

The socio Political Study of Ramcharitmanas: in special context of Value Based Politics

Introduction:

There are several religions in the world and every religion has its own literature, which tells us about the qualities of that religion. Bible is the only book for Christianity, Quran is for Islam but Hinduism has several books like The Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagwat Geeta, Puranas, Upanishads etc. These books tell us more about the goodness and greatness of Indian Culture and civilization. Shri Ramcharit Manas is one of them, which can be called the soul of Indian culture. Ramcharitmanas has been composed by Goswami Tulsidas one of the greatest poets and writers of Hindi literature. He was not merely a poet but a great thinker as well as a good politician. His perception about every field of life was very clear; his sayings true in past and reliable in present. He was a saint and he roamed throughout the country. He faced and studied the real problems of life which were prevailing in the society at that time¹. The major problems were illiteracy, untouchability, poverty and above all immorality. These problems were main hindrance in the development and integration of country. He found that people were in the deep sleep, they were helpless from all sides, there was no role model to follow and people did not even think about their progress. In such a condition, he wrote The Ramcharit Manas to bring a torch in front of society and to wake up the people of country. Although he says that he wrote Ram Charitmans just for self satisfaction “*Swantah Sukhaya Tulsi Raghunath Gatha*”² but today the epic has become more valuable and honourable not only in India but also throughout the world. Through Shri Ramcharit Manas, Goswami Tulsidas tried to give a proper solution of the social as well as family problems of his age and they have come to be more valid in the modern era. Another significant work that he has done is to bring the southern and western culture together as well as narrowing the gap of lower caste and higher caste of society. He has shown the victory of truth on untruth, the victory of honest and pure on evil as well as victory of Aryas on Rakshasas. Tulsidas wanted to bind the whole country and bring the cultural exchange together. This is the reason Sri Ram establishes the Statue of Lord Shiva in RameshwaRam, thus the people of northern India went to worship the RameswaRam in South with their unique culture and the people of south India went to Ayodhya to worship Lord Ram.

Goswami Tulsidas’s Ramcharitmanas is a devotional hymn in the garb of an epic poem. It is less important for its aesthetic quality than for its influence and importance in Indian society and culture. Tulsidas, the most prominent Ramayana author of Hindi Literature, was responsible for promoting the wave of Rama Bhakti across North India during the medieval age. To this day, Ramcharitmanas is the single most important text in the genre of Ramayana literature. It is not only a scripture or a story but also a dharma, a way of life, as Mahatma Gandhi pointed out.

“Anyone interested in the religion and culture of Northern India sooner or later encounters a reference to the epic poem Ramcharitmanas and its remarkable popularity. This sixteenth-century retelling of the legend of Ram by the poet Tulsidas has been hailed not merely as the greatest modern Indian epic, but as

*something like a living sum of Indian culture, singled out as the tallest tree in the magic garden of medieval Hindu poetry”.*³

Sri Ramcharit Manas is not only a devotion of a saint to his *Eesht* (worshipping God) but also a life span of earlier people of Northern India. Sri Ramcharit Manas, the pious book of our Indian culture, is highly respected in every Indian home. It is regarded in huts in the same way as regarded in the palace of the President. This pious book is divided into seven parts (*Sopans*) which are called *KAANDS*. They are Bal Kaand, Ayodhya Kaand, Aranya Kaand, Kishkindha Kaand, Sunder Kaand, Lanka Kaand and Uttar Kaand. There are nine main stops and thirty sub stops in the holy book called *VishRams*, they make it easier to study the book. The language of this book is *Avadhi*, the local language spoken by the common people of *Avadh Prant* (Faizabad and Lucknow District of Uttar Pradesh, India). It is written in *Doha* and *Chaupai* the very common rhyme used by the most of Hindi poets of middle age. The words and sentences of this book are so simple that a common man or a lesser qualified person can also read and understand. It is also in the form of rhyme which makes it the most popular as it can be sung. In the beginning of each *Kaand* there are some Sanskrit Shlokas dedicated as prayer to Lord Shiv-Parvati, Lord Ganesha, Shri Ram and Sita and Lord Vishnu -Lakshmi.

The main centre of this precious book is the idealism of characters as well as the moral values. Each and every character of this epic is ideal in itself. The character of Ram as an ideal king is worth praising⁴. The story of Ram is a popular narrative of Indian literature and culture. For centuries, poets and folk singers have presented the Ramayana in various forms on the basis of their personal experience and reflection. It is narrated in historical, philosophical, cultural, sociological, political and purely literary modes but in almost all such narration, the ethical and moral value of this historical story has been presented as an ideal and complete source of human welfare. Ram Katha is not only historical and mythological but also intended to inspire on human values that strengthen the society of every race for all the times to come⁵. This Katha becomes universal due to its wide spectrum. Rishi Valmiki initially wrote it but in modern age, Goswami Tulsidas presented it in a new spectrum. For the common person Goswami ji's Manas is more easily approachable. In Manas Ram is the personification of an ideal, an ideal for each and every common person as well as the king and ministers. One can still say the Ram Katha is a never ending story, which was in the past, is true for today and will be in the future. It has a dynamic universal grasp on human mind.

There are so many valuable aspects of Ramcharitmanas to study as and value of these aspects is endless as *Tulsidas* said himself “*Ram Anant Anant Gun, Anant Amit Katha Vistar*”⁶ but here in this paper the social and political aspect of Ramcharitmanas and its relevance in modern society will only be discussed.

The Social Values in Ramcharitmanas:

All of us live on the same earth. The same sky is above all of us. We breathe the same air and drink the same water. Ignoring this underlying principle of unity man visualizes multiplicity, which is a big mistake. The Ramcharitmanas centers on the principle of unity in diversity. Today, since man has lost the ability to see unity in diversity, he is immersed in restlessness. What we need today is to see unity in diversity and the divinity behind this unity. The culture of Bharat says: *Sathyam bruyath, priyam bruyath, na bruyath sathyam apriyam* (speak the truth, speak sweetly and softly, and never utter truth in an

unpalatable way). *Sathyam bruyath* is the moral value. *Priyam bruyath* is the social value. *Na bruyath sathyam apriyam* is the spiritual value. So, the moral, social, and spiritual values are all contained in the above statement⁷.

Concept of Dharma:

The Ramayana teaches these values in the simplest way but man has forgotten the message of the Ramayana and is leading the life of a Ravana. They did not understand this principle of divinity. Lanka in Ramcharitmanas is symbol of a place where evil lives like *Rakshasas* along away from morality and human values unless Dharma, Ashramas, Varnas, etc. In Ramrajya king Ram was following his Dharma (Duties) so there was prosperity in every sphere of life⁸.

“Ram Rajya Baithe Trayloka, Harsit Bahye Gaye Sab Shoka,

Bayaru na Karahi kahu san Kou, Ram Pratap Vishamta Khoi,

Sab Nar Karahi Paraspar Priti, Chalahi SwaDharma nirat Shrut Neeti”⁹

Dharma here means not the religion but the code of conduct. Modern society needs to follow the dharma that is contained in the epic Ramayana. Today, the son is not paying heed to his father's advice, and the parents are not concerned about the future of the son. Devotion to the guru should be the aim of the students. However, students are not having regard for their teachers and the teachers are not imparting anything good to them. In such a situation, everyone needs to follow the ideals of the Ramayana. The Ramayana speaks of the identity of the individual, the real significance of the family, and the sanctity of the society. The Ramayana teaches the importance of human values. Today, corruption is rampant in all fields such as business, education, and politics. Under these circumstances, the principles of the Ramayana can play the role of a torchbearer.

Concept of Varna and Ashram:

Varna and Ashram are two important pillars of Indian culture. There are four Varnas (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra) divided on the basis of quality and expertise in work, as Lord Krishna said in Gita “*Chatur Varna Maya Sruista Gun Karm Vibhgyet*”¹⁰. Ashram is another important concept that provides direction to an individual's life. These are also four (Brahmacharya, Grihasthya, Vanprasthya and Sanyas ashram) like Varna. These ashramas also played an important role in ancient Indian's life to make it prosper. In Ramcharitmanas, Tulsidas also preach the Varna and ashram as the backbone of society when he says -

“Varnashram Nij Nij DhaRam Nirat Ved Path Log

Chalahi Sada Pawahi Sukhahi Nahi Bhav Roag Na Shok”¹¹

The greatest quality of Ramcharitmanas is perhaps the ideals that it lays down for different relationships on the earthly plane. It is this ethical bent which distinguishes it from the other scriptures like The Gita

and The Upanishads. While they remain impersonal and speak only of religion and philosophy the Manas simplifies the eternal truth as well as tells us what to do and how to act¹²

Other Social and Family Values:

Ram, the ideal character of Treta Yuga, is the main character of the Ramcharitmanas. Infact, every character of Ramcharitmanas is ideal in itself. As an ideal brother the behaviour of Ram with their brothers is remarkable. He loved his brother by heart and brothers also shared the same feelings. The behaviour of Bharat and Lakshman is an extra ordinary example of brotherhood in the entire world. When Lakshman heard about exile of Ram and Sita he also got prepared to go with them,¹³ Bharat is also a milestone in the field of brotherly love. He could not go with Ram but he also left Ayodhya, got into the sadhu's getup and went to Nandi Gram (the nearest forest from Ayodhya) and lived there under the earth for 14 years.¹⁴

Ram was an ideal husband and Sita an ideal wife. When Ram prepared to go for forest she also decided to go with him and when asked to stay back, she said that wife without her husband like a river without water¹⁵

The political Values in Ramcharitmanas

Between the time of Rishi Valmiki and Tulsidas, deterioration of human values was a continuous process. This was the period when social and cultural traditions were on the verge of collapse. Outside invasions, political instability, social instability led human values to be broken and crushed. An ideal, which could be a saviour, was badly needed. Political and social instability hurt the poet who was the visionary and committed to the society. He presented an ideal persona and an ideal rajya (kingdom) called *Ram Rajya* or *Swarajya*. The concept of this great epic is as significant and relevant today as it was in his time. He has given a message of an ideal governing system and rules for the rulers of today. He has not merely given a slogan of socialism but presented it actually in *Manas* by depicting that a ruler should be socialistic in his policies and in his action too¹⁶. The king and the ruler has to put into practice the same ideas in his private and public life and if there is any blemish found in his life it was his duty to rectify it, even if it meant sacrificing his most beloved thing. The balance of society lies in a stable ideal ruling system, this message has been conveyed by Tulsidas in Manas. The rulers or the Government should do everything for the upliftment and betterment of people¹⁷. Again describing the Ram Rajya, Tulsidas says that an ideal king is not a ruler but it should be a servant of the society. He should be saint like character¹⁸ the people has the right to check him if he is going to do something wrong or unfavourable for the society¹⁹ He should not be a dictator²⁰. He should always be prepared to serve his Kingdom²¹

Ram rajya was not just the need of Valmiki's or Tulsi's time is equally required in today's world also. It is not a mere imagination, but a solution of today's problems which becomes important due to its practicability. According to Dr. Dixit, "To establish a truth one must have some ideals first then only the truth can be searched for"²². Well known critic Acharya Ram Chandra Shukl says "This Ram Rajya is not an allegory, but is a reality which can be brought into application"²³ Binanai and Rao writes " Ram Rajya is not a myth nor an imagination, it is an historical truth of its time and for the times to come"²⁴

Objective of Study

There is a bombardment of problems in our day-to-day lives. Although we have got incomparable growth in overall development but it is another truth that there is a significant difference between the ground reality and paper, our society is marching ahead towards beggary, social differences, untouchability and unemployment and so on; it is because of a great loss of moral values under society as well as humanity in human being. So it is necessary to put an example, an ideal which can inspire the people and can lead people on the righteous path. Ramcharitmanas and its moral thoughts may be a milestone in this field.

The result and Discussion:

Today, many people read the holy Ramayana, but very few understand its essence. They spend their time in acquiring bookish and superficial knowledge but fail to have practical knowledge. There are many people who can explain the teachings of Ramayana in a beautiful way, but how many of them obey the command of their fathers in their daily life? What is the use of reading various texts if we do not put into practice the message contained in them? Can anyone enjoy the taste of various delicious items such as mysore pak, gulab jamun, and jalebi by merely repeating their names? No. One can enjoy the taste only when one eats them. Mere textual information is of no use. However, today, man is interested only in information and not transformation. Intellect will blossom only when there is transformation. Therefore, man should cultivate 'Daivva preeti', 'paapa bheeti', and sangha neeti (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). Though Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all forms of knowledge, sage Valmiki extolled Rama as Divine and condemned Ravana as a foolish one. What is the reason? Ravana did not translate into action the knowledge he had acquired; on the contrary, he used it for wicked purposes. On the other hand, Rama translated all his knowledge into action and gave joy to one and all. 'Sarvaloka hithe ratah' (Rama was engaged in the welfare of all), 'Sarvajnanopasampannah' (He was the master of all forms of knowledge), 'Sarvasamudhita gunaihi' (He was the embodiment of all good qualities). These three aspects can manifest Rama's divinity.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that these facts discussed have been very well established. The Ramcharitmanas is a classic work by Goswami Tulsidas. It does not belong to a particular country or caste, but it has an universal applicability . It is a treasure of human values and whoever restores it will be the saviour of humankind. According to C. Rajgopalachari "Mythology and holy figures are necessary for any great culture to rest on its stable spiritual foundation and function as a life-giving inspiration and guide"²⁵ Thus the generation of men distressed by the world's tribulations and by inevitable miseries of existence, the Ramcharitmanas has brought calmness and strength. That is why for millions this is the book, which has lightened their miseries and lives since time immemorial as a beacon of hope in the darkness of despair and will continue to do so.

References –

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- ⁵ Goyal Santosh. Indian Epic value, Ramayan and its Impact, page 171
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- ⁷ Satya Sai speak vol 32.1 page 100.
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