

INTRODUCTION :

Goswami Tulsidas is widely considered to be one of the greatest poets in India and Hinduism. He is best known as the author of the epic *Ramcharitmanas*—an adaptation of the Ramayana. So profound is his reputation for Hindus that he is widely believed by some to be the incarnation of Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana. A great deal of Tulsidas' genuine biography is blended with the legend, to such a degree that it is difficult to separate truth from mythology.

Birth and Parentage:

It is known that Tulsidas was born to Hulsī and Atmaram Shukla Dube in Rajpur, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1532. In his childhood, he was known as Tulsiram or Ram Bola.

From Family Man to Ascetic

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 Tulsidas' heart. He abandoned home, became an ascetic, and spent fourteen years visiting various sacred places. Legend has it 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 version of the Ramayan, the work called "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 praising Lord Rama. Evidence from Tulsidas' writings suggests that the composition of his greatest work began in 1575 CE and took two years to complete. This work was composed in Ayodhya,

"Vinaya Patrika" is another important book written by Tulsidas, thought to be his last composition.

Last Days

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

About Ramcharitmanas:

Ramcharitmanas literally means "Lake of the deeds of Rama" and is considered as one of the greatest works of Hindi

literature. The work has been acclaimed as "the living sum of Indian culture", "the tallest tree in the magic garden of medieval Indian poetry", "the greatest book of all devotional literature" and "the best and most trustworthy guide to the popular living faith of the Indian people".

The core of the work is considered by some to be a poetic retelling of the events of the Sanskrit epic Ramayana, centered on the narrative of Rama, the scion of the family tree of Raghu of the Sun Dynasty and the crown prince of Ayodhya who is also considered in Hindu tradition as one of the Avatars of Vishnu. However, Tulsidas never alludes to Ramcharitmanas as being a retelling of Valmiki Ramayana.

The Ramcharitmanas consists of seven Kāndas (i.e. parts or books). Tulsidas compared the seven Kāndas (literally "books" or "episodes", cognate with cantos) of the epic to seven steps leading into the holy waters of Lake Manasarovar "which purifies the body and the soul at once". A unique feature of Ramacharitmanas is that at least one of the four letters s, t, r, m (symbolizing SitaRam) is present in every line of this epic.

Ramcharitmanas, for the first time in the history of North India, made available the story of Rama to the common man to sing, meditate and perform on. Tulsidas was a great scholar of Sanskrit. However, he wanted the story of Rama to be accessible to the general masses and not just the Sanskrit-speaking elite.

In order to make the story of Rama as accessible to the layman as to the scholar, Tulsidas chose to write in Awadhi, a local dialect of Hindi which was in vogue as the language of general parlance in large parts of north India during the composition of the work. Tradition has it that Tulsidas had to face a lot of criticism from the Sanskrit scholars of Varanasi for being a bhasha(vernacular) poet.

However, Tulsidas remained steadfast in his resolve for simplifying the knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads to the common people and was subsequently accepted by all. The

writing of Ramcharitmanas also heralded many a cultural tradition, most significantly that of the tradition of Ramlila, the dramatic enactment of the text.

RAM LAKSHMAN PARASHURAM SANVAD

(Conversation between Ram, Lakshman and Parashuram)

Parashuram is an angry saint. On hearing the news of the arrow which was broken by Ram, Parashuram enters the Court of Janaka and thunders:- Who broke the Shiva Dhanush? (Shiva's Bow). All the people assembled at the court fear Parashuram. At that time Ram comes forward and tells how he broke the bow just by his touch. Lakshman who is short tempered joins the conversation.

