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Social Evils and Reform of Tulsidas

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Contemporary history of Tulsidas shows that he was born on the beginning of a period when foreign rule was at its peak under the rules of Shershah, Humayun, Akabar and Jahangeer. Turkish rule and Mughal rule both in celebration with Afghans had brought with them the Islamic fith, religion and cultural practices to the Indian society, Plundering and cultural practices to the Indian society, plundering and destruction of temples, confiscation of the wealth of rich Brahmins and business men, seligious conversation and post war attocities had forced the Indians to significantly modify their mode of living and also adopt new practices. Women were confined to the four walls and deprived of social contacts and education. Religion practices were carried under fear and control. Tax payment to visit places of religious pilgrimage known as Jazia Tax came into existence. Society suffered under the yoke of foreign rule.

During the Treta Yuga the Social order was stable, just, disciplined and people wefare was as its peak under the RAM-RĀJYA or rule of RĀMA. It was contrary to social degradation that was to ensure in the future. After the rule of Rama came Dwapar Yuga followed by the Kali Yoga society **reach** a point no return. Still Rāma for whom past present and future hold no secret pronounced a set of warmings as a safeguard for santjan meaning virtuous people against durjan meaning evil people- who would shadow the word during the forth coming Kali Yuga.

In Kali Yoga, the social conditions that prevailed during the lifetime of Tulsidas were not much different from those described earlier by Kabirdas who also deplored malpractices in religion and society. Tulsidas too has elaborately commented on the downgrading acts unfit for human beings in all his works. Ramcharitmanas is a torch light for all ages and all generations, for it is filled with teachings that a person towards liberation- moksha Kali Yuga has an assemblage of all possible deterrents to prevent men from attaining moksha which is the ultimate goal of their purpose and existence in the universe. The contribution of Tulsidas and his works in this domain is boundless because he does not only provide the signs and indicators of human behavior that pull human beings down to hell, but he also shows the salvaging path wherein righteous action, prayer and worship have an enormously important role to play in generating divine love.

Human body is a doorway of liberation. God is above joy and sorroy, liking or hatred and all other dualities. Yet he demonstrates special regards for human bein –a specy which is the most complex, unpredictable and a variety in variety.

All species are God's creation and thus his own children, but yet he marvels at himself about his creative power and perfection in creating man. All other species have a programmed behavioral pattern man. All other species have a programmed behavioral pattern and thus a mechanical living. But the scriptures and other religious texts state that it is indeed a great fortune to be born in a human body:-

बड़े भाग मानुष तन पावा । सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथहि गावा ।

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Bare bhag manush tana pawa, sura durlabh sab granthahi gava

But man is the sole being who is endowed with a mind consisting of multiple faculties- having the freedom to select his own action and evolve at this own pace, to choose his mode of living. He falls and rises till he discriminates between right and wrong, knows the purpose of his existence on earth. It will be interesting to note that “ I have created all the have emerged from me; however I am myself most pleased with this phenomenal creation- the human being” R ā ma says in -

सब मम प्रिय सब मम उपजाये । सब तै अधिक मनुज मोहे भाये ॥

रामचरित मानस 30 का0 86/2

Sab mama priya, sab mama upjaye, sab tein adhik manuj mohe bhaye

Thus God plays with himself, because humans are a masterpiece in themselves and a miniature of God. God is the Supreme Soul and humans the individual soul. God is the Cosmic Mind and humans the individual mind. God is both- the beginning and the end and living beings journey between the beginning and the end. However in the process of evolution when the living organism attains the state of the human body, the play becomes more interesting, challenging, mind-churning and majestic. God sord of enjoys seeing the functioning of the human mind, its rise and fall and awaits humans to reach perfection and return to himself for he is the origin as well as ultimate destination.

Tulsidas known that human life offers the greatest opportunity for man to be liberated from the bondage and suffering of birth, death and rebirth- since the human body has a highly envolved mind endowed with potentials that are not available to any other species. In verse *Uttarkanda 43/7*, he deplores the ignorance of man who knows not with what divine grace he has obtained a gem in the form of a human body- a possibility not available even to deities. Through this body one can improve even his future life and beyond for

साधन धम मोच्छ कर द्वारा । पाई न जेहीं परलोक संवारा ॥

Sadhan dham mocha kar dwara, pai na jehi parlok, sanvara

The human body is door to enlightenment and liberation. Without the human body and a mind, how will one achieve cleansing of all impressions and impurities to attain godhood? But, in the Dark Age there is no concern or awareness and all actions of man make him turn his back to this door.

The thinking baviour and attitude of people who are drowned in ignorance are driven by the superficial attractions of $m \bar{a} y \bar{a}$. Thus the indestructible souls is doomed to consequences of multiple births and lives in 84 crores species as stated in the following verse of *Uttarkanda 44/2*

आकर चारि लच्छ चौरासी। जोनि भ्रमत यह जीव अविनासी।।

Akar chari lachha chowrasi, joni bhramat yaha jiva abindsi

On many occasions he has drawn attention to the importance of the human body. He explains that तन बिनु बेद भजन नहीं (*tan binu beda bhajan nahin*) without the human body neither study of sacred hymns from scriptures, nor is worship possible. But in the dark age the majority of people are the least concerned with this golden opportunity.

Evil Character Traits of Men

Tulsidas also writes about specific male character traits which lead to their destruction. According to the following verse: -

पुरुष त्यागि सक न नारीहि, जो विरक्त मति धीर।

न तु कामी विषयाबस बिमुख जो पद रघुवीर।।

Purush tyagi sak, narihi, jo virakta mati dhir

Na tu kami vishhavabas, vimukh jo pad Raghubir

‘It is only mean who are detached, patient and stable in mind who can resist the feminine attractions and consequently progress spiritually. Those who do not seek refuge at the feet of Lord Rāma can not develop such qualities and therefore become tussy and lead a life of debauchery.’ Even sages, who have command over knowledge and are detached, can become a helpless prey to the beauty and charms of women. In the Rāma charitmanas Uttarkand, verse 19/1 Tulsidas states that men dance to the tune of their master tune of women like monkeys dance to the tune of their master. One should not forget that feminine beauty and charms are born from the very विष्णु माया *Vishnu-maya* which is therefore invincible. But still it is astonishing how the Lord’s ways are, because this charms of women entices men not other women मोह न नारि के रूपा *moha na nari nari ke rupa*.

However, the remedy too is proposed straightway by Tulsidas. For it is important to note that even the charms of women, i.e. *Vishnu-maya*, cannot stand and disarm the power of bhakti- भगति सानुकूल रघुराया ताते तेहि डरपति अति माया (*bhagati sanukul raghuraya tate tehi darpati ati maya*.) According to the following Maya is afraid of bhakti, shies away from bhakti and cannot demonstrate any superiority:-

तेहि बिलोकि माया सकुचाई। करि न सकई निज प्रभुताई।।

(Tehi biliki mayasakuchai, kari na sakayi nija prabhutai)

Sexual malpractices have become a major issue faced by present society. All are born out of the mind because of sex desires and physical attraction towards other women. The above statement of Tulsidas reflects that human behavior, thought process and actions can all be transformed through devotion to the Lord. This is not an exaggeration of remote concoction of the mind but entails a scientific process of cleansing it of all impurities and connecting with the Lord who is an ocean of purity, sanctity and divine love. Thus religion and spirituality play an impurities and divine love. Thus religion and spirituality play an important role in bringing about change at individual level and ultimately in society at large. Divine love is indeed an alchemy that can transform even the most decrepit and form a better society.

While treling the sages how to discern between santas ‘saintly or virtuous people’ and asantas evil ones, a through and clear picture of such evil- minded people or asantas and the characteristics of their actions has been presented in Rāma charitmanas. Reference to male behavioral tendencies is made in the following verse

पर द्रोहि पर दार रत पर धन पर अपवाद ।।

ते नर पांवर पापमय देह धरे मनुजाद ।। उत्तरकाण्ड, 39

par drohi par dara rata par dhan par apvad

te nar panwar papmaya deha dhare manujada

which means 'ill-intentioned by nature such men whose body and mind are filled with filth and evil, enjoy other people's wives and wealth and delight in slandering others'.

It is further stated at Uttarkand 100/1,- to 10

पर तिय लंपट कपट सयाने। मोह द्रोह ममता लपटाने।

(Para tiya lampat kapat sayane, moha droha mamta laptane)

Which means 'in Kali Yuga lusty men are after other's wives, they are filled with hypocrisy and cunningness or are mad with attachment and animosity'.

While describing sinful actions of men he states that कुलवंती निकरहिं नारि सती kulwanti nikarahi nari sati. i.e. they chase faithful wives, skillful in delivering household duties from the wives, skillful in delivering household duties from the matrimonial roof" and गृह अनाहि चेरि निबेरि गति griha anahi cheri niberi gati 'bring in women who are servants of low intentions and desires'.

Also सुत मानहिं मातु पिता तब लौं। अवलानन दीख नहीं जब लौं। (Suta manahi mat pita tab lon, ailanana dikh nahin jab lon) i.e. 'sons will obey the parents only till they do not see the face of a woman'. It implies that as soon as they start communicating with, and fall in love with another woman their obeisance and commitment to parents dwindle.

In the following verse he says

ससुरारि पिआरि लागि जब तें। रिपुरुप कुटुम्ब भए तब तें।

(Sasurari piyari lagi jab tein, ripurupa kutumba bhaye tab tein)

Meaning 'once a person starts feeling that the in-laws are nice and loving, people in the household lose their charm and even become enemies'. Such statements refer to germination of difference when attachment for spouses become strong and rift of relationships occurs in the house, showing signs of family disintegration that weakens the fabrics of society.

Intending to promote the social position of people of low castes or social outcaste the poet Tulsidas states; sages and even holy scriptures have mentioned that no such difference of class or caste exist- ऊँच नीच नहीं कछु भेदा। गावहिं संत बिग्यान विसेसा ।।

(unch nich nahin kachu bheda, gā wahi sant bigyā n bisesā)