



Recreation of The Ram of Popular Imagination by Tulsidas

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Abstract: Goswami Tulsidas is one of the most popular poets of Hindi, his uniqueness lies in the way he gave a new dimension to 'Ram-Katha'. It is common to discuss the reason for Tulsi's popularity in social discourse, whether it is a pandit for Rama or the devotion and religious tendency of the people of India. Many writers came in the medieval period, but no one could reach the height of fame that Tulsidas gained which is relevant even today. In fact, the reason behind his popularity has been projection of the Rama as 'Lok Nayak'. The world in which Tulsi's Rama is enshrined is India of the 16-17th centuries, which is plagued by various inequalities. Tulsi has depicted this inequality-ridden society through 'Kali-Yuga'. It has physical, mental, and materialism exposure; Poverty, famine, pestilence, femininity, hypocrisy, crooked earth, crippling policy, wicked-gentleman, water-leech etc are prevailing. In such an era, 'Ram' has been shown not particularly in traditional form and connecting him with the struggles of life, where Rama was born with the aim of suppressing the wicked, which is meaningful in all the ages. Human society can be impacted through cultural exchange. For the welfare of the human society, suffering from the narrowness of discrimination of caste and creed, by shedding the Ganges of Ram Bhakti in the mind of man, he took shelter of the Ramayana like Amrit Sanjeevani Katha Sagar with tradition and there is no other religion like 'Parhit-Selfless'. He taught the art of living life through Ram Katha. Tulsidas coined such a 'Rama' in 'Ramcharitmanas' who, despite being in human form, the effect he leaves in front of the society, is supernatural. The personality of Rama that emerges in the Indian psyche is that of a 'Maryada Purushottam'. That form somewhere tries its best to show us the ideal path to cross the worldly ocean. Tulsidas exposes various forms of Rama such as 'Parabrahma', 'Sitapati', 'Devotee', 'World-Saviour', 'Anuj Snehi', 'Sakha Snehi' etc., as well as projecting Rama as the hero in social inequalities. Tulsidas tried to establish the same through 'Ram Rajya'. Therefore, it is called:

Sur Sur Tulsi Sasi, Udgan Keshavdas

Ab ke Chhavi Khadyot Sam, Jahan Tahan Karat Prakas

Key Words 'Lok Nayak', 'Kali-Yuga', 'Ramatva', 'Ram-Katha', 'Lok-Mangal', 'Parhit', 'Karma', 'Ram-Rajya', 'Jan-Kavi', 'Kaaljai'

Introduction

The relationship of literature and society has been discussed in one form or the other for a long time and the question of the significance of the work is deeply related to social consciousness, because a good writer would not want to escape from his cultural obligations. Even after centuries, the work endowed with social consciousness does not become stale and in this sense, it is called 'Kaljayi'. And endowed with such social consciousness, Goswami Tulsidas can be called 'Janakavi' in the true sense because he portrayed the life of common people through the very popular Ram Katha.



Goswami Tulsidas is such a poet of Hindi who accepted the basic purpose of his poetry creation to appreciate the welfare of all. He says:

Kirti Bhaniti Bhuti Bhali Soi
Sursari Sam Sab Kahan Hit Hoi³

That is, fame, poetry and opulence are good only if one is beneficial to all like the river Ganga. The poem which does not provide for the auspiciousness of the people, after reading which good feelings are not awakened in the mind, what is the use of that, Tulsi has made this euphemism here. Not only does Tulsi not say this, but in her compositions, he himself appears to be following it, while appreciating the welfare of all. Ramcharitmanas, composed by him, is the best epic of Hindi, which sets the welfare of all. In the world, there is not as much importance of those who preach about public behavior as the poets who direct the mind towards them by presenting those deeds in the form of some character. That's why Acharya Ramchandra Shukla says, 'A person's relation less path may be expressed to the intellect, but the originator remains latent to the mind'⁴. They seem to be entertaining only when viewed as the course of a person's life and thus Tulsi casts Rama as the hero who takes humanity to that higher ground.

Tulsi has envisaged such an ideal hero in the form of Rama, who is the ideal and living statue of Indian culture and civilization. They are the norms of religion and morality. In them the zenith of renunciation, dispassion, public interest and humanity can be seen. Tulsi originated at a time when inequality, malice and animosity prevailed in every sphere of society. There was conflict in all fields of religion, society, philosophy. In such a heterogeneous environment, there was a need for a great man like Tulsi, who could make the welfare of all good through coordination. Considering Tulsi as a great 'Loknayak', Hazari Prasad Dwivedi has written, 'The Lok Nayak of India can be the one who can coordinate because there were different types of conflicting culture, practices, ideas and religious principles in Indian society'⁵. The entire poetry of Tulsi is a colossal effort of coordination. The spirit of welfare of all is prominently available in Tulsi's poetry. His Ram is 'Mangal Bhavan Amangal Hari' and his Ram Katha also focuses on welfare of all.

On one hand, those who call Ram as Manuj are called by Tulsi as 'Sath Matimand', while on the other hand, those who do not believe in 'Dasaratha Sut' are called 'neech', 'andha unfortunate', who are obsessed with demons, etc.⁶. In Tulsi's place, this state of humanity and 'Brahmatva' has been created everywhere in Rama. The humility, modesty and contentment that Tulsi has in Rama was possible only in Rama's support of devotion. Tulsi's Rama is close to ordinary people, not so much in the case of Valmiki and Bhavabhuti. Valmiki and Bhavabhuti's Rama were also popular, but Rama's connect and devotion to common people has developed unparalleled in Tulsi. In Valmiki and Bhavabhuti, the relation of Rama and subjects remains intact, Tulsi's Rama is more powerful than Valmiki and Bhavabhuti's Rama because while he is the Supreme God, he is more human. Tulsi only informs the omnipotence of Rama, that is why it does not make any special impression on the readers, but he portrays the belief of Rama, that is why it is poignant. The basis of Tulsi's poetry is the human form of Rama depicted on the grounds of common sense, which he has built on the basis of the ideals of his era.

³ Ramcharitmanas, Baalkand

⁴ Hindi Sahitya ka Itihaas, Acharya Ram Chandra Shukl

⁵ Hindi Sahitya ki Bhumika, Dr Hajari Prasad Dwivedi

⁶ Lokvadi Tulsidas, Vishwanath Tripathi



The personification done by Tulsi as a poet, while crafting Rama, is worth considering from the point of view that he wants to establish his reputation as a parallel alternative character. Tulsi is acquainted with the feudal system of his time and the signs of struggle of life found in Vinaya Patrika Kavitaivali etc., should not be seen only as personal suffering, it also includes the larger society. Here again and again the word 'Kalikal' is used, expressing the horrors of time. Tulsi says

Kaha na Kiyo, Kahan na Gayo, Sees kahi na Nayo⁷

On one hand there is the feudal society, which represents 'Kalikal', in the form of demon class, which rests on injustice tyranny. During his lifetime, he had associated his poetry with the oral tradition through Ramlila, Ramkatha-singing etc. The social meaning of the incarnation of Ram in Ramcharitmanas is clear:

Jab Jab Hoi Dharam ke Haani, Badhahin Asur Adham Abhimani
Karahin Aniti Jai Nahin Barni, Seedahin Bipr Dhenu Sur Dharni
Tab Tab Prabhu Dhari Bibidh Sarira, Harahin Kripanidhi Sajjan Peera⁸

Imagining Rama as a parallel hero of medieval times, Tulsi gives him a coordinated land of thought and action. It is true that Ram says less in statements, proves more than deeds, but Tulsi goes on indicating the 'Ramatva' of Rama in other contexts through characters or even himself. The arrival of Rama in human form is for the prestige of social norms, for which Tulsi has selected classes like Saints etc. One value of Rama is the world, which governs his personality and which is known to the wider society.

He depicted Rama as people loving and caring as he was most concerned about the society. The fear of any kind of distortion cannot be imagined from slavery. At the same time, an able servant of the Lord can open his heart and keep his position and receive grace. At a higher level, there are no feelings like pride, ego in the slightest. The role of 'Vinaya' in the devotional spirit which the devotees have assumed, is attained to perfection in the spirit of 'Dasya'. Today, in the context of ideal great men, incarnations and god names, the name of Rama is first written and the name of Rama is associated with every action and ritual in public life. People greet each other while meeting with 'Ram Ram'. At its root, the reason is the devotion of Rama promoted by the poetry of Tulsi. Dr. Mataprasad Gupta, who recognized the collection as an essential role in Tulsi's 'Ram Bhakti', has written that 'renunciation of the world is not necessary for Ram Bhakti, its sustenance in the world can be done to its maximum extent'⁹.

Ab Grih Janahu Sakha Sab Bhajehu Mohi Drid Nem
Sadaa Sarvgat Sarvhit Jaani Karehu Ati Prem¹⁰

'Sarvhit' is indeed such a widespread religion that Tulsidas takes the opportunity to describe it. As a synonym of the same, he puts 'Parhit' before the public in another way:

Parhit Saris Dharam Nahi Bhai, Par Peeda Sam Nahi Adhmai

⁷ Vinay Patrika

⁸ Tulsidas, Dr Mataprasad Gupta

⁹ Ramcharitmanas, Uttarkand

¹⁰ Ramcharitmanas, Uttarkand



Nar Sarir Dhari Je Par Peera, Karahin Sahadin Maha-BhavMeera¹¹

In these words, there is a sense of widespread welfare for all. These words strike directly in the heart of the listener and the man is forced to stop and think about something.

Tulsi's Ram poetry does not harm other businesses even after giving priority to devotion in human life. Acharya Ramchandra Shukla is of the opinion that 'Goswami's sentiment was very broad. He was going to reach all the trades of human life. Within Ram's Leela, he used to see all the actions of the world and the Leela of Rama within all the actions of the world¹². Maybe that's why Goswami says:

Siya Ram May Sab Jag Jaani, Karaun Pranaam Jori Jug Jaani¹³

Karma is very necessary for the existence of the world. If a person keeps talking about a lamp sitting in the dark, then darkness will never go away from that discussion. As long as the lamp is not lit, thick darkness will remain, such people of 'Siya Ram Mein Jag' have a sign of devotion, knowledge, inaction in order to bring life to life.

Nisi Grih Madhya Deep ki Batanh Tab Nivritt Nahi Hoi¹⁴

Ritual duty in the interest of all – 'Karma' gets the name of religion. Tulsidas has expressed this through the divine character of 'Ramchandra'. Due to the efforts of Ramachandra, the possibility of people's welfare and evolution had become possible. 'Lakshmana', without caring about his parents and wife Urmila, supported Rama and became a forest dweller. 'Bharat' despised his mother Kaikeyi because he hated her selfish attitude. 'Vibhishana' abandoned his mighty but unrighteous brother Ravana. One thing is common in his duties that he left the individual religion for the sake of folk religion. Acharya Ramchandra Shukla has targeted the spread of religion very far in the poetry of Tulsi. In his words 'Tulsidas again attracted the public to religion by the beauty of Ramcharitmanas, it did not fail'¹⁵.

By combining Rama with thought and action, Tulsi gives completeness to his personality. Thoughts execute actions, from which the light emerges. Worthless karma is purposeless, which can be seen in the 'Dev-Demon' struggle. The perfection of life is in their coordination, the same 'sadhna' is purposeful, which should be done with the full power of the seeker. Without good deeds the picture cannot be pure and the rise of knowledge and devotion is impossible. 'Karma' devoid of knowledge, devotion, is the source of waste and the cause of bondage. Therefore, Tulsi has emphasized on their coordination. Tulsi has described dispassionate discretion, combined devotion and knowledgeable devotee as superior:

Shruti Sammat Hari Bhajti Path Sunjat Birati Bibek¹⁶

Synergy is an important feature of Indian culture. The era in which Tulsi's contemplative power started its flow, he saw that in his then society, there is great disparity and discrimination in the fields of religion, politics, devotion etc. In the field of religion, there is a conflict between Hindu-Muslim followers, on the other hand, there was a great animosity in Hinduism itself between the followers of Shaivism, Shakta, Vaishnava religion. Along with these the social situation was extremely unstable. In the political and literary fields, the fire of jealousy was burning with full intensity. They are unable to come out of the structure of Vedic, Puranic

¹¹ Ramcharitmanas, Uttarakand

¹² Hindi Sahitya ka Itihaas, Acharya Ram Chandra Shukl

¹³ Ramcharitmanas

¹⁴ Vinay Patrika

¹⁵ Hindi Sahitya ka Itihaas, Acharya Ram Chandra Shukl

¹⁶ Ramcharitmanas, Uttarakand



culture even to get out of this heterogeneous environment which they have established as 'Kalikal'. They have only one solution - 'Bhakti, devotion to Rama'. They argue that Ram is compassionate to poor, and a devotee who protects the refugee and is the saviour. Therefore, in order to solve the problems of his era, Tulsi prepared the reconstituted text of the story of Rama, in which 'Ramrajya – Rule under Rama' was the inverse of 'Kaliyuga'. There is a 'mythical utopia' which idealizes the reigning monarchy of Indian feudalism, imagining folk beliefs and legends in a new context, re-calling the dead past into the present complexities and dreamy exaggerations of the ancient - Even if it turns out to be a pure fantasy.

Ram Rajya is not spiritual or a spiritual achievement. That drinking the juice of 'Brahmananda' or 'Amrit Sarovar' is not a state of ultimate 'samadhi', it is a state of being freed from the physical, divine and material elements of the world:

Daihk Daivik Bhautik Tapa, Ramrajya Kahuhin Nahi Byapa¹⁷

When Rama became the king, everyone's grief went away. People went to the joyful, so no one hated anyone and the inequalities were removed by the majesty of Rama, no one dies in a short life, all are beautiful and all have healthy bodies. No one is poor, miserable, no one is foolish and without symptoms:

Alp Mrityu Nahi Kavniun Peera, Sab Sundar Sab Viruj Sareera
Nahi Daridra Kou Dukhi na Deena, Nahi Kou Abudh na Lachchanheena¹⁸

Overall, we can say that Tulsi has accepted the basic purpose of establishing 'Rama' as 'Loknayak – Hero of a Common Man', to establish 'Lokmangal – welfare for all'. His Rama is strong and compassionate and his 'Ramkatha' is also focused on welfare for all: 'Mangal Karni Kalimal Harni Tulsi Katha Raghunath Ki'. To get rid of all the inequalities and discrepancies of his society, Tulsi found a way to coordinate with the concept of 'Ram Rajya'. Tulsi took shelter of the Ramayana like 'Amrit Sanjeevani Katha Sagar' from tradition for the welfare of human society suffering from the narrowness of caste discrimination by establishing Ram Bhakti in the minds of the common man and there is no other religion like 'Parhit'. He has taught the art of living life through Ram Katha.

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¹⁷ Ramcharitmanas, Uttarkand

¹⁸ Ramcharitmanas, Uttarkand



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