CHAPTER I
Chapter - I

Introduction

A brief sketch of the life of Tulasidas.

In collecting material for the biography of Tulasidas we have to depend on mainly two kinds of evidence - internal and external. The internal evidence comes from the writings of the great poet himself i.e. the places in his writings, where he pauses to reflect on his own life and circumstances. The external evidence may be collected from various sources including the writings of his contemporaries and successors.

Internal evidence

In 'Vinaya Patrika,' Barvai Ramsayana and 'Kavi-tāvalī,' the poet has mentioned his name as 'Ramabola.' In 'Vinaya Patrika' he writes -

"Rāma ko Gulāma nama Ramabola"
Rakhyo Rama."

(I am a servant of Rama. I have been christened as Ramabola by the Providence.)

This line hints at 'Ramabola' being his original name.

In Kavitavali and Vinaya Patrika Tulasidas' has written that he was abandoned by his parents after his birth.

(a) "Mātu pita Jaga Jāya tajyo 2
vidhihū na likhī kachu bhāla bhalā."

( My parents abandoned me in the world after giving birth.
The Providence also did not distine anything auspicious in my life. )

(b) "Janāī Janaka tajyo Janami
Karama bimubidhihū srijyo avadere 3"

( My mother and father abandoned me after giving birth.
As ill-luck would have been, I was made negligible by the Ordainer as well. )

2- Kavitavali___Tulasī-Granthāvalī, Part II; published by Nāgari Pracārini Sabha; Second Edition; Page No. 176.
3- Vinaya Patrikā___Tulasī-Granthāvalī, Part II; published by Nāgari Pracārini Sabha; Second Edition; Page No. 477.
Some scholars hold that the poet has referred to his preceptor, one Narahari or Naraharidas in the Bala-kanda of Ramcharitmanasas:1

'Bandaś guru pada kanja
Kṛpā Sindhu nara rūpa hari 
(I pray the lotus like feet of my Guru, who is God(Hari) in the form of a man (Nara) and who is the Ocean of Kindness.)

About his offsprings, he writes:

'Kāhu ke beti so beta na byāhaba
Kāhu kē jāti bigāri na soṁ. 2

(I am not required to arrange marriage of my son with some body's daughter, nor do I stand the risk of being excommunicated from my community.)

This goes to show that he had no issue.

1- Ramcharitmanasas-- Mula Gutakā; Gita Press; Gorakhapur; Page No.34.

His childhood was spent in utter poverty. He had to beg from door to door to keep body and soul together and four grains of gram appeared to him as four great attainments of life - vis. Dharma, Artha, Kama ed and Moksha.

Bare te lalata bilalata dvara dina
janota he cari phala cari hi caeaka kal.

(From the very childhood I was extremely helpless and moved from door to door for alms, I considered the four grains of gram to be equivalent to the four attainable objects of life.)

According to common belief, saints have the gift of prescience and can predict their death. Tulasidas also wrote just before his death.

"Rama nama jasa barani kai,
bhaya cahata abe, mouna;
Tulasi ke mukh dijiye,
abahi tulasi soma."
I want to keep silent after describing the fame of the name of Rāma. O, Lord, let that (holy) tulasi leave be put into my mouth (at the time of death).

It indicates the wish of a dying man requesting others to set him off on the last journey with the holy tulasi (basil) leave and gold in his mouth. The above verse occurs in 'Tulasi Satasayī' and is quoted by Dr. Ram Kumar Verma in his book 'Hindi Sahitya ka Aloca-nātamak Itihāsa.' But his view is not acceptable to many scholars.

External evidence.

The external evidence as to the life of Tulasīdāsa comes mainly from three sources:

(a) Biographies.

(b) Local materials.

(c) Manhāga Hearsay.
Biographies.

Of the biographies throwing light on the life of the great poet, the following are the most important:

1- Gosāi Carita mula Gosāi Carita — Benī Madhava Dāsa.
2- Gosāi Carita — Bhavāni Dāsa.
3- Ātma Carita — Tulasī Sāheba.
4- Tulasī Carita — Raghava Dāsa.
5- Bhaktamāla mura Uski Tīka — Nābha Dāsa and Priyādāsa.
6- Do sau Bāvana Vaiṣṇavō ki vārtā — Gokula Nātha.

(From the different account and language the sixth one seems to be the work of a later date by an unidentified author. Only one event of the life of Tulasidāsa is related in this book).

The most notable among modern scholars, both foreign and Indian, who have made a study of the life and work of Tulasī, is the late Sir George Grierson.)
Local materials:

On the basis of local materials like the remains of temples, buildings, Pāṭhasaṅgas and manuscripts etc, the scholars have different opinions while locating the birth-place of Tulasidāsa. Some of them are of opinion that his birth-place was Soro while others hold that his birth-place was Rājapura.

The relics of the saint and some manuscripts found in Kāśi and the traditional lore or hearsay and manuscripts available at Ayodhyā show that he had pretty long attachment with these places.

Date of birth:

Tulasi's date and time of birth is recorded by Babu Benimadhavadasa as follows:—

When the sun was in its own house (Leo) Jupiter was in cancer, with the moon in (one of the Four) moveable Zodiac signs (cāra sāsi), the planet Mars was in the Seventh house, Saturn in the eight house, during the time of Abhīhit
(Makṣatra or Muhūrta) and in the pleasant hours of the evening Tulsidāsa was born on the bank of the Jamuna. It was the month of August (Śrāvana) in Samvat 1564 (A.D. 1497).

This date of birth is almost unanimously rejected or deferred by scholars. After much research, Pandit Ram Ghulam Divedi has fixed samvat 1589 as Tulsidāsa's year of birth and Grierson also supports this view, but Śiva Singha Saroja says that Tulsī was born in or about samvat 1583. Indian scholars have accepted the first date. In the face of such strong opposition, Bābū Shyām Sundara-Dāsa quotes from Śri Indradeva Nārāyaṇa who says, "In the fourth generation of Tulsī's disciples there was a learned man, who was an inhabitant of Benaras and was known by the name of Shivalalī Pāthaka. He wrote a commentary on Mānasa called the Mānasa-Mayenka in which he writes "Goswāmījī was born in samvat 1554. At the age of five he heard the stotry (of Rāma) from his Guru and then heard the same from the saints at the age of 40. After completing his 77th

1- Mūla Gosāi Carita—BenimādHAVAdāsa
1/8-9 and doha P.2 as quoted by Chandra Kumari Handoo
in her work Tulasidāsa; Page No.9.
year . . . . in samvat 1631 he started on his writings of Rāma-Caritamānas and went to heaven in samvat 1680. In reference to Tulasi's date of birth as given by Babu Benimadhavadasa, Babu Shyam Sunder Das further says, "in samvat 1554 there were two Srāvanas and the Original (Suddha) Srāvana seems to be the one in view here. On calculation this day was a Saturday and in our opinion this date should be accepted.

Parentage:

on the basis of the internal and external evidence referred earlier, the life-histroy of Tulasidas has been reconstructed by various scholars, which is mentioned here in brief.

"Tulasidas was the name of the Hindu for whom such pre-eminence is claimed. He enjoyed no advantage of birth, fortune or education, being the son of an ordinary Brahman parents, who exposed him in his infancy to live or die, because he had been born in an unlucky hour."

1- Goswami Tulasidasa -- Sita Ram Chaturvedi; Page No. 25-26.
2- Akbar the Great Mughal -- V.A. Smith; Page No. 393.
The Mula Gosai Carita by Beni Madhava Dasā, an ancient biographer, is among the most eminent authorities from whom events of Tulasidāsa's life have been gathered in Chronological Sequences. Benīmadhava Dāsa was a disciple of Tulasidāsa and he wrote his master's biography. Babu Shyama Sundera Dasasays that the oldest known copy of this book was written in A.D. 1889 and was found in the possession of Pandit Ramadhari of Bihar. Mahātma Balak Ramā-Vinayak obtained a copy of it from Pandit Ramadhari and passed it on to Pandit Ram Kishore Shukla, who published it for the benefit of the general public.

According to this book, Atma Rama, the father of Tulasidāsa was a spiritual preceptor of the king of Rajapura and Tulasi was born on the bank of Jamuna in samvat 1554 (A.D. 1497).

Tulasidāsa's life as related by Benīmadhava is full of miracles. Anecdote has it that Tulasidāsa pronounced Rama as soon as he was born and that even at the moment of his birth Tulasidāsa had all his thirtytwo teeth in his jaws and he was as healthy as a boy of a few years. But the scholars are not of opinion to give any asset to 'Mula Gosai Carita' for these supernatural features.

1- Goswami Tulasidāsa — Sitaram Chaturvedi;
Page No. 10.
The name of the mother of Tulasīdāsa was Hulasī. Hulasī died within three days of his birth. The boy was looked after by a maid-servant whose name was Muniyā. She also died within five years. Thereupon his father declared him inauspicious and refused to own him. The result was, that the five years old 'Ramabola' was obliged to beg from door to door for a living.

Preceptor:-

'Fate or providence willed that the child should be picked up by a wandering mendicant who gave him sustenance as well as instruction in the Pędandary.

He came under the patronage of his preceptor. It was in Sukara Kṣetra that he was renamed Tulasīdāsa by Narhari. Narhari related to him the story of Rāma in Sukara-Kṣetra. It is said that Narhari saw a dream in which he was instructed by a divinity, to look after the little boy and to teach him the essence of the incarnation of Rāma. In obedience to his command, he became Tulasīdāsa's benefactor and Guru, and made himself responsible for his literary and religious education as well as for his general upbringing.

1- Akbar the Great Mughal - V.A. Smith.
Dr. G. A. Grierson on the basis of sectarian lineage asserts that Narhari was the precepter of Tulasi-das. Narhari was himself a disciple of the great vaisnavava saint and teacher, Ramananda, who gave a new impetus to the Bhakti movement of the middle age and left behind a band of eminent disciples like Ravidas and Kabira.

Narhari took Tulasi-das to Ayodhya when he performed his sacred thread ceremony, gave him the 'Rama' mantra and started his education in earnest. After ten months, they left Ayodhya together for Sukara Ksetra, a place of pilgrimage on the bank of the river Sarayu in the district of Gonda. Here the master and the disciple lived in close association for five years and it was at this place, as we learn from his Rama Caritamana (Bala Kanda) that Tulasi-das first heard the fascinating story of the Isaddeva, Rama whose divinely human life he was destined to relate and interpret to the world.

"Mai Puri nija guru saha suni,\nKatha so Sukara Kheta\n
(I heard this story of Rama from my Guru in Sukara Kheta)\n
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1 - Manaasa _ Tulasi Granthavalii Part I published by Nagari Pracarini Sabha; Page No. 18
Tulasidāsa remained with his Guru for six years in all. Inspite of his low assessment of himself, he proved to be an exceptionally intelligent pupil with a very good memory. During this period, he had a good grounding in the grammar of Pāṇini.

Nāhāri took him to Kāśī and met Seṣa Sanātana. Seṣa Sanātana then looked after him for another fifteen years and during this period Tulasidāsa got himself versed in all the learning of the ancient books. After the death of Seṣa Sanātana, Tulasidāsa returned to his native place.

Marriage:

In Sambhata 1583 (A.D. 1526) Tulasidāsa was married to the daughter of a Brahman. His wife's name was Ratnāvalī. His vijal life lasted for five years only.

One day when Tulasidāsa had gone to the neighbouring village of Barkhāna, Ratnāvalī's brother came to visit her and she left with him for her parental home. Tulasidāsa could not tolerate the pangs of separation and followed his wife up to his father-in-law's place by swimming across
Jamuna in its full spate at the dead of night. His wife became annoyed by his gesture. She scolded him badly and is reported to have uttered the following verse:

\[
\text{Hasthi Camamaya deha mama} \\
to me Jaisi priti \\
Tulsi jo Sri Rama mahi \\
hota na to bhava bhiti. \\
\]

(If half of your devotion to this skeleton of skin and bones was given to Rama, you would surely overcome the fear of the world.)

This aroused very deep feeling in him. The futurity of the worldly enjoyments and family life at once appeared to be extremely transitory. The inner conscience was awakened. The wife appeared to be the incarnate of Saraswati—the Goddess of learning. He decided to renounce the world then and there. Thereafter he devoted himself whole-heartedly to the cause of spiritualism.

Renunciation:—

After leaving the house of his father-in-law, Tulasidasa came to Prayaga—the modern town of Allahabad—where at the holy confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna
he first had a bath for purification and then took the
vows of Samnyāsa. This meant the renunciation of the
responsibilities of householder's life, including the
severance of all old ties such as name and family, wealth
and social position. We do not know when he took
the name of Tulasidāsa, but most probably this was the
time when he did so. In the early part of his book, Benī-
-MadHAVADĀSA refers to Tulasī as 'boy', 'child' or 'son
of Hulasī'. Only once does he address himself as
Rāmabolā, on behalf of Narharidasā. This is sufficient
for our purpose. But Śrī MATĀ Prasad Gupta in his book on
Tulasidāsa, thinks that his first name must have been
Tulasī, with 'dāsa' added on to it after samnyāsa. In his
opinion and accordingly to old custom, Rāmabolā was his
spiritual name given to him by the Vaisnavas, because he
was constantly repeating the name of Rāma. He quoted the
following line to prove his point of view.

Nama Tulasī pāl bhonde bhāga,
so kahāyo dāsa,
Kiyo aṭigikāra aise bāde
dagābāja ko.

1- Tulasidāsa — Chandra Kumari handoo;
Page No. 27
2- Kavitāvalī — Tulasi Granthavali Part II published by
Nagari Pracārini Sabha Page No. 168.
My name is Tulasi;
I am an ignorant fool, but am known as your servant (dāsa)
and deceitful as I am, you have accepted me.

Pilgrimage:

After taking 'Vairāgya', Tulasidāsa devoted the rest of his life to the devotion of Rama.

From Prayāg, Tulasi went to Ayodhya, where he remained for four months during the rainy season. He then proceeded to the sacred city of Jagannātha-Puri on the east coast, when he arrived after twenty-five halts on the way. From Puri he went Southward to the island temple of Rameshwara, encircled by the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, where Rama himself had installed an image of Siva. Then after slowly wending his way to Dwārakā on the West-coast—a place alive with memories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—he trudged across the plains to the temple of Badrī Nārāyana, hidden in the snowy peaks of the Himalayan range.

After performing the four great pilgrimage, he
settled down finally in the holy city of Benaras, to which he always returned after short visit to Ayodhya, Citrakūta and other places.

Death: His old age did not pass in bodily comfort. It is stated that in his old age he was oppressed by a severe pain in his arms for the cure of which he composed prayers to Śiva, Pārvatī and Hanumāṇa.

It is clear from the verses of the 'Hanumāṇa-Bāhuka' that Tulasidāsa himself had a severe attack of the plague.

Putana Písācini Jyō Kāpi Kānha
Tulasi ki,
behupīra, mahābīra tere nāre
maraigī. 2

( O chief of the monkeys, the pain in the arm of Tulasi is like the devil Putana and it will be killed by you alone (who is like lord Krishna in his childhood.) )

In A.D. 1623, at the age of nearly 126 years according to Benimādhavadāsa, he cast off his old and ailing

1- Tulasidāsa— Mata Prasad Gupta; Page No.251.
2- Hanumāṇa Bāhuka— Tulasidāsa; Gita Press, Gorakhpur
Page No.24.
body.

This is a general belief that the "poet died at the confluence of Asi and Ganga in Benaras on the 'Sravana Sukla Saptami' in Samvat 1623.

'Samvata Soreha sai asi
asi Ganga ke tira'
Savana sukla sattimi
Tulasi tajyo Sarira'

(Tulasi discarded the mortal being (died) on the seventh day of the bright moon of the month of Sravana in Samvata 1680 at the confluence of the river Asi and Ganga (Benaras).)

The descendants of Todaramala (not the Todaramala of the Moghul Court), a fast friend of Tulasidas, however celebrate Tulasidas's death anniversary on the third of the dark half of Sravana.

Accordingly to Benimadhavadama "In Samvat 1680, on the banks of the Asi Ganga (Kashi) on Saturday the third of the dark fortnight, in the month of Sravan, Tulasi gave up his body."

1- Tulasidas Chandra Kumari Handoo; page No.71.
2- Tulasidas Mata Prasad Gupta; Page No.167.
3- Tulasidas Chandra Kumari Handoo; Page No.72.
A verse supporting this view is quoted by Dr. Mata Prasad Gupta thus:

Samvata Soleha sai asi
asi Ganga ke tira,
Savana Syama tijya Sani
Tulasi tajyo Sarira.

(Tulasi discarded the mortal being (died) on Saturday, the third day of the darker half of Sravana in Samvat 1680 at the confluence of the river Asi and Ganga (Benaras).

Scholars have also accepted this date, which they consider to be astrologically correct.

1- Tulasidasa — Dr. Mata Prasad Gupta
Page No. 157.
(b) A general survey of his work.

The life of Tulasidâsa can not be complete without a reference to his work, for he lives and influences the lives and thought of his readers through these. He is embodied in the word he speaks and has been immortalised through it.

There are different views about the numbers of his writings. According to Sheo Singh Saroja the number of his books is eighteen. In 1903 Sri Sheo Behari Bajpai, the manager of 'Bangabasi,' presented Tulasigranthâvali to the readers of 'Bangabasi.' According to this Granthâvali the numbers of the books is 17; after sometime 3 more books were added to it. Misra Bandhus have mentioned them to be twentyfive. 37 works have been attributed to Tulasidâsa in the Inquiry Report of the Nagari Pracârini Sabha.

1- Tulasidâsa - C.K. Handoo - P. 77
2- Hindi Sahitya ka alocanâtmaka Itihâsa - R.K. Verma
3- Ibid; Page No. 362. Page No. 363
4- Hindi Sahitya ka alocanâtmaka Itihâsa - R.K. Verma
5- Ibid; Page No. 371.
According to Dr. G. A. Grierson and Acarya Ram Chandra Shukla, 12 of these alone have been regarded as authentic and are published in the Tulasī Granthāvalī Volumes I & II in 1923 A.D.

Tulasīdāsa is thus known to be the author of more than a dozen books. The noteworthy among them are Gitāvalī, Kavitāvalī, Vinaya Patrika and Ramacaritamānasā, the last name being by far the most important and the best known and the largest of his works. His other works are Dohāvalī, Vairāgya-Sandīpanī, Rāmāyāna Prasna, Rāmalalā nāhachū, also Barāval Rāmayana, Parvati-mangle, Janaki-mangala, Kṛṣṇa-Gitāvalī, Hanumān Bāhuka and Rāma satsai 3.

Besides these, the ' Siva singh Saroja ' has mentioned the names of some other books viz., the Satsai, Sankata-mocana, Rāma Sālākā, Candrāvalī, Chappaya Rāmayana, Rolā Rāmayana and Kundaliyā Rāmayana. Some of these are untraceable at present and only small portion of the others are to be found. The Satsai is the only large book amongst them.

1. Mid; Page No.363
2. Mid; Page No.371
Rāma-Carita-Mānasā is an epic consisting of five thousand one hundred cantos and equal number of chandas, dohas and sortas. Thus altogether there are about ten thousand verses in the mānasā. The epic tells the story of Rāma. The story is based on the Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa, Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. On the other hand, the

1. A History of Hindi Literature - K.B. Jindal;
   Page No.60.

   Page No.423.
Manasa also narrates the episodes and incidents which are to be found neither in Valmiki Rāmāyana nor in the Adhyātma Rāmāyana. For example, the romantic meeting of Rāma and Sītā in the state gardens before their marriage and the sudden coming of Pārashurāma before marriage is over, were introduced by Tulasidāsa 'just to keep up the bardic tradition of premarital love and bordel-and chivalry. For these the poet is indebted to Jaideva's Prarśma-Rāghava and the Hanumāntaka.'

Tulasidāsa himself described his Manasa as Nānapurāṇa-nīgama-samāta (in accordance with the various Purāṇas, sastras and the Vedas) still his book can not be regarded as a mere imitation of these Sanskrit precursors.

In Manasa, Rāma has been delineated as the 'Maryādā Puruṣottama' (the ideal human being under all circumstances). As the man, as a king, as a brother and as a son, as a husband and as a subject he never departs from the right conduct and the right thought.

Besides giving a very full life account of Rāma, the poet has introduced various other matters from the Hindu scriptures in his Manasa. In last canto Tulasidāsa is busy expounding his theory of Divinity and the poet never misses...
a single opportunity of giving learned discourses on ethics or morality through the medium of his character.

Putting the literary merits of the Manasa out of consideration for the present, the facts of its universal acceptance by all classes of Hindus in India is based not so much on the religious theme of the story but on the didactic mood in which it has been written. Pandits may talk of Vedas and the Upanisads, and a few even study them, others may say they pin their faith on the Puranas but, of Hindustan, learned and illiterate alike, their sole norm of conduct is based upon Ramayana of Tulasidas.

Tulasidas was a great preacher of man's duty to his neighbour. He elevated and idealised Bharat's sense of duty, Lakshmana's brotherly affection, and Sita's wifely devotion. His characters live and move with all the dignity of perfection.

Kavitavali:

The Kavitavali is a collection of detached verses written by the poet from time to time in praise of his lord.

1- History of Hindi Literature -- K.B. Jindal;
Page No. 60.
it is written in Braja bhāsa, in four kinds of chandas viz Kavitta, Gaṇakaśāri, savalyā and chappaya. The arrangement of the verses in the usual seven cantos is quite unequal and disproportionate. Considerable space has been given to the fifth and the sixth cantos, while the third and fourth have only one verse each allotted to them. This is because the poet has given up the quietistic, dispassionate objectivity of a story-teller; he has become one with his hero. He has represented him as a man of extreme courage, valour and prowess. The Sundara and the Lankākanda (cantos 5 and 6) are concerned with the part of Rama's life where he stands forth as a man of action.

Grierson calls the Kavitāvali, 'a work in the heroic style'. In praise of it he says, 'There are some really fine word-paintings, the sound being literally an echo of the sense. ................... we hear the crackling of flames, the shouts of the citizens and the cries of the helpless women as they cry for water.'

lagi lagi agi bhagi ca
dhiya ko na masya bāpā
Chuṭe bāra bāsana Ughāre
dhūma dhundha andha
Kehāi bāre būche "bārī bārī bāra barah"

( Crying, Fire Fire people began to run in all directions.
Mother were unable to look after their daughters.
Fathers could not protect their sons,
with dishevelled hair and clothes falling off,
Blinded by smoke; young
and old
Cried, water water over and
over again.

The Uttarakanda, in particular which covers more than half the book, deals with a variety of topics. A large portion of the book is devoted to the praise of Rāma, showing his kindness to the lowly. There is reference to Prahlāda.

1- Kavitāvalī Talishidas Tulasi Granthāvalī Part II
Published by Nāgār Pracārini sabhā, Page No. 146.
to the devotion of the Gopīs of Brindābana, a description
of Kali age, Citrākūṭa, Vālmīki's āśrama and Prayāga. The
book ends with prayers to Hanumān, Siva and Amāṣpūrṇā for
freeing the town of Kāśi from the ravages of plague.

The battle-description of the Kavitāvāli are far
superior to those of Manasa. The metre chosen is also
more apt for the purpose. In Kavitāvāli the poet is appeal-
ing to our emotions rather than intellect, and he has
succeeded in using his Kavitās, where he wants to leave a
defining impression on us and his Savaiyā where he chooses
to dazzle us by his imagery.

Gitāvāli:

In this book the poet devotes himself more to the
softened aspects of Rāma's life—his childhood, his marriage
and the magnificence of Ayodhyā. The meeting of Rāma with
Bharata in the forest, the salvation of Jātayu and the
surrender of Vibhīsana are some of the topics closest to the
heart of Tulasī.

Gitāvāli as its name denotes, consists of songs
set to music and written in Braja-bhāsa dialect. The
poet depicts the tenderness of Rāma's character and so
the sentiment of sweetness reigns supreme here. In this way he gives the whole history of Rama in a delightful style, quite different from that of his formal epic. There is no verse in the book which is not a complete little picture, and most attractive of all are those in the first book, in which he tells of the baby life of his hero and his brothers.\(^1\) (Grierson)

The Gitävalī is considered to be second only to the mānas. It is also divided into 7 chapters and covers the whole life of Rama. There are 328 songs in this book.

Vinaya Patrika:

Dr. Grierson has connected with the book, the story of Chandra, the homicide whom Tulasi declared to be purified by the name of Rama. The miracle of Nandi, the stone bull, eating out of Chandra's hands has acted as an incentive to thousands of people to lead good and pious life. Kali, enraged at this sudden increase of piety and

\(^1\) Quoted in the Cultural heritage of India; Page No. 397.

\(^2\) Hindi Sahitya Ka Alocanatmak Itihāsa

Dr. Ram Kumar Verma; Page No. 190.
morality, threatened to kill Tulasi, who then prayed to Hanumāna to save him. But since Kali was the king of the age, ever Hanumāna was powerless to protect Tulasi against his wrath. The former then advised the latter to write a petition of complaint in the Court of the Lord. As applicants have first to be made to the door keeper and the courtiers for leave of access to the king, so in sweet humility, Tulasi first addresses his prayer to Ganesa, the sun, Śiva-Parvati Gaṅgā- Yamunā, Hanumān; Kṣetrapāla of Kasi, Citrakūṭa and its pālaka (Protector) the brother of Rāma, Sītā and last of all to his master Rāma. In Vinaya-Patrikā, the majestic aspect of the Lord's character is kept in view.

Tulasi dasa was christened as a smārta vaisnava. Among the smārtas it is a regular practice to worship the five Gods — Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā Sūrya and Ganesa — in what is called Panchāyatana Pūjā. The Vinaya Patrikā has been written to facilitate this Pūjā. The songs of the Vinaya Patrikā number 279 all in Tulasi Granthāvalī Part II. Like those of Gitavali they are also set to rāgas and rāginis.

1. Hindi Sāhitya Ka ālocaṇātmaka Itihāsa
   — Dr. Ram Kumar Verma; Page No. 417.
As compared to Tulasidas’ other works, Vinaya-Patrika is more difficult to understand, but it is in some respects his finest work and displays very deep religious feeling.

Vinaya Patrika is the second magnificent work of Tulasidas. This is a kind of application made to the Lord. This work is the natural outcome of the poet’s heart.

The Ramalala nahachū:

This is the earliest writing of Tulasidas and consists of twenty verses. The metre is called Sohara Chanda. Before the bridegroom leaves his house for the parental house of the bride, after the ceremonial bath, he sits in the lap of his mother and the barbar’s wife paints his toe-nail red. This custom, called nahachū, is prevalent in the Eastern districts of Northern India, from Delhi to Behar.

It is also performed before the sacred thread ceremony: "The Ramalala nahachū is written in the typical village dialect of strictly orthodox Avadhī."

1. Hindi Sāhitya Kā ālokanātmaka Itihāsa — Ram Kumar Verma
Page No. 374.
The poet describes the special seat prepared for Rāma. 'The milk-maid then brings a bowl of curds for good luck, the tailor's wife a new set of clothes, the cobbler's wife new shoes and the gardener's wife a garland of flowers. Last of all comes the barber's wife. Blessed is she, the poet says, for she washes the feet of Rāma, the dust of which is ever desired by the saints and sages.'

The Baravai Rāmāyana:

It is a small book consisting of 69 verses. It tells the story of Rāma. It is composed in the Baravai metre.

According to Dr. Ram Kumar Verma and Dr. Udaya Bhan Singh the writing of this book has some connection with Abūr Rāhīma Khanakhānā. Once the wife of the clerk of the Nawab Abūr Rāhīma Khanakhānā wrote a verse which her husband presented to the Nawab. The Nawab took a fancy to it and composed some verses in the same metre and begged

1- Tulasidāsa _ Chandra Kumar Handoo; Page No.89.
2- Hindi Sāhitya Kā Alocanātmaka Itihāsa _ Dr. Ram Kumar Verma, Page No. 376.
3- Tulaśi Kāśya Mīmāṁsā _ Dr. Udaya Bhan Singh, Page No.139.
his friend Tulasidēsa to do likewise. It is said that this book is the result of Khāna Khānā's persuasion. The book is divided into 7 chapters and only hints at various episodes in the life of Rama. Sri Shivalal Pathak holds that the 'Baravai Rāmāyaṇa was originally a large book, of which only some verses remain, which are now known by the same name.'

Pārvatī Maṅgala

Pārvatī maṅgala is a small book consisting of 164 verses. The language is orthodox Avadhi. Metres used in this book are Harigātika and Maṅsara.

The poet has described the austerities performed by Pārvatī to win over Śiva as her husband. At the crucial moment, Śiva comes to test Pārvatī disguised as a young Brahmacārya. He condemns himself (Śiva) mercilessly. Pārvatī retorts and answers back until, thoroughly annoyed, she asks him to leave. Then—'bhae pragāta Karunāśindhu Sankara bhūla candra Suhāvano'.

1- Hindi Sahitya Kā alocanātmaka Itihāsa —
   Dr. Ram Kumar Verma; Page No.376.
2- Tulasīgranthavali — PartII, Published by Nāgarī Pracārini Sabhā; Page No.30.
[Śiva, the Ocean of compassion, His forehead adorned with the (crescent) moon,
  Revealed himself (to her).]

Pārvatī goes back to her home happily. The seven sages go to her parents as messengers of Śiva and the marriage is arranged.

The book gives the description of the marriage ceremony. Humorously Tulasī describes the marriage procession of Śiva and its effect on the bridal party. Seeing the consternation he and his men are causing, Śiva changes his own austere appearance as well as those of his followers. Then the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is happily celebrated.

The influence of Kalidāsa's Kumāra Sambhava is evident on this book.

The Jānakī-mañgala:-

The Jānakī maṅgala is a small book consisting of 216 verses. The language of this book is orthodox Avadhi. Metres used in this book are Harigītikā and sohara.

The preparation for Sītā's marriage are the starting points of Jānakī maṅgala. The arrival of Viśvāmitra to

1- Hindi Sāhitya Kā alocanātma-Itihāsa—Dr. Ram Kumar Verma, Page No. 378.
Tulasidāsa has given an elaborate description of the marriage rites in this book. This description includes the account of the then social and traditional rites.

The Vairāgya sandipani :-

The vairāgya Sandipani literally means 'Fanning the Flame of Dispassion'. It consists of 62 verses written in dohā, Camapā and Saraṭha forms of verse. The first 32 verses describe the nature of the holy ones, the second nine their greatness, while the last 30 verses are a description of peace. Describing the merits of his book, 'The

1- Tulasidāsa: Jivani aur Kavya — Dr. Srinivasa Sharma; Page No. 33.
Vairāgya Sandīpānī. Tulasiḍasa. Himself declares —

Tulaśī Veda purāṇa mata
Purāṇa śāstra bicara
Yeha birāga- sandīpānī
akhila gyāna Ko sara

(The Vairāgya sandīpānī is the essence of knowledge. The views of Vedas and Puranas, the idea of all the śāstras are retained in it.)

The Ramājñā Praśna:

Ramājñā Praśna means question by the permission of Rāma. This is a small book written solely with the idea of finding out future events by means of questions.

The book contains seven chapters, consisting of 49 verses each, which are again divided into groups of seven, called Saptakas.

The events of Rāma's life interwoven with the prophecies. Chapter VII explains how questions may be asked and answers obtained from the book.

Three circles containing seven divisions bearing a number each (1-7) are given at the beginning of the book. When a question is asked, a number may be selected from each circle; the number of the first circle will then indicate the chapter, the second the saptaka and the third, the verse. The particular verse thus determined, furnishes the answer.

The Kṛṣṇa Gitāvālī:

Like the Gitāvālī, the Kṛṣṇa Gitāvālī, consisting of 61 songs set to music, is written in the Braja language. The songs are independent of each other, but at the same time give a brief life-sketch of Kṛṣṇa. These songs are set to different classical ragas like Gāsāvari, Rāma Kedāra, Malhāra, Ghanāksarī etc. 20 songs are devoted to the childhood of Kṛṣṇa, 3 to the description of his beauty and 9 express the sorrow of the gopīs at their separation from Kṛṣṇa, 27 songs are addressed to Uḍḍhava or the honey-bee on behalf of the gopīs stating their point of view, and 2 songs show how Draupadī was protected by divine intervention when she was dishonoured at the court of Kaurava. All the songs are very appealing.
The Dohāvalī.

It is a collection of 573 verses dealing with a variety of topics. It was never written in the forms of a book. Most probably random verses, composed at different times, were collected together, either during the life time of Tūlasī or after his death. According to Grierson, about half of the verses of the Dohāvalī are also to be found in the mānasā, the Rāmājīna Prāśna, the Satasai and the vairāgya Sandipani. The greatness and glory of the name of Rāma, God with and without attributes, what constitutes māya, one-pointed devotion, the ideal of Kingship and the characteristics of Kali, are some of the topics, which have been discussed in this book. A number of verses deal with the problems of morality and good conduct, some are in praise of Rāma and others in praise of his brother, his parents, Sītā and other characters of the Mānasā.

The Satasai:-

Most of the scholars do not accept this book to be

1. Tulasidāsa — Chandra Kumar Handoo, Page No. 92.
the work of Tulasidasa and so it has not been included in the Tulasi-Granthavali published by Nāgari Pracārini-Sabha. The book seems to be out of print at the moment. But as Benimādhavaḍasa has mentioned the name of this book, we can not ignore it altogether.

The Satsai consists of approximately 700 verses. It is divided into seven chapters. In first chapter devotion to Rāma is elaborately described. About 38 verses are written in praise of Cātaka bird. The bird is held up as an ideal of devotion, because it drinks only the water which falls from the clouds (before it touches the ground) when the planet Svāti is in the sky otherwise it prefers to die of thirst.

The Hanumāna Bāhuka:

This book consisting of 44 verses seems to be the last writing of Tulasidasa. He has written this book in Braja Language and the forms of its verses are the same as those of Kavitāvalī. The Kavitāvalī ends with a description of the havoc caused by the spreading of plague in

1- Tulasidasa — Chandra Kumari Handoo— Page No.122.
Kāsi, and the Hanumāna Bāhuka is a prayer to Hanumāna to
free Tulasi from a painful disease which Grierson thinks
was an attack of the same dreaded plague itself.

According to Dr. Mata Prasad Gupta and Dr. Udaya-
Bhan Singh, Hanumāna Bāhuka is a part of Kavitāvalī. In
Tulasi-Granthāvalī-II (Nāgari Pracārini Sabha) we find
that this book is included in Kavitāvalī and has no signifi-
cance as a separate book. But Dr. Ram Kumar Verma con-
siders it an independent book, because many devotees of Lord Rāma,
recite it daily and obtain the various fruits of life
through it. It is clear from Hanumāna Bāhuka that natural
and supernatural treatment were tried for Tulasi's illness,
but the disease showed no good result. It is not stated in
the book whether Tulasi recovered from the disease.

The book is known to ward off evil in the time
of trouble.

1- Tulasidāsa — Dr. Mata Prasad Gupta,
Page No. 207.

2- Tulasi Kavya mīmāṃsa — Dr. Udaya Bhan Singh,
Page No. 132.

3- Hīntā Sahitya Ka alocanatmak-Itihāsa — Dr.R.K.Verma
Page No. 386.
All the writings of Tulasidasa are a reflection of his own saintly heart which is filled to the brim with love for Rama, on whom he depends, who is his source of strength and his one and only hope and faith.
His place among the poets.

Tulasidas was no doubt a great saint poet among the poets of his time. His task was not an easy one. He had no fixed standard or pattern to follow. Hindi language was still feeling its way. "The bardic chroniclers wrote neither in pure Sanskrit nor in the language of the people; theirs was a strange amalgam of Gaudian, apabhramsa, Saurseni, Prakrit forms. Kabir and the later day saints were quite in different to language and style; they cared more for their preaching than for the form in which it was put. Tulasidas, while being the greatest teacher of his time, also raised Hindi to the dignity of a literary language." 1

Pandit Ramchandra Dwivedi describing how Tulasi borrowed from others languages says that Hindi language is derived chiefly from Prakrit, Saurseni and Magadhi, but mixing the rural Avadhi dialect with pure Hindi and Sanskrit, Goswami has created a confluence of the three sacred rivers (triveni) on the spiritual and psychological plane which is the giver of greater happiness and peace than the triveni of

1- A History of Hindi Literature — K.B. Jindal
Page No. 55.
the Gâṅga, Jâmnâ and Sarasvatî. The occasional use of Persian and Arabic words is like wonderful bubbles in this triple glowing stream of poetry, which strengthens the theory that provided it does not interfere with the formation and beauty of the language, we are fully justified in using foreign words when the necessity arises. The great poet has used Brajâ Bhasâ, Avadhī, Bundelkhandî, Magadhî, Bhojpuri and a few Persian words in his poems.

He was a master of all the dialects and all the styles of writings prevalent in his times. He could write from the simplest flowing narration to the most complex verses. In his 'Râma-Carita-mânasa' we find the Doha Caupaī style of the Sufis, the Kavitta-Sawaiyâs of Gâṅga and the Châppayas of the bardic chroniclers. They are perfected in the Kavîtâvalî. The lyrical style of Vidyâpati and Sûra is adopted for Gîtâvalî. The Dohâvalî is more than reminiscent of the impressive songs of Kabîra. Tulasi's command over language and his poetic excellence have been adjudged by Greeves in the following words:

"As clay in the hands of a potter, so was Hindi in the hands of Tulasidâsa; it yields to his touch and is moulded into the forms that his will dictates. Grammar and constructions and the forms of words are as subservient to him as
are slaves to the commands of their Lord. He takes words, and shortens and lengthens them, he twists and turns them; they do his bidding and assume the shape he commands, fitting in just where they are needed and yet without loss of dignity or self-respect.

It goes to the credit of Tulasidāsa that of all the poets of the world, he was probably the only one who began with a clear conception of poetry, and who set before himself a definite ideal which he desired to serve through it. "It was he who set out with a full realisation of the duties and responsibilities of the office of the poet and felt the need of subjecting a poetic creation to the searching examination of unbiased scholars for the correct appraisal of its worth." 2

Sir George Grierson, is firmly convinced that the poem (Rāma-Carita- Mānasā) is the work of a great genius. In a letter dated January 30th, 1916, he expresses himself even more strongly than he has done in print, and declares that 'I still think that Tulasidāsa is the most important

1- A Sketch of Hindi Literature __ Greeves.
2- A Jewel of Hindi Literature __ S.N. Sharma
Page No. 304.
Tulasidasa never subordinated matters to expression. Similes, metaphors and alliterations came natural to him, and whenever a figure is used, we can not help saying that the idea could not have been better expressed.

Other poets of Hindi literature have not versified as Tulasidasa in his metres. After Abdur Rahima Khankhana, it was he alone, who used Barvai metre in his writings.

Tulasidasa has been a rare phenomenon in the poetic creation. He says he will achieve what he desires by means of his poetry, and he does what he says. "His is a declaration of conscious genius, whose veracity needs no attestation from those who read and understand Rama-Carita Manasa." 2

Tulasidasa is praised for his narrative skills with similes drawn not from the traditions of the schools but from nature herself, and better than Kalidas at his best." 3

1- Akbur the Great Vincent A Smith-Page No.304.
2- The Jewel of Hindi Literature _ S.N. Sharma; Page No.155.
3- Akbur the Great Vincent A Smith- Page No. 304.
The greatness of Tulasidāsa lies in the fact that he set a new high pattern for literature when there was no example to follow. Before him, the bards (Cārana) had sung of wars and love only, as we find in Prithivirāja. Māra had sung only of the love of Krishna and hardly anything else. Kabīra has adopted witticisms, satire, sarcasm, and pungent remarks in his poetry. Even the great Surāsā had sung nothing but of his devotion to Krishna and of filial piety. They all depicted only a part of life. Even the epic writers could not give us a full and comprehensive picture of life. The tradition of the great poets like Kalidāsa was lost for a considerable length of time. Tulasidāsa for the first time created an epic which was as full in the dramatic quality of a well knit plot, portrayal of human emotions under dramatic circumstances as in lyricism and poetic beauty, besides presenting a very full and comprehensive commentary on life in all its varied aspect in the course of the telling of the story of Rāma.

Tulasidāsa was a great student of human psychology. He never wrote a line in which he did not himself believe heart and soul."

(d) Tulasidasa viewed as an arch messenger of national integration.

Many writers feel that the era in which Tulasidasa worked, lived and survived was an era of disparity, inequality in the field of religion and society. Often there was no communal harmony and the people were making the mockery of religion. What to speak of the people of different sects, faith and following, even the followers of the same faith and religion were getting divided and disunited. It was all due to the personal ill will and ill feelings. There was a chaos in the country. It got more deep-rooted in south India so much so that the people of the same sect and faith were dislocated into "Sivakanci and Vijayavand." In Northern India also the tussle was going on and the threshold of religious, social and cultural peace was almost on the breaking point. In the Hindu society the gaps between the high and the low, the poor and the rich, the Brahmans and the Sudras were getting wider and wider. To counteract these evils the best of the efforts of the great diplomat Emperor Akbar, who was ruling the country could not fully succeed. During these eventful days a dynamic saint, poet and preacher Tulasidasa brought about a revolutionary change in the field.
of religions and social life and communal unity which went and helped a long way in the national integration.

Tulasidāsa never kept himself confined only in meditation or composing poems but he gave a deep thought and devoted much of his time and energy in studying the day to day events of the society and the country as a whole. He therefore selected the different fields e.g. spiritual, religious, political, social and economical and worked hard in each and every sphere to establish harmony. He was awarded with fruitful results. Because of this great broad outlook of national integration, he received a very high place in the society and people started putting him on the parallel footing of Lord Buddha.

During the time of Tulasidāsa untouchability was was at the climax. The caste Hindus were at a different footing. Even the shadows of the untouchables were considered unpersons. Such was the social structure. It hurt the feeling of the great poet and reformer. He wrote the great epic with a view to propagate the cause of social ideals. It helped in removing the social injustice. Ram had to fight out all the social evils, he slowly, cautiously and tactfully brought about the revolution without disturbing the social structure and causing any untoward events. The conservatives also were changed without being hurt. There are
many clear and concrete instances in Ṛṣmācarita mānasa, where we find Brāhmaṇas of high rank like muni Vasisthā meeting and creating friendship with Nisāda Rāja hailing from a śudra family. Tulasidāsa went a step further and presented numerous examples where Lord Rāma not only had mere interviews and dialogues with śudras but actually he embraced them with wide open arms to Kevāta, Kolā, Bhīma, Kīrtā and different representatives of all tribal races of India.

Tulasidāsa was a firm believer of co-existence. He not only advocated the theory and philosophy of co-existence but he brought about a completely new hypothesis. He advocated friendship and peaceful co-existence between human race and other creatures. Hanumāna, Angada and ṇatāyu etc were not only devotees and servants of Rāma but most faithful and dependable friends. They carried out the top secret spying work of Rāma.

Tulasidāsa gave a vivid description in his 'Ṛmā-carita-mānasa' that Rāma had no intention of expanding his territory. He wanted justice and peace. He believed in co-existence. He sought the help of all, low and high, weak or strong, young or agile in his day to day work. He resisted
and fought against evils. Rama always stood firm and fought for the just cause. Justice was the key of his success. Whenever there had been any quarrel between the two brothers, he always helped the one who stood for the just and rightful claim. In the dispute of Bāli and Sugrīva, he helped Sugrīva. The entire conquered territory was handed over to Sugrīva and in return he only sought his friendship and goodwill. This was the magnitude of his generosity. It bears a very clear proof that he had no intention of expanding his kingdom.

In the great mythological war of Rama and Rāvana, which was fought on the soil of Lanka, Rama always aspired for a peaceful settlement. He only wanted his abducted wife back. He sent two of his trusted and brave negotiators, Lāmunāna, and Angada for a compromise and honourable return of his wife Sītā. He never wanted bloodshed and left no stone unturned to bring about the compromise. He sought the help of Vibhiṣṭa, to persuade his brother Rāvana for avoiding ruin and devastation of his kingdom. Rāvana paid no heed to the sincere and noble advice of his ministers, courtiers and even his wife consequently he had to pay for it. Rama vanquished Rāvana and made Vibhiṣṭa the king of Lanka.

Thus through his writings Tulasidasā put forward his great teachings for bringing about national integration and gave shape to the social ideas.
His services to the Indian society and the humanity at large.

The sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries have been regarded as the golden age of Hindi poetry. Emperor Akbar did patronise men of letters, but the poetry that grew and developed under the court-patronage subordinated matters to expression and began to study style for its own sake. It devoted attention not to what was to be said but as to how to say it. Court poets were not men with any special message for their generation or for the world. After duly singing the praises of their patrons, they were content to display their powers of versification and ornamentation. Most of them exhausted their energy in writing poems of love and amorosity.

Most of the poets of Moghal court taught their generation neither their duty to God nor to fellowmen, the poet of Krishna cult were content to teach only their duty towards God; Tulasidasa alone realised the necessity of laying stress on both. He tried to establish harmony between the spiritual and material aspects of life.

Tulasidasa while teaching us our duty towards God, never lost sight of our duty towards the fellowmen. Even his Lord-God is not depicted as a supernatural being work-
-ing wonders in a triumphant glee; nay Rāma plays his role as mortals do with all the failings of man. The characters in the story of Rāma are placed in different situations and are shown to come out successful and unblamished through all trials and tribulations, thereby selling a norm of conduct for all of us in whatever walk of life we may happen to be placed. In fact he tried to establish harmony between the spiritual and material aspects of life.

Tulasīdāsa in his ideal epic *Rāma-Caritamānasā* has very rightly drawn the picture of an ideal Indian home and the reciprocal relations between their kith and kin and their duties towards the society.

The epic tells the story of Rāma. Rāma has been delineated as the greatest ideal human being under all circumstances. As a man, as a king, as a brother, as a son, as a husband and as a subject he never departs from the right conduct and the right thought and that is why the picture of Rāma as painted by the poet has become a perpetual ideal to be emulated by all persons in all ages.

There are a few other ideal characters also in the Mānasas, but their is one-sided greatness. The glory of Rāma is that he embraces the whole of life. Many problems and difficult situations face him, but he is always the
master of them. He is never baffled or confused nor does he ever take a wrong step. With a calm and unruffled mind, he is seen to be serving, honouring and loving all, even beyond the strictest demands of duty.

At places there are special touches on the principles of politics. A dissection and impartial treatment of the possible corrupt political practices together with an indication of the ideal political set up which should be the endeavour of all government to achieve, viz, the 'Rāma Rājya', the ideal of kingship. In his Rāma charitamānasā Tulasīdāsa has very rightly depicted the ideal of kingship. According to him a king or a government is the embodiment of God on earth and the supreme duty of a king is to achieve the well being and happiness of his subjects. A king must look upon all his subjects, high and low, equally and without any discrimination. A king's acts must have the common support of his populace and any act which has not this support is unkingly and improper. A king must govern with four rules as his guiding principles, viz, Dama, Danda and vibheda. A king must be entirely truthful under all circumstances and must be a keeper of his word. Vigilance and self reliance are his essential qualities. In an ideal king's regime or under an ideal government the people must be prosperous and
it is the sacred duty of all the governments to protect their subjects from the ravages of war and other calamities. A king must regard his country as greater than heaven and dearer than life.

The Gorakhpanthis, the Tantrika, the Kabir-Panthis, the Saivas, the Shakta, the Vaishnavites—all acclaimed themselves as Hindus, though none could define Hinduism. Tulasidas’s greatest service to Hinduism is to evolve a composite whole out of these conflicting ideologies.