



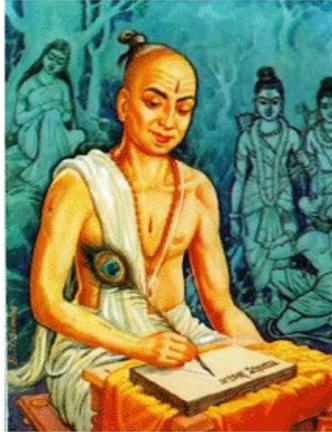
NEW

June 2010

Glory of Bharath » Santh Darsan

Tulsi Das

Tulsidas was born to Hulsli and Atmaram Shukla Dube in Rajpur, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1532. He was a Sarayuparina Brahmin by birth and an incarnation of Sage Valmiki, the author of the Sanskrit Ramayana. It is said that Tulsidas did not cry at the time of his birth, and was born with all thirty-two teeth intact. In his childhood, he was known as Tulsiram or Ram Bola. Tulsidas was passionately attached to his wife Buddhimati until the day she uttered these words: "If you would develop for Lord Rama even half the love that you have for my filthy body, you would certainly cross the ocean of Samsara and attain immortality and eternal bliss". These words pierced his heart. He abandoned home, became an ascetic, and spent fourteen years visiting various sacred places. It is said that Tulsidas met Lord Hanuman, and through him had a vision of Lord Rama.



Immortal Works:

Tulsidas wrote 12 books, the most famous being the Hindi Ramayan - "The Ramcharitmanasa" that is read and worshipped with great reverence in every Hindu home in Northern India. An inspiring book, it contains sweet couplets in beautiful rhyme in praise of Lord Rama. "Vinaya Patrika" is another important book written by Tulsidas.

Wanderings & Miracles:

Tulsidas lived in Ayodhya for some time, and then shifted to Varanasi. He once went to Brindavan to visit the temples of Lord Krishna. Seeing the statue of Krishna, he said, "How shall I describe Thy beauty, O Lord! But Tulsi will bow his head only when You take up bow and arrow in Your hands". The Lord revealed Himself before Tulsidas in the form of Lord Rama with bow and arrows.

It is believed that Tulsidas's blessings once brought the dead husband of a poor woman back to life. The Mughal emperor in Delhi came to know of this miracle and sent for Tulsidas, asking the saint to perform some miracles. He declined saying, "I have no superhuman power, I know only the name of Rama", only to see himself behind the bars. Tulsi then prayed to Lord Hanuman as countless powerful monkeys invaded the royal court. The emperor released him from prison asked Tulsi to pardon him.

Last Days:

Tulsi left his mortal body and entered the Abode of Immortality and Eternal Bliss in 1623 A.D. at the age of 91. He was cremated at Asi Ghat by the Ganga in the holy city of Varanasi (Benaras).

Ramacharitamanas

Ramacharitamanas, an epic devoted to Rama, was the Awadhi version of Ramayana of Valmiki. It is not exactly the "Awadhi version", but the original one of its kind. Apart from "Awadhi"- three other languages are also seen in the epic Ramacharitamanas - they are "Bhojपुरी", "Brijbhasa" and "the local language of people of Chitrakut". Like many translations of the original Sanskrit Ramayana, it is read and worshipped with great reverence in many Hindu homes in India. It is an inspiring book that contains couplets in verse form called chaupai.

It is also called Tulsi-krita Ramayana and is as well known among Hindi-speaking Hindus in India. Many of its verses are popular proverbs in that region. Tulsidas' phrases have passed into common speech, and are used by millions of Hindi speakers without the speakers being conscious of their origin. Not only are his sayings proverbial: his doctrine actually forms the most powerful religious influence in present-day Hinduism; and, though he founded no school and was never known as a guru or master, he is everywhere accepted as both poet and saint, an inspired and authoritative guide in religion and the conduct of life.

Tulsidas professed himself the humble follower of his teacher, Narhari Das, from whom as a boy in Sukarkhet he first heard the tale of Rama's exploits that would form the subject of the Ramacharitamanas. Narhari Das was the sixth in spiritual descent from Ramananda, a founder of popular Vaishnavism in northern India, who was also known for his famous poems. There are numerous differences between Tulsi Ramacharitamanas and Valmiki Ramayana. One example is the scene in which Kaikeyi forces her husband to exile Rama. In Tulsi Das it becomes considerably longer and more psychological, with intense characterisation and brilliant similes.

Other works

Besides the Ramacharitamanas, Tulsidas the author of five longer and six shorter works, most of them dealing with the theme of Rama, his doings, and devotion to him. The former are

1. the Dohavali, consisting of, 573 miscellaneous doha and sortha verses; of this there is a duplicate in the Ram-satsai, an arrangement of seven centuries of verses, the great majority of which occur also in the Dohavali and in other works of Tulsi,
2. the Kabitta Ramayan or Kavitaivali, which is a history of Rama in the kavitta, ghanakshari, chaupai

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and savaiya metres; like the Ramacharitamanas, it is divided into seven kandas or cantos, and is devoted to setting forth the majestic side of Rama's character,

3. the Gitavali, also in seven kandas, aiming at the illustration of the tender aspect of the Lord's life; the metres are adapted for singing
4. the Krishnavali or Krishna gitavali, a collection of 61 songs in honor of Krishna, in the Kanauji dialect of Hindi: the authenticity of this is doubtful,
5. the Vinaya Patrika, or Book of petitions, a series of hymns and prayers of which the first 43 are addressed to the lower gods, forming Rama's court and attendants, and the remainder, Nos. 44 to 279, to Rama himself.

His minor works include Baravai Ramayana, Janaki Mangal, Ramalala Nahachhu, Ramajna Prashna, Parvati Mangal, Krishna Gitavali, Hanuman Bahuka, Sankata Mochana and Vairagya Sandipini. Of the smaller compositions the most interesting is the Vairagya Sandipani, or Kindling of continence, a poem describing the nature and greatness of a holy man, and the true peace to which he attains. Tulsidas's most famous and read piece of literature apart from the Ramayana is the "Hanuman Chalisa", a poem praising Hanuman. Many Hindus recite it daily as a prayer.

Doctrine

Like Ramanuja, Tulsi believes in a supreme personal God, possessing all gracious qualities (sadguna), as well as in the quality-less (nirguna) neuter impersonal Brahman of Sankaracharya; this Lord Himself once took the human form, and became incarnate, for the blessing of mankind, as Rama. The body is therefore to be honoured, not despised. The Lord is to be approached by faith (bhakti) disinterested devotion and surrender of self in perfect love, and all actions are to be purified of self-interest in contemplation of Him. Tulsi, as a Saryupareen Brahmin, venerates the whole Hindu pantheon, and is especially careful to give Shiva or Mahadeva, the special deity of the Brahmins, his due, and to point out that there is no inconsistency between devotion to Rama and attachment to Shiva. But the practical end of all his writings is to inculcate bhakti addressed to Rama as the great means of salvation and emancipation from the chain of births and deaths, a salvation which is as free and open to men of the lowest caste as to Brahmins.

However for Tulsidas "doctrine" is not so important. Far more relevant is practice, the practice of repeating Rama-Nama, the name of the Rama. In fact, Tulsidas goes as far as to say that the name of Rama is bigger than Rama Himself. Why is the name of Rama bigger than Rama? Because "Rama" is a mantra, a sound, the repetition of which can lead one to higher states of consciousness. Because the name itself contains Lord Rama himself in it. Rama itself means the one which is present in every atom of this universe (Ramta sakal jahan).



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