



Prof. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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An outstanding litterateur, a revered patriot, a distinguished parliamentarian, an eminent educationist, and a respected philosopher, Prof. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar was one of the towering personalities of our national life. A progressive and humanist poet, he evoked the spirit of nationalism by his inspiring and patriotic compositions during the pre-Independence days. It is no wonder then that his patriotic poetry earned him the sobriquet of *Rashtrakavi* (national poet).

Ramdhari Singh Dinkar was born on 23 September 1908 at Simaria village in Monghyr district of Bihar. After his early education at a local school in Mokamehghat, he graduated from the Patna University. As a student, Dinkar's favourite subjects were history, politics and philosophy. He also had great interest in Hindi, Sanskrit, Maithili, Bengali, Urdu and English literature and was deeply influenced by the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Iqbal, Keats and Milton. In his early days, Dinkar supported the revolutionary movement during the freedom struggle but later he became a true Gandhian as his political thoughts were greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi.

Dinkar started his career as the Head Master of a school and thereafter served the Government of Bihar for some years in different capacities. He joined as a Sub-Registrar in 1934 and remained in this job till 1943. Dinkar had to suffer the wrath of the British Government because of his nationalistic leanings and was transferred 22 times in five years. From 1943 to 1945, he was the Publicity Officer in Bihar. After Independence, Dinkar worked as the Deputy Director of Public Relations from 1947 to 1950. Later, he also served as the Professor of Hindi in the University of Bihar for two years.

In 1952, Dinkar was elected to the Rajya Sabha; he was re-elected in April 1954 and again in 1960. During his twelve-years stint as a member, he effectively used

the parliamentary devices to raise issues that affected the lives of the common man and forcefully voiced their concerns and deprivations on the floor of the House. Dinkar resigned his membership of the Rajya Sabha in 1964 to join the Bhagalpur University as its Vice-Chancellor.

Dinkar's first published poetry work was *Vijay Sandesh*, published in 1928. After the Second World War, he set up his own publication, *Udyachal*, in 1946 and published his works *Kurukshetra*, *Saamdheni* and *Dhoop Chhah*. He authored seventeen volumes of Hindi poetry, ten volumes of Hindi prose and five volumes of children literature during his lifetime. Some of his major poems are: *Pranbhang*, *Renuka*, *Hunkar*, *Rasavanti*, *Dvandvageet*, *Parashuram ki Pratiksha* and *Haare ko Harinaam*. His famous works in prose are: *Mitti ki Or*, *Ardhanaarishwar*, *Ujli Aag*, *Kaavya ki Bhumikaa* and *Sahityamukhi*.

The nationalist atmosphere in the country greatly influenced Dinkar and in his works, patriotism came to its fullest realization. The well-known Hindi writer, Kashinath Singh said, 'Dinkar was a poet of anti-imperialism and nationalism.' His poetry was more about reawakening and was very motivating and inspiring to read. He tried to achieve through poetry what freedom-fighters were trying by participating in the freedom struggle. His fearless poetry awakened the national spirit in no small measure. The lines, *sinhasan khali karo ke janta aati hai* (vacate the throne, the people are coming), from one of his famous poems, became one of the ringing slogans of the freedom movement. His poems on patriotism fired the young people especially, and were exceedingly popular.

Dinkar's reputation does not rest on his fervent patriotism alone. An epitome of sagacity, he symbolized the progressive trend in Hindi poetry. In 1928, at the age of twenty, Dinkar, inspired by the triumph of the peasants' agitation led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, had written *Bordello Vijay*. During this time, the impact of Marxism was also making its way into art and literature of the country. Dinkar too came under its influence. But even as he was influenced by Marxism, his inspiration

came not from Russia but from the toiling humanity of his own soil. The social inequality and the dominance of the rich landlords over the landless immensely influenced his works. Dinkar, a poet of human relations and metaphysics, through his philosophical poetry drew attention to the sufferings of the masses. He wished the people of India to be strong: "In the arteries of each soul/O God ignite thy fire!" (*Durbal prano ki nas-nas me Dev/phook do chingari*).

Dinkar greatly enriched Hindi literature by writing on a variety of cultural, social and nationally vital subjects. He was not an advocate of soft options and easy life, but exhorted his readers to brave challenges, to spread out their wings and soar with courage and a deep conviction that good will triumph over evils and oppression. His poems and writings seized the minds of the readers, motivating one to pause and think seriously and break all psychological barriers. He firmly believed that only those who have passed through fire and pain could really enjoy the finer moments of life, just as success is far more enjoyable when achieved after a struggle.

A member of many cultural, social and educational institutions, Prof. Dinkar made significant contributions towards the cause of the Hindi language. He participated in more than 500 literary conferences all over the country. He also represented Indian poetry at the International Conference of Poets in Warsaw (Poland) in 1955 and visited China as a guest of their Writers' Union in 1957. He led the Government Delegation of Indian Writers to the erstwhile U.S.S.R. in 1961. Dinkar was a member of the Official Language Commission, Central Board of Film Censors, Central Advisory Committee of All India Radio, Kendriya Hindi Shiksha Samiti, Sangeet Natak Akademi and Sahitya Akademi. In 1970, he was appointed as the Hindi Advisor to the Government of India.

For his meritorious and distinguished services to the nation, Dinkar was awarded the *Padma Bhushan* in 1959. He was also decorated with two of the highest literary awards—the *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1959 for his work *Sanskriti Ke Char Adhyay* which is a detailed

and analytical account of India's cultural development through the ages against a historical backdrop, and the *Jnanpith Award* in 1972 for *Urvashi*, the great classic published in 1961. Dinkar received many other awards too for his distinguished works in poetry. He was awarded the Dwivedi Gold Medal twice by the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Kashi, for *Kurukshetra* and *Rashmirathi*; awarded prizes by the Sahityakar Samsad, Allahabad for *Kurukshetra*; by the Government of U.P. for *Rashmirathi* and *Sanskriti Ke Char Adhyay*; by the Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad for *Neel Kusum*; and by the Government of India for *Mirch ka Maza*.

Prof. Dinkar passed away on 24 April 1974 in Madras at the age of sixty-six. Paying glowing tributes to the literary legend, the then President of India, Shri V.V. Giri, said: 'In the death of Prof. Dinkar, the world of literature has suffered an irreparable loss. His outstanding contributions to Hindi, in particular, and to our national movement, in general, will always be remembered.' The then Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, in her condolence message, said: '...The country has been deprived of an outstanding creative writer who reflected the heritage and aspirations of our people.' The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha also mourned the sad demise of Dinkar. Offering his tributes in the Lok Sabha on 26 April 1974, the then Speaker, Dr. G.S. Dhillon, described him as 'a great poet, an educationist and symbol of refined culture'. 'Prof. Dinkar served the nation in a number of fields,' Dr. Dhillon added.

Dinkar was among the outstanding Hindi poets of his time that coincided with the cultural efflorescence that followed the self-conscious nationalism of the early decades of the 20th century. He left his indelible imprint on our national life with his many patriotic writings. Like all great poets, Dinkar will live through his works.

[*The Portrait of Prof. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, painted by Shri Gopal, will be unveiled by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, on 22 December 2008. The Portrait has been donated by Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers and Union Minister of Steel, and National President, Lok Jan Shakti Party*]

