

PUNDIT MADHUSUDAN GUPTA: THE FIRST HUMAN DISSECTOR OF INDIA

Pundit Madhusudan Gupta (1800–1856), a high caste Hindu, is given the credit of first dissector of human cadaver of India. The first human dissection was carried out in India on 28th October, 1836 in Calcutta Medical College (CMC), Calcutta. It was also the Asia's first human dissection. This courageous act of Madhusudan placed his name at high position in the history of modern anatomical knowledge in India.

Pundit Madhusudan Gupta taught medical courses in a Native Medical Institution (Sanskrit college) in Calcutta. When CMC was opened on the 1st June 1835, by the government order of British authority, Pundit Gupta joined the new college as demonstrator. Dr. Bramley was the first principal of CMC and Dr. Goodeve the professor of anatomy. In the mid nineteenth century the Indian people, especially Hindus, were highly prejudice and superstitious. Most of them were not even prepared to touch a dead body for the study of anatomy. The dissection of human cadaver by a high caste Hindu was unthinkable at that period of time.

The day of 28th October, 1836 is regarded as an eventful era in the annals of Calcutta Medical College. On this day Pundit Gupta performed the first dissection of human cadaver. He was assisted by four courageous students of first batch of CMC. These were Umacharan Set, Rajkrishna De, Dwarkanath Gupta and Nabin Chandra Mitra. The demonstration of dissection was carried out in the presence of all professors of the college and students of first batch. Pundit Madhusudan demonstrated with accuracy and nicety, several of the most interesting parts of the body. The first dissection caused great anxiety. The college gates were closed to prevent the forcible interruption of that awful act. Obviously enough, the act of dissection was not greeted by orthodox Hindus community. However, this event was duly celebrated by British authority by firing a fifty round salute from the guns of Calcutta Fort William. Madhusudan died of diabetic septicaemia on 15th November 1856.

The dissection of a cadaver by a high caste Indian was the first phenomenal step in the direction of modern medical education. Probably, therefore so much importance is attached to first dissection and the individual dissector. It opened the door of Western Medicine to the natives of India as practitioners and beneficiaries.

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