswamini .

 Poetic Style

He is considered one of the Four Pillars (Char Stambh) of Romanticism in Hindi Literature (Chhayavad), along with Sumitranandan Pant, Mahadevi Verma, and Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala'. His style of poetry can at best be described as "touching". Art and philosophy have been exquisitely amalgamated in his writings. His vocabulary avoids the Persian element of Hindi and mainly consists of Sanskrit (Tatsama) words and words derived from Sanskrit (Tadbhava words) - some of them made really exquisitely by himself. By this means, he arrives at a sophisticated diction that was typical for Hindi Romanticism of the 1920s and 30s, and also, on the Urdu side, for Muhammad Iqbal.

The subject of his poetry spans the entire horizon of subjects of his era, from

romantic to nationalistic. He in a way signifies the epitome of classical Hindi poetry. One of his patriotic poems, 'Himadri Tung Shring Se', won him many accolades in the era of Indian independence movement. However, Kamayani undoubtedly remains his best creation.

 Dramas and other Writings

His dramas are considered to be most pioneering ones in Hindi. The majority of them revolve around historical stories of Ancient India. Some of them were also based on mythological plots. In 1960s, Shanta Gandhi Professor of Ancient Indian Drama at while at National School of Drama, revived interest in Jaishankar Prasad's plays for modern Indian theatre, by successfully staging his most important play Skanda Gupta written in 1928, with little changes to the original script, thus quashing doubts over its "stagability".

He wrote short stories as well. The subjects were mixed - ranging from historical and mythological to contemporary and social. Mamta (motherly love) is a famous short-story based on an incident where a Mughal Badshah gets refuge in a Hindu widow's home whose father was killed by Badshah's army. Another one of his well-known short-stories called chhota jadugar (little magician) portrays the life of a child who learns to earn his own living by performing small skits with his dolls on streets.

He also wrote a small number of novels.

Beetee Vibhaavaree Jaag Ree

Jaishankar Prasad

Bharat Mahima

Jaishankar Prasad

Himadri Tung Shring Se

Jaishankar Prasad

Kaamaayani - 'Lajja' Parichhed

Jaishankar Prasad

Kaamaayani - 'Nirved'

Jaishankar Prasad

Prayaangeet

Jaishankar Prasad

Woman, You Are Love Incarnated

Now I've come to know -
I am a woman of weakness.
My soft beauty of winds
Makes me lose to everyone.

But why does my heart
Itself grows so tender?
And why do my dusky eyes
Well up suddenly with tears?

To lose myself fully,
To trust the shades of a tall tree,
To lie down there silently,
Why do my longings grow in the web of love?

Woman, you are love incarnated
Under the silver mountain of faith.
Keep on flowing like a river of nectar
On the beautiful bed of life.

-tr. Ravi Kopra

Yah aaj samajh to paayi.N hu.N,
main durbalata mei.N nari hu.N
Avyav ki sundar komalta,
lekar main.N sabse haari hu.N

Par mann bhi kyo.N,
itna dheela apne hi hota jaata hai
Ghanshyam khand si aankhon mein
Kyon sehसा jal bhar aata hai?

Sarvasva samarpan karne mi,
vishvas mahataru-chaya mei.N
Chupchap padi rehni ki kyo.N,
mamta jagti hai maya mei.N?

Nari! Tum keval shraddha ho,
Vishwas-rajat-nag-pal-tal mei.N,
Piyush srot si baha karo,
Jeevan ki sundar samtal mei.N

[From Lajja]

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