

RAM PRASAD 'BISMIL' - THE GREAT MARTYR

**"SAR FAROSHI KI TAMANNA AB HAMARE DIL MAIN HAI,
DEKHNA HAI ZOR KITNA BAZUE KATIL MAIN HAI."**

The murderous hands of the ruthless foreign rulers cannot extinguish my burning desire to make the supreme sacrifice (for freeing my country).

Note : This is not a literal translation but only the essence of the above couplet.

Ram Prasad Bismil was one of the great Indian freedom fighters who also participated in the Kakori train incident¹. He was also a great poet and has written several inspiring verses. He was prosecuted by the British Government in India. Ram Prasad Bismil joined the band² of martyrs³ who dreamt of a free India and made the supreme sacrifice. Bismil, along with stalwarts like Ashfaqulla Khan, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagwati Charan, Raj Guru and others organised several upheavals against the British; they printed literature, provided shelter to revolutionaries, made hand bombs and were a constant source of worry to the British Government. They are most remembered for the Kakori train incident and the bombing of the Punjab assembly.

'Bismil' is the pen-name⁴ of Ram Prasad. As 'Bismil' he is well-known as a great revolutionary poet in Hindi. At the end of his autobiography, he has reproduced some selected poems. Every line of his poems throbs⁵ with patriotic⁶ fervour⁷. In one poem, he prays, " Even if I have to face death a thousand times for the sake of my Motherland, it shall not sadden me. Oh Lord! Grant me a hundred births in Bharat. But grant me this, too, that each time I may give up my life in the service of the Motherland."

-
1. incident - /'InsIdJnt/(n) - something that happens, especially something unusual or unpleasant (to the foreign rulers of India, the Kakori train incident was an act of robbery or dacoity. But for Indians, it was a most courageous act of the revolutionaries in their struggle for India's independence.)
 2. band - /b&nd/(n) - a group of people having the same ideology.
 3. martyr - /'mA;tJ(r)/(n) - one who suffers very much or is killed for his political or religious belief.
 4. pen-name - /'pen neIm/(n) - a name used by writers instead of a real one
 5. throb - /TrQb/(v) - a strong and regular feeling of expression
 6. patriotic - /peIttri'QtIk/(adj) - having or expressing a great love for your country
 7. fervour - /'f3:vJ(r)/ - very strong feeling about something

In a poem written just before going to the gallows¹, he prays, "Oh Lord! Your will be done. You are unique. Neither my tears nor I will endure. Grant me this boon, that to my last breath and the last drop of my blood, I may think of you and be immersed in your work."

Ram Prasad 'Bismil' was a brave revolutionary, who gave up his life smilingly for the sake of the Motherland. He was persecuted² by an enraged foreign government, hunted by the police and betrayed by fellow workers. And yet he lit the fire of revolution to be liberated from slavery. He was the brave leader of the Kakori train incident. His poetry is also a lamp lighted at the altar³ of the Motherland. Kakori is a village near Lucknow. It became famous, because the attack on the train took place near Lucknow.

It was the evening of the 9th of August 1925; the number eight down train was passing near Kakori. Ram Prasad and his nine revolutionary followers pulled the chain and stopped it. They took under their control the money belonging to the government, deposited in the guard's carriage. Excepting that one passenger was killed by an accidental shot, there was no bloodshed. This extremely well-planned incident jolted the government. After a month of detailed preliminary inquiries and elaborate preparations, the government cast its net wide for the revolutionaries. Arrest warrants were issued not only against the ten participants but also against other leaders of the Hindustan Republican Association. With the lone exception of Chandra Shekhar Azad, all participants were caught. The case went on for over a year and a half. Ram Prasad, Ashfaqullah, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri, all four were sentenced to death. A strong campaign was organised throughout India to save the lives of these revolutionary heroes. Many of leaders appealed to the British Government to show mercy to the condemned men. But the government was unyielding.

It was the 18th of December 1927. A middle-aged lady was waiting at the main gate of the Gorukhpur Central Jail. She was eagerly waiting to be called into the prison. By that time, her husband also arrived there. He was surprised that his wife was already there before him. He also sat down to wait for the call. A young man came there. He was not related to them. He knew that the couple would be permitted to enter the prison. But how should he manage to enter the prison? This was his problem. The officials of the prison called in the husband and the wife. The young man followed them. The guard stopped him and rudely asked, "Who are you?" "Permit him also, brother. He is my sister's son.", the lady said in an entreating voice. The guard relented. All the three entered the prison to

1. gallows - /'g&lJUZ /: a structure on which people or criminals are killed by hanging

2. persecute - /'p3:sIkju:t /: to treat somebody in a cruel and unfair way

3. altar - /'O:lEtJ(r) / - a special table where religious ceremonies are performed

visit a freedom fighter who was to face his death on the morrow¹. The freedom fighter was brought there in chains. They were like ornaments on him. This was the last time that he could see his mother, the last time he could address her as 'mother'. At this thought grief welled² up in him. He stood speechless and tears rolled down his cheeks.

In a firm voice the mother said, "What is this, my son? I had thought of my son as a great hero. I was thinking that the British Government would shiver at the very mention of his name. I never thought that my son would be afraid of death. If you can die only in this way, weeping, why did you take up such activities?"

The officials were astounded³ at the firmness of the mother. The freedom fighter replied, "Mother, dear, these are not tears of fear - the fear of death. These are tears of joy - joy at beholding so brave mother!"

The brave son of that brave mother was Ram Prasad Bismil. He was the leader of the famous kakori train incident. The last meeting ended. Next morning Ram Prasad got up earlier than usual, bathed and said his morning prayers. He wrote his last letter to his mother. Then he sat down with calm mind awaiting his death.

The officials came and removed his chains. They took him from the prison - cell towards his death. He was completely untroubled and walked like a hero. The officials were amazed. As he moved to the gallows, he joyfully chanted 'Vande Matram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'. At the top of his voice, he shouted, "Down with the British Empire". Then he calmly recited prayers and embraced death.

As he was being executed, there was a strong guard around the prison. When he was dead, the officials brought out the dead body. Not only his parents but also hundreds of his countrymen were waiting outside in tears. The people of Gorakhpur decorated the body of the brave son of Bharat as befitted a hero and carried it in a procession⁴. Flowers were showered on the body and the last rites were performed.

1. morrow/ 'mQrJU /- the next day

2. well/wel/(v)- start to flow.

3. astound/J 'staUnd /(v)- to surprise or shock somebody very much.

4. procession - /prJ 'seSn /(n)- a line of people or vehicles that move along slowly, especially as part of a ceremony

EXERCISES

Word Power

[A] Rearrange the jumbled letters into meaningful words and write the words in alphabetical order:

- (i) nylo (ii) renve (iii) vocie
(iv) ollgasw (v) talre

[B] Supply the synonyms for the words given below (take the help of a good dictionary) :

- (i) anxiety (ii) call (iii) brave
(iv) motherland (v) grief

[C] Match the words in column 'A' with the meanings in column 'B'

Table

A	B
(i) verses	some one who comes from another country.
(ii) upheaval	an in stituation where people are kept as a punishment for committing crimes.
(iii) endure	sentences forming a section of a peom.
(iv) foreigner	to suffer something unpleasant.
(v) prison	sudden or violent change affecting people's lives.

How Much Have I Understood?

[A] Answer the following questions:

- (i) Ram Prasad 'Bismil' was a great patriot. Do you find any other quality in him? Describe.
- (ii) Bismil joined the band of martyrs. What do you understand by the phrase the band of martyrs'?"

- (iii) Bismil along with other stalwarts helped revolutionaries in many other ways. Do you agree with the statement? Explain in brief.
- (iv) What incidents made Bismil and his followers immortal figures of India? Give some references from the text.
- (v) Every line of Bismil's poems throbs with poetic fervour. How far do you agree with the remark? Explain in brief.
- (vi) What was Bismil's contribution in the 'Kakori train incident'?
- (vii) How did the Kakori incident affect the British in India?
- (viii) Describe the qualities of Bismil's mother that astounded the officials of the prison.

[B] Who said these words to whom:

- (i) "Even if I have to face death a thousands times for the sake of my motherland, it shall not sadden me."
- (ii) "Who are you?"
- (iii) "Permit him also, brother."
- (iv) "Why did you take up such activities?"
- (v) "These are not tears of fear - the fear of death."

Language Practice:

Observe the following sentences carefully:

- (i) Ram Prasad 'Bismil' was one of the great Indian freedom fighters, who also participated in the Kakori train incident.
- (ii) Bismil joined the band of martyrs who dreamt of free India.
- (iii) Bismil was a brave revolutionary who gave up his life smilingly.

In above sentences the underlined parts of the sentences are relative clauses. A relative clause tells us which person or thing the speaker means.

We use 'who' in a relative clause when we are talking about people (not things), and when we are talking about things, we use 'that' or 'which' (not 'who').

Now look at the following pairs of sentences:

- (i) (a) Bismil was a brave young man.
(b) He sacrificed his life for the sake of India's freedom.
- (ii) (a) I read a book.
(b) It is very interesting.

We can combine the above pairs of sentences as:

- (i) Bismil was a brave young man, who sacrificed his life for the sake of India's freedom.
- (ii) I read a book, which is very interesting.

Now we combine the following pairs of sentences using relative pronouns 'who' for subjective case, 'whom' for objective case and whose for possessive case for people and 'which' for things. As:

- (i) (a) Have you met that boy?
(b) The boy lives next door to me.

Have you met the boy who lives next door to me?

- (ii) (a) Father called the boy.
(b) He wanted to send him to market.

Father called the boy whom he wanted to send to market.

- (iii) (a) I have lost the pen.
(b) You gave it to me last year.

I have lost the pen which you gave to me last year.

- (iv) (a) I like the students.
(b) Their work is neat and tidy.

I like the students whose work is neat and tidy.

Now combine the following pairs of sentences as illustrated above :

- (i) (a) My sister is wearing a new frock.
(b) The frock is pink.
- (ii) (a) She is my teacher.
(b) She teaches English.
- (iii) (a) I never touch these things.
(b) The things are prohibited.
- (iv) (a) I am looking for Sharda.
(b) Her book is with me.

Listening Time:

Here is a conversation between a girl Shreya and her teacher. Talk in pairs. One student will play the role of the teacher and the other one of the student.

- Teacher** : Shreya, what is the thing you are keeping in your bag?
- Shreya** : Sir, a book on the freedom struggle of India.
- Teacher** : Where did you get it from?
- Shreya** : I borrowed it from the school library.
- Teacher** : How long have you been keeping it with you?
- Shreya** : Sir, only for two days.
- Teacher** : Have you gone through it?
- Shreya** : Not yet.
- Teacher** : Why?
- Shreya** : Because I had lent it to my cousin.
- Teacher** : I also want to read it.
- Shreya** : It's okay. I'll give it to you tomorrow.

Speaking Time:

- A. Read loudly with correct pronunciation each pair of words twice. In each pair the vowel sound of the first word is short and the second long:**

live, leave

hill, heel

lip, leap

this, these

bit, beat

bid, bead

sick, seek

- B. Now read these pairs of sentences and speak them aloud.**

1. Will you fill it, please?
Will you feel it, please?
2. We're going to live here.
We're going to leave this place.
3. Can you see the ship?
Can you see the sheep?
4. That's a high hill.
That's a high heel.
5. Would you like to have this?
Would you like to have these?

- C. These sentences contain examples of both sounds. Read aloud each sentence twice:**

1. If you eat that piece of meat you'll feel sick.
2. On the peak the leaves are green in winter.
3. Don't drink from the cup: the cup is chipped.
4. The ship sprang a leak as it was leaving harbour.
5. I don't think we'll have a picnic this week.

Writing Time

Write a composition on any one of the freedom fighters you admire the most with the help of the following clues :

name, date and place of birth. early childhood, activities, achievements etc.

Things to do

Collect different types of pictures showing freedom fighters. Discuss in your class about their contribution in achieving freedom and write a paragraph about 5 freedom fighters each.

