

# DŌHĀVALĪ

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration and  
English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

\*\*##\*\*

English Exposition by:-

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

Ayodhya (Faizabad, U.P.)

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,  
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123  
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.

Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < [www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com](http://www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com) >

Email of Author: (i) < [ajaiChhawchharia@gmail.com](mailto:ajaiChhawchharia@gmail.com) >

(ii) < [ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com](mailto:ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com) >

Facebook ID < [www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8](https://www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8) >

Linkedin: [www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia](https://www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia)

\*\*

© By Author—All rights reserved by the author. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission of the author-Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

NOTE: Author's Books are available at:--

- (1) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) in its Kindle + Paper-Back Print Editions.
- (2) [www.pothi.com](http://www.pothi.com) in a Print edition.
- (3) [www.draft2digital.com](http://www.draft2digital.com) and its various vendors' platforms in E-Book edition:  
URL: <https://www.draft2digital.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia>
- (4) [www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com](http://www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com)
- (5) Archive.org: [https://archive.org/details/@ajai\\_kumar\\_chhawchharia](https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia)
- (6) Goodreads:  
[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai\\_Kumar\\_Chhawchharia](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia)

Language: English.

DŌHĀVALĪ  
Of Goswami Tulsidas  
(English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

Contents

Dedication:	Page—4
Preface:	Page—5
Topics of Dohas:	Page—8
DOHAWALI: Text, Roman Transliteration & English Exposition with Elaborate Notes:	Page— 15 to 524
Index of Key-Words:	Page— 525
Other Books by Goswami Tulsidas:	Page— 530
A life-sketch of Goswami Tulsidas:	Page— 532
About the Author:	Page— 543

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

## DEDICATION

### THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!  
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!  
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,  
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia  
Author

# DŌHĀVALĪ

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

## PREFACE

Goswami Tulsidas [Birth: Hindu year Samvat 1589, corresponding to 1532 A.D.—Death: Samvat 1680, or A.D. 1623.] was one of the greatest poets, realised souls, enlightened saints, erudite philosophers, and men of astounding wisdom and vision that India has ever seen. He was a wise saint and an enlightened man of wisdom. He was not only a scholar par excellence, a fact which is endorsed by his writings, but a highly spiritual man who was completely devoted to his Lord God Sri Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. Tulsidas had committed himself and his life to spread love and devotion for Lord Ram through his immortal classical books on the theme of Lord Ram whom he venerated.

Writing on this theme was a practical means of meditation for Tulsidas because his mind kept itself constantly focused, day in and day out, on the subject on which he was to write—i.e. the subject of Lord Ram, a subject that was extremely dear to his heart.

He was especially blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which we can call the Supreme Brahm, the Parmatma and the Lord God of creation, who used this pious and holy man to act as an Apostle on his behalf to spread the word of God and show humankind the path of Bhatki (devotion, love and submission to the Lord God), the path of Dharma (virtuousness, righteousness, probity, propriety and auspiciousness) and the path of Satya (truth and honesty) at a crucial time in history when religion, morality and ethics were on the decline, bound as they were in the shackles of formalities, rituals, dogmas, doctrines and such like which were more contradictory and confusing themselves than the contradiction and confusion they were meant to remove.

Tulsidas and his writings acted as a beacon of light in an age which was engulfed in spiritual darkness. The essence of religion and the nectar of spiritualism as enshrined in the scriptures were lost in the hardened crust of meaningless rituals, sacrifices, incantation, observances, vows and the like. One of the main objectives of a religious way of life is to follow the laws of Dharma and Satya. At the time when Tulsidas lived, these were almost eclipsed.

Tulsidas was a scholar who had studied Sanskrit, the language of the classical scriptures, and this equipped him to study the important versions of the Ramayana, e.g. the famous Valmiki's Ramayan, and the Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas. He had also studied the Purans, the Vedas and the Upanishads which formed the main texts studied by all scholars of Sanskrit. Since the Lord God had sent Tulsidas with a mission in life, the reading of these scriptures lit a desire in him to make the eclectic but abstruse spiritual ideas enunciated in an esoteric form in them rendered into a simple colloquial

language so that they become easily understandable by the common man who will then be able to really benefit from the teachings as well as the intentions of the scriptures.

So, Tulsidas set out to present to this world the distilled essence of not only the doctrines and philosophy of the holy scriptures but also of the divine ideas that the Lord God revealed in his heart and mind to be conveyed to mankind in a simple day-to-day language. This is why Tulsidas' writings reveal much more than merely the wisdom and esoteric teachings of the scriptures—they reveal the grand messages of practical value that this great saint had wished to convey to the world, messages that are based on his analytical study of life and its problems first hand by experience.

He was a keen observer of the world and the life around him. He had the penetrating insight into things, and could peek behind the apparent to seek the truth that lay behind. The deductions that he made by these personal observations were woven into his writings so as to give subtle advices and cite examples to guide others and let them benefit from his own experiences.

Thus, he penned his observances in the form of couplets of two line verses called 'Dohas'. These Dohas are said to have been written by him throughout his adult life—as they are said to have been written between Samvat 1626-1680 (corresponding to A.D. 1569-1623).

It is clear that 'Dohawali' is a compilation of verses jotted down by Tulsidas over a spread of time extending to 54 long years. These are based on his personal observation of life and depict his own take on it.

'Dohawali' has 573 Dohas or two-line verses that cover a variety of subjects such as Bhakti, Satya, Dharma, Maya (delusions), Gyan (knowledge), religion, metaphysics, political science, morality, ethics, realities and horrors of existential life such as old age and death, poverty, delusions of the world and its entangling effects, discrimination, what is to be done or chosen when one is faced with a sticky situation, the glorious virtues of saints, and so many other aspects of practical life that it becomes a virtual ready reckoner and a reference guide for a man to refer to, consult and follow with confidence that he is following a well-considered advice and a true path shown by a wise man who was blessed and graced by Lord Ram himself. The verses of Dohawali are like priceless pieces of gems and pearls presented to us on a platter by Tulsidas, condensing the wisdom and sage thinking of this blessed and enlightened saint.

The verses of Dohawali come under the category of classical composition called 'Muktak Chanda'. The word 'Chanda' means a style in which poetry is composed, and the word 'Muktak' is derived from the basic 'Mukta', meaning 'free', 'independent' and 'free-flowing'. It means that each verse of a Muktak Chanda is an independent entity having a complete meaning in its own right, and that it does not depend upon either the one preceding it or following it to make clear its own meaning. Another import of this style is that it allows the author a free hand to jot down his views as and when they occur in his mind, without having to wait to find a proper and fitting place where to implant this thought so that it fits in well during the flow of the main narrative which he is in the process of composing. A Muktak Chanda is not a continuous narration of any story or event, but a collection of independent ideas and thoughts. Thus we find that the verses of a Muktak Chanda appear to jump from one subject to another at the drop of a hat, but it is a part of this style of composition. It is a sort of a garland of independent flowers of

varying colours and types that have been threaded together to make one unit of a garland. Dohawali is one such 'garland' made up of these Muktak Chandas.

If we cite the Holy Bible, the nearest analogue to Dohawali would be the 'Book of Proverbs' and the 'Book of Ecclesiastes' of the Old Testament.

Tulsidas has used metaphors, parables and similes liberally to drive home the point he wishes to convey, and this is expected from a learned and scholarly poet that he was. These comparisons and citations are most appropriate for the occasion and remarkable in their import because they explain the idea or concept in the verse most vividly.

It is to be noted that many of the Dohas of Dohawali are also found in Tulsidas' other works such as the epic Ram Charit Manas (85 Dohas), Vairagya Sandipani (2 Dohas), Rama-Agya Prashnaawali (35 Dohas), and Hanuman Bahuk (3 Dohas). This shows either of two things—one, that they were written down first independently as part of Tulsidas' collection of his thoughts, that would later on be compiled in the form of the book known as 'Dohawali', and then picked up and inserted in one of the other book mentioned above as and when the poet thought fit, and second, that these particular verses were first written as part of the above mentioned texts and then later on included in the collection known as 'Dohawali' by the poet himself because he thought that they needed to be highlighted as independent entities of their own standing.

A list of other books written by Goswami Tulsidas along with a brief description outlining what they are about and a 'life-sketch of Tulsidas' are added at the end of this book.

This simple English rendering of Dohawali is my humble endeavour to bring the great saint's magnificent book of gems of wisdom within the reach of a modern man. And if in this endeavour I may have made some mistakes then I beg forgiveness for them because after all I am an ordinary man with his limitations and shortcomings.

I wish to express my thanks to Sri Somil Bharti, B.Tech (IIT Kanpur) and MBA (IIM, Calcutta) for doing the Roman Transliteration of the Dohas for me.

The reader should overlook any errors if they are in this book, but rather focus on the nectar of wisdom that drips from the verses of Dohawali, and benefit from the priceless pieces of advice that Tulsidas offers to us through this book.

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

(Author)

Address: 36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,

Post Office: Ayodhya, Pin: 224123,

Distt.: Faizabad, U.P., India.

Mobile: +919451290400, +919935613060

Website: < [www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com](http://www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com) >

Email of Author: (i) < [ajaiChhawchharia@gmail.com](mailto:ajaiChhawchharia@gmail.com) >

(ii) < [ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com](mailto:ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com) >

Date—30<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

# DŌHĀVALĪ

Of Goswami Tulsidas  
(English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

## MAIN TOPICS OF DOHAS

Note: The following list of major topics/themes of the Dohas is just to help the reader to locate a particular Doha of his choice or interest, a sort of quick guide. It should be remembered, however, that Tulsidas himself had not assigned any theme or topic to the Dohas; he hasn't named any of the Dohas. The Dohas cover a wide range of topics. So this list is only an indicative one for ready reference and ease of referral of the Dohas, for there are many other ways in which any given Doha can be assigned a topic or heading.

Awakening & Motivating of the Mana— Doha nos. = 51-56

Affection and devotion for Lord Ram is the best spiritual endeavour— Doha nos. = 103-104

Absolute love of the Chatak bird for the rain-bearing cloud—Doha nos. = 277-312

Affect of the company one keeps— Doha nos. = 140, 178, 336-337, 340, 358-364, 366, 438, 505, 532

Affable and friendly nature gives all round happiness— Doha no. = 434

Acquisition of powers and authority makes a man proud and haughty— Doha nos. = 497-498

A loyal and devoted server is more important than his lord— Doha no. = 528

A modest man who has no pride and pretensions is respected by the world— Doha no. = 530

An individual's glorious virtues shine when the opportunity comes— Doha no. = 535

By the grace of Lord Ram even the impossible becomes possible— Doha nos. = 15, 70, 105-116, 155, 171-176, 566-570

Bad/negative result/effect of false pride and ego— Doha no. = 390

Basic principles of leading a happy life (one must obey one's parents, Guru and Lord)— Doha no. = 540

Compassionate nature of Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 108-113, 149, 157-176, 180-181, 187-188, 201-204

Combined effect of all the negative qualities listed in previous Dohas— Doha no. = 271

Characters of a Gentleman— Doha nos. = 356-357

Comparison of a selfless and a selfish man— Doha no. = 377

Comparison of a noble-hearted man with a lowly person— Doha no. = 380  
 Comparison of the virtue of forgiveness with the evil of anger— Doha nos. = 427-428  
 Clever enemy— Doha no. = 520  
 Company of great people makes a man great himself— Doha no. = 532  
 Charity made deceitfully is ruinous for the donor and the recipient— Doha no. = 533  
 When a person is abandoned by his loved ones, the world becomes his enemy— Doha no. = 534  
 Credit and Greatest Virtue of Kali-yug— Doha no. = 562

Dhyan (meditation on Lord Ram)— Doha nos. = 1-3  
 Death can come anytime— Doha nos. = 248-249  
 Deluding and degrading nature of Material Wealth, Power and Passions— Doha no. = 262  
 Dilemma of a self-respecting and noble person— Doha nos. = 335-336  
 Difficulty in overcoming habits/nature— Doha nos. = 337-343  
 Difference between good and evil persons— Doha no. = 353  
 Difference between good and evil persons— Doha nos. = 354-355  
 Distinction between saints and non-saints— Doha no. = 374  
 Diversity in creation— Doha no. = 365  
 Destiny and Providence play a powerful role in one's life— Doha no. = 450  
 Devotion and love for Lord God must not be diminished under any circumstance— Doha no. = 563  
 Dominance of evil in Kaliyug (the present age/era)— Doha no. = 537

Everything is futile if there is no love and devotion for Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 40-45  
 Evil nature of Kali-yug— Doha nos. = 87-88, 537, 545-562, 564—566  
 Easy way for one's welfare— Doha nos. = 77-79, 84-85, 469-470, 566  
 Easy way to attain Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 80-81, 152, 562, 566-570  
 Exhort the mind to worship Lord Ram and having devotion for the Lord— Doha no. = 269  
 Essence of anything is most important— Doha no. = 351  
 Everything is respected for its basic quality— Doha nos. = 385-386  
 Everyone likes his own behaviour— Doha no. = 355

Futility of pursuing the pleasures of the sense organs— Doha no. = 260  
 Few people know how to use their resources to help others— Doha nos. = 345-350  
 Friendship and animosity have three categories— Doha no. = 352  
 Fighting and quarrel is not good under any circumstance— Doha nos. = 425-426  
 Friendly and righteous nature endears a person to all— Doha nos. = 441-442  
 Four noble paths— Doha no. = 451  
 For a wife, service rendered to the husband is the best deed— Doha no. = 542

Glory of Lord Ram & the importance of having love and devotion for the Lord—Doha nos. = 47-55, 57—60, 84—85, 126—127, 134—149, 150—151, 156—157, 171—177, 190-194, 199-201, 228, 565—570  
 Glory of Lord Ram's divine story— Doha nos. = 194-197

- Glory of Lord Ram's kingdom— Doha nos. = 182-186, 567  
 Glory of Lord and his holy name— Doha nos. 128-129, 190-194, 566-570  
 Glory of Lord Ram's devotees— Doha nos. = 141-148  
 Glory of Lord Ram's Divine Story— Doha nos. = 195-198  
 Glory of Bharat— Doha nos. = 205-209  
 Glory of Laxman (brother of Lord Ram)— Doha no. = 210  
 Glory of Shatrughan (brother of Lord Ram)— Doha no. = 211  
 Glory of Kaushalya (mother of Lord Ram)— Doha no. = 212  
 Glory of Sumitra (mother of Laxman)— Doha no. = 213  
 Glory of Sita (the divine consort of Lord Ram)— Doha nos. = 188, 214  
 Greatness of Sugriv, Vibhishan etc.— Doha no. = 215  
 Glory of Hanuman— Doha nos. = 229-234, 236  
 Glory of Dasrath (father of Lord Ram)— Doha no. = 218-221  
 Glory of Kashi (Varanasi)— Doha no. = 237  
 Glorious form of death— Doha nos. = 218-227  
 Glory of Jatayu (the vulture)— Doha no. = 222-227  
 Gracious Nature of Lord Ram— Doha no. = 228  
 Gentlemen are naturally respected and honoured— Doha no. = 392  
 Gods and saintly people are contented by showing respect to them— Doha no. = 455  
 Glory of the Vedas— Doha no. = 464-465  
 Glory and importance of this book 'Dohawali'— Doha nos. = 571-573
- Hurdles in attaining Lord Ram and his grace— Doha nos. = 153-154  
 How Maya (delusions) can be overcome— Doha no. = 276  
 Harmful dates when the result of any deed done is negative— Doha no. = 458  
 How stupid the world is— Doha no. = 496  
 How a wise man uses/employs his subordinates— Doha nos. = 526-527  
 How to develop the best form of love and devotion for Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 152, 568
- Importance of Lord Ram's holy Name— Doha nos. = 4-39  
 Importance of having affection for Lord Ram— Doha no. = 58-63  
 Importance of Vairagya (renunciation)— Doha nos. = 82-83  
 Importance of taking refuge with the Lord— Doha nos. = 84-85  
 Importance of Bhajan/Bhakti (remembering/devotion) of Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 126-140, 150-151  
 Immensity of love for Lord Ram that Sita, Laxman and Bharat had— Doha nos. = 202-204  
 Importance of contentedness— Doha no. = 275  
 Importance of timely action— Doha no. = 344  
 It is better to be humble and simple-hearted— Doha no. = 391  
 Importance of following correct or right path— Doha no. = 367  
 Importance of acting at the proper time— Doha nos. = 448-449  
 Importance of using an opportunity— Doha nos. = 444-446  
 Importance of wisdom and application of mind— Doha no. = 452  
 Importance of faith, trust and conviction— Doha nos. = 453-454

- Importance of having devotion for Lord Ram— Doha no. = 462  
 Importance of being financially prudent— Doha no. = 471  
 Importance of protecting one's acquisitions/achievements— Doha no. = 472  
 Importance of following the laws and orders of a righteous king— Doha no. = 505  
 Importance of contemplation and understanding things for oneself— Doha no. = 486  
 It is good to take timely action— Doha no. = 423  
 It is wise to be calm and treat others with respect— Doha nos. = 429-430  
 It is not advisable to antagonise an able and powerful enemy— Doha no. = 479  
 It is useless to give good advice to stubbornly stupid and haughty persons— Doha nos. = 483-485, 489  
 Impossible to please the world— Doha nos. = 491-493  
 Irony & paradoxes in this world— Doha nos. = 368-369  
 Importance of doing good deeds— Doha no. = 531  
 Importance of giving charities in Kali-yug— Doha no. = 561  
 It is always good to be of a friendly nature— Doha no. = 538
- Jiva is like an image in a mirror— Doha no. = 244  
 Jealousy/envy never pays— Doha nos. = 388-389
- Keeping good company of wise men— Doha no. = 438
- Lord Ram's charm during childhood days— Doha nos. = 117-122  
 Lord Ram's merciful and compassionate nature— Doha nos. = 156-189  
 Love and hatred are blind— Doha no. = 326  
 Love or animosity decides a person's reaction to any given situation— Doha no. = 328  
 Lack of proper wisdom is at the root of misery and grief— Doha no. = 414  
 Lord God is the supreme Protector— Doha no. = 424  
 Lord Ram's glorious virtues are perfect antidotes for the ills of Kaliyug— Doha no. = 565  
 Lord God helps if one invokes the Lord in any form— Doha no. = 536
- Making a confession—Doha no. 96  
 Mysterious ways of God— Doha no. = 241  
 Mystery of Creation— Doha nos. = 198, 244-245  
 Moha (delusions and attachments)— Doha no. = 259  
 Most auspicious moment in a man's life— Doha no. = 567
- Negative effects of Pride and Ego— Doha no. = 243  
 Negative effects of being opposed to Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 64-76  
 Negative forces of Kaam, Krodha, Mada, Lobha etc. makes a man blind and act as obstacles in having devotion for Lord Ram— Doha no. = 270  
 Non-duality between Lord Ram and Lord Shiva— Doha nos. = 101-102  
 Natural habit/inclination of a donor and a beggar— Doha no. = 327  
 Names and external façades are often misleading—so one must have deep insight before making judgment— Doha no. = 373  
 Nature of a wicked & mean person— Doha nos. = 375, 379-380,

- Nature of a noble person— Doha nos. = 376, 378-381  
 Noble-hearted man remains unfazed by criticism by lowly people— Doha nos. = 373, 377-379, 381-384  
 No one helps when a person faces bad times— Doha no. = 499
- Obstacles in love— Doha no. = 242  
 One should have no expectations or hopes from the world— Doha no. = 258  
 Overpowering nature of Greed— Doha no. = 261  
 One must be careful of a woman— Doha no. = 268  
 One should nurture anything that serves his welfare— Doha no. = 370  
 Only wise people can distinguish between the good and the bad— Doha nos. = 371-372  
 One should rely on God and not beg from anyone in the world— Doha no. = 393  
 One must heed good advice given by one's well-wishers— Doha no. = 421  
 One must think properly before doing anything— Doha nos. = 415, 452  
 One must avoid unnecessary confrontation— Doha nos. = 431-433  
 One must be careful with what one speaks— Doha nos. = 435-437  
 One must never abandon Dharma— Doha no. = 466  
 One must always do good to others— Doha no. = 467  
 One should be wary of betrayers— Doha no. = 474  
 One must wait till the fruits ripen on the tree— Doha no. = 511  
 One must obey one's father— Doha no. = 541  
 One must not refuse shelter to someone who seeks it during times of distress— Doha nos. = 543-544
- Path of Bhakti; the true spiritual path— Doha nos. = 86, 102-104, 563, 565-570  
 Pain in Tulsidas' shoulder and arms— Doha no. = 234-236  
 Prayers to Lord Shiva— Doha nos. = 238-240  
 Prayers— Doha nos. = 46, 89-92, 105, 125, 177-179  
 Powerful army of delusions— Doha no. = 263  
 Powerful forces of Kaam, Krodha and Lobha— Doha no. = 264  
 Powerful forces of Lobha, Dambha, Kaam and Krodha— Doha nos. = 265-267  
 Proper judgment before passing remarks— Doha no. = 387  
 Pride, haughtiness, hypocrisy and arrogance are not good traits— Doha no. = 440
- Qualities of an excellent king— Doha nos. = 507-510  
 Quality of a good master/chief— Doha no. = 522
- Relationship between the Saguna and Nirguna forms of Lord God— Doha nos. = 251-252  
 Result of lack of wisdom and judgment— Doha nos. = 420, 422  
 Rewards that accrue when the king is good and noble— Doha no. = 512  
 Relationship between a king and his subordinates— Doha nos. = 523, 525
- Spiritual path of Gyan (acquisition of esoteric knowledge of the Absolute Truth) is difficult to traverse— Doha no. = 273

Sincere love— Doha nos. = 313-321

Signs of being un-welcome— Doha no. = 329

Tulsidas pleads with Lord Ram to take care of him— Doha no. = 46

Tulsidas' earnest wish— Doha no. = 57

Tulsidas' advice for a man's well-being— Doha nos. = 95-100, 102-104, 106-107, 130-140, 269-270, 566-573

Truthful knowledge and true renunciation— Doha nos. = 253-254

True friend— Doha nos. = 322-325

The 3 states of existence of consciousness (Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta)— Doha no. = 246

The 12 Nakshatras (asterisms) that are auspicious for financial transactions— Doha no. = 456

The 14 Nakshatras (asterisms) that are inauspicious for financial transactions— Doha no. = 457

The 6 auspicious sights— Doha no. = 460

The 7 entities that are always auspicious— Doha no. = 461

The 7 entities one should leave aside if he loses interest in them— Doha no. = 475

The 4 persons who create mental unease— Doha no. = 476

The 4 persons who are subjected to insults— Doha no. = 477

The 5 entities that give sorrow— Doha no. = 478

The 2 types of persons who are worthy of pity— Doha no. = 480

The 3 universal helpers— Doha no. = 468

The 3 types of kings— Doha no. = 519

Those who help others are honoured and appreciated by the world— Doha no. = 529

Those who practice equanimity are always happy— Doha no. = 539

True Brave-hearts don't boast— Doha no. = 439

True friends during bad times— Doha no. = 447

The dangerous lunar mansions— Doha no. = 459

Uselessness to attempt to improve the world—Doha no. 274

Uncontrolled servants are crueler than their masters— Doha nos. = 500-501

Virtues of devotees of Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 93-94

What is true renunciation— Doha nos. = 255-257

Why the Supreme Being became a human being— Doha nos. = 113, 123-124

Wish for having devotion and love for Lord Ram— Doha nos. = 89-92

Who is safe in Kali-yug— Doha nos. = 87-88

World is like a dream; it is illusionary— Doha no. = 247

Wise use of the sense organs— Doha no. = 250

Wickedness of Kaikeyi (the step-mother of Lord Ram)— Doha no. = 216-217

Who can't find peace— Doha no. = 272

World is selfish, crooked and cunning— Doha nos. = 330-334

Wicked—It is unwise to be nice to wicked people— Doha no. = 398

Wicked—It is unwise to rely on what wicked people say— Doha nos. = 399-400

Wicked—It is wise to treat wicked people with caution— Doha nos. = 401-403  
 Weak and humble are always tormented by the mighty and strong— Doha no. = 404  
 Wicked—Only god can save against the wicked— Doha nos. = 405-406  
 Wicked people are like demons— Doha no. = 407  
 Wicked—It is difficult to recognize the wicked— Doha nos. = 408-410  
 Wickedness never gives peace— Doha no. = 411  
 Wickedness, deceit, conceit, pretension etc. are not good things— Doha nos. = 394-396, 412-413  
 World has a habit of tormenting those who are simple-hearted— Doha no. = 397  
 Warning for kings and rulers— Doha nos. = 416-419  
 What is more important— Doha no. = 473  
 Who is deemed to be actually blind?— Doha nos. = 481-482  
 Who is an epitome of stupidity— Doha nos. = 487-488  
 Which 4 types of people can never be happy— Doha no. = 490  
 Worldly achievements and praise don't give mental peace— Doha nos. = 494-495  
 Who is worthy of praise— Doha no. = 443  
 What to remember at the beginning of a journey— Doha no. = 463  
 What is more dangerous— Doha nos. = 502-503  
 Who follows whom— Doha no. = 504  
 What happens in a bad kingdom— Doha nos. = 513-515  
 Which kingdom becomes happy; the qualities of a good king— Doha nos. = 516-518  
 Which king is happy— Doha no. = 521  
 Why are sycophants and 'yes men' ruinous— Doha no. = 524  
 Wise men prefer to keep quiet when the times are bad— Doha no. = 564

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

# DŌHĀVALĪ

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration and  
English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

Dhyan (meditation on Lord Ram)

1. राम बाम दिसि जानकी लखन दाहिनी ओर ।  
ध्यान सकल कल्याणमय सुरतरु तुलसी तोर ॥
1. rāma bāma disī jānakī lakhana dāhinī ōra.  
dhyāna sakala kalyānamaya surataru tulasī tōra..

Meditating on Lord Ram, who has Sri Janki (Sita, his consort) on his left and Laxman (his brother) on his right, is exceedingly beneficial in every imaginable and possible way. [Addressing himself, Tulsidas says—]

‘Oh Tulsī! For you it (meditating on the holy form of Lord Ram) is like the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling celestial tree of Gods) which can fulfill all your wishes.’ (1)

[Note—Sita is Lord Ram’s divine consort, hence she stays to his left. Laxman is his brother who is like his own right arm, his main support and companion. Hence he stays to the right of the Lord.]

The Kalpa Tree gives only three types of fruits—Artha or worldly riches and prosperity, Kaam or fulfillment of desires, and Dharma or ability to live righteously and auspiciously. But having devotion for Lord Ram gives additional fruit—which is Moksha or emancipation and salvation of the soul, liberation and deliverance for the soul.

Here in this verse, meditation on Lord Ram is compared to the Kalpa Tree.]

2. सीता लखन समेत प्रभु सोहत तुलसीदास ।  
हरषत सुर बरषत सुमन सगुन सुमंगल बास ॥
2. sītā lakhana samēta prabhu sōhata tulasīdāsa.  
haraṣata sura baraṣata sumana saguna sumaṅgala bāsa..

Tulsidas says that Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, appears adorable, majestic, beautiful and praise worthy. The Gods are brimming over with joy and happiness at this sight of the Lord, and are showering flowers from the heaven. This vision of the Lord (i.e. meditating upon such a divine sight or portrait of the Lord) is symbolically like an abode of all good omens, all good fortunes and all auspiciousness. (2)

[Note—This Doha appears in Tulsidas' book 'Ram Agya Prashnawali' in 3/1/7. The context there is that the Lord is relaxed after he has slayed the demon Khar-Dushan etc. The Lord had killed one of the enemies of the Gods, so they are extremely happy and shower flower upon him from the heaven. The Lord is contented as he is fulfilling the promises he had made to the Gods when they had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them succour from the horrors of the demons.]

3. पंचबटी बट बिटप तर सीता लखन समेत ।  
सोहत तुलसीदास प्रभु सकल सुमंगल देत ॥
3. pañcabaṭī baṭa biṭapa tara sītā lakhana samēta.  
sōhata tulasīdāsa prabhu sakala sumaṅgala dēta..

Lord Ram is seated, along with Sita and Laxman, under the huge Banyan tree in Panchvati hermitage (during his exile). Tulsidas says this holy and divine vision (sight) of the Lord can provide all auspiciousness and welfare to the meditator. (3)

[Note : This verse shows that Tulsidas favours the posture and view of Ram as a hermit or an ascetic as opposed to his being seated on the throne of Ayodhya as a King. Probably because, as a hermit leading an austere and contemplative life of simplicity, Sri Ram seems a far better redeemer of the soul as compared to a King who lives in comfort and enjoys the pleasures of the material world, being surrounded by the royal pomp and circumstance and more often than not out of touch of the harsh realities of the world around him. A king is not aware of the suffering, trials and tribulations of an ordinary human being.]

This Doha is 3/2/7 of the book Ram Agya Prashnawali of Tulsidas. The context is the period between the killing of Khar and Dushan, and the arrival of Marich as a disguised golden deer which led ultimately to the abduction of Sita by Ravana. This is the last time Ram, Sita and Laxman are seen happily seated together, for soon Sita would be kidnapped by Ravana and all the peace of the Lord would be a thing of the past.

There is an interesting meaning of the term 'Panchvati' and 'Panchvat'. Lord Shiva is known to have five faces, and as an ascetic he has dense lock of hairs on his head. The thick branches of the old Banyan tree and its dense cover of foliage reminds one of Lord Shiva sitting in a meditative posture for eternity. Shiva seems to give protection to Lord Ram in the dense forest in the form of this Banyan tree.]

#### The importance of Lord Ram's holy Name

4. चित्रकूट सब दिन बसत प्रभु सिय लखन समेत ।  
राम नाम जप जापकहि तुलसी अभिमत देत ॥
4. citrakūṭa saba dina basata prabhu siya lakhana samēta.  
rāma nāma japa jāpakahi tulasī abhimata dēta..

Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, always reside in Chitrakoot. Tulsidas says he (Sri Ram) fulfils the wishes of all those who (constantly) chant his name (i.e. the holy Mantra 'Ram') with faith, conviction, devotion and sincerity. (4)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali in 2/5/7. Here the context is the time after Bharat had gone back to Ayodhya from Chitrakoot, having failed to persuade the Lord to return home. The place known as Chitrakoot has great natural beauty—with mountains, rich forests and the pristine water of river Mandakini. Amongst the different places where the Lord stayed during his 14 years of exile period, Chitrakoot occupies a pride of place. Tulsidas is very enchanted by the beauty of this place. So he prefers to describe the beauty of the Lord's sight at this place because the Lord's beauty coincides with the beauty of Nature surrounding him.

Tulsidas says that a person must make his heart and mind so beautiful that the Lord lives in them happily as he lived in Chitrakoot. Besides this, the remembrance of the holy name of Lord Ram gives the person the same peace and solace that one obtains in the extremely enchanting and beautiful environs of Chitrakoot.]

5. पय अहार फल खाइ जपु राम नाम षट मास ।  
सकल सुमंगल सिद्धि सब करतल तुलसीदास ।।
5. paya ahāra phala khā'i japu rāma nāma ṣaṭa māsa.  
sakala sumāṅgala sid'dhi saba karatala tulasīdāsa..

Chant Lord Ram's holy name for 6 months, surviving either by drinking milk or eating fruits. Tulsidas says by doing so, all the 'Siddhis' (great spiritual achievements, mystical powers and fruits of labour) and all sorts of auspiciousness and good fortunes would be easily available to the person without making much effort or striving for them separately endlessly. (5)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali in 7/4/7.

The time frame of '6 months' has a symbolic value. It is to stress that the spiritual benefits that one gets after spending a whole lifetime in following the rigorous laws of Dharma (observing principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct and thoughts, morality and ethics), observing strict codes of righteous conduct and auspicious thoughts, doing Yoga (meditation) complete with its eight limbs or branches such as Dhyān (contemplation) etc., doing so many other religious deeds such as making charities, going on pilgrimage, doing sacrifices, observing many strict vows, being diligent and alert in one's actions and thoughts, so on and so forth—all such and many more other spiritual and worldly rewards or benefits are available to a person if he simply spends some time in meditating upon Lord Ram's holy name and having devotion for Lord Ram.

In short, what rewards one gets with so much labour and spending so much time is available to him so very easily if he just takes some time off his busy life to meditate upon the holy name of Lord Ram and having devotion for the Lord.

The time frame of six months to attain one's spiritual goal of final liberation and deliverance is miniscule as compared to the time scale that the soul has to spend wandering from one birth to another in countless numbers of bodies in as many countless numbers of births in search of its liberation and deliverance.

A wise man must strive for rewards that have eternal value, value that is sustainable and universal, rather than a reward that has superficial value of fleeting importance. So, the soul's emancipation and salvation that is obtained by repeating and depending upon Lord Ram's holy and all-powerful divine Name is always preferred as a reward by wise men as compared to transient gains and worldly fame obtained by doing so many other religious deeds and noble undertakings that are deemed to be auspicious and rewarding.]

6. राम नाम मनिदीप धरु जीह देहरीं द्वार ।  
तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहुँ जौं चाहसि उजिआर ॥
6. rāma nāma manidīpa dharu jīha dēharīm dvāra.  
tulasī bhītara bāhērahum̐ jaur̐m cāhasi uji'āra..

Tulsidas says that if you wish to light up both the inside and the outside of you (i.e. if you wish to have enlightenment as well as knowledge of both the spiritual world as well as the mundane world), the best way is to keep the lamp of Ram's name on the doorway of your mouth (i.e. keep on constantly repeating the holy name of 'Ram'). (6)

[Note—This Doha appears in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 21.

A light of an ordinary lamp can be extinguished either when the oil is exhausted or by a gust of wind, thereby causing darkness. But Sri Ram's holy name is such that the illumination would be permanent. The 'darkness' here refers to ignorance and delusions that prevent the Atma, the soul of the living being, from seeing and experiencing the truth of his pure conscious 'self' as well as seeing the goal of his life. A deluded person is like a ship without a rudder in the choppy ocean, a ship that is tossed and turned violently and never able to reach its destination. An ignorant person is like one who gets terrified on seeing a length of rope lying on the ground, thinking it to be a serpent.]

7. हियँ निर्गुन नयनन्हि सगुन रसना राम सुनाम ।  
मनहुँ पुरट संपुट लसत तुलसी ललित ललाम ॥
7. hiyam̐ nirguna nayanahi saguna rasanā rāma sunāma.  
manahum̐ puraṭa sampuṭa lasata tulasī lalita lālāma..

Tulsidas says that constantly remembering in one's heart the Supreme Being who is formless and without attributes, keeping the Lord's divine form (as described in verse nos. 1-3) within one's sight (i.e. keeping the mind focused on the holy portrait of the Lord God known as Ram), and repeating the spiritually enchanting and beautiful name of the Lord (i.e. 'Ram') by the tongue— these are like priceless and magnificent gems that have been placed in a beautiful golden box<sup>1</sup>.

According to Tulsidas, the Lord's holy name 'Ram' is far superior to either or both the Saguna as well as the Nirguna forms of God which are like the two lids of the golden box. (7)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Here, the body is the golden box. The three gems that are placed in this box are (i) the Atma that resides in the heart of the devotee and is a representative of the cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm or the Parmatma who is invisible, all pervading and all-encompassing, the Atma that the individual is expected to meditate upon, (ii) the vision of the Lord in the form of Lord Ram which the individual's mind should remain focused on and contemplating upon, and (iii) the holy Name of the Lord that the individual is expected to keep repeating by his tongue. If this happens then the ordinary body becomes 'golden' or worthy, otherwise it is just like a sac full of bones, flesh, muscles, excreta and blood.

This stanza advises the devotee how to meditate upon Lord Ram in the proper way. He must involve his heart, mind, eyes and tongue, all of them together. While doing Japa

(repetition) of the holy name of Lord Ram with his tongue, the devotee must keep the holy vision of the Lord in the front of his ‘mental eyes’—that is, the holy image of Lord Ram must be firmly established in the sub-conscious aspect of the ‘mind’ so that in spite of seeing the physical world when one has to deal with it, this image of the world is kept outside and not allowed to enter the sub-conscious aspect of the mind which is occupied by the holy image of the Lord. Not only this, the devotee must realise that the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma resides inside his own heart as the Atma, and therefore while repeating the Lord holy name with his tongue and keeping his mind focused on the divine vision of the Lord he should also meditate upon the Parmatma enshrined in his own heart as the Atma.

There is yet another way how this stanza can be interpreted. A man must be wise and enlightened enough to realise that the invisible Parmatma that lives in his heart as his Atma has revealed himself as the visible world outside. All that exists is one or the other form of the same Parmatma which the scriptures prefer to call Brahm, the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness. That is, a wise and self-realised man sees the Parmatma everywhere in the physical world. All forms of creatures he sees in this world are one or the other forms of Parmatma. Since the Atma that lives in each living being is an image of the Parmatma, it follows that there is no difference between the Atma that lives inside a person’s own body in his heart and the Atma that lives in the body of the other person. This principle of non-duality of the Atma is the foundation of Advaita Vedanta.

So true devotion is achieved when one remains contemplative and constantly meditates upon the Lord by repeating his holy name ‘Ram’ while being focused on the Atma internally and virtually seeing the Lord as existing in all the visible forms that he sees in the external world.

<sup>2</sup>In this stanza, Lord Ram's holy name is compared to a magnificent gem, and Saguna and Nirguna aspects of God are like the bottom and top of the golden box where the gem is placed. The Saguna aspect of the Supreme Being is the one that has attributes and a physical form—such as that of Lord Ram, and the Nirguna aspect of the same Supreme Being is the one which has no attributes and visible forms—such as that of Lord Vishnu, the macrocosmic form of the Lord.

Refer also Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 which says “ascetics keep spiritually awake by repeating the Lord’s holy name by their tongue, and this helps them to be perfect renunciates and abandon the trap of delusions that has spread around them in the world created by the Maya of the creator”.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 23. They say that—“Brahm, the Supreme Being, has two forms—one is the Saguna form, i.e. the form that is visible, has attributes, special characteristics and a physical gross form, and the other is Nirguna, which is the opposite of Saguna and is the cosmic all-pervading universal form of the Lord. These two forms are from time immemorial, are eternal and equally true. They are indescribable and fathomless. They are equally beautiful and mystical. In my (Tulsidas’) view, the name of the Lord is superior to them both, and it has been able to keep both the forms of the Lord under its spell. That is, one may be confused about which of the two forms of Brahm should one pursue for his spiritual needs, but the Lord’s holy name bridges this gap; it sort of helps the spiritual aspirant to tide over this dilemma by taking him effortlessly across the world and provide his soul liberation and deliverance. Pursuing the Lord through the twin path of Saguna and Nirguna is like dealing with fire—because the Saguna form of the Lord is like the visible form of fire, and the Nirguna form is like the latent fire that lives inherently in firewood. Fire in whatsoever form is dangerous as it would burn the person. The holy and divine name of the Lord is like knowing about the virtues of fire (that it burns impurities)

without actually getting one's fingers burnt. That is why I regard the name of the Lord as being superior to the two forms of the Lord.

Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Holy Spirit, is immaculate and taintless; it resides in the bosom of all living beings as their consciousness, their Atma, their soul, their Spirit. In spite of the fact that Brahm is a fountainhead and a reservoir of eternal and fathomless bliss, the creatures are still engulfed in sorrows and miseries (though Brahm resides in their inner self as the Atma). This dilemma can be overcome by the help of the holy name of the Lord—by diligently pursuing it, by faithfully taking its refuge, by knowing what the name means, to whom does it belong, what are its mystical powers and spiritual benefits etc., one can be enlightened about the otherwise enigmatic and unknown Brahm (and therefore attain eternal peace and bliss so characteristic of Brahm-realisation) just like the case when one begins to appreciate the importance and material benefits of possessing a piece of stone which turns out to be a priceless when its value and uniqueness is established or discovered.”]

8. सगुन ध्यान रुचि सरस नहिं निर्गुन मन ते दूरि ।  
तुलसी सुमिरहु रामको नाम सजीवन मूरि ॥

8. saguna dhyāna ruci sarasa nahim nirguna mana tē dūri.  
tulasī sumirahu rāmakō nāma sajjivana mūri..

One does not have devotional interest in the Saguna form of the Lord God which has a physical form that is visible and easy to relate to, nor does one understand the true nature, meaning and essence of the Nirguna (formless) aspect of the Supreme Being because of it being too abstract and beyond his comprehension.

Tulsidas says in such a condition one should partake of the herb called Sri Ram's holy name (i.e. the holy mantra of Sri Ram—which is ‘RAM’) as a remedy for all spiritual ills associated with ignorance, delusions and incompetence as well as lack of wisdom and knowledge. (8)

[Note—Tulsidas means that the easiest way of attaining emancipation and salvation of the soul is to rely on the stupendous spiritual and astounding divine powers of the Lord's holy name ‘Ram’. The other two ways to attain the same objective are extremely difficult in the current era. These two ways are the following—

(i) Having love and devotion for the Supreme Being's incarnation in the form of Lord Ram. It is difficult for a person because devotion and love have their seat in the heart, and this heart is pre-occupied with worldly attachments and longings. The mind too is engrossed in the affairs of the world which seem real to it. These two instruments being somehow occupied by the thoughts of the world leaves no space for devotion and love for the Lord to take a foothold. A man is always surrounded by the material world in which he lives, a mortal world that is steeped in delusions and so confusing that a person is left dazed and perplexed under its onslaught.

(ii) The other method is to realise the Supreme Being through the path of knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom, contemplation and meditation, but this path is more difficult than the first because it requires higher levels of discriminatory powers of the intellect and a superior wisdom that few possess. An ordinary person does not have the required level of wisdom and the ability of the mind to ponder into the unknown and to understand something exceptionally ethereal and sublime. One of the reasons why this is difficult is that the mind has been trained to understand things related to the material world that is gross in nature, and not of a world that has a sublime and ethereal existence. The material

world of sense objects is easy to see, hear, feel, taste and smell, but the ethereal world is too sublime for the sense organs of the body to perceive.

So these two paths seem virtually blocked for an ordinary spiritual aspirant. Hence, the only path—which fortunately is extremely easy and comfortable to follow—left for him to follow is to rely upon the holy name of the Lord, which is ‘Ram’, to find his way to liberation and deliverance.

Incidentally, this name ‘Ram’ is also called the ‘Tarak Mantra’—i.e. it is a divine and mystical spiritual formula that helps the creature to attain liberation and deliverance from this world and its inherent problems, pains, miseries, troubles and tribulations. The emancipation and salvation of a creature’s soul or Atma is taken care of by the powerful influence of the Tarak Mantra. It kind of lifts one out of the quagmire in which he finds himself trapped; it is like key that liberates the soul from the shackle of the gross body and provides deliverance to the creature from the endless cycle of miseries and pains associated with the mundane gross world in which he lives as well as the endless cycle of birth and death in which he finds himself entangled.

The name of the Lord, i.e. RAM, is so easy to access that even the illiterate man can say it as easily as one who is exceptionally learned and enlightened. Its effects are magical for the welfare of the soul as well as the physical being of the creature himself. He derives immense mental peace and tranquility by repeating the Lord’s holy name ‘Ram’. It is like a balm that is applied over weary nerves to soothe them.]

9. एक छत्रु एक मुकुटमनि सब बरननि पर जोड ।  
तुलसी रघुबर नाम के बरन बिराजत दोड ॥

9. ēku chatru ēku mukuṭamani saba baranani para jō'u.  
tulasī raghubara nāma kē barana birājata dō'u..

Tulsidas says that the two letters of Lord Ram's name (Ra and Ma) crown all the words and alphabets of the Hindi language—the former as an umbrella [the sign that is put on the top of a letter and pronounced as 'ref'—e.g. the equivalent sound of the English word *rum*

or *wrung*], and the other as a crown jewel [the sign (◌̣) put on the top of a letter and pronounced as 'anuswar' which has an equivalent English pronunciation in the word *rung*]. (9)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand as Doha no. 20. The symbolism of the two signs of ‘Ref’ and ‘Anuswar’ is obvious. Like a king whose crown jewels and the ceremonial umbrella over the head adds to his royal splendour and majesty, all the alphabets of the Sanskrit language, which is the language of the scriptures, and the Hindi language, which is the national language of India, get their majesty and authority because of the presence amongst them of these two letters of the Lord’s holy name ‘Ram’—i.e. the letters ‘Ra’ and ‘Ma’.

The three components of the name ‘Ram’ are the following—Ra, Aa, and Ma. These are regarded as being equivalent to the three subtle sounds of the divine Mantra ‘OM’ which pertains to the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, and the cosmic vibration generated by this Consciousness that is known as Pranav.

The spiritual and metaphysical importance as well as the significance of Lord Ram’s divine and holy name ‘Ram’ vis-à-vis the ethereal Mantra OM which pertains to the supreme Brahm is elaborately explained in two Upanishads devoted to Lord Ram—viz. Ram Rahasya Upanishad and Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition.

Canto 2 of the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad is especially devoted to this topic. These two Upanishads have been included as part of volume no. 5 dealing with the Upanishads of the Atharva Veda which is a part of the series on the 108 Upanishads published by this author.]

10. नाम राम को अंक है सब साधन हैं सून ।  
अंक गएँ कछु हाथ नहीं अंक रहेँ दस गून ॥
10. nāma rāma kō aṅka hai saba sādhana haiṁ sūna.  
aṅka ga'eṁ kachu hātha nahīṁ aṅka rahēṁ dasa gūna..

Lord Ram's holy name 'RAM' is like a 'numeral' (such as 1, 2, 3 etc.), and all other means of salvation and emancipation are like 'zero' (0). This zero has no value if it is not preceded by any of the numerals – and when it is preceded by any one of the numerals then the same zero assumes great value because it is honoured as being able to add a ten-fold or hundred-fold or thousand-fold value to the numeral. But sans the numeral, the zero is equivalent to naught. (10)

[Note—The zero taken independently has no value of its own; it is equivalent to naught or nothing. But it becomes very effective at adding value to any given entity if it is preceded by any of the numerals. At the same time, all cardinal numbers are enhanced in their value when they are accompanied by zero.

In simple words it means that all the avenues of spiritual welfare and worldly well-being are effective and meaningful only when the Lord's holy name precedes them. Sans this name they are all worthless like the numeral zero. To take an example from the world, all the royal regalia, pomp and circumstance of an emperor have no meaning if the emperor himself is missing from the throne.

All means of salvation become more effective or enhanced in their value if they are accompanied by Lord Ram's holy name. All other Mantras and spiritual practices have their importance and effect only when they are sanctified by first invoking the holy name of Lord Ram. Otherwise they lose their strength and spiritual value, and instead become meaningless rituals.

All spiritual efforts that a creature undertakes would be useless and ineffective if they are not honoured by the presence of the Lord's holy name. They are like food without salt. Any food becomes tasteless and unpalatable if a tiny amount of salt is not added to it. Similarly, all spiritual undertakings become boring and lusterless without the shine of Lord Ram's holy name.]

11. नामु राम को कलपतरु कलि कल्यान निवासु ।  
जो सुमिरत भयो भाँग तेँ तुलसी तुलसीदासु ॥
11. nāmu rāma kō kalapataru kali kalyāna nivāsu.  
jō sumirata bhayō bhāṅga tēṁ tulasī tulasīdāsu..

In Kaliyug, Lord Ram's holy name is like a Kalpataru (the all wish-fulfilling celestial tree of Gods), and it is like a treasury of all auspiciousness and welfare. It is benefactor of all the living beings in every possible way.

Tulsidas was as worthless as Bhaang (a hallucination producing herb called Tetra hydro – cannabis sativa) early in his life, but when he started chanting or repeating the Lord's holy name 'Ram' he was transformed into a worthy person who is as venerated and respected by the society as the holy Tulsi plant (the holy Basil plant). (11)

[Note—The comparison is symbolic. If one reads the life of Tulsidas he will come to know that this great saint was born in a very inauspicious moment. The configuration of stars indicated that his parents would die soon. Soon after his birth his mother died, and the foster mother who had adopted the helpless child died too. His father abandoned this inauspicious son, and Tulsidas had to beg from house to house to feed his stomach even in the early stage of life when he was merely six to seven years old. He was reviled by his family and the society at large. They treated him with disdain like a sober man treats Bhaang or any other herb that produces hallucinations. But when the same Tulsidas took the refuge of Lord Ram and started repeating the Lord's holy name he became a colossus amongst all his peer saints, and got more acclaim than any of them. Even today, the name of Tulsidas is taken with the greatest of respect in India, and he is regarded as a personified form of the virtue of Bhakti (devotion, dedication) for the Supreme Being who incarnated as Lord Ram.

As compared to Bhaang which is despised in the scriptures and is to be avoided in all religious affairs, the Tulsi is regarded as very holy and dear to Lord Vishnu whose physical incarnation was Lord Ram. The leaves of the Tulsi plant are used to sanctify food offered to the Lord, but the leaves of the Bhaang are treated as being defiling and polluting the same food.

The main thrust of this comparison is to stress the importance and significance of Lord Ram's holy name as compared to all other Mantras and spiritual formulas in existence.]

12. राम नाम जपि जीहँ जन भए सुकृत सुखमालि ।  
तुलसी इहाँ जो आलसी गयो आजु की कालि ॥

12. rāma nāma japi jīham̃ jana bha'ē sukr̥ta sukhamāli.  
tulasī ihām̃ jō ālasī gayō āju kī kāli..

Tulsidas says that by doing Japa (repeating or chanting) Lord Ram's holy name with the tongue, people have become purified, most happy and contented. But those who are lazy in chanting the name are bound to get ruined and face all sorts of horrors sooner or later. (12)

[Note—Japa can be done by the tongue because it is the only instrument of the body which allows a person to speak. Tulsidas says that a person never tires of speaking on so many subjects related to this world and life in it, but when it comes to doing Japa with the holy name of Lord Ram people get weary, become bored, and begin to yawn. How stupid they are, he says. There are umpteen numbers of instances when a Jiva, a living being, has attained the highest spiritual stature by simply relying upon this single Mantra—the holy name of Lord Ram. Some of the instances are sage Valmiki, the crow saint Kaagbhusund, the vulture Jatau, the low-caste woman Sabari, Ajaamil, the child devotees Prahalaad and Dhruv, the celestial sage Narad, etc. Even Lord Shiva who is considered as the most enlightened God relies upon Lord Ram's holy name to obtain eternal bliss and spiritual enlightenment.

All other means of spiritual attainment require effort and energy, but repeating the Lord's holy name 'Ram' by the tongue is so easy and effective. But still the creature feels lazy to do so. Tulsidas admonishes them and says that it is the easiest thing to do in this world—the name can be repeated anywhere, anytime and under any circumstance. Even an illiterate person can repeat the word "Ram" with as much ease as a wise and learned man. Hence, this holy name of the Lord is a panacea of spiritual welfare that is available to all the living beings just like the sunshine that does not discriminate between any two entities but gives light and energy to the entire world with equanimity and impartiality.]

13. नाम गरीबनिवाज को राज देत जन जानि ।  
तुलसी मन परिहरत नहिं घुर बिनिआ की बानि ॥

13. nāma garībanivāja kō rāja dēta jana jāni.  
tulasī mana pariharata nahim̄ ghura bini'ā kī bāni..

Tulsidas says the name of Lord Ram is such a magnanimous benefactor and a benevolent giver that it liberally and without reservations gives the kingdom of the world to those who chant or repeat it (i.e. it gives salvation and emancipation to the soul of those who repeat the holy Name of the Lord without discrimination), thinking them to be loyal followers and devotees of the Lord. But this mind is such a miserable wretch and a unbeliever that it does not abandon its habit of searching grains in a rubbish heap (i.e. it seeks pleasure in base elements and sense objects of this world.) (13)

[Note—The word 'Ghu-Binia' refers to the hen that has the habit of digging into heap of rubbish in search of grains even if it is fed properly and pampered like a favourite pet. The mind of a creature is like this greedy hen because inspite of having access to the holy name of Lord Ram which can fulfill all its needs it still prefers to dwell on mundane subjects of this mortal and deluding world of sense objects though it known very well that this world and its objects can never give it eternal peace and happiness.]

14. कासीं बिधि बसि तनु तजें हठि तनु तजें प्रयाग ।  
तुलसी जो फल सो सुलभ राम नाम अनुराग ॥

14. kāsīm̄ bidhi basi tanu tajēm̄ haṭhi tanu tajēm̄ prayāga.  
tulasī jō phala sō sulabha rāma nāma anurāga..

Tulsidas says that the spiritual fruit in the form of Moskha (emancipation and salvation) of soul which one obtains by living a righteous way of life and then dying in Kashi (Varanasi), or by leaving the mortal body forcefully (i.e. by doing severe penances and austerities, collectively called Tapa or hard spiritual practices) in Prayag (Allahabad; Triveni)—the same spiritual reward can be obtained very easily by having love, devotion and affection for Lord Ram's holy Name without having to undertake so strict and rigours methods. (14)

[Note—That is, the Moksha that one obtains in these famous pilgrim places by observing strict codes of conduct and religious vows is as easily available to a spiritual aspirant if he simply takes the shelter of Lord Ram's holy name. If he does so, then he need not even spend any time at these places, or for that matter in any other holy place or observing any other sanctified religious process, for this benefit can easily be obtained by simply

repeating the holy name of Lord Ram at the place where the aspirant is residing at present, and in the circumstance where he has to live in this world.

The holy name of Lord Ram needs no special preparations and religious observations to be effective. Rather, it is the foundation upon which all other methods for spiritual liberation and deliverance, as well as happiness and peace of the soul depend.

Kashi is called the Avimukta Kshetra—i.e. the terrestrial realm which has the mystical ability to provide the creature his liberation and deliverance. This ability comes from a boon which Lord Shiva obtained from Lord Ram according to which Lord Shiva was granted the authority and power to provide liberation to the soul of all those who die in Kashi by uttering the holy name ‘Ram’ in the ears of the dying creature. So, in the final analysis the actual Mukti (liberation and deliverance) or Moksha (emancipation and salvation) is granted by the holy name ‘Ram’ of the Lord.

Prayag is also called Triveni because it is the confluence of three holiest rivers of India—viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. They represent Lord Vishnu who is the protector and sustainer of creation, Yam who is the God of Death that is represented by Lord Shiva, and Brahma who is the creator of the visible world. These three deities represent the Trinity Gods, and in turn represent the entire cycle of birth and death—i.e. creation, its development and growth, and its final conclusion. A person who does Tapa here is able to transcend these three phases of creation by burning all his spiritual impurities in the fire of austerity and penances (Tapa) which ultimately helps to cleanse and purify his inner self known as the Atma, and thereby become equivalent to the Supreme Self known as Brahm or the Parmatma.

Tulsidas says that the same objective is fulfilled much more easily by repeating the holy name of Lord Ram—i.e. the word Mantra ‘Ram’.]

15. मीठो अरु कठवति भरो रौंताई अरु छेम ।  
स्वारथ परमारथ सुलभ राम नाम के प्रेम ॥

15. mīṭhō aru kaṭhavati bharō rauntāī aru chēma.  
svāratha paramāratha sulabha rāma nāma kē prēma..

Having sweets and that even by the bowlful, having the rights, powers and authority of a king but abstain from having ego, pride and pleasures that are associated with and an integral aspect of kingship, and simultaneously having the benefit of enjoying the comforts and pleasures of this material world of sense objects as well as being able to obtain welfare and liberation of the soul—Tulsidas says it is impossible to have these two contradictory benefits or rewards simultaneously. But the glory, the mystical power and the authority of Lord Ram’s holy name is such that it makes it possible for the living being to obtain all the rewards together and at the same time. (15)

[Note—That is, even that which is considered impossible becomes possible on the strength of Lord Ram’s holy Name. Good fortunes come to him in abundance like the bowl full of sweets. He enjoys the greatest of physical comforts and happiness like the ones enjoyed by kings, but his Atma or soul remains free from the sin of being engrossed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the material sense objects of the world and remaining indulgent in self gratification like the king does. In spite of being able to live and enjoy all the comforts and pleasures afforded in this material world he still becomes eligible to get Mukti (liberation and deliverance) of the soul. His soul is never trapped in sins and the quagmire known as the world.]

16. राम नाम सुमिरत सुजस भाजन भए कुजाति ।  
कुतरुक सुरुपुर राजमग लहत भुवन बिख्याति ॥

16. rāma nāma sumirata sujasa bhājana bha'e kujāti.  
kutaruka surupura rājamaga lahata bhuvana bikhyāti..

By remembering Lord Ram's holy Name, even lowly and unfortunate people (i.e. those of low birth such as Ganika and Ajaamil) became eligible for good fame, honour, respect and the best of luck and fortunes in this world. Worthless trees that line the route to heaven<sup>1</sup> (such as the trees near the bank of the holy river Ganges that is supposed to pave a soul's way to heaven) become famous and worthy of admiration in the three worlds (called the 'Tribhuvan'). (16)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This route to heaven has only symbolic value. These trees are used as a metaphor to imply that even worthless creatures who take the shelter of Lord Ram and his holy name become respected in the society and given high honour much like those who are renowned for their high knowledge and wisdom or for their stature in society obtained by a number of factors, such as their noble birth and worldly accomplishments.

The three worlds too have a symbolic meaning—i.e. the whole world.

Other possible meanings are the following—(a) Along the route to any place, there are three places where the itinerant traveler rests—(i) under the shade of the tree, (ii) near some water body, and (iii) a village or other inhabited area.

(b) Then again, the term 'three worlds' refer to the past life, the present life and the future life.

(c) Technically speaking, the three worlds are the terrestrial world, the nether world and the heavenly world.]

17. स्वारथ सुख सपनेहुँ अगम परमारथ न प्रबेस ।  
राम नाम सुमिरत मिटहिँ तुलसी कठिन कलेस ॥

17. svāratha sukha sapanēhum' agama paramāratha na prabēsa.  
rāma nāma sumirata miṭahim̐ tulasī kaṭhina kalēsa..

Tulsidas says that those who are so unfortunate that they neither have the minimum level of happiness or joy in this mundane world even in their dreams, nor do they have entry on the path of salvation and emancipation leading to the attainment of final spiritual bliss—even they can eliminate their miseries, agonies, torments and sufferings by remembering Lord Ram's holy Name.

[These sufferings may relate either to their existential circumstances in this mortal world or their spiritual welfare. Both are taken well care of if such unfortunate persons take the shelter of Lord Ram's holy Name.] (17)

18. मोर मोर सब कहँ कहसि तू को कहु निज नाम ।  
कै चुप साधहि सुनि समुझि कै तुलसी जपु राम ॥

18. mōra mōra saba kaham<sup>1</sup> kahasi tū kō kahu nija nāma.  
kai cupa sādhaḥi suni samujhi kai tulasī japu rāma..

[Addressing the common man who is not aware of the spiritual truths, who is surrounded by delusions and is ignorant of the reality of this world as well as his own 'self', Tulsidas says—]

You call every one 'mine' in this mortal and deluding world. Well, tell me who you are, and what your real name is<sup>1</sup>?

Tulsidas tells such an ignorant and deluded man—'Either you should realise your 'true self' (stop differentiating between myself and yourself), and having thus become truly 'realised and enlightened' you must keep quiet and turn inwards towards the Lord known as the Parmatma who resides within you as your Atma, or you should simply chant Lord Ram's holy Name (as the easier way out of this spiritual debate and moral dilemma)<sup>2</sup>. (18)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Here, Tulsidas is speaking the greatest of truths enunciated in the Upanishads about the true nature of the 'self' and the world. Briefly, the scriptures say that the living beings 'true self' is not the gross body which is visible to the world, but it is the Atma, the soul, which is pure consciousness. This Atma is the same in each living being that exists in this world. The Atma is the only entity that is the 'Truth', the reason being that 'Truth' is eternal, infinite, unchangeable, steady and imperishable, and this Atma possesses all these qualities, while the rest of the world, including the gross body in which this Atma lives, has the opposite characters—it is perishable, limited, gross and subject to change from the instant it is born. Therefore, the world is 'not the truth'. The man is so foolish that he calls this untrue world as 'mine' and neglects the 'truthful Atma' as being non-existent. What more stupid can he be?

There is another reason why Tulsidas admonishes him. The gross body is not the truthful identity of the person because it is the Atma that is his 'true self'. This Atma is the same in all the living beings as stated above. Then is it not foolish to call one person as mine and the other person as not mine?

If the word 'mine' is used to mean the material things of the world then the level of stupidity is of the extreme kind. These things are as inanimate, gross, transient and perishable as the world itself. They are more worthless than the body which harbours the Atma because the body at least has 'life' in the form of the Atma living inside it, something the material things lack.

<sup>2</sup>The first path stated here is the path of 'Gyan' or the path of knowledge and wisdom acquired by deep study of the scriptures, understanding their essence and then following the strict method prescribed by them to realise the Atma and its relation with the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma. If successful in this path, the aspirant would realise that the Atma residing in his bosom is not only his 'truthful self' but also the Parmatma who is the Supreme Being and the Holy Spirit. If the Parmatma is the cosmic Being or the cosmic Soul or the cosmic Consciousness, then the individual's Atma is the microcosmic counterpart of this Parmatma.

The path shown by the scriptures involves many steps, such as for instance doing Yoga and Dhyān—i.e. doing meditation and contemplation. Mantras are needed to focus the mind and harness the cosmic energy in one's spiritual practices. It is not that easy as it seems, for there are very rigid methods if one is to be successful in them. The many paths prescribed by the scriptures require the spiritual aspirant to observe so many difficult sacraments, religious vows, observances and strictures that they create a huge block for him and act as more of a deterrent in his spiritual progress instead of coming to his help.

As compared to them, the path of having devotion for Lord Ram and repeating his holy Name is very easy as it has no restrictions and rigidity associated with any of the other paths. One can repeat the name 'Ram' anytime and any where in this world.

Ram is the Parmatma or the Supreme Being referred to in the scriptures in a manifested form. The labyrinth of Mantras is taken care of by the simple name of the Lord, i.e. 'Ram'. In comparison to complicated Mantras that are difficult to pronounce, the word 'Ram' is very easy and convenient.

Tulsidas advises the common man by saying that if he is not sure of himself and do not have the mental aptitude or level of intelligence to grasp the profound truths preached by the scriptures, then he should not worry because an easy and hassle-free spiritual path is available to him. And this path is to take the shelter of Lord Ram's holy Name. When a man does so he would not need to spend his time and energy to understand the complicated doctrines and philosophies enunciated by the Upanishads and the other scriptures in order to unravel the truth hidden in them, but get the same benefit very easily by repeating the holy Name of the Lord, i.e. the word 'Ram'. This word is deemed to be the panacea of all spiritual ills and is a powerful Mantra or spiritual formula that would have the same spiritual effects that comes by understanding the essence of the scriptures and repeating long-winding hymns and texts.

The main reason why a man studies the scriptures is that he wishes to find the 'truth' of the world and his own self as explained in them, and to attain liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death and their attendant miseries and torments by taking the path prescribed in these scriptures. The scriptures are voluminous and cumbersome and require an expert to be properly interpreted and explained. They are like a labyrinth which more often than not become entangling. Tulsidas wonders why would a man wish to get himself entangled in their web when he is telling him the essence and the truth in simple language—and it is to take the shelter of Lord Ram, the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma, and repeat his holy Name as the Mantra for spiritual well-being.

The term 'Parmatma' literally means 'the supreme transcendental Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, the supreme Soul, the divine and supreme Holy Spirit, the Supreme Being'. Parmatma is the supreme transcendental Soul, while Atma is the individual soul of the creature. It is the 'Parmatma', the cosmic Soul at the macro level of the creation that has revealed or manifested itself as the individual soul of the creature as his Atma at the micro level of this creation. This can be visualised by a simple example—the drop of water in the tumbler is the Atma of the creature, while the body of water in the fathomless and measureless ocean is the Parmatma.

The term Parmatma has been explained in—(i) The *Niralamb Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 7-8; (ii) Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 4; (iii) The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 41-42.]

19. हम लखि लखहि हमार लखि हम हमार के बीच ।  
तुलसी अलखहि का लखहि राम नाम जप नीच ॥

19. hama lakhi lakhahi hamāra lakhi hama hamāra kē bīca.  
tulasī alakhahi kā lakhahi rāma nāma japa nīca..

[Addressing a mystic who chanted 'Alakha', meaning an entity that is not visible and referring to the Supreme Being who has no form and attributes, Tulsidas admonishes him, saying :-]

‘Oh you Mystic! First you must understand the true nature and form of your own ‘self’, and it is only then that you become eligible to talk about invisible and formless ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being, to whom you refer by using the term ‘Alakha. After that, recognise the ‘Maya’ (delusions) that separates your ‘true self’ and Brahm. Oh you wretched! How can you understand or comprehend the Supreme Being who is invisible and unknown without first understanding these three entities—the truth about your own ‘self’, the truth about Brahm, and the effects of Maya. Hence, chant Lord Ram's holy Name instead of shouting 'Alakha', literally meaning ‘the one who cannot be seen’. (19)

[Note—Tulsidas admonishes the mystic and says that he goes about shouting ‘Alakha’ as if he has known the truth of the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma or the cosmic Soul of creation who cannot be seen as he is beyond the reach of the senses of perception. To know the Parmatma is not that easy as it seems. The mystic does not even know what his true ‘self’ is, and therefore he has no right to preach about the supreme Self of this creation.

From the metaphysical point of view, the truthful ‘self’ of a living being—called the Jiva—is his Atma which is pure consciousness. This individual Atma is a microcosmic form of the supreme Atma which is the Cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma. Both the ‘Atma’ and the ‘Parmatma’ are the same; the only difference is in the plane of existence. Whereas the Jiva has a gross body and a gross existence, the Parmatma is subtle and formless. But the ‘consciousness’ that is called the Atma or the soul is the same in both the cases. Both the Atma and the Parmatma are ‘Alakh’—i.e. they cannot be seen. The Maya is that delusion which separates the Atma from the Parmatma; the Jiva begins to treat himself as separate from the Parmatma under the influence of the Maya.

So Tulsidas basically says that a mystic who goes on his rounds shouting ‘Alakh’ as if he has come to know the Supreme Being who is invisible is actually deceiving himself as the people around him. Will he tell truthfully if he has seen the Atma that is residing in his own bosom? Well then, if he cannot see something so close, he has no right to claim to have seen or known an entity that is beyond the reach of the mind and its organs of perception—such as the eye.]

20. राम नाम अवलंब बिनु परमारथ की आस ।  
बरषत बारिद बूँद गहि चाहत चढ़न अकास ॥

20. rāma nāma avalamba binu paramāratha kī āsa.  
baraṣata bārīda būṁḍa gahi cāhata caṛhana akāsa..

Those who expect their emancipation and salvation without taking the refuge of Lord Ram's holy Name are trying to ascend to the sky by holding the falling rain drops. [That is, as it is impossible to rise to the sky astride falling rain drops, so it is equally impossible to attain emancipation and salvation without repeating and taking the aid of Lord Ram's holy Name.] (20)

[Note—In this context Tulsidas says in his book of prayers called the ‘Vinai Patrika’, in its verse no. 66 and 129 amongst others, that no other mean is successful in providing spiritual liberation and liberation to the creature if that mean is not accompanied by the holy Name of Lord Ram. In other words, the word ‘Ram’ is the key to all spiritual welfare and attainments. Without this ‘master key’ the treasury of spiritual well being cannot be opened.]

21. तुलसी हठि हठि कहत नित चित सुनि हित करि मानि ।  
लाभ राम सुमिरन बड़ो बड़ी बिसारें हानि ॥

21. tulasī haṭhi haṭhi kahata nita cita suni hita kari māni.  
lābha rāma sumirana baṛō baṛī bisārēm hāni..

Tulsidas addresses his mind and sub-conscious with earnest sincerity, and advises them—  
'Oh my Chitta! Listen to what I say as something that is most beneficial for you and the best path that would provide for your welfare. Remembering Lord Ram is the greatest profit (benefit, reward or fruit of any endeavour) that you can ever have, and forgetting the Lord is the biggest loss for you and the biggest mistake you will ever make. So pay heed to me and focus yourself (i.e. attention of the mind and the sub-conscious) on Lord Ram's holy form and divine Name.' (21)

[Note—Refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precedes Doha 112; and Vinai Patrika verse no. 67.]

22. बिगरी जनम अनेक की सुधरै अबहीं आजु ।  
होहि राम को नाम जपु तुलसी तजि कुसमाजु ॥

22. bigarī janama anēka kī sudharai abahīr̄m āju.  
hōhi rāma kō nāma japu tulasī taji kusamāju..

Tulsidas advises a seeker: 'You should abandon all bad company and thought from your mind, and instead you should identify yourself with Lord Ram (i.e. surrender yourself to Ram) and repeat the Lord's divine Name. By doing so, all the accumulated bad effects of the deeds done by you in so many previous births can be rectified immediately and instantly.' (22)

[Note—Refer Vinai Patrika verse no. 193. The 'bad company and bad thought' are those that keep the creature entangled in the web of this deluding world and eclipsed in the darkness of ignorance. Such a creature remains permanently trapped in the cesspool of birth and death and their attendant horrors.

If, however, such a creature is wise enough to take the shelter of Lord Ram and his holy Name then his liberation and deliverance from this quagmire is assured.]

23. प्रीति प्रतीति सुरीति सों राम राम जपु राम ।  
तुलसी तेरो है भलो आदि मध्य परिनाम ॥

23. prīti pratīti surīti sōm̄ rāma rāma japu rāma.  
tulasī tērō hai bhalō ādi madhya parināma..

Tulsidas says that one should do Japa<sup>1</sup> (repetition) of Lord Ram's holy Name with great faith, intense love, a high level of devotion and a firm conviction, as well as according to the prescribed method, because by doing so one will have all-round welfare and access to all types of good fortunes in the present time, in the middle of the future, and even in the distant future. (23)

[Note—Refer verse no. 228 of Vinai Patrika.

<sup>1</sup>Japa—The general meaning and understanding of the word ‘Japa’ is ‘constant repetition of any holy name of the God or any divine word or Mantra’. This verse tells us that if that is not possible for a man, or if he is not interested in it, then the next best option for him is to read good books. This will have similar good effects on his mind as doing ‘Japa’. Because if the mind is not kept busy, it will gravitate towards corrupt and pervert thinking; it cannot sit idle. If it is not possible to leash it by means of chanting or repetition of ‘Mantras’, then at least it should be reined in by reading good books instead of allowing it to wander aimlessly here and there like a vagrant indulging in useless roaming about. Remember, an idle mind is the workshop of devil. Refer: *Trishikhi Brahmno-panishad*, verse nos. 2/28-34 of Shukla Yajur Veda in this context.

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 2 says that Japa is one of the ten Niyams or spiritual observances that any spiritual aspirant should practice. It then defines Japa and its types as follows—“Japa is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one’s Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering and it’s multiple times more beneficial.”

The *importance and benefits of doing Japa* has been emphasized in the Atharva Veda’s Gopal Purva Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 16 as follows—“Those devotees who do Japa (repetition) with the holy Mantra of the Lord having five steps and eighteen letters by prefixing them with the ethereal salutary word ‘OM’ standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness<sup>1</sup>, are the ones to whom the Lord voluntarily reveals his true divine and holy form in the form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma. That is, such persons become self-realised and enlightened. This is also tantamount to Brahm-realisation.

Hence, those who are desirous of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this delusory, mortal and entrapping world are advised to do Japa with this holy Mantra.’ (16).

The word ‘Japa’ is derived from the root word ‘jap’ meaning to utter. Hence, doing Japa means to utter or repeat the different Mantra which are spiritual formulas in the form of sounds, syllables, letters, words, phrases or sentences such as complete hymns that have a high level of cosmic spiritual energy inherent in them.

The Bhagvat Gita, 10/25 considers Japa as a manifestation of the Lord God (or the worshipped deity) himself.

Japa has three forms—(i) When the Mantras are said aloud it is called ‘Vaikhari Japa’ or ‘Vaachika Japa’. (ii) When the Mantras are inaudible and merely uttered or whispered, the Japa is called ‘Upamshu’. And (iii) when it is done mentally without opening the mouth, the Japa is called ‘Maansika’.

Further, there are different classes of Japa depending upon their usage as follows—

- (i) Nitya Japa—that Japa which is done daily and regularly.
- (ii) Naimittik Japa—that Japa which is done on special occasions—such as on the days of eclipses or special worship days.
- (iii) Kaamyas Japa—that Japa which is done for the fulfillment of certain desires—such as acquisition of wealth or success in any endeavour.

(iv) Praayaschita Japa—that Japa which is done as a penance, for repentance or for expiation of sins.

(v) Ajapaa-Japa—that which is done along with the passage of breath through the body as inhalation and exhalation. Usually the Hans Mantra is used for this by acclaimed ascetics.

(vi) Vilom Japa—that Japa in which the Mantra is repeated in the reverse order. This sort of Japa is usually done to counter the negative effects of black magic rites.

(vii) Likhit Japa—that Japa in which the Mantras are written down on paper.

Since each Mantra has a Rishi (one who first witnessed the revelation of the particular Mantra and experienced its profound effects), a Chanda (poetical style), and a Devta (the deity to whom the Mantra is dedicated), the devotee is required to pay his homage to all of them before starting to repeat the Mantra or do Japa.

Usually a prayer rosary is used to do Japa, but when one has become spiritually uplifted or has practices doing Japa over a long period of time the need for the rosary is not felt. Then the Japa becomes automatic and natural to him.]

24. दंपति रस रसना दसन परिजन बदन सुगेह ।  
तुलसी हर हित बरन सिसु संपति सहज सनेह ॥

24. dampati rasa rasanā dasana parijana badana sugēha.  
tulasī hara hita barana sisu sampati sahaja sanēha..

[Tulsidas describes a wise man's life in a metaphoric way—] The sweet taste of Lord Ram's holy Name (i.e. the sense of euphoria and exhilaration that comes by saying it) and the tongue (which says the Name) are like husband and wife, the teeth are like the relatives, the mouth is a beautiful home, Lord Shiva's beloved two syllables 'Ra' and 'Ma' (of the holy Name 'Raam') are like two adorable children, and natural affection towards them (Ra + Ma) is the wealth of a person.

[That is, a wise man who seeks liberation and deliverance from this world inspite of having to live in it to fulfill his obligations can easily do so by taking refuge in the name of the Lord, and repeating this holy Name which would help him break free from all worldly fetters even without his knowing of them. A man who repeats the holy Name of Lord Ram leads a happy and contented life like a householder who is so fortunate that he has a compatible and obedient wife, two adorable sons, well placed, respectable and cooperative relatives, and a home and hearth of which he is proud and where he finds peace and happiness.] (24)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 10; Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22; Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; and Uttar Kand, Doha no. 46. (ii) Vinai Patrika verse nos. 129, 170, 237.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 10—  
“The Lord's holy name 'RAM' is the most gracious and benevolent element in the entire pantheon of words and letters that constitute literature and the spoken word. This name is the holiest and most divine letter, and this fact is endorsed and reiterated by the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. It is the cause of all goodness, auspiciousness and good fortunes on the one hand, and the eliminator of the opposite circumstances. The wise god, Lord Shiva, and goddess Uma, his divine consort, therefore repeat this holy name.”

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20 says “the two letters of the Lord’s name, viz. ‘Ra’ and ‘Ma’, are like the two eyes for the entire language consisting of letters or alphabets.” That is, even as one cannot see the world without the eyes, true knowledge contained in the scriptures cannot be known without having faith and devotion for the Lord known by his holy name ‘Ram’. This is because all the scriptures, whether written or taught, are based on letters, and if the body of the knowledge symbolized by the scriptures loses its eye it cannot enable the person to see what is contained in them.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 asserts “ascetics repeat the holy name of the Lord, i.e. the word ‘Ram’, to remain spiritually awake in the darkness of the night symbolized by this world of delusions”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108, goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva, wonders why Lord Shiva always repeats the holy name ‘Ram’ when she says—“Oh Lord, you repeat the name ‘Ram-Ram’ day and night without break; what is the mystery behind it?”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 46, Lord Ram has himself answered this basic question. He says “he who is completely submerged in the thoughts of my divine virtues and glories, who remains ever engrossed in repeating my divine name, and who has abandoned all worldly taints as Mamta (attachments), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy, pride and vanity) and Moha (delusions, infatuations for the material sense objects of the world as well as the body)—verily, they are the ones who experience what is known as truthful and the highest kind of spiritual bliss and happiness”.

25. बरषा रितु रघुपति भगति तुलसी सालि सुदास ।  
रामनाम बर बरन जुग सावन भादव मास ॥

25. *baraṣā ritu raghupati bhagati tulasī sāli sudāsa.*  
*rāmanāma bara barana juga sāvana bhādava māsa..*

Tulsidas says that devotion for Lord Ram is like the rainy season, the best devotees and followers of the Lord are the grains, and the two syllables 'Ra' and 'Ma' of Lord Ram's holy Name are the two Hindu months of Saawan and Bhaadon.

[Even as the grains sown during the rainy season consisting of these two months of Saawan and Bhaadon yield rich harvest, the devotee too gets immense pleasure, peace, happiness and rich benefits in spiritual terms by devotionally chanting Ram's holy Name. Just like a good harvest brings cheer to the farmer and the society at large, repeating Lord Ram's holy name brings cheer to the soul of the devotee as well as to the rest of the society which hears this divine Name.] (25)

[Note—This Doha appears in the Ram Charit Manas as Doha no. 19 of Baal Kand. Refer also to: Vinai Patrika verse no. 221.]

26. राम नाम नर केसरी कनककसिपु कलिकाल ।  
जापक जन प्रहलाद जिमि पालिहि दलि सुरसाल ॥

26. *rāma nāma nara kēsari kanakakasipu kalikāla.*  
*jāpaka jana prahalāda jimi pālihi dali surasāla..*

Lord Ram's holy Name is like a Man-Lion (an incarnation of God, called Narsingh) and Kali (a personified form of the present Hindu era called Kali-yuga) is the demon named Hiranya-Kasipu. Even as the Man-Lion crushed (killed) the demon who was tormenting the devotee Prahalad<sup>1</sup> (to abandon his devotion for the Lord), the Name of the Lord can destroy all evil forces tormenting the devotees. (26)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The story of Prahalad, his demonic father Hiranyakasipu, and Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is briefly as follows—

Prahalad was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was the eldest son of the king of demons, named Hiranyakashipu. His mother was Kayaadhu, the daughter of the demon king named Jambhaasur. Both the mother and the son were initiated by sage Narad who had inspired them to become devotees of Lord Vishnu.

The story of Prahalad is narrated in detail in (i) Vishnu Puran, 1/17-20, and (ii) Bhagvata Puran, 7/3-10.

The father, being a demon, was an inveterate opponent of Lord Vishnu, and so naturally he couldn't tolerate his own son worshipping his enemy Lord Vishnu. He tried his best to dissuade Prahalad from being devoted to the Lord, but the son had immense faith in the Lord and would not be deterred by his father's threats and scolding. Hiranyakashipu tried even cruel means to change Prahalad, including an attempt to burn in a raging fire, but the child devotee escaped unscathed. So, finally the demon father decided to kill him personally. Prahalad was tied to a pillar and asked 'Where is your Lord Vishnu? Is he in this pillar also?' The child replied in the affirmative. Then his father swung the sword to kill him, and it was at this instant that Lord Vishnu revealed himself as the famous incarnation known as 'Nrisingh'—the upper half of his body was like a lion and the lower half was like a man. An Upanishad titled 'Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad' of the Atharva Veda is dedicated to this Lord.

Lord Nrisingh snatched the sword and laid the demon father across his laps. He then tore through his abdomen, and yanked out his intestines, thereby killing the demon. He then picked up the child Prahalad on to his laps and lovingly licked and caressed him like a lion does to its cub. But Prahalad prayed to the Lord to provide deliverance to the soul of his father, at which the Lord liberated the demon from all his sins.

Prahalad is credited with enumerating the nine-fold path of Bhakti, the path of devotion for the Lord, in the epic Bhaagvata, 7/5/23.

Lord Dattatreya, one of the manifestations of Lord Vishnu, had preached Prahalad about the eclectic state of Avadhut Sanyasi in the form of a huge python, known as Ajgara. Prahalad had spiritual discussions also with other sages such as Hansa (the divine Swan, an incarnation of Vishnu), and with Indra (the king of Gods).

Prahalad had four brothers, three sons and a daughter. The king of demons known as Bali, who was famous for his charities and donations, was a grandson of Prahalad. The incarnations of Vishnu as Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, is related to this legendary king.

Refer also to Doha no. 299 of this book.

This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas as Doha no. 27 of Baal Kand.]

27. राम नाम कलि कामतरु राम भगति सुरधेनु ।  
सकल सुमंगल मूल जग गुरुपद पंकज रेनु ॥

27. rāma nāma kali kāmataru rāma bhagati suradhēnu.  
sakala sumāṅgala mūla jaga gurupada paṅkaja rēnu..

In the era of Kali<sup>1</sup>, Lord Ram's holy Name is like the all wish fulfilling tree called the Kaam Taru (i.e. the Kalpa Tree) which can give the desired fruits (benefits) to the devotee<sup>2</sup>. Devotion for the Lord is like the all wish fulfilling Surdhenu (also known as the Kamdhenu cow which is the celestial cow of Gods that also fulfills all desires) for him<sup>3</sup>, and the dust from the feet of the Guru<sup>4</sup> (wise, moral teacher) is the root of all spiritual welfare and good fortunes (i.e. good luck and auspiciousness) for him (the devotee). (27)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>*Kaliyug* is the fourth of the four epoch Hindu cycle of creation and destruction.

The four Yugs are the following four eras or phases of one cycle of creation and destruction—the first is the Sat-yug, the second is the Treta-yug, the third is the Dwaparyug, and the fourth is the current Kali-yug.

The Satayug which was the great Vedic period of fire sacrifices, the Tretayug culminated with the incarnation of Lord Ram, the Dwaparyug ended with Lord Krishna's incarnation, and the Kaliyug would end with the great deluge or Doomsday when the entire world would be drowned in water. The next Kalpa would come after that in a cyclic form. This happens because at the fag end of Kaliyug, sins and evils would have reached such a crescendo that the Supreme Being no longer is able to tolerate it though he is most tolerant, magnanimous and forgiving, and decides to finally wind up the whole thing by punishing the world by clean sweeping the slate. Only the righteous and auspicious few survive who would become the progenitors of the next cycle.

The Satayug is also called Kritiyug because elaborate fire sacrifices were done during this phase. It is equivalent to 4800 divine years of Gods, and 17,28,000 human years.

The Tretayug is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years.

The Dwaparyug is equivalent to 2400 divine years of Gods, and 8,64,000 human years.

The Kaliyug is equivalent to 1200 divine years of Gods, and 4,32,000 human years.

<sup>2</sup>*Kalpa Tree*—refer: Doha nos. 11, 28 and 183. Also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27. Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 36.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27 says “in the era known as Kali-yug (the present period of time), the Lord's holy name ‘Ram’ is a fulfiller of all wishes and desires; it ensures well-being even after death; and is like one's loving and caring parent in this world”.

<sup>3</sup>*Surdhenu*—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 and 9-10 that precede Doha no. 120; Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114.

<sup>4</sup>The *Guru*—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1; and Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2.

Now, let us see briefly the significance of a Guru and who he actually is. Who is a true Guru? This is a question which has baffled many a scholars. The word ‘Guru’ simply means a person who is one's teacher—be it in the field of knowledge that pertains to the world or the field that relates to the spiritual. He is the person who makes a person acquire knowledge that he did not have earlier.

The Upanishads explain the term Guru in detail and list the virtues that a wise and enlightened Guru is supposed to possess. They also outline the characteristics that a good disciple must have, and how best one can choose a good Guru.

The word *Guru* has two parts—viz. ‘Gu’ meaning darkness, and ‘Ru’ meaning light. Hence the word ‘Guru’ means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters. Therefore he is an exalted, revered and much sought after person who

can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge and guides him whenever he finds himself in a moral dilemma and quandary. He is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual. The disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal or blackmail. He is the one who is expected to have risen above all kinds of vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. Therefore it is deemed that only a person of high mental, intellectual, spiritual and ethical caliber can become a true Guru.

A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the ‘Trinity Gods’—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is ‘God like’ because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. The Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 explicitly asserts that Lord Shiva is the universal Guru of all, and that the Guru is Shiva personified in this form.

Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies.

When the teacher (Guru) is especially pleased with a particular student, he would naturally be inclined to pay more attention to him as compared to others. This is natural for him because he sees in this student a spark of great future, a soul who would sincerely and honestly carry forward the teacher’s legacy forward and make his teachings as well as his name and fame immortal. As for other less brilliant and devoted students, or those who are just mediocre and run-of-the-mill sort, the teacher has no such grand expectations from them. So he prefers to impart the best of education to his special and most-favoured student. The teacher would even unravel top secrets to him because he is confident that this disciple would never misuse them and also understand these secrets correctly and properly. This relationship is just like a father of more than one son. The father would have a natural love for the son in whom he sees a bright future and from whom he expects the family’s good name and fortune to get a boost as compared to those sons who are like blights on the family.

The Guru is regarded as a personification of the great knowledge of the scriptures (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 10), as well as Lord Maha Vishnu himself (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1<sup>st</sup> stanza). It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the eternal ‘soul’ and not the physical gross body is venerable.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its opening verse no. 1 emphasises the importance of true Guru and says that he is the primary source of Shakti (strength, energy, vitality, vigour and authority) for the spiritual aspirant and his primary advisor and moral support. The aspirant relies on the authority of the Guru and his knowledge to faithfully move ahead in a field which is still unknown to him and un-

chartered by him, without the fear of going on the wrong path or falling prey to uncertainties.

The wise, learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, guide and teacher) is a true advisor and guide for a spiritual aspirant. He is the one who acts as the primary source of strength and support that empowers the person to move ahead on his spiritual path and ultimately attain success in his endeavours. He is the virtual 'Shakti' or source of energy, motivation, strength, power and authority that provides the necessary support, impetus and dynamism to all the efforts made by the aspirant to reach his goal in life successfully. But for this to materialize, the Guru himself should be an expert in his field, and inclined to helpful and supporting; he should be a teacher, a preceptor, a motivator, an advisor, a friend and a guide all rolled into one.]

28. राम नाम कलि कामतरु सकल सुमंगल कंद ।  
सुमिरत करतल सिद्धि सब पग पग परमानंद ॥

28. rāma nāma kali kāmataru sakala sumāṅgala kanda.  
sumirata karatala sid'dhi saba paga paga paramānanda..

Lord Ram's holy Name is like a Kalpa Tree (the celestial tree of Gods and provider of fruits in the form of wish fulfillment) in the era of Kali, and is the root (source) of all good fortunes. Remembrance of Lord Ram's Name provides all the renowned Siddhis<sup>1</sup> (mystical powers and abilities as well as successes and acclaim) to the person as if they are already present on one's palm (i.e. already available to the devotee). Such a devotee enjoys supreme and eternal form of bliss and spiritual ecstasy (known as Parmaanand) at each moment and at every step of the way in his life.<sup>2</sup> (28)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *Siddhis*—There are said to be various kinds of Siddhis numbering from nine to eight, or even two chief ones. The word means spiritual and mystical powers as well as great achievements that are not normally available to an ordinary creature. The term 'Siddhi' has been explained in a note of Doha no. 229 of this book.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 22. It says—"Spiritual aspirants repeat the holy name of the Lord faithfully, with due diligence, and with great concentration. By doing so they are able to acquire great mystical powers called the various Siddhis, such as Anima etc."

This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnaawali of Tulsidas as verse no. 3/4/4.

<sup>2</sup>*Parmaanand* simply means 'the supreme form of bliss and ecstasy'.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 223. It says "wherever, in whichever direction, the two brothers Ram and Laxman went, there was extreme bliss, joy and ecstasy all around". This is said in the context of the two brothers' touring the city of Janakpur where they had gone to attend the bow-breaking ceremony in connection with the marriage of Sita. The idea is that wherever the Lord goes, there is happiness and joy.]

29. जथा भूमि सब बीजमय नखत निवास अकास ।  
राम नाम सब धरममय जानत तुलसीदास ॥

29. jathā bhūmi saba bījamaya nakhata nivāsa akāsa.  
rāma nāma saba dharamamaya jānata tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas knows the esoteric secret that Lord Ram's holy Name is richly embedded and endowed with all the grand, magnificent and eclectic virtues that come under the ambit of the term 'Dharma' (religion, probity, propriety, auspiciousness and righteousness) like the earth which is richly provided with (i.e. contains) all types of seeds, and the sky which is full of countless stars.

[Just like the earth that contains numerous seeds or the sky that is dotted with numerous stars, Lord Ram's holy Name also possesses all the auspicious virtues that are collectively called Dharma. In other words, all the benefits of having good virtues and righteous qualities that one expects to acquire in this world can be had by simply having this one single Name of the Lord as one's priceless possession. All the virtuousness associated with Dharma will come automatically to a person who repeats the holy Name of Lord Ram.] (29)

[Note—Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika verse no. 131, 226. (ii) Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 64. (iii) Kavಿತawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 72.]

30. सकल कामना हीन जे राम भगति रस लीन ।  
नाम सुप्रेम पियूष हृद तिन्हहुँ किए मन मीन ॥

30. sakala kāmanā hīna jē rāma bhagati rasa līna.  
nāma suprēma piyūṣa hr̥ḍa tin̄hahūṁ ki'ē mana mīna..

Those who have tasted the juice of Lord Ram's devotion and love without hankering for any type of desires are like a fish that floats in the pond of nectar and derives immense pleasure and bliss from it.

[This fish will not like to leave this pond of nectar for another pond of plain water. Similarly, one who has tasted the nectar of bliss, ecstasy, happiness and peace that comes with Lord Ram's holy Name would never bargain it for anything else in this world.] (30)

[Note—This Doha appears as Doha no. 22 of Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.]

31. ब्रह्म राम ते नामु बड़ बर दायक बर दानि ।  
राम चरित सत कोटि महँ लिय महेस जियँ जानि ॥

31. brahma rāma tēṁ nāmu baṛa bara dāyaka bara dāni.  
rāma carita sata kōṭi maham̃ liya mahēsa jiyam̃ jāni..

The holy Name of Lord Ram is greater than and superior to Brahm (the Absolute Authority of creation and the Supreme Being) so much so that it bestows blessings even on those (Gods) who themselves are capable of giving boons to others. [In other words, the Gods derive their mystical powers and authority to grant boons to others by invoking Lord Ram's holy Name. It is this name that empowers them to bestow boons on other creatures. So Tulsidas wonders that if this is the case, then why should he not ask or

request or seek from Lord Ram instead of wasting time and energy in attempting to appease the Gods who have no power of their own. Why not approach the Emperor (Lord Ram) directly instead of begging to junior courtiers (Gods).]

Wise as he is, Lord Shiva selected these two syllables (Ra and Ma) which constitute the Lord's holy Name 'Ram' out of 100 crore (millions of ) verses comprising the story of Lord Ram in its myriad variations<sup>2</sup>. (31)

[Note—This is Doha no. 25 of Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 23. They have been explained in a note of Doha no. 7 above.

The term 'Brahm' refers to the Supreme Being also known as the Parmatma. He is invisible, formless and without attributes. The same Brahm has revealed or manifested as Lord Ram who has a known visible form with divine attributes.

Tulsidas says that while Brahm is too difficult to comprehend and an abstract entity, and Lord Ram in his physical form took birth and lived in Treta Yuga which was long ago, his divine Name exists even today amongst us and can be invoked at any instant of life. Whereas the presence of Lord Ram may not be feasible under all circumstances because the Lord had a physical gross body which is subjected to so many laws of Nature, the Lord's holy Name is ubiquitous, omnipresent and immanent in this creation just like Brahm who is also omnipresent and all-pervading. But whereas realisation of Brahm is a cumbersome process, the path of invoking the holy Name of the Lord is extremely easy and convenient. The name can be said at any time and under any circumstance with no effort at all.

Again, while attainment of Brahm requires employment of various Mantras as prescribed by the scriptures, the name of Lord Ram, i.e. the word 'Ram' is a Mantra itself. Since Lord Ram is Brahm personified, the Name 'Ram' is directly related to the Supreme Being. No other mediums are required to access the Lord except this single word 'Ram'.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: Vinai Patrika verse no. 254.]

32. सबरी गीध सुसेवकनि सुगति दीन्हि रघुनाथ ।  
नाम उधारे अमित खल बेद बिदित गुन गाथ ॥

32. sabarī gīdha susēvakani sugati dīnhi raghunātha.  
nāma udhārē amita khala bēda bidita guna gātha..

Raghunath (the Lord of king Raghu's dynasty; Lord Ram) gave immortality to only a few faithful servants (i.e. devotees) such as Sabari<sup>1</sup> (a low caste woman) and Gidha<sup>2</sup> (a vulture called Jatau), whereas his holy Name has delivered (liberated) numerous wretches – a fact that is known well by the Vedas, and they have unequivocally sung (lauded and honoured) the glory of Lord's holy Name. (32)

[Note—This is Doha no. 24 of Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

<sup>1</sup>Sabari—The entire episode of Sabari appears in Ram Charit Manas in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 34, to Doha no. 36. In these verses of Ram Charit Manas, the episode of Sabari is described in detail.

According to the story of Ramayana, Shabari was a woman belonging to a forest tribe called 'Sabari'. This tribe was classified as Shudras or lower caste, and sustained themselves by collecting and selling honey and fruits from the forest trees. Being of a low caste, she is said have been ostracized by others. She served a sage named Matanga very

devotedly. The sage was a realised soul, and so pleased was he with her devotion and service that he blessed her at the time of leaving his body that she would find her emancipation and salvation when Lord Ram visits her while searching for Sita. Like her Guru, Shabari too left her mortal body after having the privilege of meeting and worshipping the Lord in person by lighting the pyre herself with her mystical powers. According to Adhyatma Ramayana of sage Veda Vyas, it was Lord Ram who had performed her last rites himself, a rare privilege that was even denied to his own worldly father Dasrath.

Sabari used to live in the hermitage where earlier sage Matanga lived. This hermitage was near Mount Rishyamook where Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of the king of monkeys Vali, lived with his close confidantes Hanuman, Jamvant, Naal and Neel etc. This place was about ten Yojans or eighty miles from Kishkindha, the capital of the forest kingdom of which Vali was the king.

There is a story about Lake Pampa on the banks of which she lived. The great sage Matang had his hermitage here. Shabari used to get up very early and clean the path around this lake before her Guru went there for his daily bath and other chores. It so happened that one day, the sages and seers who lived in that area saw her cleaning the path leading to the lake very early in the morning. Since she was of a low caste, they cursed and scolded her because they regarded her appearance as defiling the place. This misplaced notion of superiority and high stature immensely displeased the Lord. So as soon as those haughty and proud sages went and took a dip in that lake, its water turned turbid, polluted and infested by worms and filth. When Sri Ram had gone there during his forest exile, the sages and seers requested him to purify that lake. Sri Ram, being all-knowing, knew the secret behind that pollution, and in order to teach those sages a lesson of their lives, he asked them to request Sabari to take a dip in it. As soon as she did it, the water regained its former pristine purity, and the lake its former exceptional scenic beauty. This made the haughty sages and seers feel ashamed at their ignorance and behaviour.

According to the story of Ramayana, Sri Ram had visited her hermitage and enjoyed the fruits offered by her just like he would have enjoyed them if they were given to him by his mother. In the 'Ram-Sarawali of Surdas', verse no. 11, it is said that 'Sabari was a long time ardent devotee and a humble follower of Raghupati (Sri Ram). He accepted and ate fruits offered by her, preached her on the concept of complete devotion, and then liberated her by giving her residence in his own abode.'

It was Sabari who had advised Sri Ram to go towards the Rishyamook mountain and make friends with Sugriv, the monkey king, who in turn would help the Lord in finding out Sita and freeing her from the clutches of her captors.

<sup>2</sup>*Giddha*—The entire episode of the Giddha (the vulture Jatou) appears in Ram Charit Manas in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30 to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Jatou was a vulture by birth but a great devotee of Lord Ram. When Ravana was rushing towards Lanka on his chariot with Sita as captive, it was Jatou who had fought fiercely with him in an attempt to rescue Sita from the demon's clutches. But ultimately Ravana had cut off his wings, and so the unfortunate Jatou fell down on the ground, mortally wounded. He kept repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram and managed to hold on to his life till the time the Lord came there in his search of Sita. Jatou told the Lord about Ravana stealing Sita and proceeding towards Lanka in the south direction. Then Jatou left his mortal coil while Lord Ram held him in his arms, caressing him and wiping his wounds with his own hands and using the plaits of his long hairs. When Jatou died, the Lord did his last rites himself—a privilege that no one else except one other character, i.e. Sabari, had got in the whole story of the Ramayana. Even Dasrath, who was the

worldly father of the Lord, was denied this honour when he died at Ayodhya after the Lord was sent to exile in the forest because at that time only Bharat and Shatrughan were present in the city, and so his last rites were performed by Bharat. This episode is narrated in all the versions of the Ramayana, e.g. in the Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, in its Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29 right upto Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

It ought to be noted here that prior to this, Lord Ram has met Jatau earlier in the forest and befriended him. Jatau was a friend of Dasrath, and he had assured the Lord that he will stay in close proximity with them (Ram, Sita and Laxman) in the forest to keep a vigilant eye and give them protection to the best of his might—this is narrated in the Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-7. This fact is also endorsed by Tulsidas in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 12, stanza no. 2.

The glorious way that Jatau died has been lauded and applauded by Tulsidas in Dohawali verse nos. 222-227. Refer also to Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 12-16.

“Lord Ram lifted Jatau onto his lap and washed his wounds with the tears streaming from his (Ram’s) eyes”—this is said in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 13, stanza no. 1, while Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30 says that “the Lord moved his loving hand caressingly on his head”.

Jatau’s special death which made him a subject of jealousy and envy for all other exalted persons as narrated in the Doha above has one unique aspect—in spite of him being a vulture by birth and body, he was given an honour befitting a father by none else than the Supreme Being (Lord Ram) himself when the Lord performed his last rites himself—refer: (i) Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no. 4; verse no. 14, stanza no. 1; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32; (iii) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 16, line no. 3; (iv) Doha no. 227 of Dohawali; (v) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 164, stanza no. 2; verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1 says that Lord Ram offered a ‘Pinda’, a ball of cereals that is offered to the soul of one’s departed parent, to Jatau after the bird left its physical body.]

33. राम नाम पर नाम ते प्रीति प्रतीति भरोस ।  
सो तुलसी सुमिरत सकल सगुन सुमंगल कोस ॥

33. rāma nāma para nāma tēm prīti pratīti bharōsa.  
sō tulasī sumirata sakala saguna sumāngala kōsa..

Tulsidas says those who are wholly devoted to Lord Ram's holy Name, have great affection for it, a firm belief in it, and have no other support in this world except the strength of Lord’s holy Name—such persons become a treasury of all good virtues and auspiciousness as soon as they remember the holy Name of the Lord. (33)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10 that says “the Lord’s holy name is the one which provides all goodness, auspiciousness and good fortunes, and eliminates the bad, the misfortunes and the unholiness. It is therefore repeated by Lord Shiva and goddess Uma, this divine consort”.

For instance, when one takes a bath in a holy river, he gets drenched and all his dirt gets washed-off. Similarly, when one remains submerged in the thoughts of the Lord and symbolically scrub his innerself by repeating the holy name of the Lord, all his worldly taints as well as the impurities that sully his innerself are washed-off. This notion is cited in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 34 which says—“groups of pious men take a

bath in the holy water of river Sarayu, repeating the holy name of Lord Ram and establishing the Lord's divine image in their innerself".]

34. लंकं बिभीषन राज कपि पति मारुति खग मीच ।  
लही राम सों नाम रति चाहत तुलसी नीच ॥

34. laṅka bibhīṣana rāja kapi pati māruti khaga mīca.  
lahī rāma sōm nāma rati cāhata tulasī nīca..

Vibhishan<sup>1</sup> obtained the crown of Lanka, Sugriv<sup>2</sup> got the kingdom (of Kishkindha), Hanuman<sup>3</sup> received fame as a loyal devotee and the best follower of the Lord, and the vulture Jatayu<sup>4</sup> achieved death which is unattainable even by the Gods.

Tulsidas says that he is not as fortunate as them. But that does not bother him. He only wants to have the highest level of love, devotion and affection in the holy and divine Name of the Lord (because he knows that the spiritual rewards that come with it are greater than anything else in this world; because he knows that the Name of the Lord will deliver to him all the benefits that those named in this verse got by the personal intervention of Lord Ram or their personal meeting with the Lord).

[This Doha emphasizes the great importance of the holy Name of Lord Ram. Tulsidas stresses the point that the holy Name of Lord Ram is more powerful and spiritually beneficial than the physical form of the Lord himself. In this context, refer Doha no. 31.] (34)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>*Vibhishan* was the younger brother of Ravana. He had taken refuge with Lord Ram after being kicked by his brother and insulted in open court. When he took shelter with Lord Ram, the Lord immediately anointed him the future king of Lanka, thereby sealing the fate of Ravana, his elder brother. So when the war was finally won, the Lord appointed Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49; Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 says “the wealth, the prosperity, fame and majesty that Ravana had acquired by doing severe penances and austerities along with offering of his ten heads to Lord Shiva as a sacrifice, were given to Vibhishan by Lord Ram even without any effort on the former's part and even without his seeking or expecting them”. This Doha essentially says that by submitting to Lord Ram and becoming his devotee, a person can get all that he wants, as well as a lot more, as a bonus, that he never expects to get even in his dream.

Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106 narrates that Lord Ram anointed Vibhishan as the king of Lanka after victory in the epic war to keep the promise the Lord had made to him at the time of Vibhishan's seeking refuge in the holy feet of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup>*Sugriv* was the monkey king whose army helped Lord Ram locate Sita, and then launch a campaign against the demons that ultimately led to the war of Lanka. Sugriv was beaten out of the kingdom of Kishkindha by his elder brother Vaali. When he sought Lord Ram's help, the Lord killed Vaali and put Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha which was capital of the kingdom of the monkey race. Ref: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 11.

<sup>3</sup>*Hanuman* was a companion of Sugriv and the closest confidante and the greatest devotee of Lord Ram. His meeting with the Lord, and the Lord expressing his

unconditional indebtedness towards Hanuman have been chronicled in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand and Lanka Kand.

Some of the brief references are as follows—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 1, to line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 4 that describe Lord Ram's first meeting with Hanuman; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 32 in which Lord Ram expresses his indebtedness to Hanuman; (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 33 wherein the Lord has affectionately embraced Hanuman; and (iv) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 50 which says that no one is as fortunate and lucky as Hanuman whose devotion and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram is legendary and unmatched.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 100.

Hanuman was the one who had searched Sita successfully, and had played a pivotal role in the Lord's victory in Lanka. He is regarded as a manifestation of Rudra who is one of the many forms of Lord Shiva, the third of the Trinity Gods responsible for conclusion of creation.

<sup>4</sup>Jatau was the vulture who had fought with Ravana in a futile attempt to prevent him from taking Sita away to Lanka. Lord Ram had given him love befitting a father, and the Lord had done his last rites himself. Lord Ram was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and this is why his caressing a wounded vulture with his own hands, putting the bird's head on his lap and wiping blood from his injured body with his long hairs, grieving at his death just as a son would do when his father dies, and performing his last rites just as he would do for his own father is regarded as something that even the gods and the greatest of sages and hermits were denied. Dying in the physical presence of the Lord God is in itself next to impossible, but to have the Lord move his merciful and kind hands on one's dying body and having the Lord perform one's funeral is the best death that any living being can hope to have. Jatau got this privilege. That is why he is regarded as luckier than even the Gods. Ref: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30 to Doha no. 33 which describe the episode of Jatau.

Refer also to Doha nos. 222-227 of this book Dohawali.]

35. हरन अमंगल अघ अखिल करन सकल कल्याण ।  
रामनाम नित कहत हर गावत बेद पुरान ॥

35. harana amaṅgala agha akhila karana sakala kalyāna.  
rāmanāma nita kahata hara gāvata bēda purāna..

Lord Ram's holy Name eliminates all misfortunes and sins, and is exceptionally beneficial as well as a provider of welfare and good fortunes in every possible way. This is why Lord Shiva constantly keeps on repeating Ram's holy Name, and it is also highly praised and lauded in unequivocal terms even by the Vedas and the Purans (i.e. by the ancient scriptures). (35)

[Note—Refer: (i) Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 56, 58. (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 184. (iii) Doha no. 33 of this book Dohawali.]

36. तुलसी प्रीति प्रतीति सों राम नाम जप जाग ।  
किएँ होइ बिधि दाहिनो देइ अभागेहि भाग ॥

36. tulasī prīti pratīti sōm rāma nāma japa jāga.  
ki'ēm̃ hō'i bidhi dāhinō dē'i abhāgēhi bhāga..

Tulsidas says that by performing a Yagya (a religious ritual usually associated with some fire sacrifice) in the form of repeating Ram's holy Name in the proper way and with the greatest of devotion, love, faith and dedication<sup>1</sup>, even Vidhata (the creator) becomes benign and favourable, thereby making the most unfortunate man into a lucky person. (36)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer Doha nos. 5 and 23 of this book Dohawali. Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 70 and 130.]

37. जल थल नभ गति अमित अति अग जग जीव अनेक ।  
तुलसी तो से दीन कहँ राम नाम गति एक ॥

37. jala thala nabha gati amita ati aga jaga jīva anēka.  
tulasī tō sē dīna kaham̃ rāma nāma gati ēka..

There are millions of (i.e. countless) creatures—both animate as well as inanimate in this world. Some have their abode underground, some on land, and some in the air. Tulsidas says that for him, Lord Ram's holy Name is the only destination and the only habitat. (37)

[Note—A creature finds a destination or is born in the new life into a world according to deeds by him in his previous life. Therefore, some are born as birds who are sky borne, some as animals and humans who live on the surface of the earth, and others who live underground in holes, such as snakes, and under water such as the marine creatures and those who live in water of lakes and ponds. But Tulsidas says that he is not bothered, for the only destination for him is Lord Ram; wherever he is born he will be living in the bliss of his Lord, so it does not matter.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 which cites all the the world having three types of creatures, the ones who live in the sky, the ones who live on the surface of the earth, and the ones who live in water. Then, all living beings are further classified as those who are mobile (such as animals) and those who are immobile (such as plants).

Another interpretation is that Tulsidas is certain of his destiny—he will surely find emancipation and salvation by attaining the Supreme Being known as Ram because he has been chanting the Lord's divine Name throughout his life.

Besides this, Tulsidas has no other source of solace and succour except the holy Name of Lord Ram. It is here that his soul finds peace, happiness, rest and bliss. So Tulsidas says that his heart and mind as well as his Atma, his soul, always find their habitat—i.e. their comfortable resting place—in the holy Name of Lord Ram.

Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 67, 68, 182, 252 etc.]

38. राम भरोसो राम बल राम नाम बिस्वास ।  
सुमिरत सुभ मंगल कुसल माँगत तुलसीदास ॥

38. rāma bharōsō rāma bala rāma nāma bisvāsa.  
sumirata subha maṅgala kusala māṅgata tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas asks for only one boon or blessing or reward—that he should have reliance only on Lord Ram's Name, that Lord Ram should be his only strength, and that he should believe only in Lord Ram's holy Name the mere remembrance of which provides all the auspiciousness, well-beings and good fortunes that one can ever have or expect to have. (38)

[Note—Refer: (i) Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 68. (ii) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 69, 77, 81, 84, 109. (iii) Vairagya Sandipani, verse no. 15. (iv) Doha nos. 34-35, 39, 277 of this book Dohawali.]

39. राम नाम रति राम गति राम नाम बिस्वास ।  
सुमिरत सुभ मंगल कुसल दुहुँ दिसि तुलसीदास ॥

39. rāma nāma rati rāma gati rāma nāma bisvāsa.  
sumirata subha maṅgala kusala duhum̃ disi tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas says that those who love Lord Ram's holy Name, have Lord Ram as their only destination, and believe in none other than the Lord's holy Name—for such people the mere remembrance of Lord Ram's holy Name gives auspiciousness, well-being and good fortunes in both the worlds (this mundane world as well as the world to which they go after death). (39)

[Note—Refer: (i) Doha nos. 23, 33, 34, 36, 38 and 58 etc. of this book Dohawali. (ii) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 36. (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28 which says “the Lord's name, i.e. ‘Ram’, is a provider of all round auspiciousness and goodness, in any way whatsoever it is remembered and repeated, whether done so attentively and carefully with due diligence, or lazily, or negligently and carelessly, whether it is remembered and repeated with honour, respect and reverence, or with hate and annoyance”. The best way to understand how this happens is to take an example—when an ill man takes a correct medicine, it will cure him of his illness notwithstanding whether he had taken it willingly, with full knowledge of its medical benefits or its formula, or he had been forced to take it by the doctor.]

Everything is futile if there is no love and devotion for Lord Ram

40. रसना साँपिनि बदन बिल जे न जपहिं हरिनाम ।  
तुलसी प्रेम न राम सों ताहि बिधाता बाम ॥

40. rasanā sāṃṇini badana bila jē na japahim̃ harināma.  
tulasī prēma na rāma sōṃ tāhi bidhātā bāma..

Tulsidas says the tongue of those who do not chant Sri Hari's (Ram's) Name is like a serpent which only pours venom in the form of worldly talks, and their mouth is like the serpent's pit (hole). Those who have no love for Lord Ram, the creator appears to be opposed to them (i.e. they are most unlucky, for then they can never ever hope to get any peace, happiness and bliss anywhere in this world). (40)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 204 says that those who do not find interest in the holy deeds of the Lord, i.e. the divine

story of the Lord during his incarnation as Ram, are abandoned even by the creator. That is, they are most unfortunate and deprived of the chance to find happiness and welfare. They cannot expect any good and well-being even in their dreams.]

41. हिय फाटहुँ फूटहुँ नयन जरउ सो तन केहि काम ।  
द्रवहिं स्रवहिं पुलकइ नहीं तुलसी सुमिरत राम ॥

41. hiya phāṭahum̐ phūṭahum̐ nayana jara'u sō tana kēhi kāma.  
dravahim̐ sravahim̐ pulaka'i nahim̐ tulasī sumirata rāma..

Tulsidas says those hearts that do not melt (become mellowed) on remembering Lord Ram should burst (crack, die, disintegrate), those eyes that do not shed tears of love and affection should be blinded, and that body which does not become thrilled and ecstatic should be burnt and reduced to ashes—for what is the use of keeping such a despicable body and its various parts because all such organs are worthless, and it is better to get rid of them. (41)

[Note—Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 83, 268. (ii) Doha nos. 42-45 of this book Dohawali.

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 113 says that “the heart that does not feel exhilarated and ecstatic upon hearing the glories and the divine story of Lord Ram is surely like a hardened, lifeless and emotionless Vajra, the strongest and the hardest element in existence”.

(iv) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 says “those who feel extremely exhilarated, happy, joyous, ecstatic and thrilled by narrating and hearing the divine story of the Lord, and who take a symbolic bath in the holy river constituting of the glories and the holy deeds of the Lord—they are the ones who are deemed to be holy and have done an auspicious deed which portends all round good for their soul and their well-being”.]

42. रामहि सुमिरत रन भिरत देत परत गुरु पायँ ।  
तुलसी जिन्हहि न पुलक तनु ते जग जीवत जायँ ॥

42. rāmahī sumirata rana bhirata dēta parata guru pāyam̐ .  
tulasī jinhahi na pulaka tanu tē jaga jīvata jāyam̐ ..

At the time of remembering Lord Ram<sup>1</sup>, facing enemy during ethically fought combat<sup>2</sup>, giving alms and donation<sup>3</sup>, and at the time of bowing at the feet of the Guru (enlightened moral teacher)<sup>4</sup> – those who are not thrilled on such occasions live a worthless life. (42)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 284; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 229.

Now, let us briefly see what the above lines of Ram Charit Manas say. (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 284 says “a Kshatriya who gets scared when facing an enemy is like a blight on the face of the family in which he is born”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 229 says “arrogance and haughtiness arising out of royal powers and strength is a natural blight that did not spare

even great kings such as the thousand-armed Sastra-baahu, Indra, the king of gods, and king Trishanku”.

<sup>3</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 207 which says “Oh King, you must give with cheerfulness, and discard delusions of being deprived of something that is so dear to you that you can’t part with it”. This is said by sage Vishwamitra when King Dasrath was reluctant to send Ram and Laxman with the sage to protect his fire sacrifice. The idea is, one must give with cheerfulness and willingly, and never cling to anything in this world.

<sup>4</sup>Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha line nos. 1-10, and Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precedes Doha no. 1, which primarily are dedicated to the praise of the holy feet of one’s Guru. (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, line nos. 2-3 of Doha no. 5 describes how Lord Ram had rushed to fall at the feet of his Guru sage Vashistha and sage Vaamdeo as soon as the Lord saw them upon his return to Ayodhya after the end of the 14 years of forest exile. This is cited here to emphasise that even the Lord had eagerly fell at the feet of his learned Guru and other elderly men to show his respect to them.]

43. हृदय सो कुलिस समान जो न द्रवइ हरिगुन सुनत ।  
कर न राम गुन गान जीह सो दादुर जीह सम ॥

43. hr̥daya sō kulisa samāna jō na drava'i hariguna sunata.  
kara na rāma guna gāna jīha sō dādura jīha sama..

The heart, which does not become mellowed and full of devotion on hearing Sri Hari's (Sri Ram's) glories, is hard (i.e. stiff, unemotional and soul-less) like a Vajra (the thunderbolt; literally 'hard as a stone'); and a tongue, which does not sing the glories of Lord Ram, is croaking like that of a frog's. (43)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: (i) Doha no. 41 of this book Dohawali.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 113 which say—“He who has not given place to devotion and love for the Lord in his heart is as good as a corpse. The tongue that does not sing or narrate the divine glories and virtues of the Lord is like the tongue of a frog. The heart that does not feel ecstatic on hearing the divine story of the Lord is as stern and lifeless as Vajra, the hardest element in existence.”

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 6 that precede Doha no. 53 which say “those who get fed up by hearing the story of Lord Ram have not understood its true meaning, and neither have they truly enjoyed its succulent juice which is like nectar; such creatures who get fed up by hearing the Lord’s divine glories and holy stories are self-defeating, self-ruining, and act like poison for their own self”.

(iv) Refer also to: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 142, and no. 237.

In brief, any one organ (or all the organs) of the creature’s body that do not (or does not) find comfort, peace, happiness and joy in Lord Ram’s holy Name, which is like the nectar of life, is (or are) absolutely worthless, and worthy of discarding.

Refer also to Bhagwat 2/3/20-24.]

44. स्रवै न सलिल सनेहु तुलसी सुनि रघुबीर जस ।  
ते नयना जनि देहु राम करहु बरु आँधरो ॥

44. sravai na salila sanēhu tulasī suni raghubīra jasa.  
tē nayanā jani dēhu rāma karahu baru ām̐dharō..

Tulsidas pleads, 'Oh Sri Ram! It is better for me to become blind than to have eyes which do not shed tears of devotion and love on hearing your name.' (44)

[Note—Refer: (i) Doha no. 45 below.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 113 which says “eyes that have not seen saints (i.e. true devotees of the Lord) are like the design of an eye that is seen on the feather of a peacock—that is, they are just for show, and are worthless in practice.”]

45. रहैं न जल भरि पूरि राम सुजस सुनि रावरो ।  
तिन आँखिन में धूरि भरि भरि मूठी मेलिये ॥

45. rahaim̐ na jala bhari pūri rāma sujasa suni rāvarō.  
tina ām̐khina mēm̐ dhūri bhari bhari mūṭhī mēliyē..

'Oh Sri Ram! Those eyes which do not well-up with devotional and affectionate tears on hearing your name should be stuffed with fistful of dust (i.e. they are worthless and have no right to see).' (45)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 44 above.]

Tulsidas pleads with Lord Ram to take care of him

46. बारक सुमिरत तोहि होहि तिन्हहि सम्मुख सुखद ।  
क्यों न सँभारहि मोहि दया सिंधु दशरत्थ के ॥

46. bāraka sumirata tōhi hōhi tinhahi sam'mukha sukhada.  
kyōm̐ na sam̐bhārahi mōhi dayā sindhu daśarat'tha kē..

'Even an ordinary child who invokes you (i.e. the merciful and compassionate Lord Ram) when in distress is provided with joys and happiness by you, and you take good care of him. Tell me why then the same Lord who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, and is the son of Dasrath (i.e. Lord Ram), won't take good care of me?

[That is, Lord Ram is like a loving and caring father who takes care of all his children. Tulsidas asserts that therefore there is no reason why the same Lord Ram won't take care of him.] (46)

[Note—The son usually inherits the virtues and characteristics of his father. King Dasrath was also very caring for his subjects. There is a story narrated in Padma Puran which shows how careful and worried Dasrath was for the well-being of his subjects. Once it so happened that in a particular year the malignant planet Saturn was to cast its dark shadow on the kingdom. The result would have been horrible if he succeeded. There would have been famine and death for the next 12 years. Dasrath was very alarmed. Risking his own life, Dasrath mounted his chariot and confronted Saturn, known as the 'God Shani', in the sky.

The king's chariot got burnt due to Shani's bad sight. Just at that time, the vulture Jatau came to his aid and made him mount on his back. Dasrath fearlessly faced Shani once again with a fierce arrow mounted on a strong bow. This determination and resilience of Dasrath terrified Shani and he relented.

It was this incident which made Jatau and Dasrath fast friends.

Tulsidas has cleverly interwoven this incident when he calls Ram as the son of Dasrath while lauding the Lord's compassionate and merciful nature when dealing with his subjects—which here means his devotees and followers. The subjects of a king are like his children, and a good king is one who takes care of them like a loving parent would do for his children.]

The glory of Lord Ram & the importance of having love and devotion for the Lord

47. साहिब होत सरोष सेवक को अपराध सुनि ।  
अपने देखे दोष सपनेहु राम न उर धरे ॥

47. sāhiba hōta sarōṣa sēvaka kō aparādha muni.  
apanē dēkhē dōṣa sapanēhu rāma na ura dharē..

Other masters become angry and annoyed immediately on hearing the mistakes or wrongdoings of their servants or subordinates (without finding out the actual facts), but Lord Ram is so magnanimous, forgiving and gracious that he does not pay any heed to such errors even when he has seen them himself (i.e. Lord Ram does not bother about the faults and shortcomings of his devotees; he overlooks them). (47)

[Note—For instance, Lord Ram had overlooked certain mistakes or shortcomings in the character of Vibhishan while accepting him as his devotee—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 29. These lines say—“The Lord does not pay attention to or remember the mistakes and misdemeanours of his loved devotees. Instead, he praises their goodness repeatedly, in spite of the fact that such goodness may be very miniscule and inconsequential. That is, the Lord is so magnanimous and gracious that he gives every chance to his devotee to be praised. He overlooks his failings, and tries to highlight his good virtues. For instance, he had overlooked and forgiven Sugriv for the same sins and misdemeanours for which the Lord had punished his elder brother Vaali. Similarly, even in his dreams the Lord had never brought to heart, i.e. never minded and felt annoyed about, the same type of misdeed that Vibhishan had committed.” Refer also to Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 5, line no. 2.

In this context, refer Doha no. 157 also which says that the benevolent Lord Ram had overlooked the misdeed of Sugriv though the Lord had punished his elder brother Baali for the same misdeed.

Bharat has also affirmed this noble virtue in Lord Ram when he pleaded with the Lord to forgive him for being the cause of his forest exile and its attendant troubles that the Lord has had to face. Refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 299 which explicitly say—“Oh Lord, you had never taken umbrage of the misdeed done by your devotees, but praised the little virtues that they had in the company of saints instead. I raise my arm to solemnly declare decisively and with the greatest of emphasis in my command that never ever can one find a (kind, gracious, forgiving, merciful, compassionate, magnanimous, benevolent, amiable and benign) Lord like you (Ram) in this world”.

Then again Bharat is sure that Lord Ram will come back to Ayodhya at the end of the exile period because the Lord does not bring to heart any mischief done by his subordinates or servants or followers; the Lord does not harbour any sort of ill-will against any one no matter who he is or how sinful he may be—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1 which says “the Lord does not mind and pay attention to the faults and shortcomings of his beloved devotees, for the Lord has an extremely sweet, kind, gracious, loving, benevolent, merciful, friendly and forgiving nature”.

The same idea is expressed by Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29 which stresses that—“Even the hell will constrict its nose, i.e. feel disgusted, and refuse to accept me in utter revulsion when it hears about my sins, my faults, my evil demeanours, and my character of being stubborn and haughty. But the miracle is that Lord Ram feels nothing of it; he does not mind my faults and shortcomings though I myself feel guilty of them, and am scared of them and their consequences. On the other hand, my beloved and merciful Lord Ram had praised me instead whenever he could inspite of hearing, seeing and knowing all about my shortcomings.

Refer also to Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 7.]

48. तुलसी रामहि आपु तें सेवक की रुचि मीठि ।  
सीतापति से साहिबहि कैसे दीजै पीठि ॥

48. tulasī rāmahī āpu tēm sēvaka kī ruci mīṭhi.  
sītāpati sē sāhibahi kaisē dijai pīṭhi..

Tulsidas says that Lord Ram favours (i.e. gives precedence, more priority and importance to) the needs, the interests, the wishes and the desires of his servants (i.e. devotees, followers, subordinates) more than his own. He (Tulsidas) wonders why then should one oppose (i.e. not follow) such a Lord and Master (who is so benevolent, gracious, considerate and kind). (48)

[Note—Usually the master or the lord pays little or no heed to the desires, needs and comforts of his servants and subordinates. They are concerned only whether the individual is able to serve them properly or not, and if the servant or the subordinate do not suit them they chuck him or her out without blinking. But Lord Ram is completely different. He is more concerned about the happiness of his subordinates or subjects or followers or devotees than the latter are themselves.

The intensity and sincerity of Lord Ram’s worry about the well-being and good of his devotees can be best understood with the help of a simple example. If an ignorant child goes to catch a snake or rush towards fire because in his innocence he is unaware of the horrific consequences of his childish actions, the child’s father would immediately grab the child and pull him away; the father would not turn his face away and look the other way as if nothing has happened. The child may cry because the father has not allowed him to play with the snake or the fire which the child thought to be an interesting plaything, but the father pays no heed to his crying and yelling for the larger interest of the child. Similarly, Lord Ram is very careful to look after the future—both the worldly and the spiritual—of his devotees and followers, and he ensures that their well-being, their welfare and happiness are well taken care of.

Other masters and lords in this world favour a person only till the time and the point when that person is of any use to them or serves their self-interest. Beyond that they are

not bothered about the person's long term benefits or any of his personal goals or wishes in life. The world is self-centered and revolves around the axis of self-interest, while Lord Ram is extremely magnanimous and compassionate so much so that all his actions are targeted at doing well for his devotees and followers.

The best proof of this is to be found in the story of the Ramayan itself. A few instances would help to highlight this grand virtue in the character of the Lord. He had taken the trouble of becoming a human being and undergoing all the miseries associated with being a human on the pretext of killing the demons—so that the numerous creatures on earth could benefit from his Darshan (holy sight) and Parshan (touch, communion, contact) personally in a physical form. Being the Supreme Being he could have killed the demons by his mere wish, and there was no need to become a man and spend 14 years in the forest in sufferance, walking barefoot, bearing the vagaries of Nature, and eating wild fruits and roots. The Lord obviously did this because there were countless hermits, sages and seers as well as ordinary men, women and other creatures whose soul longed for the Lord but were unable to attain the Supreme Being for a variety of reasons. The Lord himself went to their doors and their villages.

Then again, though the Lord killed the demons he had also ensured that their souls found emancipation and salvation by getting liberated from the body of a demon when it was killed at the hands of the Lord. None of the demons killed by Lord Ram had gone to hell where they would certainly have gone because of their past horrendous sins. The hell was the proper place where they would have gone if they had died a natural death—but the Lord was quick to step in and killed them prematurely himself so that instead of going to hell and suffering the consequences of their past sins they could be liberated from the sinful body of a demon and their souls could be provided with emancipation and deliverance. What more proof is needed for the magnanimity, merciful nature and graciousness of Lord Ram?

At a worldlier plane, certain actions of the Lord gave rise to controversies—such as (i) his killing of the monkey king Vaali by taking sides with his younger brother Sugriv on the pretext that the injustice done to the latter could be nullified and he could get the kingdom of Kishkindha, and (ii) accepting Vibhishan in his camp though he was clearly a traitor and had betrayed his own brother Ravana. Lord Ram preferred suffering from slight ignominy if this helped his devotees and made them happy.

The Lord is so magnanimous, gracious, kind, compassionate, merciful and full of equanimity that he provided emancipation and salvation even to Ravana, the cruel, ferocious and blood-thirsty king of the demons, who had tormented Sita, the consort of the Lord, and had been causing the greatest of horrors in this world. An ordinary king or emperor would have impaled his head and hung it on the gateway of the city, or would have brought his severed head along with the demon queens and nymphs back to Ayodhya as war trophies. But the Lord never ever hinted at this most despicable thing.

The merciful and kind Lord never thought of the ill-doings or misdemeanours of his devotees and followers, and was ever eager to forgive them most easily. Refer Doha no. 47 above.]

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 266 which describes Bharat as saying “the Lord (Ram) had broken his vows to uphold my (Bharat's) vows; this is not something to be neglected, rather it shows the level of the Lord's love for me, as well as his forgiving and magnanimous nature”.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 313 which says that Bharat fell like stick to prostrate before the Lord and said “Oh Lord, you have kept all my wishes; you have fulfilled all my desires; you have upheld all that I wanted”.

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219 which says “the Vedas and the Purans are witness to the fact that Lord Ram always keeps the wishes of his followers, his devotees and those who serve him”. ]

49. तुलसी जाके होयगी अंतर बाहिर दीठि ।  
सो कि कृपालुहि देइगो केवटपालहि पीठि ॥
49. tulasī jākē hōyagī antara bāhira dīṭhi.  
sō ki krpāluhi dē'igō kēvaṭapālahi pīṭhi..

Tulsidas wonders if a person—who understands the secret or the hidden reality of the ‘Truth’ that is concealed within one’s bosom (in the form of the invisible, subtle and sublime entity known as the Atma or the soul that lives in the heart of all living beings as ‘pure consciousness’ and their true ‘self’) as well as is obvious in the external physical world (that is visible and has a physical gross form)—will or can ever be opposed to the merciful and kind Lord Ram who had allowed the boatman, known as Kewat, to wash his feet on the pretext of taking the Lord across the river on his boat? (49)

[Note—Would the Lord have obliged him when Kewat became stubborn and unrelenting inspite of the fact that Lord Ram was the son of the king of that realm?

In ordinary course, the Lord would have commanded Kewat—‘How dare you refuse to obey the orders of the prince of Ayodhya in whose realm you live?’ But the kind Lord smiled back and obliged him. The reason is far deeper than what meets the eye.

The Supreme Being had come down to earth to provide the chance of getting his Darshan (divine viewing) and Parshan (contact and communion) to even the ordinary creatures whose souls yearned to attain the Lord but were unfortunately unable to do so because of the gross body in which they were trapped. All such creatures had qualified for emancipation and salvation, but for some tiny or miniscule error committed somewhere down the line in their previous life they could not fulfill their dream, and had to take a birth again. But internally their souls yearned for the Lord’s Darshan and Parshan, or put simply to find closeness with the Lord of their heart. Their gross body engaged in some vocation of this world prevented their souls from achieving success in fulfilling this desire held secretly in their hearts.

The Supreme Being knew of this, and in his incarnation as Lord Ram he gave all such souls the chance to fulfill the desire so close to their hearts. This is what exactly happened with Kewat. When he refused to let Lord Ram board his wooden boat out of fear that the dust of the Lord’s feet might turn his wooden boat into some lady just like it had turned a stone into Ahilya, the chaste wife of sage Gautam, after the Lord had touched the stone with his feet, the Lord smiled and allowed Kewat to wash his feet. This was the external or worldly reason cited by Kewat and conceded to by Lord Ram when he allowed the former to wash the Lord’s holy feet. But there is more to it than what meets the eye.

Had this been the only reason for Kewat insisting to wash the feet so that the dust is washed off and the boat is secured, Kewat would not have devotedly and most religiously drunk the washed water himself and called his entire clan to drink it as if it was some special sanctified elixir or ambrosia sent from heaven for their spiritual liberation and deliverance. This is exactly what he did. This proves that there was a hidden reason in Kewat insisting to wash the Lord’s feet.

After Kewat had taken Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman across the river, he refused to take any monetary rewards as his fees or charges. This proves the fact that he was not a

greedy man trying to bargain hard for greater pecuniary benefits when he had refused to take the prince across the river and had him literally begging to take him across. Kewat knew that a golden opportunity had come knocking at his door, and if he missed this chance he will lose everything in this life.

In other words, Kewat knew the profound Truth that Ram was no ordinary prince but the Supreme Being himself personified. Well, this incident is so obvious that Tulsidas wonders how stupid a man is at not being able to get a hint from it. Kewat was no holy man; he was no saint or sage. He led an ordinary householder's life, ate fish (meat) like the rest of his community, and belonged to a caste (the boatman caste) that lies far down in the rung of social hierarchy. This is what his external body presented to the world.

But internally, deep in his heart, Kewat's soul was enlightened and realised, and the Lord knew it. This is the reason why the Lord did not become angry or annoyed at Kewat's temerity to have refused to allow the Lord to board the boat against his will. The Supreme Lord in the physical form of Lord Ram allowed the simple and humble boatman to wash his feet and drink the washed water in a gesture to tell the world that caste, birth, the nature of body and the vocation in which it is involved to survive in this world, the social standing or the level of scriptural knowledge etc. are no criterions or restraints if the soul sincerely wishes to attain emancipation and salvation. The 'washing of the feet' is a symbolic gesture implying complete and unconditional surrender to the Lord and paying sincere homage to him. Anyone who does this becomes entitled to emancipation and salvation, to liberation and deliverance.

The story of Kewat is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100 to Doha no. 102.

All human being has two types of eyes—one is the external eyes of the body with which he sees the gross world, and the other eye is the internal eye of wisdom and discrimination which leads to spiritual awakening, to enlightenment and self-realisation. Just like the two external eyes, there are two internal eyes—one is Gyan (wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment) and the other is Vairagya (renunciation of and dispassion for all that is gross, perishable, material and untrue). Just like the two external eyes help the creature to have a three-dimensional view of the external gross world, the two internal eyes of Gyan and Vairagya help the creature to have a three-dimensional view of the subtle world of the Atma, the pure consciousness that is a counterpart of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120. These lines say—"Saints are the wise ones, and their wisdom is like the spade or the shovel which helps them dig out the truth from the surface of untruth and delusions. Gyan (truthful spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation; detachment from delusions and abandonment of ignorance) are like their two eyes. When one sincerely searches for the truth, he finds that Bhakti (devotion and dedication for Lord God) is like a gem that is like a treasure house of all happiness and well-beings."

Vairagya is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Doha no. 89 Ka. It says—"Can Gyan (true knowledge) be acquired without the help of a wise Guru (teacher); can Gyan (true spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment) be acquired without Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from delusory world ridden by ignorance); and can true happiness and bliss ever be obtained with having Bhakti (devotion, dedication and love) for Hari (Lord God). This is the declaration of the Vedas and the Purans (hence it is unquestionably correct because it is ancient and time-tested wisdom)."

"Anyone who has the priceless gem in the form of Bhakti (unflinching devotion and purest form of love) for Lord Ram in his heart can never have any sorrow or grief even in

his dreams; he is free from them”—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 120.

One must see the presence of the Lord in all physical shapes the world has taken because the Lord is all-pervading and ubiquitously present within and without this creation. This whole is a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. When one has developed this sort of sight or vision of the world, a clarity and sharpness of vision that is marked by a high level of wisdom and enlightenment, he can rightfully say that his external eyes as well as his internal eyes are able to see the world properly, clearly, sharply and in a three-dimensional form. All other views of this world are distorted.

Such a wise and enlightened man is able to see the Saguna form of the Lord in all the visible forms of the living world, and he sees the Nirguna form of the same Lord as the Atma that lives inside the physical form.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 166, 191 and 193.]

50. प्रभु तरु तर कपि डार पर ते किए आपु समान ।  
तुलसी कहूँ न राम से साहिब सील निधान ॥

50. prabhu taru tara kapi ḍāra para tē ki'ē āpu samāna.  
tulasī kahūṁ na rāma sē sāhiba sīla nidhāna..

The monkeys lived on the branches of trees whereas their Lord, Sri Ram, dwelt under them (i.e. under the branches of the trees). Nevertheless, not paying any attention to this violation of etiquette and decorum, Sri Ram made them one like himself (i.e. there was no distinction or formal hierarchy between them; the Lord ate, drunk and lived amidst them like they were his friends and brothers).

Tulsidas says no where else in this world will anyone find someone who is so humble, so courteous, so polite, so well-mannered, so tolerant, so loving, so considerate, so friendly, so amiable and so easily approachable as Lord Ram who is like a treasury of these magnificent noble virtues. (50)

[Note—The Lord has no sense of ego and pride as to his high birth or the fact that he is after all a prince and the future king of Ayodhya. He lived like an ordinary man would in the forest. Not for one fleeting moment did Lord Ram invoke his supernatural powers to overcome the physical discomfort that was so natural in the harsh environ of the forest. The Lord underwent all the hardships that an ordinary man would have had to pass through in the course of his life. The Lord did not wince at the thought of taking help from ‘monkeys’ though he was a brave warrior born in the Kshatriya race that prided itself in valour, vigour and strength of arm.

Ordinarily, even an ordinary Kshatriya would have recoiled at the very thought of taking the help of monkeys and bears to retrieve his lost wife. He would have preferred death to seeking such help. But Lord Ram did not feel shy or guilty for doing so though he was not merely a Kshatriya but the incarnate Supreme Being, and the Lord did not even shy away from acknowledging the help that he got from them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 of Doha no. 8. The moment is when Lord Ram introduces his friends from Lanka and Kishknidha to sage Vashistha upon his return to Ayodhya after the 14 year period of exile. The Lord told the sage—“Oh Guru, all of them are my dear friends who had sacrificed their lives and comfort for me. They acted like big ship for me to cross (overcome) the formidable ocean represented by the war at Lanka.”

The Lord had clearly told Vibhishan at the time of his coronation that he is sending the chief monkeys such as Sugriv, Hanuman and Angad on his behalf and their presence at the coronation ceremony should be treated as the Lord's personal presence—refer Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precedes Doha no. 106. ]

#### Awakening & Motivating of the Mana

51. रे मन सब सों निरस ह्वै सरस राम सों होहि ।  
भलो सिखावन देत है निसि दिन तुलसी तोहि ॥
51. rē mana saba sō nīrasa hvai sarasa rāma sōm hōhi.  
bhalō sikhāvana dēta hai nisi dina tulasī tōhi..

[Addressing the mind, Tulsidas motivates it to avoid thinking about the mortal world to which it has a natural inclination to move and get hooked, and instead focus its attention on Lord Ram because it will give the mind immense peace, bliss and happiness.]

‘Oh Mind! Tulsidas advises you day and night to detach yourself from all the products and material sense objects of this (deluding and entrapping) world, and instead attach yourself to Lord Ram (i.e. have devotion, affection, faith and longing for Sri Ram, and surrender yourself to the Lord).’ (51)

[Note—The world is selfish, and whatever benefits one seems to get by his attachment with the world is because he is of some use to the latter and serves some of its interests. As soon as he stops serving the vested interest of the world, the latter would start shunning him like he was some despicable creature. But Lord Ram is very kind, merciful and accepting; he is a friend of the downtrodden and the helpless; he will accept the person even when he is useless for the society. The only requirement the Lord needs is devotion, love and sincerity of surrender. He does not like deceit and cunning.

Refer: (i) Doha no. 21 and 49 of this book Dohawali. (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 190.]

52. हरे चरहिं तापहिं बरे फरें पसारहिं हाथ ।  
तुलसी स्वारथ मीत सब परमारथ रघुनाथ ।
52. harē carahim tāpahim barē pharēm pasārahim hātha.  
tulasī svāratha mīta saba paramāratha raghunātha..

Tulsidas warns that this world is very selfish. When the trees and plants are green, the birds and animals graze or feed upon them; when they become old or withered and dried, people use them as firewood and burn them down; and when they bear fruits, people spread their hands to grab them (the fruits). All are friends while the going is good. But it is only Sri Ram who stays with us in both thick and thin (i.e. Sri Ram loves us always—whether we are happy or in distress, especially the latter). (52)

[Note—When a man is rich, resourceful and charitable, people flock to him to seek favours, and when he is struck by bad days the same people shun him. If he hands out rewards and largesse liberally, people stretch their hands to grab whatever they can and praise him for his magnanimity, helpful nature and charitable disposition, but when he is

not able to do so they criticize him as being miserly and selfish who is not sharing his good fortunes with the society.

People are so selfish that they would not think twice to go and eat a hearty meal at a man's house during a party, but when he is facing some bad patch in his life they would not invite him to take his meals in their own homes. Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 264.

On the contrary, Lord Ram is extremely gracious and helpful. He is a universal friend of all the creatures irrespective of whether they love the Lord or not. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 74; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 93.

Now, let us see briefly what the above referred lines of Ram Charit Manas say.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 74, Sumitra, the mother of Laxman, advises him to serve Lord Ram faithfully and lovingly. She says—"One must serve one's Guru, father, mother, brother, god and master whole-heartedly, most sincerely, faithfully and diligently, as if one is serving one's own Pran (life; self). Lord Ram is dearer than the Pran (life-sustaining forces in the body), he is the one who injects life to the heart (i.e. is the soul that lives inside the subtle space of the heart, and is the one who enables the heart to beat by injecting life-consciousness into the body), and he is a selfless friend of all the creatures. So, you must be extra careful and diligent in your service to the Lord."

In Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 93 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8, Laxman told Nishad, the boatman, when he was full of sorrow, watching Lord Ram and Sita sleeping on the bare ground at night. Laxman said—"Oh friend, the best spiritual endeavour for any person is to inspire and direct his Mana (mind, sub-conscious, and heart), his Vachan (spoken words) and his Karam (deeds and actions) to have undiluted and the purest form of love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram. [This is because—] Lord Ram is the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, the supreme Spirit personified. He represents the supreme spiritual goal of life in this world. The Lord is so enigmatic and mystical that he is 'Abigat' (cannot be fully known and comprehended), is 'Alakha' (having no visible form that can be seen by the physical organ of sight known as the eye), is 'Anaadi' (having no beginning or end), and is 'Anupa' (having no forms to which characteristic features or attributes can be assigned). He is free from all the 'Vikars' (faults, taints, negativities and shortcomings associated with the existential gross world) and free from the confusions arising out of duality and the debate around what is true and what is false. The Vedas declare that he is 'Nita' (eternal, omnipresent, immanent, universal and unchanging; present now in the same way as long ago and in the distant future). The Vedas were so frustrated at their attempt at describing the Supreme Lord that ultimately they surrendered, saying 'Neti, Neti' (not this, not this; neither this nor that—i.e. no particular definition and description applies to the Lord exclusively, for his is this as well as that!). It is the same Supreme Being known as 'Ram' who has taken a human form for the good of his devotees, the earth, the Brahmins (elderly and learned members of the society), the cows (representing humble creatures who cannot defend themselves), and the Gods (representing holy souls who were being subjected to excessive torments by the evil forces in creation)."

For his devotees this is especially the case as the Lord feels a special obligation towards them like a father who would naturally be concerned for a son who is devoted to his father and serves him with sincerity though this son may have otherwise failed to be successful in this world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87 and its preceding Chaupai. Briefly, here Lord Ram says—"A father, who has many sons, some of whom are well-off and well-established, will be naturally inclined to favour a son who serves him diligently and lovingly in spite of this son not doing well in life and deemed to be a failure vis-à-vis his other brothers, though otherwise the father loves all his sons

equally. Similarly, I—the heavenly Father who has created this whole magnificent edifice known as the world of extreme diversity where animate and in-animate things co-exist side by side—too am naturally inclined to favour my sincere devotees who have abandoned all forms of deceit, pretensions and delusions (known as ‘Maya’) to steadfastly love me and diligently serve me faithfully inspite of all the odds being stacked against them. Such creatures, of whatever dispensations they may be, are very dear to me; I love them very much who sincerely serve me, have the greatest of devotion for me, and who have no one to turn to except me under any circumstance.”

Also refer to Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 52.]

53. स्वारथ सीता राम सों परमारथ सिय राम ।  
तुलसी तेरो दूसरे द्वार कहा कहु काम ॥

53. svāratha sītā rāma sōm paramāratha siya rāma.  
tulasī tērō dūsarē dvāra kahā kahu kāma..

Tulsidas addresses himself and his mind, saying—‘All the worldly interests as well as the spiritual interests will be taken care of by Sri Sitaram. Then say, why should and why would Tulsidas go and knock at the doors of others seeking favours?’ (53)

[Note—There is another way at interpreting this Doha—‘All the worldly interests and well-being (of Tulsidas) are taken care of by Lord Ram and his divine consort Sita. And the Lord is the only one who will take care of the spiritual needs of the soul of Tulsidas, the needs that go beyond this mundane and mortal existence. Oh Tulsidas! Say then, what is the need for you to go and beg at the door of others (i.e. the world as well as so many other gods and goddesses)?’

Tulsidas has invoked both Lord Ram and Sita here—the reason being that Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and Sita is a manifestation of Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of wealth and material well-being. So Tulsidas says that when both of them are favourable to him it is rest assured that he cannot suffer from shortages of any material things in this world because of the grace of Sita, and his spiritual welfare will be taken care of by Lord Ram. So why should he worry?

Lord Ram has said himself that if anyone says that he is my devotee and subordinate and dependent upon me for everything, and then he goes seeking favours somewhere else, say then how can such a man honestly call himself my true devotee and follower, and how can he claim that he has faith and belief in me? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46. It says “if one claims to be my (Lord Ram’s) devotee but expects something from others, or depends upon others, say then how can he so claim in the true sense?”

Refer: (i) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 57. (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 135. (iii) Doha nos. 22, 54-56 of this book Dohawali.]

54. स्वारथ परमारथ सकल सुलभ एक ही ओर ।  
द्वार दूसरे दीनता उचित न तुलसी तोर ॥

54. svāratha paramāratha sakala sulabha ēka hī ōra.  
dvāra dūsarē dīnatā ucita na tulasī tōra..

'Oh Tulsidas! When all your worldly desires and needs, as well as the final liberation and deliverance of your soul (emancipation and salvation of the Atma) can be achieved only at the one place (i.e. with Lord Ram), then it is not at all advisable and apt for you to beg at the doors of others (because that would not only prove that you are extremely stupid and greedy but would also be insulting for your beloved Lord who goes to any length to ensure your happiness, peace and welfare; it would be an outright betrayal).' (54)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 53 above.]

55. तुलसी स्वारथ राम हित परमारथ रघुबीर ।  
सेवक जाके लखन से पवनपूत रनधीर ।।

55. tulasī svāratha rāma hita paramāratha raghubīra.  
sēvaka jākē lakhana sē pavanapūta ranadhīra..

For Tulsidas, all worldly self-interests (such as fulfillment of worldly desires and needs) as well as spiritual interests (such as emancipation and salvation of the soul) are served and met by Raghubir (Lord Ram, the Supreme Being who manifested as a brave warrior in the dynasty of king Raghu of Ayodhya) who was served by Laxman and the son of the wind-god (i.e. Hanuman). (55)

[Note—Laxman was the younger brother of Lord Ram, but in his cosmic form he is Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who supports the world on his thousand hoods. Even such a powerful force of Nature, which can 'support' the weight of the entire creation, serves the Supreme Being. Laxman represents that force of creation that supports it from the outside.

Similar is the case of Hanuman who represents the powerful Wind or Air element. The whole living world needs air to breathe and survive; one feels suffocated in a 'windless' day. Air and life are synonymous with each other; the body of a creature is kept alive by the wind element known as the Pran that lives inside it. Hence, Hanuman represents the other powerful force of Nature that supports this creation from within.

The two—Laxman and Hanuman—together help the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram to help maintain and supervise the laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety) in this world. Tulsidas invokes them to emphasize the fact that when he has taken shelter with such stupendously powerful forces of creation, why should he worry about anything at all. So he believes that one's interests are well served by taking the shelter of and refuge with Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93. See note of Doha no. 52.]

56. ज्यों जग बैरी मीन को आपु सहित बिनु बारि ।  
त्योँ तुलसी रघुबीर बिनु गति आपनी बिचारि ।।

56. jyōm jaga bairī mīna kō āpu sahita binu bāri.  
tyōm tulasī raghubīra binu gati āpanī bicāri..

The whole world, except the water, is like an enemy for the fish so much so that its own body acts like a foe (because it bites the fisherman's bait, gets caught, and subsequently killed). Similarly, Tulsidas tells himself, the same fate awaits you without Lord Ram (i.e. his own mind and sense organs would entangle him in the web of worldly attachments, delusions and temptations that would ultimately lead to his ruin if he does not strive to exercise control over them). (56)

[Note—Refer: (i) Doha nos. 57 and 404 of this book. (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 269.

In this Doha Tulsidas cites the example of a fish to emphasize the need to control one's sense organs as well as the natural tendencies of the mind to be attracted by the world and its material things. The fish knows very well that its best friend is the water, but still its greed makes it bite a fisherman's bait. This leads to the ultimate suffering and death of the fish. But it still does not refrain from biting the bait. Similarly, the mind and the senses force a creature to remain involved and entangled in the world because the latter seems to give a lot of pleasure and comfort to the body and the mind. But in the long run all this is detrimental for the spiritual well-being of the creature who gets trapped and sucked in the vortex of this whirlpool-like world of artificiality and delusions.]

#### Tulsidas' earnest wish

57. राम प्रेम बिनु दूबरो राम प्रेमहीं पीन ।  
रघुबर कबहुँक करहुगे तुलसिहि ज्यों जल मीन ॥

57. rāma prēma binu dūbarō rāma prēmahīm pīna.  
raghubara kabahum̐ka karahugē tulasihī jyōm̐ jala mīna..

A fish<sup>1</sup> gets nourishment in water and remains healthy in it, but it becomes emaciated without it and dies if totally deprived of it. Similarly, Tulsidas wonders when shall he develop such profound degree of devotion, longing, love and affection for Raghubar (Sri Ram) that he would become emaciated without the Lord, and feel nourished (well-off, happy and contented) by having love and affection for the Lord. (57)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Doha no. 56, 404 and 569 of this book Dohawali.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 68, stanza no. 5, the metaphor of the fish is used to emphasise the sort of love, devotion and dedication one should have for Lord Ram. This stanza says—“Oh Tulsidas! Just like a fish depends upon water, you (Tulsidas addresses himself) have only one succour and hope in the holy and divine name of Lord Ram in all the three phases of life representing your past (previous life), your present (life in this world), and your future (life after death).”]

#### The importance of having affection for Lord Ram

58. राम सनेही राम गति राम चरन रति जाहि ।  
तुलसी फल जग जनम को दियो बिधाता ताहि ॥

58. rāma sanēhī rāma gati rāma carana rati jāhi.  
tulasī phala jaga janama kō diyō bidhātā tāhi..

Tulsidas says that a person who loves only Lord Ram, whose aim or goal in life is (the attainment of) Lord Ram, and who has devotion and affection only for the feet of Lord Ram—well, such a person is the fortunate one who has been selected by the creator for granting the real benefits or rewards of having taken birth in this world.

[That is, such a person is indeed most lucky and he enjoys the fruit of life by way of happiness, joys, bliss, contentedness, pleasures and comforts of all kinds, as well as good fame and a secured spiritual future in the form of liberation and deliverance of the soul.] (58)

[Note—Refer: (i) Doha no. 39 of this book. (ii) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37. (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 195, line no. 2. It says “the creator seems to opposed to someone who does not have devotion and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram and serve them in this world”.]

59. आपु आपने तें अधिक जेहि प्रिय सीताराम ।  
तेहि के पग की पानहीं तुलसी तनु को चाम ॥

59. āpu āpanē tēm adhika jēhi priya sītārāma.  
tēhi kē paga kī pānahīm tulasī tanu kō cāma..

Those who have greater love for Lord Ram than for any of the material things belonging to or related to them—Tulsidas says that such persons are so exalted and fortunate that even if he is beaten or even touched by the footwear of these people, he would consider himself very lucky and fortunate.

[Tulsidas means to say that such people who have undiluted and unflinching love and devotion of the purest kind and of the highest order for Lord Ram are indeed very fortunate and holy. They are true devotees of the Lord, and therefore worthy of the greatest respect and adoration. They become as holy as any other pilgrim site.] (59)

[Note—Refer: (i) Vairagya Sandipani, verse no. 37.(ii) Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 19 and 72.

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131 says “Oh Lord, you should reside in the heart of such persons who have preferred or opted to keep you close to their heart and give you an exclusive place in it to reside by vacating all other worldly relationships and attachments from it. Therefore, they discard all desires from their hearts to make way for you. Hence, they pay no heed to whether or not they are adhering to the edicts and requirements of caste, creed and religion; they eliminate all longings for wealth and prosperity from their hearts; they remove the desire for following the principles of Dharma (laws of righteousness, propriety and probity) so as to obtain welfare and happiness in this world; they abandon the natural attachment of the heart towards one’s family, kith and kin, compatriots and friends, as well as homestead. Nothing concerns them any more once they have decided to clean the inner chambers of their heart and make place for you. They treat the rest of the world and anything related with it, including all material things and relationships, as redundant and as useless as garbage that must be thrown out to clean one’s inner self so that the one who is most dear to the person can be welcomed with open arms and given a neat and honourably place to stay in.”]

60. स्वारथ परमारथ रहित सीता राम सनेहँ ।  
तुलसी सो फल चारि को फल हमार मत एहँ ॥
60. svāratha paramāratha rahita sītā rāma sanēham̐ .  
tulasī sō phala cāri kō phala hamāra mata ēham̐ ..

Tulsidas says that according to him having a selfless form of deep love and affection for Lord Ram, without expecting any worldly gains from it, or any hope of fulfilling one's objective in this world, or even expecting the salvation of the soul, is a greater (i.e. more important, richer and better) fruit than the acquisition of the four legendary rewards of doing auspicious deeds that come in the form of Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness), Kaam (desires fulfilled) and Moksha (emancipation and salvation of the soul). (60)

[Note—Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 254.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204; and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 289. Let us read them in brief.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 says that Bharat asked Triveni, the confluence of the three holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, to grant him the following boon if it is interested to bless him—"I have no interest in obtaining any of the following: 'Artha' (money, wealth and prosperity), 'Dharma' (following the laws of righteousness etc. as ordained by the scriptures), 'Kaam' (fulfillment of desires, especially related to the world), and 'Nirvana' (emancipation and salvation) which is the highest stature for the soul. Let me be interested in serving the holy feet of Lord Ram in all the generations and lives that I may take in future."

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 289 say—"Bharat has no place in his heart or mind for anything even in his dreams, such as his spiritual well-being, or any other mundane considerations that may serve his selfish purpose such as having comfort and pleasure. In my (king Janak's) view he (Bharat) is of a firm belief that everything is achieved if a person has developed love, affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram."]

61. जे जन रूखे बिषय रस चिकने राम सनेहँ ।  
तुलसी ते प्रिय राम को कानन बसहिं कि गेहँ ॥
61. jē jana rūkhē biṣaya rasa cikanē rāma sanēham̐ .  
tulasī tē priya rāma kō kānana basahim̐ ki gēham̐ ..

Tulsidas says that only those who have renounced their attachment to the material gross world of sense objects and a desire or longing for them, and are instead engrossed in enjoying the taste of the nectar of love and devotion for Lord Ram are the ones who are the beloved of the Lord. It does not matter then whether they stay in the forest (as hermits or ascetics) or live as a householder. (61)

[Note—Usually it is believed that a hermit or sage who has renounced the world and its material attractions is closer to God as compared to a householder who remains engaged in the affairs of the world. Tulsidas addresses this question and says that what actually matters is not whether one stays in the forest or lives a householder's life carrying out his assigned duties but the degree and depth of his love and devotion for the Lord God.

Merely living in a forest will not serve any spiritual purpose if the man's mind is hooked to the world. A householder who does his duties but keeps his mind, sub-conscious and heart focused on the Lord God is far better than a hermit or sage who dons ochre clothes but remains hooked to the world and its material charms. A person can deceive the world by his pretensions, but not the Lord. So those who have sincere and truthful love and devotion for Lord Ram are given the greatest of respect and honour in the community of saints and sages irrespective of their vocation.

Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 118, 127, 251. (ii) Doha nos. 62-63 that follow below. (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 277; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precedes Doha no. 86; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87 and line no. 2 of Doha 87 Ka.

Let us briefly see what Ram Charit Manas says on the referred topic.

(a) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204—see note of Doha no. 60 above.

(b) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 277—“those whose mind and heart are drenched in, soaked in, infused and suffused with a natural love and affection for Lord Ram, such persons get honoured and respected in the community of saints”.

(c) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precedes Doha no. 86 in which the Lord himself declares to sage Kaagbhusund—“I repeatedly tell you, truthfully, that there is nothing or no one in this world as dear to me as the person who serves me with devotion, faith and sincerity. Even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. On the contrary, if a creature has devotion and faith in me then I love like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden.”

(d) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87 and line no. 2 of Doha 87 Ka—“amongst all the creatures, they who have devotion, love, affection, belief and faith in me after having abandoned all sorts of negativity such as deceit, pretensions and delusions, verily I say that they are very dear to me no matter who they are, even if they are impotent men or women, or even if they are humble creatures of whatever denomination”.]

62. जथा लाभ संतोष सुख रघुबर चरन सनेह ।  
तुलसी जो मन खूँद सम कानन बसहुँ कि गेह ॥

62. jathā lābha santōṣa sukha raghubara carana sanēha.  
tulasī jō mana khūṁḍa sama kānana basahūṁ ki gēha..

One who is contented and happy with whatever he gets, and in whom (i.e. in whose heart) love and devotion for Lord Ram's holy feet is full to the brim, he whose heart and mind have become like a horse whose hind legs are tied<sup>1</sup>—Tulsidas says that for such people, there is no difference between living in a forest or as a householder. (62)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>When the hind legs of a horse are tied it cannot go anywhere inspite of moving its front legs constantly. Similarly, when one has tied oneself at the holy feet of Sri Ram, then his mind and heart won't wonder from place to place.

Refer: Doha nos. 61 and 63 of this book Dohawali.]

63. तुलसी जौं पै राम सों नाहिन सहज सनेह ।  
मूँड मुड़ायो बादिहीं भाँड़ भयो तजि गेह ॥
63. tulasī jaur̄m pai rāma sōm nāhina sahaja sanēha.  
mūmḍa muḍāyō bādihīṁ bhāmṛa bhayō taji gēha..

Tulsidas says that if one does not have natural love, affection and devotion for Sri Ram, then it is useless to tonsure the head (i.e. leave the household and pretend to be a monk or an ascetic). (63)

[Note—(i) Doha nos. 61-62 above. (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 204, 268.

Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 137 says that it is useless for a person to have dressed like a hermit who has renounced the world, but harbour desires or yearnings for this world in his mind and heart. It is plain and simple cheating.]

The negative effects of being opposed to Lord Ram

64. तुलसी श्रीरघुबीर तजि करै भरोसो और ।  
सुख संपत्ति की का चली नरकहुँ नाहीं ठौर ॥
64. tulasī śrīraghubīra taji karai bharōsō aura.  
sukha sampati kī kā calī narakahūṁ nāhīm ṭhaura..

Tulsidas says that a person who takes refuge (shelter) with any other person except Sri Raghbir (Lord Ram) – what to talk of happiness and wealth, he cannot find place even in hell. (64)

[Note—In other words, a wise person should not go and worship so many gods and goddesses or deities, but rather focus his attention on Lord Ram who is the Supreme Deity of creation. Why should anyone go and beg at the door of lesser gods when the Supreme God is so easily accessible? Wouldn't one call such a person a fool of the highest order? If such a person who avoids having love and devotion for Lord Ram and goes offering his obeisance to any other deity in the hope or expectation of deriving any sort of enduring happiness and well-being, whether of the worldly kind or of the spiritual kind, Tulsidas says that he would not only not get any of the benefits he seeks by worshipping so many other deities but would be worse off than a man who goes to hell because of his sins and misdemeanours.

That is, it is despicable to worship and pay one's homage to any other god instead of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram.

Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 140. (iii) Doha no. 67 of this book Dohawali.

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252 expressly says “it is famous in the Vedas and well-known in the world from times immemorial that one cannot find place even in hell if one becomes opposed to Lord Ram”.

(iv) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 2 (the episode of Jayant, the son of Indra who had bitten Sita in the form of a crow) say “mother become equivalent to death, father becomes the god of death himself (i.e. the parents become the cause of his destruction, ruin and death), nectar turns into poison, the dearest of friend behaves like the deadliest of enemies, the holy river Ganges transforms

into the river of hell known as Vaitarni which is horrible and impossible to cross, and the world becomes hotter than a raging fire—this happens to a person who becomes opposed to Lord Ram”.

(v) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-19 that precede Doha no. 122 say “hair can grow on the hardened back of the shell of the tortoise, a barren woman can bear a son who would become so strong that he kills someone, many varieties of flowers may bloom in the sky, thirst can be quenched by the water of the desert mirage, horns can grow on the head of a rabbit, night may be able to destroy the sun and its ability to remove darkness, fire may be produced from ice, butter may be produced by churning water (instead of milk), and oil may be extracted from sand by squeezing it—these impossibilities can become possibilities, but it is an irrevocable and quintessential truth that one will (i) never find happiness and peace, and (ii) be able to cross the ocean representing this world consisting of the endless cycle of birth and death by being opposed to Lord Ram and not having devotion for him or surrendering oneself before him”.]

65. तुलसी परिहरि हरि हरहि पाँवर पूजहिं भूत ।  
अंत फजीहत होहिंगे गनिका के से पूत ॥

65. tulasī parihari hari harahi pām̐vara pūjahim̐ bhūta.  
anta phajihata hōhiṅgē ganikā kē sē pūta..

Tulsidas says that those who worship any of the lowly spirits and ghosts (i.e. any of the countless semi-gods) instead of Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity Gods and the protector of creation) and Lord Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods responsible for conclusion of creation), are like off springs of whores who have great distress and misery in store for them in the end. (65)

[Note—It ought to be noted here that in Doha no. 64 Tulsidas has said that one should not worship any deity except Lord Ram, but here he allows the worship of Vishnu and Shiva. It implies that he sees no difference between the three. Since Lord Ram is a manifestation or an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, this is obviously understandable. Vishnu represents the role that the Supreme Being plays as the caretaker, sustainer and protector of creation, while Shiva represents him as the concluder of creation. Lord Ram being a manifestation of the Supreme Being, Tulsidas obviously means that when he says that one should worship Lord Ram he also means to include Lords Vishnu and Shiva.

Even Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has endorsed this view in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 167 when he says “those who worship ghosts and other evil spirits instead of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu whose incarnation is Lord Ram) are destined to a most horrible destiny”.

The son of a whore/prostitute is treated with utter disrespect and disdain by the society. Similarly, those who go to so many deities in order to fulfill their worldly needs are also no better than such sons because they do not have any particular Lord to whom they owe their allegiance, or a single God whom they can call their Lord just like a prostitute who does not know who the father of the son is.]

66. सेये सीता राम नहिं भजे न संकर गौरि ।  
जनम गँवायो बादिहीं परत पराई पौरि ॥

66. sēyē sītā rāma nahim bhajē na saṅkara gauri.  
janama gamvāyō bādihim parata parāṭi pauri..

One's life is considered in vain and useless (i.e. futile) if one does not serve Sri Sita-Ram faithfully and have deep devotion the Lord, and also if he does not worship Lord Shiva with his divine consort Gauri<sup>1</sup> but spends his life lying at the door of others (i.e. worshipping other gods and goddesses)<sup>2</sup>. (66)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Here Lord Ram is not worshipped alone but with his divine consort Sita. Therefore, when one worships Lord Shiva he must also offer his worship to his divine consort Gauri, who has other names such as Parvati and Uma.

From the metaphysical perspective, the worship of Ram and Sita, or of Shiva and Gauri means that the worshipper is wise and enlightened enough to know that the Supreme Being known as Brahm in the Upanishads has two aspects—one is known as the 'Viraat Purush' who is the cosmic Male aspect of creation, and the other is 'Shakti' which is the female counterpart of the Viraat Purush. They together constitute the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm'. The Shakti is the dynamism of Brahm; it represents the cosmic energy of Brahm and it has revealed itself as Prakriti or Mother Nature.

The Supreme Being plays two vital roles in creation—he is the supreme Creator as well as the supreme Concluder. No one can create this world but him, and no one can bring about the end of this creation but him. In the former role he is known as the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation has emerged, and in the latter role he is known as Shiva. In both the cases the Brahm needs his dynamism to put into effect its role as either the creator or the concluder.

Lord Ram is an incarnation of Vishnu who is also known as the Viraat Purush, and therefore when Vishnu is given respects as a form of the Supreme Being, his female counterpart Laxmi is honoured as Sita when Vishnu became Ram.

Similarly, Shiva is that aspect of the Supreme Being that deals with the conclusion or end of creation. Therefore when one offers his respects to Shiva it will be incomplete if the dynamic Shakti of Shiva is neglected—hence the need to honour Gauri in the same way as there is the need to honour Sita when one wishes to honour Lord Ram in a wholesome and comprehensive manner.

In this context, refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 9 which says “those who have natural love, faith and devotion for Lord Hari (Vishnu) and Lord Har (Shiva), those who do not indulge in unnecessary debates or harbour nonesensical doubt, the divine story of Lord Ram is sweet as nectar for them”. Here, Lord Shiva is cited because he is the one who has narrated the divine story of Lord Ram, known world-wide as the Ramayana, to his consort Parvati. So it is natural that if one has no faith in the truthfulness or the integrity of the narrator then the thing which he says becomes one big narration of falsehood.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 312. It also couples Lord Hari and Lord Har together. In other words, just as one should revere Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva in equal terms, one should also regard Lord Ram and his divine consort Sita as being equally important and worthy of reverence.

<sup>2</sup>The same idea has been expressed in Doha nos. 64-65 above. Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 276.]

67. तुलसी हरि अपमान तें होइ अकाज समाज ।  
राज करत रज मिलि गए सदल सकुल कुरुराज ॥

67. tulasī hari apamāna tēm hō'i akāja samāja.  
rāja karata raja mili ga'ē sadala sakula kururāja..

Tulsidas warns that insulting (i.e. not welcoming and not paying heed to) Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu) results in accumulation of horrible consequences and the greatest of misfortunes—like the case of King Duryudhan of Kuru's clan who perished along with his kin for rebuking and not paying heed to (i.e. insulting) Sri Krishna who had gone to him with a peace proposal (to avoid the Mahabharat war that led to the rout of the Kuru clan)<sup>1</sup>. (67)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are two episodes narrated in the Mahabharat where the Kuru king had insulted Lord Krishna. The first instance is narrated in Mahabharat, Uddyog Parva, Chapters 130-131. Briefly it is follows—Lord Krishna had gone to the court of the Kuru king Duryodhan to talk of peace and truce on behalf of the Pandavas. Duryodhan consulted the evil-minded cunning Shakuni and Karna and plotted to make Krishna a captive. At that time Lord Krishna showed his macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whose body the Gods, Brahma the creator, Rudra the annihilator of creation, and the brave Pandavas appeared. When the assembled people saw the Lord's vast macrocosmic form they got terrified.

The second episode is narrated in Mahabharat, Uddyog Parva, Chapter no. 160/53-64. Here, Duryodhan sent a messenger to Lord Krishna with the teasing message—Oh Krishna, you are an expert in creating delusions of grand proportions and clever at conjuring up majestic deception. [This allures to the incidence narrated above.] But all this won't work in the battlefield. Here only manliness and valour counts. So come on, come and face us in the battlefield or the world will call you impotent and a eunuch. You became haughty at the killing of Kansha (the king of Mathura and a maternal uncle of Krishna whom he had killed in his childhood days), but you have not faced a brave and invincible king like me. Let me see and test your manliness and potent now. This was the second disparaging remark against Krishna. The result of these two insinuations and profanity against Lord Krishna was that the entire Kuru clan was wiped out in the ensuing war.]

68. तुलसी रामहि परिहरें निपट हानि सुन ओझ ।  
सुरसरि गत सोई सलिल सुरा सरिस गंगोझ ।।
68. tulasī rāmahī pariharēm nipaṭa hāni suna ōjha.  
surasari gata sōī salila surā sarisa gaṅgōjha..

Tulsidas says, 'Oh Ojha (a clan of Brahmins), listen. There is great harm or loss in abandoning (turning away from) Sri Ram just like the case of the water of the holy river Ganges that becomes equivalent to wine (i.e. loses its holiness, its purity and importance) once it is taken out of this river.' (68)

[Note : Tulsidas means that in its primary form, the Atma of a Jiva (the pure self or the soul of the living being) and the Parmatma (the Supreme Atma or the Supreme Being) are one and the same. As long as this situation prevails, the Jiva has the same holiness as the Parmatma—the only difference is the plane of existence. While the Jiva exists at the microcosmic level of creation, the Parmatma exists at the macrocosmic level. But usually it so happens that under the influence of delusions or ignorance the Jiva begins to think

that it is separate and different from the Parmatma. When this occurs, the holiness and purity of the Atma gets polluted as soon as it begins to identify itself as a separate entity from the Parmatma.

Tulsidas cites the instance of water to stress his point. It is common knowledge that water has the same chemical formula of H<sub>2</sub>O whether it is present in the river Ganges or in an ocean or in any other body of water such as a well or a pond. But still the water of river Ganges is regarded as holy while the rest of the water is not. It is not that the water of river Ganges is more pure in chemical or physical terms than any of the rest of the water bodies, but it is the aura of holiness and divinity that river Ganges possesses by the virtue of its origin from the feet of Lord Vishnu that makes its water more worthy than the rest of the water bodies.

Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 87 and 136.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 70 say—“If hard wine is made drinkable by mixing the holy water of river Ganges with it, saints would still not drink it (because it still remains ‘wine’). But when the same wine is poured in the river Ganges, the saints have no objection to drinking or sipping the water of the river, because the wine does not pollute the water of the river, and it remains as holy as ever. This is the difference between a Jiva (the living being) and Ish (the Lord God).”

What is the difference? In the first instance when water of river Ganges was added to the wine, the dominant element was ‘wine’ and not ‘water of Ganges’. One was drinking ‘wine’ and not the ‘water of Ganges’. But in the second case the entire circumstance is changed and the role is reversed. Here, the dominant element is ‘the holy water of river Ganges’ and not ‘wine’. In the first case it was a little amount of water that was added to the main body of wine, and in the second case it is just the opposite as now a little bottle of wine is added to the huge body of water flowing in the eternal river known as Ganges which can purify and cleanse, and never be dirtied and polluted.

So, when the element of holiness and divinity that are characteristic of the eternal Soul, the Atma, the Holy Spirit, that lives in the gross body of all living beings is dominated by the taint of delusions and ignorance which are also components of the same creation as the one in which the Atma lives, then surely the latter loses its pristine pure nature and becomes affected by these negativities. Then the Atma begins to think that it has a ‘gross physical body’ that has its own characters, its own habitat in this equally gross physical world, etc. That is, the Atma becomes a ‘Jiva’—a creature that identifies itself with the gross body and the world in which it lives. But on the contrary, when the same Jiva becomes self-realised and enlightened so as to understand its true nature and form, then its Atma realises that it is an eternal and sublime element that has none of the grossness associated with this body or the world in which it lives. It becomes the universal Spirit that is all-pervading, eternal and omnipresent. This truthful knowledge about one’s real ‘self’ makes an otherwise ordinary Jiva equivalent to the Supreme Being because both have the same Atma in them. In the case of the ordinary Jiva, this Atma was dominated by worldly taints and effected by the mortal nature of the body in which it lives, but in the case of the Ish this same Atma becomes taintless and eternal.]

69. राम दूरि माया बढ़ति घटति जानि मन माँह ।  
भूरि होति रबि दूरि लखि सिर पर पगतर छाँह ॥

69. rāma dūri māyā barḥati ghaṭati jāni mana mām̐ha.  
bhūri hōti rabi dūri lakhi sira para pagatara chām̐ha..

Like a shadow that is long when the sun is not overhead (and is at distance towards the horizon), and gets progressively shortened till the time it is underfoot as the sun moves closer towards the perpendicular till the time it is finally overhead of the observer, the delusions created by Maya<sup>1</sup> are inversely proportionate to one's nearness to or closeness with Lord Ram<sup>2</sup>. (69)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>*Maya* refers to the delusions created by this artificial world.

The word 'Maya' has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother; a progenitor; something that creates', while the other half refers to the 'notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty'. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define this entire complex phenomenon at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance inspite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that Brahm employs to create delusions.

Maya is the deluding power of the supreme Authority in creation known as Brahm that has been used by him to create the sense of duality. The factual position is that everything is one and the same, and the different views of them is simply an illusion just like one sees a mirage in a desert and thinks it to be real whereas everyone knows that it is a physical phenomenon created due to the effect of excessive heat on desert sand, and it is the deluded mind that thinks it to be real though it is well aware that such things do happen in a desert and it is wise advice not to follow this illusion. Likewise, when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, he had to create a smokescreen of delusions to enable him to hide the truth, because otherwise everyone would renounce this world of artificiality and become recluses, and the result would be everyone becoming a monk, renouncing the world and the resultant termination of the cycle of birth and death! So under the influence of Maya or delusions, the living creature thinks that it, the Jiva, and Ishwar, the Lord, are two separate entities. The Jiva offers prayers to the Ishwar and looks upon him for his benevolent mercy and intercession in order to survive and prosper in this competitive world; the Ishwar looks upon the Jiva to offer him oblations and worship that would sustain and nourish the former as well as keep him in an exalted and honourable position. There exists a mutual symbiotic relationship between the two. The Jiva lives on the earth, while the Ishwar lives in the heaven. The Jiva watches the exalted stature, glory, fame and powers that the Ishwar possesses, and so the Jiva tries to acquire that stature for himself. Therefore the Jiva does good and auspicious deeds to go up to heaven, but the deeds themselves pull the Jiva down because of their inherent and inbuilt

nature to tie down anyone who gets involved in them. So the creature continues to oscillate like a pendulum between being a mortal being living on earth and the immortal being living in the heaven.

This is the theory of 'duality'. Both are covered in an invisible veil of ignorance-based delusion. From the metaphysical point of view, Ishwar is the sum total of all the causal bodies that exist in creation, while the Jiva is represented by the individual causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma or soul. This factor of the 'pure conscious Atma or soul' is common to both the Ishwar and Jiva, and hence to treat them differently is a stupid proposition caused by deluding effects of the mind. This is called being sheathed by a veil of Maya, or being under the influence of ignorance that prevents one from realizing the truth and reality.

Refer also to Doha nos. 200, 245, 263 and 276 of this book Dohawali in the context of Maya.

<sup>2</sup>Closeness or nearness to Lord Ram implies the degree of love, affection and devotion as well as the sincerity of surrender that a person has for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. Lord Ram is an embodiment and a fount of cosmic Consciousness. He is Brahm personified; he is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being. The Upanishads have said that the celestial Sun is a metaphor for Brahm because its light illuminates the world just as the light of Consciousness enlightens the creature about the truth and reality of this creation as well as his own 'self', thereby removing the darkness of his ignorance.

Delusions are like ghosts and phantoms that are seen in darkness. These delusions are compared to the shadow of a man as a figure of speech. Just like the shadow, the darkness created by ignorance and delusions are also dark. The further away a creature is from the source of light, the longer is his shadow—i.e. the further away he is from knowledge of the Truth and Reality the greater is the degree of his delusions.

The closer a man is to the source of light the brighter would he see things around him. Similarly, the closer one is to the cosmic Consciousness, i.e. the more one has come close to realise the Truth of existence as well as of his own 'self' as being the pure conscious and subtle Atma, and not the physical body that is gross, that this Atma is a counterpart of the cosmic Atma known as Parmatma, the more clearly would he see the reality and the truth of this living creation, and consequently the more shorter will be his spiritual ignorance and its attendant delusions.

Tulsidas therefore affirms that the closer one is to Lord Ram—who is Brahm personified—the lesser is the fear that he has from the delusions and untruths that surround the creature from all sides in this artificial world and keep him tied in fetters that prevent his soul from either finding peace and rest in this life or find emancipation and salvation upon death. Just like a servant who serves an able master is free from any worries about his well-being or future safety, one who has surrendered himself to Lord Ram is free from all sorts of tensions and fears pertaining to this spiritual well-being.

Tulsidas asserts that a person who has firm faith and devotion for Lord Ram is untouched by Maya. This has been affirmed in the context of Bharat when it is said that Lord Ram and Sita are enshrined in the heart of Bharat like a deity is enshrined in a temple, and wherever there is the sun there can be no trace of darkness—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 295.

Maya is afraid of a person who has Bhakti (devotion, dedication, love, affection and surrender) for Lord Ram in his heart because the Lord is especially caring for such a person, and Maya is scared of the Lord because Maya itself is a humble maidservant of the Lord—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 15.

Now, let us read what is said about Maya in the above referred verses of Ram Charit Manas. (a) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116 briefly say as follows—“Lord Ram loves Bhakti (devotion and dedication) while Maya (delusions) is merely like an obedient dancer who does the bidding of her Lord to please him. [The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the music being played and song being sung.] Since Lord Ram favours Bhakti, Maya is scared of it. Bhakti is free from any taint or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness. Maya is afraid of anyone in whose heart Bhakti resides with full authority—because Maya is simply a maid when it is compared to Bhakti. So Maya cannot play its tricks upon a devotee of the Lord in whose heart Bhakti lives as the reigning mistress.”

(b) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15 says “Kaam, or worldly desires and lust, do not sprout in the mind and heart of followers and devotees of Lord Hari just like it is impossible for grass to grow in a patch of infertile (desert or rocky and barren) land even if it rains there.”]

70. साहिब सीतानाथ सों सब घटिहै अनुराग ।  
तुलसी तबहीं भालतें भागिहैं भाग ॥

70. sāhiba sītānātha sōm saba ghaṭihai anurāga.  
tulasī tabahīm bhālatēm bhāgihaim bhāga..

Tulsidas says when one's devotion and love towards Lord Sita-Nath (i.e. Lord Ram) diminishes, one's luck, good days and fortunes immediately leave or abandon him.

[That is, as soon as one abandons his devotion, love and affection for Lord Ram, all his good days are over, and such a person will have to face the wrath of misfortunes and the gravest of horrors in this world.] (70)

[Note—One is extremely lucky and fortunate if he develops love and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram—refer: Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 63.

On the contrary, as soon as one turns away from Lord Ram, all the good luck and good fortunes as well as the fame and majesty that he might have accumulated till that time immediately abandon him or turn their faces away from him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 23.

The whole world and even the creator Brahma turns away from such a person who has become opposed to Lord Ram—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 195. (ii) Kavitawali, Uttarkand, verse no. 2.]

71. करिहौ कोसलनाथ तजि जबहिं दूसरी आस ।  
जहाँ तहाँ दुख पाइहौ तबहीं तुलसीदास ॥

71. karihau kōsalanātha taji jabahīm dūsarī āsa.  
jahām̃ tahām̃ dukha pā'ihau tabahīm tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas advises the world and says—‘You shall get distress and misfortune in abundance as soon as you abandon Lord Kosal-Nath (Lord Ram) and seek refuge elsewhere.

[Lord Ram was the king of the kingdom of Kaushal which had its capital at Ayodhya.] (71)

[Note—Refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46 in which Lord Ram has himself declared—“How can a man claim to be my sincere servant (follower, devotee and subordinate) if he expects some sort of help and succour from someone else, or seeks anything whatsoever somewhere else except from me?”

Refer also to: (i) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 45. (ii) Doha nos. 64 and 66 of this book Dohawali.]

72. बिंधि न ईधन पाइए सागर जुरै न नीर ।  
परै उपास कुबेर घर जो बिपच्छ रघुबीर ॥

72. bindhi na īndhana pā'i'ai sāgara jurai na nīra.  
parai upāsa kubēra ghara jō bipaccha raghubīra..

If Lord Raghubir (i.e. Lord Sri Ram) becomes opposed and malevolent, firewood would not be available in Vindiyachal forest (which is rich in firewood trees), the ocean would be deprived of water, and even Kuber's house (Kuber = the treasurer of Gods) would be impoverished.

[Lord Ram is usually called ‘Raghubir’ meaning the brave member of king Raghu’s dynasty. This is because the Lord had taken birth in this dynasty that ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya.] (72)

[Note—‘Fire’ that is represented by the firewood, ‘water’ represented by the ocean, and ‘material wealth’ in the form of availability of basic needs of life and here represented by Kuber, are the three essential necessities of life. Without fire the body as well as the world would chill to death. Without water the world would dry up and die. And a minimum level of material wealth that can help a person meet his daily needs is absolutely necessary to live a reasonably comfortable life on earth.

Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 68 and 151.

Tulsidas means that when a person becomes opposed to Lord Ram or abandons his love and devotion for the Lord, he becomes so unfortunate that even the basic peace of mind and the basic requirements of happiness do not become available to him. He remains constantly in a state of grief, misery and pain. The ‘fire’ and ‘water’ which are most essential ingredients of life, both in their physical forms as well as in their subtle forms, refuse to oblige and cooperate with him. Good luck in the form of availability of basic material needs to survive in this world of material objects also takes a beating and abandons him. The result is that such a man is subjected to immense problems and suffering in this world.

Refer Doha no. 63 above.]

73. बरसा को गोबर भयो को चहै को करै प्रीति ।  
तुलसी तू अनुभवहि अब राम बिमुख की रीति ॥

73. barasā kō gōbara bhayō kō cahai kō karai prīti.  
tulasī tū anubhavahi aba rāma bimukha kī rīti..

Tulsidas says that the person who has abandoned Sri Ram is like cow-dung during the rainy season – it can neither be used to make cakes (for use as fuel) nor fit for smearing or plastering of walls or floor of huts (as usually done in the villages). [That is, such a person becomes worthless].

Who would like such a person a worthless person, and who would like to have any sort of dealing with him? (73)

[Note—If the cow-dung is allowed to remain in the open ground during the rains of the rainy season, it begins to give a foul smell, gets infested with worms and becomes a breeding place for insects. Similarly, the Atma of a man who turns away from Lord Ram suffers a lot and becomes tainted with sins. He becomes an object of ridicule and scorn in the world, and both his worldly life as well as his spiritual life is ruined. Refer: Geeta, 9/30-31.]

74. सबहि समरथहि सुखद प्रिय अच्छम प्रिय हितकारि ।  
कबहुँ न काहुहि राम प्रिय तुलसी कहा बिचारि ॥

74. sabahi samarathahi sukhada priya acchama priya hitakāri.  
kabahum̐ na kāhuhi rāma priya tulasī kahā bicāri..

The situation in this world is such that those people who are able, competent, successful and accomplished prefer those persons who give them worldly happiness and comfort (i.e. help in enhancing the worldly pleasures, comforts and happiness that they already have), whereas those who are less fortunate prefer a person who can provide them with an opportunity to become more able and successful in this world. [That is, a person always prefers to favour another person if the latter helps the former to fulfill his worldly desires and augment his worldly successes. No one would like to have any dealing with another person who acts to the contrary.]

Tulsidas ponders over the matter and wonders that it is an irony that inspite of this inherent tendency of all living beings no one pays attention to Lord Ram and has any inclination or desire to have devotion and affection for the Lord. [Tulsidas means that Lord Ram is the one who, being the Supreme Lord of creation, bestows some virtues in a man which makes him useful to the world and the society in some way or the other. But the world is so foolish that whereas on the one hand it prefers to like a person because he is of some use to it by the virtue of certain qualities or skills that he possesses, but on the other hand it neglects the Lord who has made the concerned person useful to the world by granting him the particular virtue or quality or skill that the world finds so useful. That is, the world is so ignorant, deluded and foolish that it does not know or realise that the ultimate Authority that makes anything good happen is Lord Ram who is the Supreme Being. The person whom the world finds useful is a mere puppet in the hands of Lord Ram who is the supreme puppeteer.] (74)

[Note—Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 168, 190.]

75. तुलसी उद्यम करम जुग जब जेहि राम सुडीठि ।  
होइ सुफल सोइ ताहि सब सनमुख प्रभु तन पीठि ॥

75. tulasī udyama karama juga jaba jēhi rāma suḍṭhi.  
hō'i suphala sō'i tāhi saba sanamukha prabhu tana pīṭhi..

Tulsidas says that when Sri Ram becomes benevolent and favourable on anyone, all his endeavours, all his actions and all his deeds become successful (i.e. their yield desired result) at that moment. Not only this, when a person turns his back to the world and his face towards Lord Ram, all his spiritual as well as worldly desires are fulfilled or taken care of. (75)

[Note—When a devotee offers his complete devotion for Lord Ram and decides to renounce everything pertaining to the material world that is spiritually entangling, he is for a surprise. He discovers that he gets both the fruits even without asking—the Lord not only meets his basic needs in this world and gives him good name and fame, but at the same time also ensures his spiritual welfare by way of his obtaining emancipation and salvation. Previously when this man was running towards this world and attempting to fulfill his desires, the world receded from him like a mirage seen in a hot desert. The more he strived the further his goals for material successes and the desire to obtain happiness and comfort from them moved away from him. But when he turns to Lord Ram he finds that not only does he get immense peace and calmness of the mind and the soul but the same world which had hitherto avoided him now begins to honour him and voluntarily surrender itself to him. While previously he was despised in the world as being greedy and lustful, after surrendering to Lord Ram he is now treated as a holy man who deserves the highest respect in the society. Voluntary contributions come pouring in, and the paradox is that whereas earlier he had to beg others for morsels of food and to meet the basic necessities of life, now the same people vie with each other to serve him.

Refer: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 246. (ii) Hanuman Baahuk, verse no. 44. (iii) Doha no. 468 of this book Dohawali which says that the grace of the Lord God is the chief factor or catalyst that ensures success in any venture. (iv) Ram Charit Manas. Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 Kha—which says that Lord Ram can make a mosquito attain a stature superior to Brahma the creator, and degrade Brahma from his exalted position as the creator of this creation to that of an inconsequential mosquito.]

76. राम कामतरु परिहरत सेवत कलि तरु ठूँठ ।  
स्वारथ परमारथ चहत सकल मनोरथ झूँठ ॥

76. rāma kāmataru pariharata sēvata kali taru ṭhūmṭha.  
svāratha paramāratha cahata sakala manōratha jhūmṭha..

Those who (are foolish enough to) abandon Lord Ram who is like the ‘Kaam Taru’ (the all wish-fulfilling tree of the Gods which is also known as the Kalpa Tree) and seek favour from Kali-yug (the material world of the present era), which is nothing but like a dry stump of wood, in the hope that their worldly desires would be fulfilled and they can ensure an enduring happiness in future, lose everything—neither is their worldly well-being ensured nor their spiritual welfare taken care of. They prove themselves to be in vain, pursuing a mirage that leads them no where. They are bound to be totally disappointed and absolutely disillusioned.

[Such stupid people not only lead a vain life of unfulfilled desires that leave them restless, frustrated and fuming, but even ruin the prospect of their future spiritual welfare,

their chance of finding liberation and deliverance from the horrors of the endless cycle of birth and death as well as obtaining eternal peace and tranquility for themselves.] (76)

[Note—Tulsidas cites two trees here—one is the Kalpa Tree and the other is the Kali Tree. The Kalpa Tree gives all desired fruits and is considered to be an auspicious tree, while the Kali Tree is symbolized by the ‘Bahera tree’ (the *belleric myrobalan* tree) which is regarded as an inauspicious and an useless tree. So, while seeking from Lord Ram (the Kalpa Tree) gives fruits or rewards that are auspicious and sweet, seeking from the world (the Kali Tree) will give fruits or rewards that are inauspicious and bitter.

Refer: (i) Doha nos. 53-55 in this context. (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 251 says that those in whose heart the Kalpa Tree in the form of love and devotion for Lord Ram has grown are the ones who enjoy the sweet fruit of spiritual peace and happiness that are enduring and of a divine quality.]

### The easy way for one’s welfare

77. निज दूषन गुन राम के समुझे तुलसीदास ।  
होइ भलो कलिकाल हूँ उभय लोक अनयास ॥

77. nija dūṣana guna rāma kē samujhēm tulasīdāsa.  
hō’i bhalō kalikāla hūm’ ubhaya lōka anayāsa..

Tulsidas says when a person begins to understand that all the shortcomings that he has are his own while all the goodness that exist in this world are the virtues of Lord Ram, it is then that he obtains his welfare—both at the worldly plane as well as the spiritual plane—very easily in this era of Kali-yug. (77)

[Note—When a wise man realises that he has certain flaws and shortcomings in him, he would strive to remove them. This translates into his moving away from the sinful and corrupt world towards the world that is marked by virtues that are holy and divine. The Lord God is the one who is a fount of all goodness and auspicious virtues in this creation; they emanate from him. When the man decides that he is not perfect, he loses his sense of ego and pride; he becomes humble. This in itself is a positive development. In his endeavour to improve himself and obtain the rewards of being good, the wise man moves away from the corrupting influences of this deluding artificial world, and gets closer to the world of divinity ruled by the Lord. Just like moving away from the sweltering heat of the plains during hot summer months and going up to some mountainous resort gives immense relief and comfort to the man in physical terms, moving away from the sinful and corrupting world towards the divine and holy world of the Holy Spirit bestows immense spiritual peace and bliss to the aspirant. As he moves closer to Lord Ram, who is a fount of all good virtues and auspiciousness, he imbibes holiness and divinity to such an extent that in due course of time he acquires a completely different personality that makes him reflect the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram himself.

A good, honourable, righteous and virtuous man gets a lot of respect in this world though the world itself is corrupt. He has simply to express his desires, and the people are too eager to meet them. No thing becomes out of reach for such a man. This is the benefit that he gets in this world. Even when he is dead and gone, he is remembered fondly and shown the same respect that he was given when alive. He is raised to a high pedestal just like the world honours Lord Ram.

Once he is able to overcome his spiritual shortcomings such as his attachments to this world and longing for it, his sense of possessiveness of the material world, he begins to develop spirituality in him. The darkness of worldly taints that cast a long shadow on his soul now begins to be replaced by the light of auspiciousness and virtuousness.

It is only when a man realises that he is not perfect that he will make efforts to get rid of his shortcomings. Then he realises that the source of good virtues and auspiciousness is the Supreme Lord. So he begins to move away from the world and gets closer to Lord Ram. In due course of time he begins to shine with the same glory as belongs to the Lord himself just like the moon that reflects the light of the sun but the world praises it for its own beautiful light that is soothing for the weary nerves and calming for the senses.

The Kali-yug is the present era of the 4-era cycle of creation and conclusion according to Hindu belief. It is regarded as the spiritually most corrupt era. Spiritual welfare is very difficult during this period. Tulsidas' main thrust is that if a person takes the path of having devotion for Lord Ram even in this corrupt era, then his worldly as well as spiritual welfare is very easily and certainly ensured.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 131, and Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 28, both of which also endorse the same idea as narrated in this Doha.

Other references: Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 158, 159, 171, 238.]

78. कै तोहि लागहिं राम प्रिय कै तू प्रभु प्रिय होहि ।  
दुइ में रुचै जो सुगम सो कीबे तुलसी तोहि ॥

78. kai tōhi lāgahim rāma priya kai tū prabhu priya hōhi.  
du'i mēm rucai jō sugama sō kībē tulasī tōhi..

Tulsidas advises that one should either begin to love no one else except Sri Ram (i.e. be totally devoted to him)<sup>1</sup> or he should take refuge at his holy feet and surrender everything to the Lord<sup>2</sup>—depending upon one's convenience and inclinations. [In both the cases, one would get Lord Sri Ram's protection, grace and mercy. In fact, both are like the two sides of the same coin.] (78)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 130 Kha which says “Oh Ram! Let me have enduring love, affection and longing for you just like a lustful man has for a woman, and a greedy man has for profits.”

(ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 85 which says ‘if one wishes to cross this ocean-like entrapping world easily, without having to do Yoga (meditation), Yagya (various fire sacrifices or other religious formalities), Vrat (keeping strict fast and observing religious vows) and Sanyam (self control), then Tulsidas says that one should not forget the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram. It is the only way out.’

(iii) Refer also Doha no. 63 of this book.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 185. It says that the Lord is one who is loved by those who are humble, hapless and helpless on the one hand, and the Lord is the merciful One who loves those who are humble, hapless and helpless. (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precedes Doha no. 43. Here the Lord himself tells Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, that he (Ram) has taken an eternal vow that he will remove the troubles and miseries of those who come to seek refuge in the Lord's holy feet. This was said in the context of Vibhishan who had come seeking refuge with Lord Ram after he was kicked by his elder

brother Ravana. This assertion and declaration by the Lord extremely pleased Hanuman who knew that the Lord is very loving for those who have taken shelter in his august feet. Refer also to Doha nos. 84-85, and 98.]

79. तुलसी दुइ महँ एक ही खेल छाँड़ि छल खेलु ।  
कै करु ममता राम सों कै ममता परहेलु ॥

79. tulasī du'i maham̐ ēka hī khēla chām̐ḍi chala khēlu.  
kai karu mamatā rāma sōm̐ kai mamatā parahēlu..

Tulsidas says that one should avoid pretensions and deceit by playing a fair game—it is either to have 'Mamta' (affection, longing, endearment, attachment) with Lord Sri Ram or to abandon 'Mamta' (with anything or anyone else in this world) altogether. (79)

[Note—It is like not riding on two boats at the same time—because if one does so he will certainly sink midstream. 'Mamta' is like a fetter for the soul because it ties it down to the entity for which a person has an attachment, for which he has a longing or affection. Now, if this Mamta is for the material world and its sense objects then the soul would be tied down to it. This would prevent its liberation and deliverance because the world is gross, mortal, deluding and entrapping by nature just like the mirage in the hot desert. One would be utterly foolish to run behind it in an attempt to seek water there, as his death is certain out of exhaustion and thirst. Everyone knows that it is an optical illusion and there is no drop of water in the mirage.

Similarly, if the soul is attached to some other mortal being, such as some dear one, then also it would have the same effect because then also it would be shackled to an entity that is mortal and perishable. The reason is that all living beings are mortal, and the body which is usually recognized as the individual which a person is fond of is as gross, inconsequential and perishable as the rest of the material world. Say, how can one reach one's destination by boarding a wrong train?

The ultimate spiritual goal of a wise person is to ensure that his Atma, his pure 'self' known as the 'pure conscious soul', finds its liberation and deliverance. If it is hooked to the wrong thing it will be doomed like the thing to which it is hooked just like a train carriage that is wrongly attached to another train going to some other destination instead of the train to which it was supposed to be coupled so that it could go to the place where it is supposed to go.

The ultimate and the correct destination of the Atma is the Parmatma, the supreme Atma. Lord Ram is that Parmatma. Hence, if one must have Mamta then he is well advised to have it with Lord Ram. This will ensure that his soul finds its final liberation and deliverance from this deluding and entrapping world—because now it can be said that the carriage is hooked or coupled to the right train, and this would ensure that the passenger (the living being, the man) would reach his destination without worries.

The fact that one should expect nothing from anyone other than Lord Ram has been asserted at a number of places in the Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301 says that Lord Ram does not like pretensions and deceit, and one should have natural sense of devotion and love for the Lord, should surrender completely before him, and must have a sincere desire to serve the Lord without conceit and cunning, without caring for any self serving goals, and without expecting any one or all of the four legendary or traditional rewards or fruits that one gets for being righteous, honest and auspicious. These four fruits are 'Artha' or material wealth and prosperity, 'Dharma' or the benefits that come with being righteous

and conducting one's self properly, 'Kaam' or fulfillment of all desires, and 'Moksha' or emancipation and salvation.

(ii) Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46, Lord Ram has said himself that if one calls himself his servant or follower and then has hopes or expectations from someone else, then say how can such a person be called the Lord's real and sincere servant or follower? Such a person is obviously selfish and cheating himself as well as the world.

(iii) In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede it, Lord Ram tells Vibhishan that he treats with great respect a person who might have the world as his enemy but has come to seek refuge with the Lord after abandoning all arrogance, attachments, deceit, cunning and pretensions, after having snapped all his relations with the world and its wealth, after renouncing his household and his near and dear ones such as his wife, his son, parents, kith and kin, friends, etc., if he has no desires and treats everything equally and with stoic neutrality, if he has no fear, and if he is not affected by the sense of worldly happiness or sorrow—if such a man surrenders to the Lord and ties himself irrevocably to the holy feet of the Lord with a thread of devotion, love and affection, without any expectations whatsoever, the Lord promises to take care of him, whatever may come.

Those people who worship my Saguna form (i.e. my form as it appears in my incarnation), those who think of the good of others (i.e. are not selfish), those who diligently follow the rules of proper conduct and ethical behaviour as laid down in the scriptures, those who are steadfast in carrying out their duties with due sincerity, and those who love Dwij (elders and learned people)—verily, such persons are very dear to the Lord's heart.

Refer also to Doha no. 18-19, 46 and 65 of this book Dohawali.]

### The easy way to attain Lord Ram

80. निगम अगम साहेब सुगम राम साँचिली चाह ।  
अंबु असन अवलोकिअत सुलभ सबै जग माँह ॥

80. nigama agama sãhēba sugama rãma sãmçilī cãha.  
ambu asana avalōki'ata sulabha sabai jaga mãmħa..

Lord Ram (the personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being), who is beyond comprehension even by the Vedas, is easily accessible or attainable by everyone (i.e. the devotee, the spiritual seeker) by having purity of devotion and sincerity of desire to reach the Lord just like water and food are very easily available to all in this world. (80)

[Note—Water and food are abundantly available in this world, but they have to be sought by the needy—they won't come automatically to the thirsty and the hungry till the latter make basic effort to get them though they are available aplenty in this world. So is the case with the Lord—he is easily accessible and ready to walk the extra mile or take the extra step only if the devotee or the seeker makes some basic effort. And the simplest effort that he is expected to make is having devotion and love for Lord Ram.

Refer Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 117 Ka which says that Lord Ram is not attained even during deep meditation done by great sages and ascetics, and is also incomprehensible to the Vedas because they cannot definitely define him but simply say 'Neti-Neti'—i.e. not this, not this. In other words, after having spent reams of

paper in an attempt to sing hymns to the Supreme Being and using countless epithets and adjectives and nouns and proper nouns to describe who the Lord is and what are his characteristic virtues and qualities, they ultimately surrender and say that nothing can be said with absolutely certainty about the Lord. It cannot be said that 'this' is Lord and 'that' is not Lord. He is omnipresent, all-pervading and immanent in creation.

Lord Shiva has affirmed that the only way to make the Lord reveal himself is unadulterated love and affection—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 185.

Refer also to (i) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 55; (ii) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 126; (iii) Doha no. 573 of this book Dohawali.]

81. सन्मुख आवत पथिक ज्यों दिँ दहिनो बाम ।  
तैसोइ होत सु आप को त्यों ही तुलसी राम ॥

81. sanmukha āvata pathika jyōm di'ēm' dāhinō bāma.  
taisō'i hōta su āpa kō tyōm hī tulasī rāma..

Tulsidas says that a pedestrian coming to you from the opposite direction would pass by your left or right depending on the right-of-way of passage you give to him. Similarly, Lord Ram would respond to you depending on the quality and intensity of your devotion and faith, as well as the degree of earnestness and sincerity that you have. (81)

[Note—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 219 says that though it is true that the Lord has ordained that the world would be driven by the principles of action and reaction, or the principle of Karma which says that a man reaps what he sows, but still the Lord treats each individual according to the level of devotion, humility and submission he has for the Lord. That is, the Lord would forgive and consider sympathetically the case of those who are devoted to him, ask for forgiveness, offer all their deeds and their fruits to the Lord, and submit before him unconditionally, as compared to those who are sinful and opposed to the Supreme Being. In other words, everything depends upon the individual and his own spiritual inclinations.

Bharat also says the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 182. He essentially says in these lines that though it is correct that he (Bharat) is the root cause of all the mischief that has occurred in Ayodhya (which led to Lord Ram's forest exile and the death of his father Dasrath), it is certain that when the Lord (Ram) sees him (Bharat) in front, seeking forgiveness and refuge in his (Lord's) holy feet, he (the Lord) would surely forgive him (Bharat) and lovingly accept him, because the Lord is an ocean of mercy and compassion.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 299 which say that even the most horrible of sinners and culprits are forgiven by the Lord when they come and submit themselves with humility and devotion before the Lord.]

#### The importance of Vairagya (renunciation)

82. राम प्रेम पथ पेखिए दिँ विषय तन पीठि ।  
तुलसी केंचुरि परिहरें होत साँपहू दीठि ॥

82. rāma prēma patha pēkhi'ē di'ēm' viṣaya tana pīṭhi.  
tulasī kēn'curi pariharēm hōta sām'pahū dīṭhi..

Tulsidas says that the way to Sri Ram will be seen only when one turns one's back to the deluding world of material sense objects and involvement with them. [That is, only when one develops renunciation and detachment with the world of delusions that he is able to see the real world of spiritual peace and bliss. Turning away from the world is renunciation, and it leads one to attain spiritual enlightenment.]

A serpent can see only when it sheds its cuticle. [The cuticle is dead skin that covers the eye of the serpent, though this cuticle is like translucent plastic. Similarly, only when one gets rid of delusions created by this world of false charms that one is able to see and experience true bliss and contentedness that comes with being close to the Lord.] (82)

[Note—One has to make a choice—it is either the pleasures and comforts that are derived from the material world of delusions and its transitional charms, or the eternal bliss and the spiritual happiness of the soul that is derived by turning towards the Lord. It is not possible to have both of them simultaneously.]

Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) are like the two eyes with which one can see and find Bhakti (devotion and dedication for the Lord). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120. These lines have been narrated in the note accompanying Doha no. 49.

Vairagya is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Doha no. 89 Ka.

Refer also to Doha nos. 49, 61-62.]

83. तुलसी जौ लौं बिषय की मुधा माधुरी मीठि ।  
तौ लौं सुधा सहस्र सम राम भगति सुठि सीठि ॥

83. tulasī jau laurṁ biṣaya kī mudhā mādhurī mīṭhi.  
tau laurṁ sudhā sahasra sama rāma bhagati suṭhi sīṭhi..

Tulsidas says as long as the false and delusory world of material sense objects appears sweet (i.e. attractive and charming), one finds Sri Ram's devotion bland (tasteless and unattractive) though it might be actually thousands of times sweeter than nectar. (83)

[Note—In other words, as long as a man remains indulgent in the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the world, he will find the path of Bhakti dry and unattractive though it is, spiritually, as sweet as nectar. This can be experienced in practical terms also—if a man is used to eating spicy food dripping with oil, he will not enjoy the natural taste of vegetables and grains that comes when one eats steam-cooked food or simply boiled vegetables. Just as spices and deep frying kills the natural taste of the vegetable and the grain, the dazzle and charm of this artificial world robs the soul of its chance to enjoy the peace and bliss that comes with having devotion and affection for the Parmatma, the Supreme Being known as Lord Ram.]

Refer Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 127, 132, 169. Also Doha nos. 61 and 69.]

The importance of taking refuge with the Lord

84. जैसो तैसो रावरो केवल कोसलपाल ।  
तौ तुलसी को है भलो तिहूँ लोक तिहूँ काल ॥

84. jaisō taisō rāvarō kēvala kōsalapāla.  
tau tulasī kō hai bhalō tihūṁ lōka tihūṁ kāla..

Tulsidas addresses his Lord Ram and proclaims—'Oh Lord Ram, the king of Kaushal! Whether good or bad, this Tulsidas is yours. If this is the truth, then his welfare is assured in all the three worlds (the heaven, the hell, and the present world where he lives at present) and the three eras or phases of time (past, present and future).'

[Tulsidas is confident that once he has taken shelter in the holy feet of Lord Ram, his spiritual as well as temporal welfare and well-being is assured. He has nothing to worry about any longer.] (84)

[Note—The word 'Koshalpaal' in the text literally means the care-taker and the Lord who looks after the affairs of the kingdom of Kaushal. Obviously it refers to Lord Ram because the Lord was the king of Ayodhya which was the capital of the kingdom of Kaushal. Tulsidas means that just as Lord Ram had diligently and lovingly taken care of all the subjects of his kingdom, he is of a firm conviction that the Lord will also take care of him if he sincerely submits himself before the Lord and develops steady devotion and love for the Lord.

Refer: Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 100. It says that Tulsidas prefers to become an ardent follower and serve devotedly the gracious Lord Ram who had even done justice to the dog when the latter approached the Lord with its complaint. The story goes that once a Brahmin had hit a dog and injured the animal seriously. The dog was wailing pitifully and appealed to the Lord for doing justice. When the Lord heard both the parties, he found the man guilty, and asked the dog to determine the punishment. The dog asked that the man be made a high priest of a monastery. The reason was that the dog himself was one such highly placed functionary in a temple in his previous life, and due to the sins committed by the virtue of his position he was condemned to become a dog. So this fellow would become a dog in his second life, and then suffer the same humiliation that the dog is being subjected to now.

Refer also to Doha no. 22 of this book.]

85. है तुलसी केँ एक गुन अवगुन निधि कहैं लोग ।  
भलो भरोसो रावरो राम रीझिबे जोग ॥

85. hai tulasī kēṁ ēka guna avaguna nidhi kahairṁ lōga.  
bhalō bharōsō rāvarō rāma rījhibē jōga..

Tulsidas addresses Lord Ram and says—'People say about me that I (Tulsidas) am a treasury (i.e. that I am full) of all the negative qualities, numerous faults and great shortcomings. But they do not know that I have one good quality—and it is that I have complete devotion, faith and confidence in you (Lord Ram). I have no other support, succour or reliance except you. Well then, oh Lord, this single quality should be enough to make you pleased with me and be satisfied with me (inspite of the world accusing me of being full of all the bad qualities that exist in this creation, or me lacking in any of the

worthwhile virtues that are enumerated in the scriptures for a person to be eligible to get respect and honour as well as spiritual welfare in this world).’ (85)

[Note—Tulsidas says that though he never claims to be man of high stature or one who possesses knowledge or wisdom, though he may not have done any worthwhile religious deeds or gone to pilgrimage, or he may not have done great sacrifices, observed austerity or done penance, or he may not have done meditation, he may not have repeated the Mantras, he may not have studied the scriptures, and he may not have done any of the things one expects to be done by a man seeking spiritual welfare and respect in the society, but there is no denying of the fact that he has completely surrendered himself to Lord Ram with the greatest of devotion and faith. But this single virtue is worth its weight in gold; it eclipses all other bad qualities and supercedes all the good ones.

Here in this verse, Tulsidas speaks to Lord Ram and presents his case forcefully—pleading with the Lord not to pay heed to his shortcomings but accept him as his loving devotee because for Tulsidas there is no one else in this world except the Lord. The one remarkable thing that even a lay reader will note while reading the many texts of Tulsidas is that this holy saint has the ability to ‘talk directly’ with his Lord Ram, an ability that does not come easily, and is one of the rarest of spiritual gifts that a man can possess.

Tulsidas requests Lord Ram to have a special consideration for him, or a soft corner in his heart for him.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 261, Tulsidas says that in the eyes of the world he is merely pretending to have affection, love and devotion for Lord Ram, but nonetheless he is not bothered for it does not matter to him if his love and devotion for Lord Ram is real or imaginary—at least he has them for the Lord. This in itself is a great achievement for him. He believes that having love, affection, devotion and faith in Lord Ram is sufficient in itself—whether it is natural or artificial, whether it is sincere or pretentious is immaterial. It is like a sick man taking the correct medicine—whether he takes it willingly or forced to take it, the medicine would cure him. Similarly, all the spiritual ills of a creature are taken care of if he devotes himself to the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram, whether that devotion is done willingly and comes from the core of one’s heart, or it is done out of compulsion, is artificial and pretentious.]

### The path of Bhakti

86. प्रीति राम सों नीति पथ चलिय राग रिस जीति ।  
तुलसी संतन के मते इहै भगति की रीति ॥

86. prīti rāma sōm nīti patha caliya rāga risa jīti.  
tulasī santana kē matē ihai bhagati kī rīti..

Tulsidas says that according to saints, the primary rule of Bhakti (devotion and dedication for the Supreme Lord, and complete surrender to him) is to have undiluted and unwavering love and affection for Lord Ram, as well as to follow the path of rightful conduct, propriety and probity after vanquishing all negative traits as having ‘Raag’ (attachments, lust, greed) and ‘Krodh’ (anger, wrathfulness). (86)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 16, Lord Ram asks his companions, the monkeys and bears as well as Vibhishan, the king of demons—who had accompanied the Lord to Ayodhya after the victory at Lanka—that they should now go back to their respective kingdoms, and continue to have steady devotion for the Lord. They must

remember and realise that the Lord loves everyone in a universal manner, and that he strives for the welfare of all the creatures wherever they are and in whatever condition they are in. Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 38 which says—“One should be free from having Kaam (worldly desires and lust), and instead pursue the path of having faith and devotion in my (Lord Ram’s) holy name. Such persons become an abode of peace and tranquility, of renunciation and detachment, of humility and simplicity, and are always happy, joyous and cheerful.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 131, sage Valmiki says that the heart and mind (Mana) of those who are experts in the laws of righteousness, morality, ethics, propriety and probity—i.e. those who wisely follow this path in this world—is the proper dwelling place for the Lord (Ram).

Other references: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38; (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 47; (iv) Vairagya Sandipani, verse no. 59.]

### Evil nature of Kali-Yug

87. सत्य बचन मानस विमल कपट रहित करतूति ।  
तुलसी रघुबर सेवकहि सकै न कलिजुग धूति ॥

87. satya bacana mānasa vimala kapaṭa rahita karatūti.  
tulasī raghubara sēvakahi sakai na kalijuga dhūti..

Tulsidas says that Kaliyug can't cheat and trap (i.e. entangle in delusions and falsehoods) those devotees of Sri Ram who speak the truth, whose mind is pure and incorrupt, and actions are honest and without deceit. (87)

[Note—The Kaliyug is the fourth of the four-epoch one cycle of creation and destruction. It is characterized by a predominance of all the negative traits one can imagine of. It is deluding, entrapping and spiritually corrupting. The present era through which the world is passing is the Kaliyug.

One should sweetly speak the truth that is endorsed by the heart, i.e. the truth that is actually true and does not make a man feel guilty in the sub-conscious mind and heart—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 130.

One should have a simple and honest heart that harbours no deceit and cunning—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46.

In the context of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram and one of the Lord’s greatest devotees who personified the virtue of sincere devotion, love and surrender for the Lord, it is said that he had purity in deeds, purity in words, and purity in the mind as well as in the heart—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 304.]

88. तुलसी सुखी जो राम सों दुखी सो निज करतूति ।  
करम बचन मन ठीक जेहि तेहि न सकै कलि धूति ॥

88. tulasī sukhī jō rāma sōm dukhī sō nija karatūti.  
karama bacana mana ṭhīka jēhi tēhi na sakai kali dhūti..

Tulsidas says that Kaliyug can't cheat, trap, lead astray or delude those who are firmly convinced that their happiness and peace are directly dependent upon the benevolence, grace and mercy of Lord Ram, and if they are unhappy and restless then it is due to their own vanity, ego and haughtiness as well as their own evil deeds and misdemeanours, and those whose actions, words and mind as well as the heart are pure, pious, holy and righteous. (88)

[Note—People should realise that their happiness or unhappiness in this world lie in these qualities. They should not blame others or the destiny for their miseries, but their own selves. They must understand that one is happy in this world only when he takes refuge with the Supreme Lord, because then it is the responsibility of the Lord to take care of them and their needs. Otherwise, no one should expect to be happy and contented. One must be convinced that all his sufferings are due to the bad effects of his own evil deeds, and it is wrong to accuse either the destiny or the Lord for his miseries; they are his own making.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 291 in which sage Vashistha tells Lord Ram—“That comfort and happiness, that deed and ritual, and that Dharma (duty and religious observance) in which there is no devotion for Lord Ram and which does not arouse love and submission for Lord Ram's lotus like feet—let all them be burnt down. Any union should be regarded as sorrowful and bad, any knowledge should be deemed to be as useless as ignorance—if they do have love for Lord Ram as the main component. If anyone is happy it is because of you, or because of your company, or because you reside in his heart, or because you are pleased with him, and if anyone is unhappy it is because of the opposite circumstances than these.”

Refer also to Doha no. 152 of this book.]

#### Wish for having devotion and love for Lord Ram

89. नातो नाते राम केँ राम सनेहँ सनेहु ।  
तुलसी माँगत जोरि कर जनम जनम सिव देहु ॥

89. nātō nātē rāma kēṁ rāma sanēhamṁ sanēhu.  
tulasī māṁgata jōri kara janama janama siva dēhu..

Tulsidas prays to Lord Shiva, 'Oh Lord! Give me the boon that I may have dealings and relations with only those people who are devoted to Sri Ram, and with no one else.' (89)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 74, the mother of Laxman advises him that all relationships in this world should be hinged to or subject to one having love and devotion for Lord Ram. One should show respect to others and have affection for them only if they too have respect and affection for Lord Ram, otherwise one would be better off by snapping all relations with them.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 174, Tulsidas gives an excellent example of this relationship. He says that one applies an ointment to the eye only as long as the eye is able to see, otherwise what use is the ointment for a blind eye.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 190.]

90. सब साधनको एक फल जेहिँ जान्यो सो जान ।

ज्यो त्यों मन मंदिर बसहिं राम धरे धनु बान ॥

90. saba sādhanakō ēka phala jēhim jān'yō sō jāna.  
jyōm tyōm mana mandira basahim rāma dharēm dhanu bāna..

The ultimate reward or fruit of all spiritual efforts, all religious activities and exercises, all righteous deeds and actions etc. (which a person undertakes in order to attain his final liberation and deliverance which it tantamount to his attaining emancipation and salvation) is that Lord Sri Ram, who holds a bow and arrow, begins to reside in the temple-like Mana (the heart and the mind) of the spiritual aspirant. Those who have understood this secret are the ones who have known the essence or the true meaning of all spiritual and religious endeavours. (90)

[Note—Lord Ram is the personified form of the Parmatma, literally the Supreme Atma, but also implying the Supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being and Lord of creation. The scriptures such as the Upanishads preach that the highest knowledge of the Absolute Truth of creation is the realisation that the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma resides no where outside in the external world but inside one's own bosom as his Atma, his 'true self'. This 'self' or the 'Atma' of the individual is as true as the 'Parmatma' or the cosmic 'Self'. Both of them are 'Consciousness' personified. It is the only truthful entity in the entire creation, it is the only 'truth', and the rest is all false and deluding.

True spiritual attainment is this realisation, this knowledge. It is the real enlightenment. When the Lord's image is installed in an ordinary building it becomes a 'temple, a shrine', so therefore when a spiritual aspirant has reached the level of wisdom and self-realisation when he begins to experience the presence of the Parmatma (the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, and represented by Lord Ram) in his own innerself, in his heart and mind, the latter instrument of his otherwise gross body also becomes as holy and sanctified and consecrated as a formal temple or a shrine.

The temple is a brick and cement structure like any other ordinary building, but what distinguishes it from other such buildings is the presence of the idol or image of the Lord inside it. So when the spiritual aspirant becomes sufficiently self-realised and enlightened enough to see the Supreme Being residing in his own self as his Atma, when he is able to enshrine the Lord in his own Mana (heart and mind), his body loses its grossness and becomes as holy and divine as a temple.

In metaphysical and spiritual terms, this is the real form of liberation from the fetters of delusions that tie down a creature to this gross existence where he seeks the sublime Lord outside in a world that is extremely gross, instead of attempting to search the Lord where he actually resides—the subtle world of his own inner self. It is true deliverance because it helps the aspirant to rise from the quagmire of ignorance, untruth and delusions to reach the world of truth, knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 210 says that the best reward that one can expect to get for all auspicious deeds and righteous actions, i.e. for all spiritual endeavours, is to have a divine sight of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27 says that it is the view of the Vedas and great sages that to have love and devotion for Lord Ram is the best fruit (reward) that one can have for all the good things done in life.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 46.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 47, Vibhishan tells Lord Ram that all the negative traits, such as greed, avarice, attachments,

lust, jealousy, arrogance, hypocrisy etc., find their breeding ground in the heart of a person only till the time the Lord is not present in his heart with his bow and arrow. Here, the 'bow and arrow' signifies the Lord's preparation to immediately destroy any of the negativities that may corrupt the soul and the innerself of his devotee.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 295 asserts that Lord Ram resides in the heart of Bharat, his younger brother, and therefore it is absolutely certain that Bharat is sincere in his expression of devotion for the Lord, that he harbours no deceit and conceit in his heart, that he is truthful in his assertion that he was not a part of the conspiracy that led to the Lord's exile into the forest, and that Bharat is pure in heart and mind—because there can be no darkness in a place where the sun exists. Here, all negative thinking and worldly considerations which a man harbours in his mind and heart are compared to darkness, while the presence of the Lord in the subtle space of the heart is regarded as being equivalent to the presence of the sun in the sky.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 291 says that debates about what is good fortune and what constitutes misfortune, or what is knowledge and what is ignorance have any relevance and meaning only till the time there is lack of love and devotion for Lord Ram, because as soon as one develops the latter virtue, the former gets eclipsed automatically.]

91. जौं जगदीस तौ अति भलो जौं महीस तौ भाग ।  
तुलसी चाहत जनम भरि राम चरन अनुराग ॥

91. jaum̄ jagadīsa tau ati bhalō jaum̄ mahīsa tau bhāga.  
tulasī cāhata janama bhari rāma carana anurāga..

If Sri Ram is the Lord of the Universe, it is so far so good. If he is only a King of the Earth, it's all the same for me (i.e. Tulsidas). Whoever he is, Tulsidas wants nothing else but to have devotion for the holy feet of the Lord for the rest of his life. (91)

[Note—This Doha marks the intensity, the depth and the dimension of Tulsidas' affection, love and devotion for Lord Ram. It exemplifies his sense of total surrender before Lord Ram. He is faithful and loyal to his Lord. He is not at all concerned with the debate surrounding the Lord—whether Lord Ram was simply a noble and great King who possessed the best of virtues and characters, and who occupied the highest stature in this world, or he was actually the Supreme Being himself personified. Tulsidas is not bothered about what the scriptures have to say or what the world has to surmise—he loves Lord Ram and has devotion for him notwithstanding what others say about him.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 17-20 that precedes Doha no. 11. These lines clearly lay to rest the debate about who Lord Ram actually is. Here, sage Sutikshan is praying to Lord Ram and says that the Lord is the Supreme Being who is neutral and unaffected by any of the three Gunas ('Viraj'), is all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent ('Vyapak'), and constantly lives in the space of the heart of all living beings in the invisible form as the Atma (the soul, the consciousness). Those who know the Lord in a truthful manner also recognise the fact that the Lord has two forms—one that is known as Saguna and the other that is known as Nirguna. The Saguna form means that form of the Supreme Being which has known attributes and virtues, that which is visible and has a physical form. The Nirguna form is the opposite of the Suguna form. The Lord is all-knowing as he resides in the heart of all living beings (as their Atma), and therefore is privy to all the secret thoughts, emotions and sentiments. It is the same Lord (the Supreme Being) who has manifested himself as the king of the Kaushal race, the

Lord who has lotus like (beautiful) eyes. I (Sutikshan) pray that this Lord should reside in my heart and innerself.]

92. परौं नरक फल चारि सिसु मीच डाकिनी खाउ ।  
तुलसी राम सनेह को जो फल सो जरि जाउ ॥

92. paraum̄ naraka phala cāri sisu mīca dākinī khā'u.  
tulasī rāma sanēha kō jō phala sō jari jā'u..

Tulsidas says—‘Let me be thrown in hell, let my four sons (representing or symbolizing the 4 great rewards, also called the 4 legendary fruits, that a person gets for his endeavours in this world, such as (i) Artha = prosperity, worldly riches, (ii) Dharma = righteousness and its attendant fame and honour, (iii) Kaam = desires fulfilled, and (iv) Moksha = salvation) be devoured (eliminated, killed, perished) by the demoness called 'Daakini' (a sorceress who kills children for black magic rituals), and all other fruits (i.e. good and auspicious results, effects) that accrue for having affection for Sri Ram (i.e. the Supreme Being) be burnt (disregarded)—but I (Tulsidas) will nevertheless still continue to have unwavering, steady, unabated and undiluted love, affection, faith and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram (i.e. I will remain eternally steadfast in my love and devotion for Lord Ram inspite of facing the greatest of adversities and calamities in life; my love and devotion for my beloved Lord Ram will never be compromised under any circumstances or eventualities).’ (92)

[Note—This Doha shows the intensity of love and devotion as well as faith and surrender that Tulsidas has for his beloved Lord Ram. For him, nothing else matters—he affirms that even if he has to suffer horribly for having devotion and love for Lord Ram, he is more than happy with it. Conversely, even if he gets the crown of the whole world, even if he gets a permanent seat in the highest heaven, even if he is shown the greatest of honour and respect in this world, and even if all the fruits or rewards of goodness and auspiciousness are made available to him, but he is asked to bargain them for his love and devotion for his beloved Lord Ram, he will not do it under any circumstance.

An exactly the same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 which says—“I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward I want is that I may have unwavering, undiluted and unstunted love and devotion for holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and for all my future births.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precedes Doha no. 119, the crow saint Kaagbhushund tells Garud (the legendary eagle and the mount of lord Vishnu who had come to the former to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and be enlightened on spiritual matters)—“Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance) is not possible without having strong Bhakti (devotion, dedication and love) for Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being). Hence, those who are wise and enlightened prefer to have Bhakti, they give precedence to Bhakti, over all other means of obtaining Moksha. Moksha cannot be sustained without Bhakti even as liquid water needs a solid ground or surface to act as its base for its physical existence in this world.”

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 231.]

## Virtues of devotees of Lord Ram

93. हित सों हित, रति राम सों, रिपु सों बैर बिहाउ ।  
उदासीन सब सों सरल तुलसी सहज सुभाउ ॥
93. hita sōm hita, rati rāma saurm, ripu sōm baira bihā'u.  
udāsīna saba sōm sarala tulasī sahaja subhā'u..

Tulsidas describes the characteristics and exemplary behaviour of a true devotee of Lord Sri Ram—such a person should be simple hearted, without deceit and pretensions, should have undiluted and unstunted love and devotion for Sri Ram, should be friendly towards friends but harbour no animosity even for enemies, should inculcate the virtues of equanimity, equitability and neutrality so much so that he favours none (i.e. should be equitable and just towards all), and should be courteous and affable to all. (93)

[Note—Such a honourable man sees his Lord everywhere, in every person with whom he comes in contact or with whom he has to interact—refer Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 36.

Refer also Vairagya Sandipani, verse no. 8—simple attire, simple countenance, simple behaviour, simple language and talk (i.e. simple meaning of what is being said; no crookedness and ambiguity)—Tulsidas says that these are the simple signs of a true saint.

Refer Doha no. 94 below.]

94. तुलसी ममता राम सों समता सब संसार ।  
राग न रोष न दोष दुख दास भए भव पार ॥
94. tulasī mamatā rāma sōm samatā saba sansāra.  
rāga na rōṣa na dōṣa dukha dāsa bha'e bhava pāra..

Tulsidas affirms that those devotees of Lord Ram who have inherent and natural spiritual affinity and affection for the Lord on the one hand, and equanimity, equitability and neutrality towards all others in this world; those who have no negative emotions of Raag (attachment, longing), Dwesh (enmity, jealousy and ill-will), Rosh (anger, wrathfulness, vengeance, retribution), and Dukha (sense of grief, sorrow, unhappiness, frustration, annoyance, restlessness etc. caused by someone else) towards anyone in this world<sup>1</sup>—such persons are the ones who are deemed to have crossed this ocean-like world of transmigration (i.e. they have attained liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for themselves). (94)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 79 and 93 above. Tulsidas lays emphasis on developing a sense of renunciation towards everything and every relationship in this mortal mundane world, and instead inculcate the eclectic virtue of having exemplary love and devotion for Lord Ram, who is none else but the Supreme Being himself, as an infallible remedy for all spiritual ills. If one shifts his attention from the perishable world that is inherently deluding and entrapping, and instead focuses it on the eternal world of divinity and holiness symbolized by having love, faith and devotion for Lord Ram, then the person's

liberation and deliverance from the ocean of transmigration, the emancipation and salvation of his soul, is assured.

<sup>1</sup>There are said to be six spiritual faults or shortcomings that are called *Vikaars* which a living being should overcome. They are regarded as one's spiritual enemies.

The *Vikaars/Vikars* are the numerous faults, shortcomings, imperfections, drawbacks or errors and blemishes in the character of a creature that cast a shadow on the otherwise ideal, immaculate and perfect nature of the subject under consideration. These *Vikaars* are like the dark shadow of the earth that eclipses the bright disc of the beautiful moon during the lunar eclipse. In other words, they prevent the original beauty and shine of the subject to come to the fore by casting a dark veil of evil tendencies and traits over its surface like the case of the solar eclipse when the moon prevents the brilliant splendour of the sun from being viewed from earth by coming in between the sun and the earth during the solar eclipse.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of *Krishna Yajur Veda*, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen *Vikaars* or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement. To quote—"Verse no. 10-11 = Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature's spiritual progress and pull him down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the supreme Soul of creation are the following—*Kaam* (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), *Krodh* (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), *Bhaye* (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties, confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), *Moha* (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), *Lobha* (greed, rapacity and yearnings), *Mada* (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), *Raja* (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of *Janma* and *Mrityu* (birth and death), *Kaarpanya* or *Kripantaa* (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), *Shok* (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), *Standra* (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), *Kshudha* (hunger) and *Pipasa* (thirst) [10], *Tirshnaa* (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), *Lajja* (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of *Dukha* and *Vishaad* (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and *Harsh* (the opposite of *Dukha* and *Vishaad*; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and perfect *Atma* of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the

Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11).”]

Tulsidas’ advice for a man’s well-being

95. रामहि डरु करु राम सों ममता प्रीति प्रतीति ।  
तुलसी निरुपधि राम को भएँ हारेहूँ जीति ॥
95. rāmahī ḍaru karu rāma sōṁ mamatā prīti pratīti.  
tulasī nirupadhi rāma kō bha'eṁ hārēhūṁ jīti..

Tulsidas advises—Be afraid of Lord Ram (i.e. respect and obey the Lord’s supreme authority, never violate his laws as one will not violate the laws of the land where he lives, maintain discipline, order and decorum, be polite and courteous towards him, and in general be wary of showing any kind of disrespect to the supreme Authority of creation just as one would never imagine to offend the king of the land).

Have affection, love and reverence only for Lord Ram (and no one else). Have steady faith and firmness of belief in Lord Ram. [That it, treat the Lord as your only friend and companion in this world; love him and have affection for him as the one most dear to you; show the greatest of respect, honour and reverence to the Lord as you would to your parent, your teacher, your king and your master who takes good care of your well-being and happiness. The Lord is the only one who will care for you selflessly in thick and thin, come what may. Remember—the world is selfish; it is driven by self-interests. All relations that exist in this world expect something from you; no one is absolutely selfless—for instance, a parent expects that the offspring would look after him in his old age, and the offspring expects that the parent would pass on his wealth to him; the king expects taxes and respect from his subjects, and the latter expect protection and help from the former. It is only Lord Ram who will rush to you even if you just happen to remember him in times of distress. One must have unflinching devotion and faith in the Lord, he must be loyal to the Lord, and he must have total trust in the Lord.]

Tulsidas says that by becoming totally dependent upon Lord Ram and relying upon the Lord in an honest, truthful and sincere manner, one can ensure victory even in the face of imminent defeat. [That is, when one has totally surrendered one’s self to the Lord, the Lord takes up the responsibility of his care and well-being. Then there is nothing more to worry about.] (95)

[Note—Refer Vinai Patrika, verse no. 268 in totality. Here Tulsidas says his heart is full of joy once he has surrendered himself to Lord Ram, and has developed unbound love and affection as well as faith and devotion for him. He compares his love and devotion for Lord Ram as well as his dependence upon the Lord to that of a child on his parent, or the mutual affection and trust between two lovers and fast friends. He also says here that just like a man fears a king of the realm, Tulsidas fears his Lord Ram. That is, inspite of the fact that he treats the Lord as his loving parent and friend he still maintains discipline and decorum by showing the Lord great respect and honour just like a subject would do to his king. Tulsidas is extremely close to the Lord and is especially favoured by the Lord, but still that does not mean that he is given the right to transgress standards of courteous, orderly and dignified behaviour.]

96. तुलसी राम कृपाल सों कहि सुनाउ गुन दोष ।  
होय दूबरी दीनता परम पीन संतोष ॥

96. tulasī rāma kṛpāla sōṁ kahi sunā'u guna dōṣa.  
hōya dūbarī dīnatā parama pīna santōṣa..

Tulsidas advises that one should make an honest, sincere, truthful and full confession to Lord Ram about one's virtues (goodness) and faults (shortcomings). By doing this, one will have two-fold benefit—one, his sense of misery, depression and dejection as well as of guilt would be diminished (i.e. one will be relieved that he has made a disclosure of his shortcomings and therefore cannot be accused of hiding anything from the Supreme Authority of the land), and second, he will have a lot of peace of mind and enjoy renewed confidence in himself (because now he is assured of the Lord's protection and benevolence as he has made an honest confession and had hidden nothing from the Lord, so there is nothing to fear from in the way of punishment or retribution for his sins or misdeeds or misdemeanours).

This results in his self-confidence, his sense of contentedness and fulfillment that comes with being upright, truthful and honest to be fortified, to become stronger and more robust. (96)

[Note—A man is usually burdened with a sense of guilt if he hides something in his heart, and feels relieved when he discloses his secrets to someone in whom he has complete trust and faith. Telling someone, whom a person trusts completely, something that bears heavily on one's mind gives an immense sense of relief and peace. Tulsidas says that one should make an honest confession to the Lord because there is no one dearer in this world than the Lord. A man might have a secret fear of betrayal and blackmail from another person to whom he makes some serious and grave confession, but he has no such fear from the Lord. Confession before the Lord is a safety valve which releases pent-up worries of guilt and a sense of moral burden on one's conscience.

Besides this, disclosing to the Lord about one's virtues and abilities also helps to develop a sense of modesty and humility in the person. It helps to overcome ego, self-pride, arrogance and haughtiness that come with the feeling that a person has certain qualities or abilities that others lack. This disclosure has one more benefit—the Lord is honestly told that the man has this and that quality and virtue, and therefore if he lacks something of which he is unaware but he ought to possess, then it now becomes the responsibility of the Lord to provide it to him.

This Doha stresses the importance and relevance of making a truthful confession before Lord Ram.]

97. सुमिरन सेवा राम सों साहब सों पहिचानि ।  
ऐसेहु लाभ न ललक जो तुलसी नित हित हानि ॥

97. sumirana sēvā rāma sōṁ sāhaba sōṁ pahicāni.  
aisēhu lābha na lalaka jō tulasī nita hita hāni..

Remembrance of Lord Ram, being fortunate enough to serve Lord Ram, and recognising Lord Ram's essential and truthful nature and form (as being a personified form of the majestic, almighty, all-encompassing and all-pervading Supreme Being known as Brahm, as being the cosmic Consciousness itself personified, as being the only Truth of creation, and as being the only spiritual destination for all living beings known as the Jiva)—Tulsidas says that those who are not desirous (eager) to have such a divine fruit (a great spiritual reward) in life are surely destined for (spiritual) doom and loss of every benefit that comes by taking birth in this world as a living being (i.e. as a human being). (97)

[Note—If one spends his lifetime in pursuing worldly gains and pecuniary benefits but does not devote his time in remembering the Lord or serving him, or striving to acquire knowledge of the truth of existence, of his own 'self' known as the Atma that is proclaimed by the scriptures as being the microcosmic counterpart of the Supreme Atma of creation known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, the Supreme Lord—then surely such people are fools who barter superior rewards for useless things. Such people are bad traders and cannot profit by taking birth as a human being just like a businessman who fails in life because he is poor at making wise business decisions, who cannot make profitable bargains and strike good business deals.

The best deal that a creature can make in his birth as a human being is to find liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death, to break free from the shackle of spiritual delusions and ignorance, and to obtain wisdom and knowledge that cannot be obtained in any other birth, such as that of an animal or insect. If this golden opportunity is spent like the time spent as animal and insect, obviously such a creature, the living being called the 'Jiva', would be stupid and in vain.

The best spiritual goal of life is to ensure that the Atma finds its final liberation by freeing itself from the fetters of this gross body and an equally gross world of sense objects, and reach its destination by merging with the Parmatma, its original source, so as to become one with the latter. This gives eternal peace and tranquility to the Atma, the truthful 'self' of all living beings, because then there will be no more birth and death and their accompanying horrors. It's like the water that is present in the countless rivers and streams finally falling and merging with the ocean to become one huge uniform body of water that can submerge the whole earth if it wants to do so.

Refer—Vinai Patrika, verse no. 69 which says Tulsidas was like a barren moor, but by having devotion and love for Lord Ram, and remembering the Lord's holy name he became like a fertile land.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 157 he says that the creator, 'Vidhaata', is deemed to be opposed to a man who does not serve and have devotion for Lord Ram who is exceptionally benevolent and merciful.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 72 it is stressed by him that a man is deemed to be most unfortunate and ill-witted if he fails to serve such a loving and benevolent Lord as Sri Ram who took care of Tulsidas who was worthless and hopeless in life like a bad bargain, and who had never expected that any of his wishes would ever be fulfilled in this world; now the same Tulsidas is revered and sought after once he has taken refuge with Lord Ram.]

98. जानें जानन जोइए बिनु जाने को जान ।  
तुलसी यह सुनि समुझि हियँ आनु धरें धनु बान ॥

98. jānēm jānana jō'i'ai binu jānē kō jāna.  
tulasī yaha suni samujhi hiyam' ānu dharēm dhanu bāna..

When we start a quest to know someone then only can we know the facts and details about him. Tulsidas says that keeping this in mind, a wise man must try to bring the bow-and-arrow bearing Sri Ram in his heart (i.e. meditate on the Lord's form and enshrine this divine image in one's heart and mind). Once this is done, the man would gradually become aware of the true nature and divine form of Lord Ram as being a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. (98)

[Note—It is only when we think of someone and regard him as of any importance to us, as someone from whom we can expect some benefit, that we try to find out more about him. If we pay no attention to him then there is no question of our ever having any information or knowledge about him because we wouldn't bother at all about him. We meet thousands of people on the street and during the course of our working lives, but rarely do we pay any heed to them. They are all complete strangers for us, like we are to them. If we happen to face any misfortune, we cannot expect any help from someone who is a complete stranger.

On the other hand, when we become interested in someone for whatever reason, we try to find out more about that person. Then we discover his goodness and virtues, as well as his shortcomings. In the case of Lord Ram we find that the Lord is a treasury of goodness, and then we will thank our stars that we came to be acquainted with such a divine Lord. Then we are motivated to come closer to the Lord as we see in him our redeemer and eternal helper; we see in the Lord our true friend and companion in distress, as someone who will come to our aid when the whole world turns its back upon us.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 127 it is said that once one learns the truth of Lord Ram he becomes one with the Lord. This means that once a wise man becomes enlightened about the fact that Lord Ram is the Parmatma, the supreme Atma or Soul of this creation, and the fact that his own Atma, his own 'self', is an image of this Parmatma, then he also becomes convinced of the fact that there is no difference between him and Lord Ram. Here, the terms 'him' or 'he' does not refer to his physical gross body but to the Atma, the soul which is pure consciousness personified. This Atma is the same as the Parmatma, or the cosmic Consciousness that is also known as Brahm.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 251.]

99. करमठ कठमलिया कहैं ग्यानी ग्यान बिहीन ।  
तुलसी त्रिपथ बिहाइ गो राम दुआरें दीन ॥

99. karamaṭha kaṭhamaliyā kahaiṁ gyānī gyāna bihīna.  
tulasī tripatha bihā'i gō rāma du'ārēm dīna..

Tulsidas says that experts (in the Vedas) condemn me as one who wears a worthless wooden rosary around my neck, wise men say I am a dud and an idiot, and I don't know how to meditate and observe rituals. I have stopped bothering myself about all the three—for I have taken refuge as a humble wretch at the doorstep of Lord Sri Ram (i.e. at the Lord's holy feet).

[By taking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram, Tulsidas says that he is rest assured of protection from the Lord, that his spiritual salvation and emancipation is guaranteed, that the liberation and deliverance of his soul is ensured, and though the people of the world call him a stupid man who is ignorant about the scriptures and who

does not know how to do meditation or other spiritual practices, he is fine and happy. From the view-point of the world, the fate of Tulsidas is doomed, but he says that he believes that it is not the case—for once he has taken shelter in the holy feet of Lord Ram, he has nothing more to worry about for his emancipation and salvation, his spiritual welfare and well-being, his happiness, peace and contentedness, his fate and destiny, his present as well as future are all well taken care of.] (99)

[Note—This Doha shows the exemplary level of faith and the depth of devotion that Tulsidas has in his beloved Lord. The ultimate aim of all spiritual practices is to find Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul, and if this is obtainable by having love and devotion for Lord Ram, the personified form of the Supreme Being, why should or would one wander from place to place seeking this Mukti?

The first word of this Doha is 'Karmath' which means being diligent and active, and a performer of religious ceremonies. Here it refers to those people who are very particular in observing religious sacraments, doing rituals, performing fire sacrifices and other ceremonies, doing Japa (repetition of Mantras), Yoga (meditation), Dhyana (contemplation), etc. for their spiritual well-being and a good destiny.

The second word is 'Kathmaliya' meaning a person who wears or uses a rosary consisting of wooden beads, usually made from the wood of the Tulsi tree. The Tulsi tree is regarded as a holy plant, and is especially favoured by the devotees of Lord Vishnu as the scriptures have said that it is dear to the Lord. Tulsidas moves one such rosary while silently repeating the holy name of Lord Ram which is extremely simple and unpretentious, instead of chanting some obscure and esoteric incantation or some complicated hymns of the Vedas. So, orthodox people call him an idiot who is wasting his time and life. He also wears one such Tulsi rosary around his neck as a reminder to himself that he is bound to his Lord and to no one else. He does not get involved in elaborate formal forms of worship, such as doing fire sacrifices or sitting for hours in meditation or reading aloud from the scriptures such as the Puranas and the Vedas etc., which ordinarily a Brahmin or any other holy man is expected to do.

Therefore, those who believe that their spiritual welfare lies in formalities and ceremonies done mechanically, call Tulsidas a stupid man and a non-believer heretic who does not believe in religious doctrines, who goes against tradition and violates established norms and practices because he observes none of the traditional practices and rituals.

Similarly, the word 'Gyani' means one is wise, enlightened and knowledgeable, one who is an expert in the technical knowledge of the scriptures as well as in the theoretical knowledge of the principles of metaphysics, theology, spiritualism etc. Usually such people shun elaborate religious ceremonies and external rituals done in a mechanical way because they primarily believe in the universality of the soul and the fact that the individual's soul is the same as the cosmic Soul known as the Parmatma. Their basic belief is that there is no separate heaven or hell, and that true liberation and deliverance is freeing oneself from the fetter of ignorance about one's own self. They believe that the Supreme Being known as Brahm is an indefinable and invisible cosmic entity that has no form and attribute because it is nothing but pure 'Consciousness'. These 'Gyanis' therefore think that Tulsidas is an 'Agyani'—one who has no true knowledge—by worshipping Lord Ram as the personified form of Brahm because the latter has no visible forms.

Tulsidas does not agree. The scriptures endorse his views. They have unequivocally affirmed that the invisible Parmatma takes the form of the visible Lord whenever it is deemed fit, and then reverts back to his invisible form just like the case of the cosmic formless Atma assuming a physical body of a living being to live in this physical world as a Jiva. The former is called the 'Nirguna' aspect of the Parmatma, while the latter is

known as the 'Saguna' aspect. Both are the same; they are like the two sides of the same coin.

While worshipping an entity that is as completely abstract and unknown as the Brahm is quite difficult and possible for only a limited number of people who have that high level of intellectual wisdom and mental development, worshipping an entity about whom or which facts are well known, an entity which one can easily identify and know, is very easy to relate to and honour. For instance, invisible water molecules are difficult to comprehend and too abstract to understand by a common man, and therefore of no use to him as this knowledge won't quench his thirst, but the same water in the form of liquid is easily identifiable and understood, and it quenches his thirst. So obviously a man would prefer the liquid form of water instead of the formless variant of the same water as a molecule or as moisture or as water vapour which are of no practical use to him. The same logic applies to the Nirguna and the Suguna aspects of the Supreme Being.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 226. Here, Tulsidas says 'Karma (religious deeds, rituals and ceremonies), Upasana (formal forms of worship), Gyan (knowledge and wisdom), the doctrines of the Vedas—all of them are alright, and all of them are excellent, all of them are true and valuable. But I am like a blind man who had been blinded during the rainy season when he last saw vibrant greenery all around him, and even after he loses his sight he knows of no other colour except this greenery because it is the colour of the world that is firmly etched in the eye of his memory and sub-conscious mind.' In other words, Tulsidas asserts that whatever the scriptures say and whatever other wise men say is alright and true, but for him having love and devotion for Lord Ram is the only thing that matters.]

100. बाधक सब सब के भए साधक भए न कोइ ।  
तुलसी राम कृपालु तेँ भलो होइ सो होइ ॥

100. bādhaka saba saba kē bha'ē sādḥaka bha'ē na kō'i.  
tulasī rāma kṛpālu tēṁ bhalō hō'i sō hō'i..

Tulsidas asserts that in this world all people cause hindrances and obstacles; there is no one who sincerely extends a helping hand. Whatever well-being and help that is at all possible and can be expected in this world will come only from Lord Ram. [That is, in this selfish world, a man's true friend and companion is only Lord Ram, and no one else.] (100)

[Note—Refer Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 110. It says—'Lord Sri Ram is our parent, friend, kin, Guru (teacher, preceptor), revered and the greatest benefactor. The Lord is our Lord, a true friend and helper. Truly, all the relations of affection that exist are represented solely by Sri Ram. Our country, wealth, property, race/caste/clan, duties, homestead and destiny/fate are also Sri Ram. Our caste-clan and fame is Sri Ram. And all the fruits of good deeds done by us, as well as our salvation, welfare, good fame etc. are easily available to us by the courtesy of Sri Ram.

Tulsidas says that either now or whenever in future, if any welfare is ever expected, then it can be expected only from Lord Ram, and from no one else.'

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 191 Tulsidas affirms that all are selfish. The body is selfish because it needs pampering and self-gratification, the friend is selfish because he will support you only till some interest is served, the gods are selfish because you serve them, honour them, obey them, and offer oblations and sacrifices to them. But Raghunath, Lord Ram, is the only one who takes care of and looks after the well-being of

even those who are downtrodden, who are humble and lowly, who are destitutes, wretched, without resources, helpless and hapless, and who have no one to take care of them.

In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma—“Listen Uma. In this self-centered and selfish world, there is no one more dear and well-wisher than Lord Ram. No, it is not the Guru (moral preceptor or teacher), father, mother, friend or any master or lord. It is the natural habit of all (except Lord Sri Ram), be it the god, a human being, a sage or anybody else, that they love someone only as long as their self interests are served.”]

#### Non-duality between Lord Ram and Lord Shiva

101. संकर प्रिय मम द्रोही सिव द्रोही मम दास ।  
ते नर करहिं कल्प भरि घोर नरक महुँ बास ॥

101. saṅkara priya mama drōhī siva drōhī mama dāsa.  
tē nara karahim kalapa bhari ghōra naraka mahum̐ bāsa..

Lord Sri Ram says that those who have faith and devotion towards him and enmity towards Lord Shiva or vice-versa, are condemned to hell for one Kalpa (1 Kalpa = one full 4 Yug or era of Hindu cycle of creation and destruction).

[That is, one should not differentiate between Sri Ram and Lord Shiva as both of them are essentially the same Supreme Brahma's manifestation in two forms. Respecting one and insulting the other is not acceptable.] (101)

[Note—This Doha appears in the Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 when Lord Ram consecrated a Shiva's lingam (symbol) and worshipped the latter before starting off to Lanka to launch his campaign to free Sita from the clutches of Ravana and kill the sinful demons.

This Doha has great metaphysical and spiritual import. It is to be noted in this context that Lord Shiva worships Lord Ram as Brahm personified. Shiva cannot be wrong—as he is known as ‘Mahadeva’, the great God who is the most enlightened and wise amongst them all. The relationship between Ram and Shiva is the same as that between the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma and the Jiva. Both have the same ‘Atma’ in them, the only difference being in the plane of their existence—so while the term ‘Parmatma’ applies to the supreme macrocosmic form of the Atma that is infinite, all-pervading, all-encompassing, invisible and formless, the term ‘Jiva’ refers to the same Atma that exists in this mortal world at the microcosmic level, and has a physical body with attributes that are the opposite to those of the Parmatma.

So, the Supreme Being (Ram) tells the creature by using the instance of Lord Shiva (who represents the Jiva) that he must remember that his true ‘self’, the Atma, is the same as the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma. This is the essence of the teaching of the Upanishads.

The non-duality or oneness between *Shiva and Vishnu*, whose incarnation is Lord Ram, has been explained in *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishn Yajur Veda; the *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 6, verse nos. 8-9, and the *Sharav Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda.

The non-duality or oneness between *Brahm and Shiva* has been expounded in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32; *Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*. (ii) Atharva Veda's *Atharva-shir Upanishad*.

The non-duality between the *Jiva and Brahm* has been proclaimed in the following Upanishads:—

(a) Krishna Yajur Veda— Rudra Hridaya Upanishad; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8; Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 2-7; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 56-58; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 70, 73.

(b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse no.18; Niralamba.

(c) Rig Veda—Atma-poojo-panishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(d) Atharva Veda—Atmo-panishad; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, last stanza of verse no. 2; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 20-21.

(e) Sam Veda—Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 7.

Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, last stanza of verse no. 2, clearly asserts uniformity between Brahm and the Jiva.

Some of the concepts on non-duality as propounded in *Skanda Upanishad* are as follows—(i) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Shiva and Vishnu = verse nos. 4, 8-9. [This fact has also been highlighted in the book 'Vinai Patrika' of saint Goswami Tulsidas, in its verse no. 49.] (ii) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Shiva and Jiva or the living being = verse nos. 6, 9. (iii) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Brahm and Jiva or the living being = verse nos. 5. (iv) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Shiva, Brahm and Jiva = verse no. 9. (v) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between the three Gods of the Trinity = verse no. 13.]

102. बिलग बिलग सुख संग दुख जनम मरन सोइ रीति ।  
रहिअत राखे राम केँ गए ते उचित अनीति ॥

102. bilaga bilaga sukha saṅga dukha janama marana sō'i rīti.  
rahi'ata rākhē rāma kēṁ ga'ē tē ucita anīti..

True happiness is in keeping a distance (i.e. to remain detached) from the mundane world, and miseries are in doing the opposite (i.e. remaining involved and attached to the material world of sense objects).

The same thing applies to life and death. That is, one must treat life as a gift from the Supreme Being known as Lord Ram, and therefore treat it as something holy and well lived, ensuring that one does not do anything that would defile this gift from the Lord. If death comes, then one must accept it as the will of the Lord, and should embrace it cheerfully with the thought that it is a good chance for the soul, the Atma, to break free from the shackling effects of the gross body. Why, it is better to die and leave this miserable world than to wallow in its miseries and torments. (102)

[Note—If one has no attachment to the gross body and the equally gross world of material objects, both of which are perishable as compared to the Atma which is eternal

and imperishable, then at the time of death one will have no regrets at leaving both of them. Similarly, when one is wise enough to know that one's true self is the Atma and not the body, and that one day he will have to leave the world no matter what he does, then he will not have any emotional and mental attachment to the world; he won't yearn or hanker for it and its sense objects which he knows will perish one day like his own gross body. Who in his senses would like to pursue false things if he can spend the same amount of time and energy to obtain something that is true and everlasting? The world and its material comforts and pleasures and charms are all delusional and perishable, while the Atma is the pure consciousness that is eternal, imperishable and truthful. The world is like a mirage—the more a creature runs behind it the further away it recedes, but the awareness and knowledge of the Atma is something that takes the spiritual aspirant closer to the Absolute Truth, and makes it possible for him to one day actually access this Truth.

Therefore a wise man must live a life dedicated to holiness and piety as it brings him closer to the divine Lord, and thank the Lord when death removes any delusions of reality that he might still have harboured regarding this body and the world. This will be the Atma's final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of 'birth and death'. Once the wise and self-realised aspirant understands that this world is the cause of all his problems, grief, miseries and torments, he will never want to come back to this hell once again at the time of death. Once he realises that nothing is true and nothing belongs to him, he will have no regrets at leaving them and will no longer yearn for them. He will in effect die a peaceful and calm death, and in practice pass on from a life in this physical body to a life in the ethereal form as the cosmic Atma. He will not 'die' but become immortal! He will only shed the mortal coil and instead assume an ethereal form that is infinite and boundless.

Another way of interpreting this Doha is as follows. Tulsidas says that it is better to die than to live a life of worldly indulgences and remaining entangled in various attachments. This is because the longer a man remains indulgent and attached to this world, the greater and more robust would be the entanglement and its attendant burden of deeds and their consequences that would dog him even after death. If he dies early, then lesser would be such a burden to carry forward to the next life after death. The longer the entanglement in this world the stronger and more profound would be the miseries and agonies that this world creates for the creature. In his attempt at finding peace, happiness and comfort which constantly evade him in this world, he gets sucked deeper and deeper in the whirlpool or cesspool represented by more desires and unrequited yearnings.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 5-16 that precedes Doha no. 14. They primarily say that one is miserable and surrounded by grief only till the time one does not have steady and robust love and devotion as well as surrender in the holy feet of Lord Ram. This is the only path for true happiness and peace.]

Affection and devotion for Lord Ram is the best spiritual endeavour

103. जायँ कहब करतूति बिनु जायँ जोग बिन छेम ।  
तुलसी जायँ उपाय सब बिना राम पद प्रेम ॥
103. jāyam̐ kahaba karatūti binu jāyam̐ jōga bina chēma.  
tulasī jāyam̐ upāya saba binā rāma pada prēma..

Giving sermons, lectures and discourses to others and preaching them without undertaking corresponding actions personally to support what one teaches others, and setting of personal example relevant to such teachings are useless and merely bombast. [That is, one must practice what one preaches. There should be coordination between precepts and practice. Words and deeds must coincide.]

Similarly, acquiring success in attaining difficult objectives and acquisition of unobtainable rare objects or things without being capable of protecting those that are already in possession or being able to ensure that the new acquisition is safely kept is a worthless exercise. [Refer: Doha no. 104.]

Tulsidas says that likewise, all ways and means that lead to one's ultimate spiritual welfare are in vain and useless without having faith and devotion in the holy feet of Lord Ram.

[That is, having love and devotion for Lord Ram and complete submission in the Lord's holy feet is the core value to all spiritual exercises. Just like nothing can stand without the earth to act as the ground, no building can stand if there is no foundation, no body can live without the soul, and there can be no golden ornament without gold, it is also simply not possible to succeed in any spiritual practice or attain the desired fruit of any religious activity if one does not have steady, sincere and robust faith and devotion in the Supreme Lord, Lord Ram.] (103)

[Note—Refer: The Holy Bible, St. Mathew, 22/36-38. It says—“When Jesus was asked: ‘Lord, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’, He replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’.”

Then again in 1 Corinthians, 13/13, St. Paul says—“And now abides hope, faith and love, but the greatest of these is love”.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 194 which says ‘there is no dearth of paths that lead to one's spiritual goal, such as Gyan (knowledge), Vairagya (renunciation), Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of Mantras), Tapa (austerity and penance), Makha and Jagya (fire sacrifices and other religious ceremonies), but without love and devotion for Lord Ram they all vanish into thin air like the water in a mirage seen on the sand of the hot desert.’

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 264 it is said ‘all the rewards or fruits of all spiritual and religious efforts known as Karma and Dharma (i.e. doing auspicious and righteous deeds according to religious sanctions and in accordance to the scriptures, including sacrifices, observing sacraments, doing rituals, chanting of hymns etc.) are no better than the useless ash that remains after the fire sacrifice is complete, or like a barren patch of infertile land no matter how much rain falls on it.’

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291, sage Vashistha tells Lord Ram “let all Sukha (happiness and comfort), Karma and Dharma (deeds and laws of conduct) burn down where there is no love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All righteous efforts become unrighteous, all good fortunes and luck turn to be misfortunes and ill-luck, and all types of knowledge and wisdom become as worthless as false and misleading knowledge—when there is no love for Lord Ram, or where love and devotion for the Lord does not dominate such efforts, such knowledge and such fortunes.”

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 178 say that ‘ornaments and decorations are like burden if one does not have even basic clothes to wear, renunciation and dispassion are futile if one does not become enlightened about Brahm, physical things of comfort are secondary to having a healthy body first, and

without having Bhakti (devotion, submission, faith, dedication and love) for Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord) all Japa and Yoga go in vain.’]

104. लोग मगन सब जोगहीं जोग जायँ बिनु छेम ।  
त्यौं तुलसीके भावगत राम प्रेम बिनु नेम ॥

104. lōga magana saba jōgahīṁ jōga jāyam̐ binu chēma.  
tyōṁ tulasīkē bhāvagata rāma prēma binu nēma..

All the people are totally absorbed or obsessed in acquisition of difficult and rare-to-find things, but it is in vain without first being able to properly maintain and protect that which is already possessed. According to Tulsidas, all spiritual ways and means are similarly useless without having faith and devotion for Lord Ram. (104)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 103 which also expresses the same idea. Another Doha which also conveys the same idea is Doha no. 10.]

#### Lord Ram’s Grace

105. राम निकाई रावरी है सबही को नीक ।  
जौं यह साँची है सदा तौ नीको तुलसीक ॥

105. rāma nikā’ī rāvarī hai sabahī kō nīka.  
jaum̐ yaha sām̐cī hai sadā tau nīkō tulasīka..

Tulsidas says, 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! Your benevolent, kind, gracious and merciful nature is beneficial for all, and it ensures the welfare and well-being of all the people. If this is true, then Tulsidas is sure that his all round good, his all round welfare and well-being is assured.' (105)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 29. The Lord is a friend of the humble and is so kind, merciful, tolerant and forgiving that he pays no heed to the shortcomings and mischief of his followers and devotees—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1.

Refer also to Doha no. 47 of this book Dohawali. The following Dohas, from number 106 to 108, also endorse this idea.]

106. तुलसी राम जो आदर्यो खोटो खरो खरोइ ।  
दीपक काजर सिर धर्यो धर्यो सुधर्यो धरोइ ॥

106. tulasī rāma jō ādaryō khōṭō kharō kharō’i.  
dīpaka kājara sira dharyō dharyō sudharyō dharō’i..

Tulsidas says that those who have been accepted by Lord Ram and shown respect by him (i.e. acknowledged by Ram as being his devotee) are deemed to be good whether they are

good or not. For instance, when the lighted oil lamp has accepted the soot as its cap, there is nothing that others can say or do about it. (106)

[Note—When an oil lamp with a burning wick is covered partially on top by a shade, soot collects on the inside of this cover. It appears to cap the lamp. Though black, oily and useless otherwise, it is nevertheless used by mothers as a charm against evil spirits by putting it as a dot on the forehead of infants and children. So it becomes valuable. Tulsidas says that likewise, once he has been accepted as a humble follower or devotee by the Lord, then howsoever useless he might be, he is rendered valuable and is respected by all in this world.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1 which says “Lord Ram does not mind the faults and shortcomings of his followers and those who serve him.”

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-26 that precede Doha no. 196 say “I am full of deceit and pretensions (Kapti), I am a coward (Kaayar), I have a corrupted mind (Kumati), I have a low caste (Kujaati), I am deemed to be unworthy and rejected by the scriptures as being unfit to either studying them or having any chance or scope of ever finding higher status in society—but inspite of all these drawbacks, once Lord Ram has accepted me I have been transformed into one who is like an ornament (someone exceptionally worthy and valuable) for the whole world.”]

107. तनु बिचित्र कायर बचन अहि अहार मन घोर ।  
तुलसी हरि भए पच्छधर ताते कह सब मोर ॥

107. tanu bicitra kāyara bacana ahi ahāra mana ghōra.  
tulasī hari bha'ē pacchadhara tātē kaha saba mōra..

A peacock has a multi coloured unconventional body (referring to the colourful plume, but here meaning an unconventional body with ugly looking legs), its voice is like a coward (because it screams), its food consists of serpents, and its mind is stern and emotionless. In spite of all the shortcomings it possesses, Sri Krishna has used its plume to adorn his head (as a decorative item that the Lord tucks in the lock of his curly hairs on his head). Since Sri Krishna favoured it, everyone calls the bird "Mor-Mor" (literally meaning 'mine-mine', or everyone wants to own it). (107)

[Note—Tulsidas means that once the Lord accepts even the lowliest and the most condemned of creatures, the latter begins to get honour and fame in the world. So it is always wise and prudent to be in the favourable looks of the Lord if one wants to acquire respect, honour and acclaim in this world. The Lord is so magnanimous, merciful, kind and gracious that he accepts those who are condemned by the world, and the Lord lifts them to a high pedestal of respect and fame.]

108. लहइ न फूटी कौड़िहू को चाहै केहि काज ।  
सो तुलसी महँगो कियो राम गरीब निवाज ॥

108. laha'i na phūṭī kauḍihū kō cāhai kēhi kāja.  
sō tulasī mahamṅō kiyō rāma garība nivāja..

Tulsidas reminiscences about his earlier days of poverty and depravation, and says that he, who had no reputation or dignity, who could not get even a single coin as alm, and who was avoided or shunned by everyone, the same Tulsidas has now become respected and is much in demand in the society, thanks to the grace, mercy and benediction of Lord Ram who is the sustainer of the hapless, the helpless, the destitute and the downtrodden. (108)

[Note—In his early life, saint Tulsidas had a very tough time. His mother died, the kind lady who took care of him after her death also died, his father abandoned him as an unfortunate child who has brought misfortunes to the family, and the father himself died after some time. The orphaned Tulsidas was shunned by the neighbours and the villagers who thought that his shadow would bring misfortunes to them. The child begged for two morsels of food. But when the same Tulsidas took the refuge of Lord Ram and became the Lord's devotee, he earned the level of respect and honour in the society that rarely anyone else had managed to obtain.

Refer: Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 13 in which Tulsidas offers his thanks to Lord Ram and shows the merciful nature of the Lord by saying 'I was like Bhang (a hallucinating herb abhorred by respected people in society) though my name is Tulsi (a revered plant). I declared myself as your (Ram's) humble servant (follower and devotee). And oh Lord, you did not think twice before accepting me as one of your own (even without worrying what the world will say about your accepting such a worthless man as me who the world shunned like the plague).'

In Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 57, Tulsidas says 'my parents abandoned me at birth, the creator wrote nothing good in my destiny, I was wretched and rejected, I was subjected to scorn, rebuke and insult, I was a coward and gazed hungrily at morsels of food like a scared dog—but when I began to call out the holy name of the benevolent Lord (Tulsidas used to call out 'Ram' when he went to beg for food), the Lord ensured that his child's (i.e. my) stomach was properly filled. I therefore declare (upon oath and as a personal experience) that whether it is the fulfillment of worldly desires or attainment of spiritual rewards, there is no one more worthy of seeking refuge with than my Lord Ram.'

Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 72 is yet another beautiful verse in this context. It says—'Due to hunger, I begged from all types of people—belonging to all castes, creed, sects and clans; this fact is known to all in this world. I have committed a lot of sins by my thought, speech and deeds. And though I called myself Sri Ram's servant, I remained deceitful and cunning.

Now, look at the glory and the great effect of Lord Ram's holy Name that a wretched and rascal like Tulsidas is regarded by the world as a great and holy man (like Valmiki). Oh Idiot! You are really a fool! After seeing such a miracle you still do not have an abiding, true and sincere love and devotion in Lord Ram's holy feet. How unfortunate it is!']

109. घर घर माँगे टूक पुनि भूपति पूजे पाय ।  
जे तुलसी तब राम बिनु ते अब राम सहाय ॥

109. ghara ghara māṅgē tūka puni bhūpati pūjē pāya.  
jē tulasī taba rāma binu tē aba rāma sahāya..

Tulsidas says that earlier in life, when he was not acquainted with (i.e. he did not know about) Lord Ram, he had to search every household for each morsel of food. Now that Lord Ram has become his helper (i.e. friend, sustainer, patron, benefactor and protector), even kings worship his feet (i.e. he has become worthy and respected in the world so much so that even highly placed individuals are eager to show respect to him). (109)

[Note—In this context, refer to verse no. 74 of Kavīṭawālī, Uttar Kand which says ‘I used to hungrily and greedily look at whey, and considered myself lucky if I got it, but now when I have started to take the holy name of Lord Ram I am served cream of the best quality milk.’]

110. तुलसी राम सुदीठि तें निबल होत बलवान ।  
बैर बालि सुग्रीव कें कहा कियो हनुमान ॥

110. tulasī rāma sudīṭhi tēm nibala hōta balavāna.  
baira bāli sugrīva kēm kahā kiyō hanumāna..

Tulsidas says that the benevolent glance of Lord Ram can turn a weak and helpless person into someone who is strong and resourceful. In the animosity between Sugriv and Baali (which ultimately resulted in Lord Ram killing Baali and making Sugriv the king of Kishkindha), Hanuman had no role to play (but he got the credit for Sugriv's coronation, and Sugriv became renowned as a great warrior who had defeated Baali). (110)

[Note—The fact of the case is that Sugriv was beaten black and blue by his elder brother Baali on the first occasion when he went to face him in a hand to hand duel. Bleeding and mauled, he came to Lord Ram and felt devastated. The Lord comforted him and assured him of victory the next time. Though terrified to the bone, Sugriv gathered courage and went to fight with Baali once again, and this time the Lord shot Baali with an arrow and killed him. In spite of this, Sugriv got the fame that he won Baali and defeated him in a duel.

Since Hanuman was instrumental in making Lord Ram and Sugriv friends, a friendship that resulted in Sugriv being finally restored to the throne of Kishkindha, the capital of the monkey kingdom, the world gave Hanuman the credit for Sugriv's coronation. This is one of the reasons why Sugriv always felt obliged to Hanuman.

These episodes are narrated in the Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha nos. 1 to 12.

Sugriv was a coward, but when he came in contact with Lord Ram he became famous as the brave king of the monkey race who led his army to victory in Lanka and was credited with the ultimate defeat and slaying of its demon king Ravana.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 16, Hanuman tells Sita “look mother, a monkey who lives hidden among the foliage and on the branches of trees cannot be said to be brave and have much of a strength, but by the grace of the Lord miracles can happen so much so that even an inconsequential snake, which is normally eaten up by the Garud (the legendary heron or eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu), can instead gobble up the bird without any effort.”]

111. तुलसी रामहु तें अधिक राम भगत जियँ जान ।  
रिनिया राजा राम भे धनिक भए हनुमान ॥

111. tulasī rāmahu tēm adhika rāma bhagata jiyam̐ jāna.  
riniyā rājā rāma bhē dhanika bha'e hanumāna..

Tulsidas advises that a devotee of Lord Ram should be regarded in higher esteem than the Lord himself. The Emperor Sri Ram said himself that he would be unable to repay the debts he owed to Hanuman (who was the Lord's greatest devotee and follower). (111)

[Note—This is clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32 in which Lord Ram tells Hanuman “Listen monkey (Hanuman)! No one amongst the gods, the sages and seers or anybody else who has a body (i.e. any living being) has done so much for me as you have done. I am so obliged of you that I will remain indebted for life, and I will never be able to repay your obligations. I don't know how to repay you, compensate you or reciprocate what you have done for me.”

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 100, and Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 19 in which Lord Ram is said to be indebted to Hanuman just like a person who has taken loan from a moneylender.]

112. कियो सुसेवक धरम कपि प्रभु कृतग्य जियँ जानि ।  
जोरि हाथ ठाढ़े भए बरदायक बरदानि ॥

112. kiyō susēvaka dharama kapi prabhu kṛtagya jiyam̐ jāni.  
jōri hātha ṭhāṛhē bha'e baradāyaka baradāni..

Hanuman did nothing exceptional for Lord Ram, except carrying out his duty as a faithful, loyal, obedient and good servant of the Lord. But this knowledge made Lord Ram so obliged to him that he unconditionally submitted himself before Hanuman so much so that the Lord—who is so great, majestic and powerful himself that he grants the Gods the power to give boons to others—stood before him with hands held together so that the palms of both the hands touch each other in a sign of showing great respect.

That is, inspite of being the Supreme Lord of creation and superior to all the Gods, Lord Ram felt extremely obliged and indebted to Hanuman because of the latter's selfless service, devotion and loyalty towards the Lord. The Lord felt so humble that he did not know how to repay or compensate Hanuman for what the latter did for him. The Lord felt that he will never be able to sufficiently reciprocate Hanuman for the latter's faith, love and devotion for the Lord. (112)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265 it is clearly stated that “Raghupati (Lord Ram, the king of the Raghu dynasty) is overwhelmed by the devotion of his devotees, and he finds himself obliged to such devotees.”]

113. भगत हेतु भगवान प्रभु राम धरेउ तनु भूप ।  
किए चरित पावन परम प्राकृत नर अनुरूप ॥

113. bhagata hētu bhagavāna prabhu rāma dharē'u tanu bhūpa.  
ki'e carita pāvana parama prākṛta nara anurūpa..

The Supreme Lord of the Universe, Lord Ram, manifested himself as a human being and assumed the body of a king (of the kingdom of Ayodhya) for the benefit of his devotees, and performed ordinary tasks and deeds like a normal person. (113)

[Note—This is Doha no. 72 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

The Supreme Lord assumed the human form so that ordinary people could recount his divine story and narrate it repeatedly as a means to get across the vast and intractable ocean represented by this mundane and deluding world known as the Bhav-Sagar—refer (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122, (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 205, (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 13, (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75.]

114. ग्यान गिरा गोतीत अज माया मन गुन पार ।  
सोइ सच्चिदानन्दघन कर नर चरित उदार ॥

114. gyāna girā gōtīta aja māyā mana guna pāra.  
sō'i saccidānandaghana kara nara carita udāra..

He, who is beyond knowledge, speech, and perception by the senses, who is un-born, who is free from delusions, who is beyond the reach of the mind, and who is without any specific attributes (i.e. who cannot be defined and is therefore beyond definitions)<sup>1</sup>—he is the same Lord who is known as ‘Sacchidanandghan’ who performs activities like an ordinary human being<sup>2</sup>. (114)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand as Doha no. 25.

<sup>1</sup>An exactly the same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chand line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 192; Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 199.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 341 says that the Lord cannot be known by the Mana (mind) and he cannot be remotely described or even outlined by the means of the spoken words.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 126 it is asserted that Lord Ram’s true divine form is so esoteric and mystical that it is beyond the purview, reach and scope of the spoken word (i.e. it cannot be described in any way, it cannot be butted and bounded within the limiting parameters of words), it is invisible (i.e. the Lord’s true form is not the one that is seen with the physical eyes as being a king of Ayodhya whose name was ‘Sri Ram’), and is beyond the reach of the mind and the intelligence (i.e. the Lord’s real and truthful cosmic form is absolutely incomprehensible and indefinable).

<sup>2</sup>The word ‘Sacchidanandghan’ literally means one who is an embodiment of the following virtues—truth, consciousness, and bliss; one who has these virtues in their purest forms; one who is a treasury of these spiritual virtues. The entire word can be broken up in its components as follows—‘Sat’ = Truth; ‘Chid’ = Consciousness; ‘Anand’ = Bliss; ‘Ghan’ = having density, immensity and profoundness.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 116 which says that Lord Ram is both ‘Sacchidanand’ as well as ‘Dinesh’ meaning the ‘lord of the day’, the Sun. In other words, just as the Sun is a fount of brilliant light, the Lord is also a fount of these virtues.

Then again, even as no one can see the Sun directly with his naked eyes because its brilliance would make him blind, but no one can nevertheless deny the existence of the Sun as its light illuminates the whole world around us, the Lord’s esoteric and mystical

cosmic form, his majestic presence as the cosmic Supreme Authority, his divinity and holiness, his all-pervading and all-encompassing ethereal form as the Holy Spirit and the cosmic Consciousness that is invisible to the physical eye, too cannot be denied. Refer also Doha no. 116 of this book Dohawali.]

115. हिरन्याच्छ भ्राता सहित मधु कैटभ बलवान ।  
जेहिं मारे सोइ अवतरेउ कृपासिंधु भगवान ॥

115. hiran'yāccha bhrātā sahita madhu kaiṭabha balavāna.  
jēhim mārē sō'i avatarē'u krpāsindhu bhagavāna..

The most merciful Bhagwan (Lord; God)<sup>1</sup>, the Supreme Lord God (who is an all-pervading cosmic Being having no physical forms and specific attributes that have limitations), who is like an ocean of benediction, grace and compassion, who had slayed the demons Hiranya-Kasipu and Hiranyaaksha<sup>2</sup> in addition to the strong and powerful demons named Madhu and Kaitav<sup>3</sup>, is the one who has manifested himself in a physical form (in this world as Lord Ram). (115)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>'Bhagwan':—The word *Bhagwan* refers to an enlightened Being and a realised Soul who possesses certain divine qualities not possessed by ordinary human beings, and which are even difficult for the Gods to have. The word normally refers to 'the Lord God', but it may also include any person who has certain exclusive divine qualities in him that are enumerated below.

The word has two parts—'Bhag' and 'Wan'. The 2nd part 'wan' means 'one who possesses', while the 1st part 'Bhag' means 'one who is like the receptacle or womb' that harbours the following six qualities or virtues—(1) to have 'Aishwarya', which means to possess all the virtues that come under the category of having majesty, powers, wealth, fortune, opulence, flourish, supremacy, sway, dominance, glory, grandeur, omnipotence and other divine faculties in existence; (2) to have all Dharma, which means to possess all virtues that come under the ambit of righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, and nobility of thought and conduct; (3) to possess all the glories and majesties that come under the definition of the word Yash, i.e. to have great fame, glory, majesty and renown; (4) to have Sree, i.e. to possess all wealth, prosperity, pomp and circumstance, to have prestige, dignity, respect, honour, splendour and glory, as well as all other factors associated with those qualities mentioned in serial no. 1-3 above; (5) to have complete and comprehensive Gyan, i.e. to have true, deep, incisive, complete and all-incorporating knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, expertise and enlightenment; and (6) at the same time to have immaculate and the highest degree of Vairagya, i.e. to have complete renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion towards everything in this world. Hence, anyone who is endowed with the above six divine, eclectic and exemplary qualities, is called a Bhagwan.

Conventionally, the word is used as a synonym for the words 'Lord, God, Supreme Being', and is used for someone who is glorious, divine, holy, majestic, honoured and revered.

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, verse no. 8 says that the Atma, the pure consciousness and the 'true self' of the creature, is the Bhagwan whom the sense organs of the body serve.

The Atma is called the *Bhagwan* because it is the ruling Authority in the body whom the sense organs serve. The Atma is the only 'living entity' in the body as it is pure

consciousness, while the rest of the body, including the sense organs as well as the mind, is lifeless and inane. While the Atma is immortal, sublime and subtle, the body is mortal, worldly and gross. Just like all the organs of the state machinery serve the sovereign, the Atma is being served by all the sense organs as well as the mind of the body.

The term Bhagwan refers to someone who possesses eclectic qualities and divine virtues that others do not have. That is why Bhagwan is described as the 'Lord' of the world. In the present context, the Atma is 'Bhagwan' as it is the supreme Authority that resides in the body of the creature, and all the organs of the body along with the mind-intellect serve this Atma. Should the Atma leave the body, the latter would be of no worth, and would be dead. This is why the organs and the brain of a dead body do not function because their 'Lord', the Atma, has abandoned it.

In the above referred verse no. 8 of Canto 3 of the Annapurna Upanishad, sage Ribhu has advised his disciple Nidagh to control the restlessness of the sense organs of perception of the body. To quote—"You (Nidagh) must learn to exercise exemplary control and self-restraint over the natural tendency of your sense organs of perception to be restless, fidgety, volatile and unsteady; prevent them from being extrovert and hyper-active. Stop paying attention to the constant nagging by these sense organs; neglect them; ignore them.

Instead of this condition of being on the edge, think yourself as the pure conscious Atma that has none of these negative characteristics. Be convinced and firm in your conviction that your true 'self' is not the gross body, with its restless and fidgety sense organs as well as the mind, but the Atma which is pure consciousness and a sublime entity. This Atma is a manifestation of the supreme Lord known as *Bhagwan*.

The Atma is merely a witness of all that is happening around it, and it is not an active participant in any of the events or is at all affected and tainted by them (8)."

<sup>2,3</sup>The demons Hiranyakasipu, Hiranyaaksha, Madhu and Kaitav—

*Hiranyakashipu* was the demonic father of Prahalad. This story is narrated as note of Doha no. 26.

*Hiranyaaksha*—This story is related to the third incarnation of Vishnu as Varaaha in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30<sup>th</sup> Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

*Madhu and Kaitav*— According to the legendary story as narrated in Markandey Puran, the Vedas had been stolen by two demons named Madhu and Kaitav who had hidden them in the eastern ocean. Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of Hayagriva to kill them and restore the Vedas.

The legend about the birth of these two demons Madhu and Kaitav is that at the time Brahma the creator emerged atop a thousand-petal lotus that sprouted from the navel of Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush, two drops of water symbolising the two Gunas (qualities) of Raja and Tama (the medium and the lowest type of qualities) were present on one of the petals on which Brahma sat. Madhu was born from the drop of Raja Guna, and Kaitav from the drop of water representing Tama Guna.

Once they went up to the heaven and saw the Vedas in all their glorious form placed alongside Brahma who was engaged in the process of creation. The duo immediately stole the Vedas and hid them under the water of the eastern ocean. Brahma was confounded and requested Lord Vishnu to retrieve them as the Vedas were the former's eyes as they contained all the knowledge needed for all the aspects of creation. So Vishnu

appeared as a deity with a head of a horse—i.e. as Hayagriva. The heaven was his head, the rays of the Sun were his glistening hairs, the sky and the underworld were his ears, the earth was his forehead, the river Ganges and Saraswati were the two halves of his chest, the oceans were his thighs, the Sun and the Moon were his eyes, dusk was his nostril, OM was his ornament, electric was his tongue, the Pittars (Spirits of dead ancestors) were his teeth, the Brahma Loka was his lip, and Kalratri (the night of the doomsday) was his neck.

Lord entered the ocean and went to the ocean bed, the nether world called the 'Patal Loka'. There, he began to neigh melodiously, singing the hymns of the Sam Veda. The two demons were so enchanted by this singing that they came out to hear it. Lord Hayagriva got an opportunity and he immediately took the Vedas and gave them to Brahma. After their restoration, he went back to the ocean and lived there for some time. When the demons reached the place from where they had heard the sweet singing emanating, they found no one. So they got suspicious and rushed back to where they had concealed the Vedas to find them missing. Then they began frantically to search for the Vedas as well as the miscreant who removed the scriptures from the hiding place. They reached the surface of the ocean and found Lord Vishnu peacefully reclined on the bedstead of the celestial serpent named Sheshnath. They assumed that certainly the Lord was the one who had taken away the Vedas. They shouted and caused so much raucous that Lord Vishnu woke up from his cosmic sleep, and then there ensued a battle between the Lord and the demons which lasted for five thousand years.

Pleased by their valour and ardour, Vishnu asked them to request for a grant of a boon. The haughty demons retorted and sneered at the Lord, asking the latter to ask for a boon instead. The Lord asked that they be killed at his hands. [Markandey Puran, 81/74.] Taken aback, the demons said that they were also entitled for a boon as promised by the Lord himself. The Lord granted them permission to ask, and they requested that they be killed at a place where the earth was not submerged in water. [Markandey Puran, 81/76.] Vishnu immediately spread his thighs on the surface of the ocean, and deluded by the Lord's Maya the demons thought that dry earth has emerged from the ocean. Aside of this, they also found in this happening a chance of their own salvation and so willingly put their heads on it. Vishnu invoked his Sudarshan Chakra (the sharp weapon of Vishnu which is like a circular saw) to chop off their heads. This episode is described in detail in the Markandey Puran, Chapter 81.

Perhaps this episode describes how the continents and islands came into being during the process of creation.

A slight variant of the above narration is available in the Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto no. 203. According to it, the demons Madhu and Kaitav went to the Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu was reclining on the coiled body of Seshnath, some time after Brahma, the creator of the physical world and the Vedas, was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from Lord Vishnu's navel. These two demons began to terrorize Brahma. The scared Brahma shook the stem of the lotus violently, and this stirred up Lord Vishnu from his sleep. The Lord saw the two great demons and was very impressed by them and their valour. Lord Vishnu asked the two demons to request for a boon which will be granted to them. The two demons were very haughty, and they sneered at Vishnu, saying that the latter should ask for a boon instead. They will grant Vishnu anything he wants.

Vishnu was extremely annoyed and taken aback at their temerity and arrogance. So he said that he wished to kill them—this is the boon he wants to be granted. The two demons replied that though they do not like giving this boon as this means their death, but they are true to their words, so Lord Vishnu could go ahead and kill them. But since Vishnu had asked them for a boon first, they also had a right to be granted what they

wished. The first boon they wanted to be granted to them was that must die at a place where there is no water, and the second boon was that they wished to become sons of the Lord. So Lord Vishnu spread his thighs on which he placed the two demons and cut off their heads with his circular weapon known as the Sudarshan Chakra.

According to the version in Devi Bhagwat, 1/4/9, these two demons were killed at the intervention of goddess Mahakaali, the divine Mother and the cosmic force that brings an end to this creation. She was invoked by Brahma when the demons began terrorizing him. She woke Vishnu from his deep sleep of meditation, and when even Vishnu couldn't kill these demons after a vicious battle, the goddess Mahakali used her powers of delusions to help Vishnu slay them.

There is another demon by the name of Madhu. He was himself the son of demoness Lolaa, and the father of the demon Lavanaasur. This Madhu was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and had obtained a powerful Trident from the Lord with the condition that it would not be used to attack the gods or harm (injure and kill) anybody in this world. He built a city named Madhupura and ruled from there. His queen was called Khumbhinasi.

When his son Lavanaasur began transgressing the laws of Dharma (righteous conduct), he became extremely disgusted so much so that he went away to do Tapa (austerities and penances). After his going away, Lavanaasur became very cruel and tyrannical. Ultimately, he was killed Shatrughan, the younger brother of Lord Ram.

This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas in its Lanka Kand as Doha no. 47. The context is that Ravana's maternal uncle named Malyawan attempted to dissuade Ravana from waging a war against Lord Ram by citing the example of these demons and saying that the Supreme Lord of creation who had killed such great demons is the one who has incarnated himself as Lord Ram, and therefore if he (Ravana) wishes not to die than he will be best advised to surrender before the Lord and abandon hostility with him.]

116. सुद्ध सच्चिदानंदमय कंद भानुकुल केतु ।  
चरित करत नर अनुहरत संसृति सागर सेतु ॥

116. sud'dha saccidānandamaya kanda bhānukula kētu.  
carita karata nara anuharata sansṛti sāgara sētu..

Lord Ram, who is pure and immaculate (i.e. devoid of all sorts of shortcomings and faults created by all forms of delusions associated with this creation), who is like the root from which sprout the eclectic and grand virtues of truth, consciousness and bliss, and who is like a royal insignia or a flag that stands for the fame, majesty, glory and grandeur of the Solar race (in which the Lord was born)—it is the same Lord who performs deeds like a normal human being. The singing and hearing of these divine acts of the Lord become a bridge that helps the creature (the Lord's devotee) to cross the ocean represented by this mundane world. (116)

[Note—This Doha can be read in a different way as follows—The Supreme Lord of creation is like the brilliant sun moving across the sky heralding the existence of the majestic Lord who is immaculate and who possesses the grand eclectic virtues of truth, consciousness and bliss of the highest order. It is the same cosmic Lord who has revealed himself as a human being so that ordinary mortals (i.e. other ordinary human beings who are the Lord's devotees and followers) can sing the Lord's great deeds and divine virtues that act like a bridge which helps them to cross over from this mundane world which is

like a vast measureless ocean, i.e. find liberation and deliverance from it, and attain emancipation and salvation for their souls.

The 'sun' is the most brilliant object in the sky, and the Upanishads say that it is a manifestation of the supreme Brahm. This is because like the Brahm which injects consciousness and life marked by the virtues of dynamism, energy, vitality and vigour into this otherwise lifeless, inert, inane and gross world, the sun too provides this world with light, heat and energy. No life would be imaginable on earth if the sun stops to shine.

This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand as Doha no. 87.

A similar idea is expressed in Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 61 as well as in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 66.]

#### Lord Ram's charm during childhood days

117. बाल बिभूषन बसन बर धूरि धूसरित अंग ।  
बालकेलि रघुबर करत बाल बंधु सब संग ॥

117. bāla bibhūṣana basana bara dhūri dhūsarita aṅga.  
bālakēli raghubara karata bāla bandhu saba saṅga..

Raghubar (Sri Ram), as a child, is adorned with beautiful clothes and ornaments; his body is covered (smeared) by dust (because he has been playing around in the open), and, accompanied by other children and his brothers, he plays and frolics around like an ordinary child (though he is the Lord of this creation and the Supreme Being). (117)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 4/3/1.

Tulsidas means that it is so fantastic, so mystical and mysterious that the Supreme Lord of creation behaves like an ordinary human child. But one must not be misled by the delusion created by the Lord's worldly behaviour and treat Lord Ram as an ordinary man. No, it's not it, for Lord Ram is none else but the supreme Brahm, the Parmatma, the Lord of creation, in a personified form.

The reason is that the Lord wished to live amongst us humans like one of us for obvious objectives—such as to give his devotees a chance to see the Lord's divine form with their own eyes even if they did not have the high level of mental ability and penetrating wisdom that would enable them to visualize the Lord's cosmic form through meditation and contemplation, to help them relate to their Supreme Father very conveniently and easily, and be assured of his presence amongst them to take care of their worldly as well as spiritual well-being, to set an example for the world for the way a man should live a life according to the laws of Dharma, and to tell the world that one should accept in one's stride all the shortcomings, the miseries, the turmoil, the ups and downs of life in this mundane world as part of the game of creation because even the Supreme Being had to pass through all the horrors of life witnessed by an ordinary human being, so there is no point in fretting and fuming over it. The trick, therefore, the Lord wished to tell the world, is to remain aloof from the world inspite of living in it, to refrain from getting mentally and emotionally involved with anything related to the deluding world inspite of appearing to be externally engrossed in the affairs of the world, to not be affected by any of the problems of life and face them with courage, resilience and fortitude, to follow the laws of Dharma inspite of all the provocations and temptations, and to realise that the physical gross body of any person is no proof about the reality of that person, because behind this external façade lies the holiness and the divinity of the

Atma, the pure conscious soul which is the counterpart of the supreme Atma or the Parmatma of creation.

The story of Lord Ram's life is almost like that of any other great king and emperor, so what is so different with him that he is regarded universally as a manifestation of the Supreme Being while no other king or emperor is honoured as such? Hence, one must not be deluded and taken for a ride by the external deeds of Lord Ram, thinking him to be an ordinary king and become skeptical about the Lord's divinity and holiness.

Child Ram's enchanting image with its attire and ornaments has been described by Tulsidas at a number of places as a means of meditation on the Lord's divine form. It must be remembered that he has chosen the Lord's form as a 'child' for special treatment because a child is a living example of the Lord—a child is innocent, un-corrupt, pure at heart and mind, easily endeared, lovable and friendly to all, and has the whole future before him in which he can lead the world, show it light, become a beacon of hope and succour, and set exemplarily high standards of righteous existence in all spheres of life by his personal example so that others can follow him, emulate him, and make the world a better place to live.

If one cannot see the Lord in an innocent child, then he will never see the Lord anywhere in this world—this fact is endorsed in the Holy Bible when Jesus Christ implied the same thing. Refer: Holy Bible, *Gospel of St. Matthew*, 18/1-6—1: At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2: And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3: And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4: Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5: And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6: But whose shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

*Gospel of St. Mark*, 9/36-37—36: And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37: Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

The Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 38 says that a Brahm-realised man is as innocent and un-prejudiced as a child. To quote—"Be steady and calmed-down by obtaining the knowledge of Brahm by becoming like a child (who is innocent, untainted, unprejudiced and uncorrupt).

The knowledge of Brahm makes a man Brahm-realised, and this eclectic mental state is equivalent to that of a child as it is not only innocent, untainted, unprejudiced, uncorrupt and contented, but is also cheerful, happy, blissful and free from any worldly worries (38)."

Saint Tulsidas has written prolifically about Lord Ram as a child. He has described the beauty and the enchanting image of the Lord as a child, and becomes enthralled and captivated at the beauty of Lord Ram as a child. For Tulsidas, it is a sort of meditation on the Lord's most pure, innocent and uncorrupt physical form as a human being.

He has also said in his *Kavitawali*, verse no. 6 that one should have love and devotion for the Supreme Being who manifested as child Ram if one hopes to obtain the same result as is got by doing Japa, Yoga and Samadhi. To quote—"Attractive shoes adorn his (the child Ram's) feet, a tiny bow and arrow is in his small hands, and accompanied by children (of his age), he playfully moves about either on the banks of the river Saryu or the market places of Ayodhya. Tulsidas says that if one cannot develop love and affection towards such children, then what is the utility of doing Japa (reciting and repetition of the Mantras), practicing Yoga (meditation and concentration on the Pure-Self) or being in a

state of Samadhi (a trance like state of consciousness when one is lost in deep contemplation)? Such people (who do all these exercises but cannot inculcate love and devotion for the Lord) are similar to donkeys, pigs and dogs. Say, of what use is their life (i.e. what fruit or benefit have they got from taking birth)? (6).”

This verse must be seen in the correct light and not misinterpreted as casting aspersions on or in any way demeaning to the institution or the system of doing Japa, Yoga or Samadhi. The main objective of these three latter exercises is to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance, to find emancipation and salvation, to acquire tranquility and peace for the soul, to have access to the Supreme Being and find the Absolute Truth of existence in the form of the pure Consciousness. Such exercises require a lot of effort, they are time consuming, and strict laws and regulations must be followed rigidly to achieve success in them. A smallest deviation or carelessness makes the whole exercise go in vain.

Besides this, they require a follower to concentrate his mind and attention on something that is too abstract for an ordinary man, something that is not easily verifiable or seen—because the cosmic Consciousness, the pure ‘Self’, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Atma or Soul on which one is required to focus one’s attention are abstract entities too difficult to grasp and understand. This conception is beyond the understanding of an ordinary man, and so when the objective is not clear the path too becomes hazardous and uncertain.

Therefore, the exercises of doing Japa, Yoga and Samadhi in order to attain the Supreme Being and find emancipation and salvation are limited to a few highly enlightened souls and to those who are well-versed in the intricacies of the metaphysical philosophy of the scriptures. Therefore there are too difficult for an ordinary man to access. On the contrary, having love and devotion for the Lord’s known form and his charming image which is like that of a pretty child one sees around him in this world makes the path leading to peace and happiness of the soul as well as its emancipation and salvation very easy and light on the mind and the senses. It is very easy to relate to something that we see and experience everyday in our lives around us than to attempting to focus our mind on something that we cannot even comprehend.

Therefore, Tulsidas advocates the easier path of having love and devotion for the human form of the Supreme Lord as Ram instead of following the path that is arduous and time consuming and uncertain of yielding tangible results.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 198, Tulsidas has affirmed the fact that the Supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and immanent in creation, the Lord who has no taints, shortcomings and faults that are associated with mundane existence in this world, the Lord who has no attributes and is free from the effects or influences of the three Gunas known as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna, and the Lord who is neutral and dispassionate and indifferent to sensory impulses that make a living being feel a sense of joy and happiness or inspires him to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of this world of sense objects—it is the same supreme Brahm who has today become a child named Ram in the lap of mother Kaushalya.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 200 assert that Lord Ram is the Supreme Father and Parent of this creation, and it is the same Lord Ram who had taken birth as a human being, and his childhood activities and playful pranks had given a lot of happiness and joy to the subjects of the kingdom of Kaushal (Ayodhya).

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 199 explicitly affirm that Lord Ram who is performing enchanting deeds as a child is none but the Supreme Being of creation, the Lord who is an embodiment of happiness and bliss, is beyond the scope of doubts and

confusions, is beyond the perview of delusions, transcends the three Gunas known as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna, and is beyond the reach of speech and expressions—i.e. cannot be narrated or described, cannot be limited by words and languges on which expressions depend.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 204 clearly state that the Lord's childhood activities are simple and pleasant. They have been sung by the Vedas, Lord Shiva, goddess of speech Saraswati, and Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth afloat in the vast ocean of ether. If any one does not find the enchanting image and the most pleasant deeds of Lord Ram as a child as being attractive to the mind and heart, then surely the creator is opposed to such an unfortunate person, i.e. he is very unlucky and stone-hearted, and he will never enjoy the nectar of bliss that comes by hearing of the Lord's divine story.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 203, it is said that "all the four brothers (Lord Ram and his brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) move around doing most pleasant and enchanting things. The Lord who is beyond the imagination of the mind, who cannot be attained by merely doing formal rituals, who is beyond the reach and perview of words and speech (i.e. who cannot be defined or described or explained or expressed by the spoken word), and who is invisible in his cosmic all-pervading subtle form, becomes a boy and moves in the royal courtyard of king Dasrath.

Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 17 says that the childhood deeds and playful pranks of Lord Ram give immense pleasure to saints and sages, and they have been sung by the Gods. Tulsidas drinks this nectar and lives happily in the bliss obtained by it.

The beauty of the child Ram has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 199.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 25 which elaborately describes the enchanting and enthralling image of Lord Ram as a child.

The idea expressed in the Doha above that the Lord's body as a child is smeared in dust and mud is also expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 203.]

118. अनुदिन अवध बधावने नित नव मंगल मोद ।  
मुदित मातु पितु लोग लखि रघुबर बाल बिनोद ॥

118. anudina avadha badhāvanē nita nava maṅgala mōda.  
mudita mātu pitu lōga lakhi raghubara bāla binōda..

In Ayodhya, celebrations are held daily – there is music, there are celebratory songs, there is exuberance, exhilaration and festivity, and there is a general atmosphere of all round happiness and merry-making on the occasion (of Lord Ram's birth as a child in the royal household of the king of Ayodhya). Seeing Sri Ram's childhood activities, his parents as well as others feel very happy, joyful and delighted. (118)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 4/2/4.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 191 describe how "the Gods and Mother Nature celebrated the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram's birth in Ayodhya. The day was neither hot nor cold, the world was peaceful and calm, there was a sweet and fragrant breeze blowing pleasantly across the land, the Gods were thrilled and excited, while the mind and heart of sages and saints were filled with anticipation of happiness and blessings, the forests and gardens were filled with flowers

in full bloom, and the mountains twinkled with gems and precious stones, nectar flew in all the rivers and streams, all the Gods assembled in the sky in decorated planes, the celestial singers and musicians known as Gandharvas sang felicitous songs, flowers were rained down in fistfuls by the Gods in the heaven upon the earth, musical instruments such as kettle-drums and trumpets played in the heaven, and the legendary serpents, saints and sages as well as the Gods sang prayers and hymns in honour of the Lord.”

Then again, Tulsidas elaborately describes the ecstatic scenes of ceremony, celebration and festivity, scenes of enjoyment, merrymaking and exhilaration, that were witnessed in Ayodhya during the days that followed Lord Ram’s birth in the epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 194 and its preceding Chaupais, to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 197. Some of the glimpses of these celebrations and festivities are as follows—“The whole city was decked up like a bride, with colourful flags, banners, hangings, buntings and festoons as well as gateways, arches and pillars erected everywhere in the city. Flowers rained down from the sky in a continuous stream. Everyone was overwhelmed with bliss and ecstasy of the highest order. Ladies of the city decorated platters with golden pots filled with scented water and other auspicious items to mark the occasion, and proceeded to the royal palace in endless processions, singing celebratory songs fit for the occasion. They honoured and blessed the infant Ram and showered their well wishes on him. Outside in the city, singers, musicians and dancers showcased their talent, and the city reverberated with songs and music. Everyone made charity liberally, and even the rich accepted whatever was given to them, then giving whatever they received to others once again. There was a slush of perfume, sandalwood and vermillion on the streets of the city; the mixture formed large and small puddles here and there. Each household of the city reverberated with celebratory songs and the chanting of hymns. The citizens were excited, thrilled, exhilarated and ecstatic. The city was so well illuminated that it appeared there was no night for a full month and the sun never went down the horizon as the day never went beyond the evening hours. Whatever darkness there was was due to thick clouds of coloured perfumed powder that flew liberally everywhere. In this twilight-like semi-darkness, the decorated buildings of the city twinkled like stars. The cupola atop the king’s palace looked like the full moon in its full splendour. The place (the city) and the palace (of the king) were full of sound of chanting of the hymns of the Vedas that resembled rumbling of the clouds of the rainy season. The Sun God was perplexed and flummoxed because the day stretched so long that it virtually turned into a month, because there was no night as the place was brilliantly illuminated. He was tired but could not move the day forward, i.e. he could not push the time of the day ahead so as to bring in the night. He could not understand the mystery of this situation, so he simply praised the glory of the Lord and moved ahead. This celebration was witnessed by the Gods, the great sages and saints, as well as the legendary serpents.”

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 203 also endorses the fact that the parents of Lord Ram and the citizens of Ayodhya in general thoroughly enjoyed the childhood days of the Lord.

Refer also: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 4-5, 8-9 and 26.

Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 9 is also very explicit in describing the celebrations in Ayodhya at that time as follows—“The Lord’s childhood playful activities and deeds are most fascinating and charming. The king, Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, is exhilarated at the good fortune and overwhelmed with joy that heaves like an ocean of auspiciousness for him. Felicitous songs and auspicious hymns are being sung in every household of the city. People tell each other that it is now the opportunity to wallow in joy, enjoy happiness and fruits of good deeds, and have the benefit of eyesight to the full. One gets the reward of taking birth, even without making any effort, when he hears the

sweet lisping speech of the child Ram. The charming deeds of Lord Ram, and his brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan are like a river of happiness and joy that flows in Ayodhya even now as it had flown at the time of the Lord's birth there.”]

119. राज अजिर राजत रुचिर कोसलपालक बाल ।  
जानु पानि चर चरित बर सगुन सुमंगल माल ॥

119. rāja ajira rājata rucira kōsalapālaka bāla.  
jānu pāni cara carita bara saguna sumaṅgala māla..

The dear son of the King of Kaushal (Ayodhya) moves on all fours (crawls) along like a child (though he is the Supreme Lord of creation and its Father) in the courtyard of the palace, and he performs many charming deeds which appear to be a garland (i.e. a chain of) all good virtues and auspiciousness.

[That is, the childhood deeds and activities of Lord Ram are all very pleasant, charming and divine. Each day he does something new, and each charming deed and activity is followed by another so that they form a sequence like the colourful flowers strung one after the other in a garland.] (119)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prahawali as no. 4/2/6.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 24, 26.

Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse 30 is exceptionally similar to the ideas expressed in this Doha. It says in its stanza nos. 1-3 as follows—“The four brothers (Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) are most beautiful (handsome) and adorable; they are exceptionally charming and very enchanting to behold as they play around cheerfully in the royal courtyard. The mothers are overwhelmed with joy and filled with exhilaration when they see Shatrughan along with his brothers Bharat, Laxman and Ram (1).

All the four brothers are adorned by clothes and ornaments befitting children of their exalted, noble and royal stature; they look absolutely fabulous, most radiant and very magnificent from head to toe. The garlands that Kamdeo-cupid had made from blue and yellow lotus-like flowers appear to derive their glamour, charm, beauty and magnificence from their (children's) bodies. [In other words, the four brothers looked so exceptionally beautiful that the beauty of the garland of flowers that Kamdeo held appeared to be only a fraction of their beauty. It looks as if the magnificence which the garland possessed is a mere reflection of the original magnificence effusing out of the bodies of these four brothers. The original always has the vibrancy, the colour, the energy, the eloquence and the dynamism that its reflection lacks. Therefore, the beauty of Kamdeo's garland fades in comparison to the beauty of Lord Ram and his brothers.] (2).

No one can describe the beauty and charm of the divine sight of the children strutting around playfully and gleefully with a staggering and uncertain gait, tottering, limping, stumbling, getting up and falling again, then dashing forward, sometimes dancing, sometimes swaggering, and at other times moving around in circles, sometimes rushing forward to meet and embrace each other, and at other times quarreling among themselves and becoming angry and annoyed with each other, sometimes being exceptionally happy and joyous while at other times being in a somber and grave mood, and the sight of their giving out a shrill cry of joy, their gaze, and the enchantment of the hearing of their lisping speech and their childish babble are so fascinating that they cannot be described in words (3).”

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 203 it is said that when mother Kaushalya summoned the child Ram for meals, he ran away from her, strutting and limping as he did so.]

120. नाम ललित लीला ललित ललित रूप रघुनाथ ।  
ललित बसन भूषन ललित ललित अनुज सिसु साथ ॥

120. nāma lalita līlā lalita lalita rūpa raghunātha.  
lalita basana bhūṣana lalita lalita anuja sisu sātha..

(Child) Sri Ram's divine name, activities, countenance, demeanours, clothes, ornaments etc. all are very beautiful, fascinating, enchanting, charming and attractive. His younger brothers (Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) and other children of Ayodhya are also playing with him (i.e. they join the Lord in his playful activities). (120)

[Note— This Doha appears as no. 4/3/3 of Ram Agya Prashnawali.

Everything associated with the Lord is beautiful and fulfilling. The Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 199 succinctly describe the fabulous beauty of Lord Ram as a child in the following words—

“The beauteous body of the Lord is dark and pleasant like a blue lotus and the dense rain-bearing clouds. It is as endearing and enchanting, and as beautiful and charming as millions of Kamdeo-cupids, the patron god of beauty and love. The white nails glistening against the background of red-tinged feet of the Lord resemble the pearls that are placed on petals of the red-coloured lotus flower. [1-2]

The soles of his feet have the mark of a Vajra (a mace), a Dhvaj (a flag) and an Ankush (a goad). Even the dispassionate mind of sages and hermits get enchanted when it hears the captivating sound from the small bells tingling in the anklet worn around the Lord's feet. He wears a band around his waist, and has three lines (folds in the skin) on the abdomen. The depth and immensity of the significance of his navel is known by those who have seen it. [This is because it is from the same navel that a divine lotus had emerged earlier when the Lord in his cosmic form as Vishnu was reclining on the bedstead made of the coiled body of Seshnath, the legendary serpent who floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshir-sagar, and on the top of this lotus was born Brahma, the creator of this visible world.] [3-4]

The Lord's broad arms are decorated with many ornaments. The nail of a tiger adorns his chest. [It is worn as a charm against evil eyes and evil spirits causing harm.] The mind and heart of the beholder gets enthralled when he sees a garland of countless gems and jewels, as well as the footprint of sage Bhriгу that is marked on the Lord's chest. [5-6]

His throat resembles a divine conch, and the chin is exceptionally beautiful. Glamour and radiance of millions of Kamdeo-cupids seem to radiate out from the Lord's face. He has two rows of beautiful teeth, and two red lips. Who can describe the beauty and charm of the nose and the mark of the Tilak on his forehead? [That is, no one can describe their beauty on his face.] [7-8]

His ears and cheek are extremely beautiful. His sweet and lisping speech is very fascinating. His hairs have not been shaved since birth, and are therefore curly and form a beautiful lock on his head. They have been especially taken care of by his mother who has given them more shape and twist. [9-10]

The Lord wears a loose, yellow frock. I (Tulsidas) especially love and am enthralled by the sight of the Lord moving on his all fours, i.e. as he crawls on his knees and hands. Even Seshnath and Shiva are unable to describe the Lord's charm and grace. The portrait

of the Lord is so fabulous and charming that it is unimaginable by ordinary people, and only someone who is fortunate enough to have dreamt of it may be able to visualize it. [That is, a person who can meditate upon the divine form of the Lord can only understand the meaning of what is being said here. One must not be misled to believe that this child is an ordinary child, but must understand that he is the Supreme Lord and the Father of creation, and the beauty that is being described here is an allegorical account of the beauty and charm of Mother Nature and the Creation of the Lord.] [11-12]”]

121. राम भरत लछिमन ललित सत्रु समन सुभ नाम ।  
सुमिरत दसरथ सुवन सब पूजहिं सब मन काम ॥

121. rāma bharata lachimana lalita satru samana subha nāma.  
sumirata dasaratha suvana saba pūjahirṁ saba mana kāma..

The four brothers, Sri Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Satrugan, have beautiful and auspicious names. By just remembering the four sons of Dasrath, all the desires of a person (i.e. the Lord's devotee) are fulfilled. (121)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 4/3/2 of Ram Agya Prashnawali.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8, and Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 198 describe the naming ceremony of Lord Ram and his brothers. Sage Vashistha had declared at that time that these four brothers represent the four Vedas in a personified form—refer Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 198.

They are like assets for sages and hermits, everything for the devotee of the Lord, and the Pran (i.e. as dear as the life and soul) of Lord Shiva who gets immense pleasure and happiness by seeing the childhood activities of the Lord (Ram and his brothers)—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 198. ]

122. बालक कोसलपाल के सेवकपाल कृपाल ।  
तुलसी मन मानस बसत मंगल मंजु मराल ॥

122. bālaka kōsalapāla kē sēvakapāla krpāla.  
tulasī mana mānasa basata maṅgala maṅju marāla..

Lord Shri Ram (who is a personified form of the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, and an incarnation of Lord Vishnu), who became a child (son) of Dasrath, the king of Kaushal (Ayodhya), is a protector of the servants (i.e. devotees; dependants; those who serve him) and extremely compassionate, merciful and benevolent towards all. He resides in the Mansarovar-like heart of Tulsidas in the form of a divine Swan who represents all that is auspicious, fortunate, good and positive in this world. (122)

[Note— This Doha appears as no. 4/4/7 of Ram Agya Prashnawali.

The Mansarovar is a lake near Mt. Kailash in the northern Himalayas. It is said to be the legendary abode of Lord Shiva. It is a glacier from where river Ganges originates, and is said to consist of crystal clear and purest form of water. The Gods descend from the heaven to take a bath in it. The majestic Swan that floats on the surface of this lake are metaphorically regarded as everything holy, divine, auspicious, good and positive in this

creation. The Swan is a symbol of purity, cleanliness and immaculacy. It is this reason why it is deemed to be a mount of goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of knowledge, learning and wisdom, because these virtues make a creature enlightened, and remove his darkness of ignorance.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 285, sage Parashuram praises Lord Ram and says that the Lord floats like a majestic Swan in the lake-like heart and mind (Mana) of Mahesh (literally the 'Great Ish', the 'great God'; it is an epithet used to mean Lord Shiva because he is the most enlightened, wise and realised amongst all the Gods).

In the Upanishads, Swan is said to represent the pure consciousness that resides in the heart of a Jiva, the living being. It is employed in the ancient scriptures to denote good virtues of wisdom and purity.

Here Tulsidas means that just like the majestic Swan that floats on the surface of the Mansarovar Lake, Lord Ram, in his form as a divine child who is immaculate, is completely incorrupt and holy too remains permanently present in his heart which is full of water symbolizing his devotion and love for the Lord.]

123. भगत भूमि भूसुर सुरभि सुर हित लागि कृपाल ।  
करत चरित धरि मनुज तनु सुनत मिटहि जगजाल ॥

123. bhagata bhūmi bhūsura surabhi sura hita lāgi krpāla.  
karata carita dhari manuja tanu sunata miṭahim jagajāla..

The all-merciful, benevolent and compassionate Lord Shri Ram (the Formless Supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm or Parmatma or Lord Vishnu) manifests himself as a human being (i.e. as an incarnation) for the benefit of devotees, earth, Brahmins (i.e. the wise and holy people; the respected wise ones), cows (i.e. representing all humble and harmless creatures) and Gods (representing the enlightened and divine Beings). He then performs many auspicious deeds, merely hearing of which can eliminate all shackles and entangling web of this mundane world for the Jiva, the living being. (123)

[Note—This Doha appears as Doha no. 93 in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand.

The context is that when Nishad, the chief of the boatman community, saw Lord Ram sleeping on the bare ground as he embarked on his forest exile, he was sorry and confused about the true nature of the Lord. He wondered how it was possible that if the Lord was an incarnation of the Parmatma he would be subjected to all the sufferings and miseries that an ordinary man encounters in his life. It was then that Laxman, the younger brother of the Lord, explained to Nishad about the true form of the Lord and why he had to take the form of a human being.

How merciful and compassionate the Lord is has already been said in Doha no. 96.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 192 also expresses exactly the same idea.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121 say that whenever negative and sinful forces become dominant in this creation, suppressing the good and the righteous virtues, it is then that the Lord always descends upon the earth in various forms to restore the balance in favour of the good, the virtuous and the righteous.

Hearing the divine story of the Lord in his different incarnations or manifestations is an easy method to find deliverance from all the fetters that shackle a living being to this world of birth and death, of contradictions and ironies like simultaneous existence of

union and separation, of sufferings and enjoyments, of favourable as well as unfavourable circumstances, of misfortunes and fortunes, of happiness and grief, of heaven and hell etc., a world that is like an entangling web of miseries and confusions created by Maya (delusions)—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 92.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 explicitly says “It is for the devotees that Lord Sri Ram has taken the form of a human being, and then he does so many deeds that are divine and auspicious to remember and narrate. The Lord behaves like an ordinary human being to uphold the laws of Nature. Even as a theatre artist assumes so many roles on stage, wears costumes in accordance with the role he plays, and also behaves and speaks in the way best suited to the assigned role, though of course in his personal life he never becomes any one of the character he plays out on stage, the Supreme Lord of creation, Lord Ram, too plays the role of the form he has assumed in a particular incarnation or manifestation to perfection because he is an expert actor. But this does not alter his original nature and form and identity as being the Supreme Being and the Lord of the whole creation.”

Hence, one must not be taken for a ride and get deluded by the Lord’s worldly behaviour, but become wise enough to see behind the external façade which is misleading—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94.

Refer Doha no. 124 below also.]

124. निज इच्छा प्रभु अवतरइ सुर महि गो द्विज लागि ।  
सगुन उपासक संग तहँ रहहिं मोच्छ सब त्यागि ॥

124. nija icchā prabhu avatara'i sura mahi gō dvija lāgi.  
saguna upāsaka saṅga taḥam'rahahiṁ mōccha saba tyāgi..

The Lord (Sri Ram) manifests himself due to his own wish for the benefit of Gods, earth, cows and Brahmins so that his devotees can enjoy the privilege of serving him and remaining submerged in remembering his divine story as an exclusive mean to attain liberation and deliverance (for their souls) from this world. Such people choose this Saguna form of the Supreme Lord over all other means of attaining Moksha (or emancipation and salvation for themselves). (124)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 123 and its accompanying note above. These two Dohas are identical in content but the context is different. The present Doha is said by Jamvant, the old bear king, when he assures Angad, the monkey prince, when the group sent to search out Sita came to the shore of the ocean which acted as a formidable barrier for their further progress, and so they began to doubt whether they will ever be able to complete the mission successfully, and whether Ram has the mystical and divine ability to subtly remove this barrier and make it possible for them to actually locate Sita somewhere. It is then that Jamvant assures Angad that Lord Ram is no ordinary human being who has lost his wife, but he is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and therefore they must have patience and perseverance and wait for the right moment when the Lord has destined that Sita would be found.

The present Doha appears as no. 26 of Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand.

The term ‘Saguna’ means that form of the Lord that has attributes and a physical form that is visible and well known. It is obviously much easier to relate to and follow

than a form that is 'Nirguna'—one that has no physical form or attributes as it is too abstract for the ordinary mind and intellect.

The fact that the Lord has taken a physical form out of his own free will is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 152.]

#### Prayer

125. परमानंद कृपायतन मन परिपूरन काम ।  
प्रेम भगति अनपायनी देहु हमहि श्रीराम ॥
125. paramānanda kṛpāyatana mana paripūrana kāma.  
prēma bhagati anapāyanī dēhu hamahi śrīrāma..

[Tulsidas prays--] 'Oh Lord Sri Ram! You are the embodiment of supreme and the purest form of bliss, are a treasury of compassion, mercy, grace, kindness and benevolence, and are the one who fulfils all the desires of your devotees. Oh Lord Ram, please grant us an eternal and infinite love, devotion and faith in you.' bestow us with your ceaseless, unwavering love and devotion. (125)

[Note— This Doha appears as no. 34 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand. Here, sage Sankadi has asked Lord Ram for this spiritual grant.

The use of the plural pronoun 'we' is very significant—the sages request the Lord that he should be gracious enough to grant this boon to all his devotees irrespective of whether or not they have specifically requested for it.

A similar boon was requested by sage Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar kand, Doha no. 84.]

#### Importance of Bhajan (devotional remembrance) of Lord Ram

126. बारि मथें घृत होइ बरु सिकता ते बरु तेल ।  
बिनु हरि भजन न भव तरिअ यह सिद्धान्त अपेल ॥
126. bāri mathēm ghr̥ṭa hō'i baru sikatā tē baru tēla.  
binu hari bhajana na bhava tari'a yaha sid'dhānta apēla..

Butter may be produced by churning water or oil may be extracted from sand, but it is an infallible and inviolable rule that it is impossible to cross the ocean of worldly existence without having faith in, devotion for and submission to Lord Ram. (126)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 122 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

It highlights the fact that even if the most improbable of things is made possible, like extracting oil from sand or butter produced by churning of water, still it is impossible to find deliverance from this entrapping world without having love and devotion for Lord Ram.

This particular Doha is preceded by other impossibilities in Chaupai line nos. 15-19 before it—such as growth of hair on the back of the hardened shell of a tortoise, an infertile lady producing a son who would be strong enough to kill someone else, many varieties of flowers growing and blooming in the sky, thirst getting quenched by drinking

water from a mirage that appears on the hot sand of a desert, horns growing on the head of a rabbit, the darkness of night destroying the ability of the sun to shine its light, and fire being produced from ice. The idea is that even if all these impossibilities and incredulous things could ever come true then still it is impossible to find liberation from the entanglements of this shackling world without love and devotion for Lord Ram.]

127. हरि माया कृत दोष गुन बिनु हरि भजन न जाहिं ।  
भजिअ राम सब काम तजि अस बिचारि मन माहिं ॥

127. hari māyā kṛta dōṣa guna binu hari bhajana na jāhiṁ.  
bhaji'a rāma saba kāma taji asa bicāri mana māhiṁ..

The illusion of something being good and something being bad in this world is a delusion created by Maya of Lord Hari (Vishnu). It can only be eliminated by invoking the Lord's mercy and grace, which in turn is possible only when one has devotion and faith in the Lord. A wise man should understand this and abandon all sorts of desires and wants, and instead develop deep and abiding devotion and faith in Lord Ram. (127)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 104 'Ka' of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

An exactly the same idea is expressed in Doha no. 41 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand. It says that all notions of one thing being good and the other bad is caused by delusions of duality in this world. A wise man does not pay attention to it because such differences are limited to the grosser aspect of this mundane world, but the subtler world of the pure consciousness known as the world of the Atma is free from such delusions.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 119 stress that by having Bhakti (devotion, dedication, faith and love) for Lord Ram, the delusion created by this mortal mundane world consisting of the cycle of birth and death is removed very easily without having to make a lot of spiritual efforts just like the case when one eats food for one's satisfaction and taste but the fire burning inside the abdomen automatically digests the food even if one does not expressly ignite this fire. ]

128. जो चेतन कहँ जड़ करइ जड़हि करइ चैतन्य ।  
अस समर्थ रघुनायकहि भजहिं जीव ते धन्य ॥

128. jō cētana kaham' jāra kara'i jārahi kara'i caitan'ya.  
asa samartha raghunāyakahi bhajahiṁ jīva tē dhan'ya..

Those who worship Lord Ram—who has the mystical and divine power to make something that is animate into something inanimate and vice-versa—are fortunate, privileged and blessed. They are the wise and lucky ones (who have understood the secret of finding liberation and deliverance from this world as well as the truth of the Supreme Being living amongst them in the subtle form of Lord Ram as his divine story, his divine name and his divine glory). (128)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 119 in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

We have two living instances how the Lord can make even the most enlightened and realised saint into one who is equivalent to an ignorant one, and one who has no knowledge of the scriptures into one who becomes so exalted that the Lord himself

appeared before him. The first instance is that of sage Narad who prouided himself as being the greatest devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was once so deluded that he wished to marry a girl, and when he found out that Lord Vishnu had prevented him from doing so (because the Lord did not wish Narad to get entangled in passions and lust as he was a Sanyasi, an ascetic who is supposed to remain aloof from attachments and lust of the sensual pleasures) he cursed the Lord. It was one of the reasons why Lord Vishnu became a human, and the Lord had to suffer the agony of separation from his divine consort Laxmi, who became Sita when the Lord himself became Ram. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 125 to 139.

There are many instances of the second category of devotees—viz. Jatau, the vulture (Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 28 to 32), Sabari, the low caste woman (Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34 to Doha no. 36), Vibhishan, the demon brother of Ravana (Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Doha no. 41 to 49).

Then there is the story of the child devotee Prahalad who had been able to have a Darshan (divine, sacred sight) of Lord Vishnu though he was merely a child.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 122 Kha. It says—“the Lord can make a mosquito as great, majestic and powerful as Brahma, the creator of the visible world, and reduce Brahma to an inconsequential state of a mosquito. Therefore, a wise man must abandon logic and debates about Lord Ram, as the Lord cannot be understood by application of worldly logic and intelligence, and instead focus his attention on having devotion and faith in the Lord and his supremacy.”

Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35 asserts that Lord Ram can convert a humble straw or reed into a Vajra (the hardest thing in existence; the strong weapon of Indra), and vice versa.

Refer Doha no. 129 below in this context.

Regarding those who are fortunate to have devotion and faith in Lord Ram, Tulsidas says in his epic Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 127 that Lord Shiva told his divine consort Uma that a clan or family in which are born people who have devotion, love and faith in Lord Ram is indeed praise worthy, noble, holy, pious, honourable and most exalted in this world.

Vairagya Sandipani, verse no. 36 says that ‘glory to the father and mother who have a son who worships Lord Ram in any manner whatsoever, willingly or unwillingly, rightly or wrongly, with or without devotion.’ That is, just like a correct medicine curing a disease even if it is taken unwillingly, Lord Ram will take care of anyone who worships the Lord irrespective of his having devotion for the Lord or not.]

129. श्रीरघुबीर प्रताप ते सिंधु तरे पाषान ।  
ते मतिमंद जे राम तजि भजहिं जाइ प्रभु आन ॥

129. śrīraghubīra pratāpa tē sindhu tarē pāṣāna.  
tē matimanda jē rāma taji bhajahim jā'i prabhu āna..

By the glory and effect of Raghubir, the brave king of Raghu's dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram), even stones and boulders floated on the water of the ocean (during construction of the bridge to cross over to Lanka). Therefore, surely one is un-wise and an idiot if he abandons such a Lord and worship others.

[If dead rocks can float on the water of the ocean by the grace of Lord Ram, then getting across the ocean represented by this mundane world, and getting liberation and deliverance for the soul from its fetters, is also possible if one relies faithfully and exclusively on the powers of the divine name of the Lord, and has devotion for him.] (129)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 3 of Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand.

The great monkey architects Nal and Neel were building the bridge. Huge boulders and rocks as huge as mountains were dumped in the ocean, and they remain afloat and steady at one place. The world gave the credit of the construction of the bridge to the monkeys and their architect, but has anyone thought the real reason why the rocks and boulders floated instead of sinking to the bottom of the ocean? Well, Tulsidas says that it is due to the powers of Lord Ram's divine and holy name that this miracle happened, because Hanuman was busy etching the Lord's name on each individual stone before it was thrown into the ocean. In other words, the secret of them floating and remaining tied was in the mystical name of Lord Ram that it acted as a buoy that prevented the gross and heavy-as-lead pieces of rock from sinking into the water.

Therefore, if a man invokes the holy and all-powerful name of Lord Ram, then he is sure to remain afloat in this quagmire-like world, and ultimately help his soul to get across it. He will never drown in the water of miseries and grief of this world.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 228 has a stanza that says that it can be made possible for lotus to grow on a stone if someone invokes the almighty powers of the divine name of Lord Ram and wishes it to be so.]

130. लव निमेष परमानु जुग बरस कलप सर चंड ।  
भजसि न मन तेहि राम कहँ कालु जासु कोदंड ॥

130. lava nimēṣa paramānu juga barasa kalapa sara caṇḍa.  
bhajasi na mana tēhi rāma kaham̃ kālu jāsu kōdaṇḍa..

'Oh mind! Why don't you worship Lord Ram (the Viraat Purush, the cosmic Lord) whose bow resembles Kaal (the time factor and death or end of creation), and the arrows are like the various divisions (fractions) of time such as a Lava, a Nimesh, a Parmaanuu, a Yug (era or epoch), a Baras (year), and a Kalpa.' (130)

[Note—Technically, the smallest fraction of time is the 'Parmaanuu', i.e. the time taken by light to pass through an atom, or the time taken by a photon to travel through an atom, or for an atom to oscillate. The 'Nimesh' is the time taken for the eyelid to close and open once. The 'Lav' is equivalent to 36 such Nimesh. The 'Jug' is an era or an epoch; it may consist of a hundred years or thousands of years. According to Hindu belief, one cycle of creation and destruction of the whole world consists of 4 Yugs—viz. the Sata Yug, the Treta Yug when Lord Ram was born, the Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came down to earth, and the Kali Yug which is the current era of the four Yug cycle. The 'Kalpa' is equivalent to 1 day in the life of Brahma, the creator; it is equal to 1000 four-Yug cycles.

The word 'Kaal' has many connotations—it refers to death, an end, conclusion of what exists, a frame of time, a notion of time that is relative, creating the sense of present, the past and the future.

In practice, Tulsidas means that whatever or whoever that is born or created in this world is bound to die or come to an end. No thing and no one is eternal and imperishable.

Some exist for a fraction of time, some longer for many years, and some others for thousands of years. Even Brahma the creator has his life-span fixed and measured.

There is an Upanishad known as Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atarva Veda tradition in which the life-span of Brahma is clearly defined in its Canto 3, paragraph nos. 8-9.

To quote—“One day-time of Brahma the creator consists of one thousand cycles of creation and destruction, with each cycle consisting of the 4-Yug period according to the Hindu tradition.

One night of Brahm has the same duration as his daytime.

Therefore, the complete ‘day’ of Brahma as we humans understand this term to mean (i.e. one full cycle of day-time + night-time) would be equal to the total time taken for one day-time and one night-time according to Brahma’s measurement.

During this one day of Brahma, the world known as the Satya Loka (the truthful heaven where Brahma and the other senior Gods such as Vishnu live) is created and destroyed once. [That is, one cycle of creation and destruction of heaven would be equal to one thousand such cycles on earth where mortal creatures live.]

With this cosmic scale of measuring time, fifteen such days of Brahma would be his one ‘Paksha’ or fortnight.

Two such fortnights would be Brahma’s one month.

Two such months would be Brahma’s one season.

Three such seasons would be one solstice in the year of Brahma.

Two such solstices (i.e. the summer and the winter solstices) would make up one year of Brahma.

According to this celestial measurement of time, Brahma’s one life consists of one hundred such years.

This is said to be one life-span of Brahma the creator (8).”

The ‘4-Yug’ cycle is the following—“The first is the Sat-yug, the second is the Treta-yug, the third is the Dwapar-yug, and the fourth is the current Kali-yug.

The Satayug which was the great Vedic period of fire sacrifices, the Tretayug culminated with the incarnation of Lord Ram, the Dwaparyug ended with Lord Krishna’s incarnation, and the Kaliyug would end with the great deluge or Doomsday when the entire world would be drowned in water. The next Kalpa would come after that in a cyclic form. This happens because at the fag end of Kaliyug, sins and evils would have reached such a crescendo that the Supreme Being no longer is able to tolerate it though he is most tolerant, magnanimous and forgiving, and decides to finally wind up the whole thing by punishing the world by clean sweeping the slate. Only the righteous and auspicious few survive who would become the progenitors of the next cycle.

The Satayug is also called Kritiyug because elaborate fire sacrifices were done during this phase. It is equivalent to 4800 divine years of Gods, and 17,28,000 human years.

The Tretayug is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years.

The Dwaparyug is equivalent to 2400 divine years of Gods, and 8,64,000 human years.

The Kaliyug is equivalent to 1200 divine years of Gods, and 4,32,000 human years.

This Doha appears in the invocational lines of Lanka Kand in Ram Charit Manas. The context is the beginning of the war at Lanka, and hence it is emphasized here that the person who is about to launch the offensive against the evil demons who represent the negative and evil forces in creation so as to eliminate them and restore the balance in favour of positive forces and righteousness is none other than the Supreme Being who has come down upon this earth to do this job himself. The image that is invoked here is

that of the Viraat Purush, the all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-powerful and supreme Authority and the almighty Lord of creation.

It is the universal law of Nature that whatever or whoever that is born or created must die or come to an end. It is to uphold this law that the Supreme Being is depicted as holding the Bow of Death and continuously shooting the Arrows marking different times. The metaphoric meaning is clear—death of all those who are born is an inviolable certainty, what varies is the time that they live. Some creatures have a short life-span, other live longer, but no one can say that he will live for eternity. The Death God was so scared of the demons and their king Ravana that he was afraid to approach them, so the Lord himself decided to come down and do the needful.

Another interpretation is as follows—the demon king Ravana had tried to take a boon from Brahma that he will never die. But the creator told him that it is impossible. So Ravana devised a mean to circumvent it and asked that he will be immune to death except at the hands of a man and monkey. He was so over-confident of himself, his strength and invincibility that he thought that when even the great Gods would not be able to kill him then he has nothing to fear from the humble and coward human race and their predecessors, the monkeys, who were even more coward than their evolved forms known as the humans. In his lopsided wisdom Ravana thought that he was being exceptionally cunning in as much as he had managed to deceive Brahma into giving his consent to this condition, and thereby ensuring his freedom from the fear of death. Because he thought that once he subdued the almighty Gods, he will keep the Death God under his command and hold him captive, thereby escaping death for eternity.

But he forgot that no one has the right to break the law of creation that has been established by the Supreme Being, and not by Brahma who simply carries out his duty to 'create', and has no right over other aspects of creation such as its sustenance and conclusion, which are the exclusive prerogative of Vishnu and Shiva respectively. Cunning as he was, Ravana did severe penances and pleased Shiva, thereby ensuring the latter's kind view for him. But in his arrogance Ravana thought that once Brahma and Shiva are pleased with him, he has no fear from Vishnu, and he will easily overcome the Lord should the need arise. This single misplaced overconfidence did him in, as it was Lord Vishnu who manifested as a human being in the form of Lord Ram and killed Ravana.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 88 it is asserted that those who are wise enough to worship and remember Lord Ram are freed from the effects of Kaal. The obvious meaning here is that such devout creatures find permanent liberation and deliverance from this mortal world dominated by death, and they become immortal in the sense that their soul, which in actuality is their truthful identity as opposed to their physical gross body, finds emancipation and salvation by becoming one with the Supreme Soul of creation known as the Parmatma. This Parmatma is none else but Lord Ram in his cosmic form as the Viraat Purush or Lord Vishnu, who in turn represents the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]

131. तब ल॒गि कु॒सल न जी॒व कहूँ स॒पनेहूँ म॒न बि॒श्राम ।  
जब ल॒गि भ॒जत न राम कहूँ सो॒कधाम त॒जि का॒म ॥

131. taba lagi kusala na jīva kahum̐ sapanēhum̐ mana biśrāma.  
jaba lagi bhajata na rāma kahum̐ sōkadhāma taji kāma..

Unless the Jiva, the living being, abandons all his 'Kaam' or desires, lust and yearnings (related to this mortal world of material sense objects), which are the cause of all his unhappiness, misery and entanglements, and worships Lord Ram instead, he can neither expect any spiritual welfare nor have any peace of mind even in his dream till that time. (131)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 46 of Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand.

The context is Vibhishan coming to take refuge with Lord Ram. This Doha was said by Vibhishan.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 16, Lord Ram has told Laxman, his younger brother, that those who have no other shelter but Lord Ram, those who have only Lord Ram as their aim and destination in life, who direct all their deeds and actions towards one single goal of attaining Lord Ram (and offer all their deeds to the Lord), who speak of Lord Ram and nothing else (i.e. who speak only the Truth and holy things, and do not talk worthless things pertaining to this world), whose mind is focused on Lord Ram, and who worship Lord Ram with selfless devotion—verily, the Lord permanently lives in their lotus-like heart.

Therefore, it is advisable for a Jiva that he must think over what has been said by the Lord himself and sincerely worship and have unwavering devotion for Lord Ram after discarding all sorts of Kaam (desires, and deeds that lead to fulfillment of such desires)—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 104 Ka.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 123 says that it is an established spiritual doctrine endorsed by the Vedas ('Srutis') that one should worship and have devotion for Lord Ram after abandoning all Kaam.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 203 which says that it is not possible to enshrine Lord Ram in the heart unless one ejects all sorts of Kaam (worldly desires) from his heart. The obvious reason is that space has to be created for Lord Ram to live in the subtle space of the heart. If this space is occupied by something else then naturally it is not possible to establish the Lord there.]

132. बिनु सतसंग न हरिकथा तेहि बिनु मोह न भाग ।  
मोह गएँ बिनु रामपद होइ न दृढ़ अनुराग ॥

132. binu satasaṅga na harikathā tēhi binu mōha na bhāga.  
mōha ga'eṁ' binu rāmapada hō'i na dr̥ḥa anurāga..

Without Satsang (communion with and good company of saints) it is not possible to hear the divine stories of the Lord; without hearing such stories, worldly attachments don't leave; and without destroying attachments, one can't have robust and abiding love and devotion in the holy feet of Lord Ram (and thereby find eternal peace, tranquility and bliss of the soul). (132)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 61 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

When Garuda, the mount of Lord Vishnu, was overcome with delusions regarding the divinity of Lord Ram, primarily because he could never imagine that Lord Vishnu, his cosmic Lord, could behave like an ordinary man during the Lord's incarnation as Lord Ram, and therefore began to harbour doubts about Lord Ram actually being Lord Vishnu (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 68 Kha, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes the next Doha no. 69), he had approached Lord Shiva to know or learn the truth as Shiva is the most enlightened amongst all the Gods. The advice given in this Doha was

what Shiva told Garud. It is a general spiritual rule that Shiva stated, and it is useful for all the creatures.

The great importance of 'Satsang' (communion of saints) as well as 'Bhakti' (devotion and dedication for the Lord) for the spiritual welfare of all is reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 14 where Lord Shiva requests Lord Ram to grant him these two boons when the former honoured the latter during his coronation ceremony upon return to Ayodhya after the 14 year exile period and the conquest of Lanka.

The secret of Lord Ram is known only by hearing the Lord's divine story being explained in Satsang—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 39. It says—"those who wish to take a bath in this holy lake (consisting of the nectar that provides spiritual well-being and happiness) must sincerely participate in Satsang and pay attention to what is being said there."]

133. बिनु बिस्वास भगति नहिं तेहि बिनु द्रवहिं न रामु ।  
राम कृपा बिनु सपनेहुँ जीव न लह बिश्रामु ॥

133. binu bisvāsa bhagati nahim̐ tēhi binu dravahim̐ na rāmu.  
rāma kṛpā binu sapanēhum̐ jīva na laha biśrāmu..

Without having abiding faith in and devotion for Lord Ram, one can't worship him; without devotion and worship, Lord Ram cannot be pleased, and without Lord Ram's blessings and benevolence, one can't have peace and tranquility even in one's dream. (133)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 90 Ka of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

Along with the next verse no. 134, this present Doha expresses the conclusion that sage Kaag Bhusund drew from all his experiences, and which he had told Garud when the latter had requested the former to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram for his benefit.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 200 it is said that "Lord Ram shows his grace and benevolence when one worships him after eliminating all pretensions, deceit and conceit from his mind, deed and speech."

And when the Lord becomes benevolent and graceful, all the problems associated with this world are eliminated—refer Doha 136 of this book.

Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 89 it is asserted that "it is not possible to know the secret of who Lord Ram is without the Lord's consent and wish; without knowing who Lord Ram is one cannot have devotion, love and faith in him."

It should be noted here that in Doha no. 130, the Jiva is exhorted to have Bhakti for Lord Ram by being afraid of Kaal (certain death), then in Doha no. 131 it is said that one can expect spiritual welfare only when one has selfless Bhakti for the Lord, and in Doha no. 132 it is laid down that Satsang is a necessity for attaining Bhakti. This is because during Satsang the wise teacher explains the secrets and subtle meaning of the external deeds and form of Lord Ram, thereby removing any doubts that arise in the mind about the divinity and holiness of the Lord. Now, in Doha no. 133 it is stressed that one must have an enduring and unflinching faith and conviction as a precondition for having Bhakti for Lord Ram. Otherwise, one will be like a boat on the surface of a choppy ocean. Therefore, without Bhakti no one can have peace just like one cannot rest in a boat when it is being tossed around in an ocean.]

134. अस बिचारि मतिधीर तजि कुतर्क संसय सकल ।  
भजहु राम रघुबीर करुनाकर सुंदर सुखद ॥

134. asa bicāri matidhīra taji kutarka sansaya sakala.  
bhajahu rāma raghubīra karunākara sundara sukhada..

Hence, Tulsidas advises the Jiva that he must take into consideration all that has been said by wise ones, and be of a stable mind and abandon all doubts, unnecessary logics and arguments that would lead to confusions that would only create more perplexities for him instead of solving any issue.

Thus, he must abandon all deceit, doubts and debates, and instead worship Lord Ram—who is a mine of mercy and compassion, has a most beautiful and divine form, and who is a bestower of supreme bliss—with full faith and devotion. (134)

[Note—This is a Sortha, a sort of Doha, that appears as no. 90 Kha of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand. It winds up the discussion in the forgoing Dohas.]

135. भाव बस्य भगवान सुख निधान करुना भवन ।  
तजि ममता मद मान भजिअ सदा सीता रवन ॥

135. bhāva basya bhagavāna sukha nidhāna karunā bhavana.  
taji mamatā mada māna bhaji'a sadā sītā ravana..

The Lord ('Bhagwan'), who is a treasury of happiness and abode of compassion and mercy (i.e. the Lord who abounds in happiness himself and provides unlimited happiness, compassion and mercy to his devotees and followers), can be controlled (i.e. influenced, affected, whose attention can be drawn) only by having the emotions of love and devotion for him. Therefore, one should abandon all sorts of worldly attachments and infatuations ('Mamta'), ego, pride, arrogance and vanity ('Mada and Maan') (which act as hindrances in obtaining nearness with the Lord), and instead always worship Lord Ram with the greatest of faith and devotion along with humility and sincerity. (135)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 92 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

Just prior to this Doha, in the last line of the Chanda that precedes it in the Ram Charit Manas, it is said that 'the Lord is extremely compassionate and gracious, and he accepts anyone who approaches him after taking into consideration the person's emotions and sentiments, his internal feelings and thoughts. The Lord cannot be deceived and taken for a ride by external pretensions of faith and devotion like the attempts one makes to cheat others in this gross world. Even if one is very poor and lacks the wherewithals for elaborate offerings, but has love, devotion and faith in the Lord, the Lord will willingly accept him as one of his own.

Just like the case of a farmer getting the rewards of his toil in his field, the devotee of the Lord is amply rewarded for his loyalty and devotion for the Lord; it does not go in vain.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 79 it is said that there are numerous ways in which one can establish relationship with the Lord, but for Tulsidas taking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram as his servant (devotee and follower) is the only way out, it is the only thing he prefers. That is, Tulsidas prefers to be humble and serve the Lord, because then it will be

the responsibility of the Lord to take care of him. An obedient servant and follower doesn't demand anything from his Master, rather he humbly carries on his duties of serving the Master, but it is the moral and ethical responsibility of the latter to see that the servant who serves him so faithfully and diligently is being well looked after.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 113, Tulsidas reiterates this view when he tells his Lord 'Lord! You are magnanimous, gracious and kind, while I am most miserly and wretched. The Vedas ('Sruti') have asserted that you are absolutely immaculate and holy, while I am utterly unholy and impure. Lord, you have so many relationships in this world, so many contacts and relations that are holy, excellent and exalted, but I plead that you must not abandon or discard me (because I am unholy and impure, and therefore unsuited to your exalted stature).' This stanza clearly shows the level of devotion and surrender that Tulsidas had for Lord Ram. It must be remembered that Tulsidas was no ordinary man—in fact he was a very learned and realised man, but he never for once bragged about his achievements before the Lord. He always remained humble and submissive. This automatically made the Lord have a kind consideration for him because, being extremely kind and compassionate, the Lord has a soft corner in his heart for the humble and the downtrodden. For those who brag of their own standing, their own strength and prowess, the Lord smiles and simply let them do what they like. It is like the case of a parent who will take special care of a child who has some disability as compared to other children who are fit and healthy.

So Tulsidas is very clever and wise in this respect—he has left his spiritual and worldly well-being in the hands of the loving and caring parent, the Supreme Lord Ram, by being humble, submissive, incompetent, inept and ignorant like a child, instead of trying to influence the Lord by acting smart in front of him! Because in the former case even if Tulsidas makes some mistakes he can plead for forgiveness from the Lord, and the Lord is sure to overlook his misdemeanours like a loving parent overlooks the follies of the child, but if Tulsidas acts like a grown-up man then the Lord will have to hold him accountable for his misdeeds.

The concept of 'Bhagwan' is explained in a note of Doha no. 115 of this book.]

136. कहहिं बिमलमति संत बेद पुरान बिचारि अस ।  
द्रवहिं जानकी कंत तब छूटै संसार दुख ॥

136. kahahim bimalamati santa bēda purāna bicāri asa.  
dravahim jānakī kanta taba chūṭai sansāra dukha..

Saints and seers who are wise and have an uncorrupt mind (i.e. a mind that is not influenced by worldly considerations) give the following advice, after having consulted the Vedas and the Purans—that a person can get rid of the sorrows of the world only when Lord Ram, the dear husband of Janki (Sita), feels pity for him, and develops sympathy and compassion for him. (136)

[Note—In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 127, Tulsidas has also asserted the same thing—that there is no other way to get rid of miseries and sorrows but Lord Ram becoming compassionate and kind towards the creature.

Further, in verse no. 136 of Vinai Patrika he says “one finds company of saints and pious people when the merciful Lord Ram becomes favourable upon a person, because such contacts and sights of these holy people helps one to overcome his sins and their negative effects”, and “a man becomes purified when this does happen”.]

137. बिनु गुर होइ कि ग्यान ग्यान कि होइ बिराग बिनु ।  
गावहिं बेद पुरान सुख कि लहिअ हरि भगति बिनु ॥

137. binu gura hō'i ki gyāna gyāna ki hō'i birāga binu.  
gāvahim̄ bēda purāna sukha ki lahi'a hari bhagati binu..

Is it ever possible to attain spiritual wisdom without (the help and guidance of) a Guru (i.e. a wise teacher), and similarly is it ever possible to have such wisdom without inculcating the eclectic virtue of renunciation and detachment from this world of material sense objects as well as all its attachments, relationships, allurements and temptations (i.e. without inculcating and practicing the virtue of 'Vairagya')? [That is, it is not possible that either can happen.]

The Vedas and the Purans assert that likewise it is not possible to have true peace, comfort and happiness without having 'Bhakti' (devotion, dedication, love and faith) in Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, whose incarnation was Lord Ram). (137)

[Note—This verse is actually called a 'Sortha', a form of Doha, and it appears as no. 89 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 115, Tulsidas has made the following declaration—"It is not possible to have purity of wisdom and attainment of enlightenment without the grace of Lord Hari and the Guru, and without the virtue of wisdom and enlightenment it is not possible to get across this world which is like a huge ocean."

"The Vedas, the Purans and other holy scriptures affirm that there is no possibility of attaining peace and happiness without developing Bhakti for Raghupati, Lord Ram", and "it may be possible for flowers to grow and bloom in the vacuum of the sky, but it is not possible to have happiness and peace by being opposed to Lord Hari, or literally turning away from the Lord"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 and no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 122.

The nectar-like supreme spiritual bliss that is obtained by having Bhakti for Lord Ram is known by only those who have experienced it first hand. It is obtainable by being submerged in the holy and divine thoughts of the Lord, by remaining engrossed in repeating the Lord's holy name, and by keeping away from or discarding Mamta, Mada and Moha (worldly attractions, attachments, arrogance, pride, and delusions)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 46.]

138. रामचंद्र के भजन बिनु जो चह पद निर्बान ।  
ग्यानवंत अपि सो नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषान ॥

138. rāmacandra kē bhajana binu jō caha pada nirbāna.  
gyānavanta api sō nara pasu binu pūṁcha biṣāna..

A person who, inspite of being learned, expects emancipation and salvation of the soul without worshipping Sri Ramchandra (Lord Ram) is like an animal without a horn or tail (i.e. he has a deformed mind and corrupted intellect which has anomalous and erroneous thoughts that are in breach of the law of Nature and the well established principles of the ancient scriptures).

[Even as an animal would look unconventional, odd and deformed if it does not have the characteristic features of an ordinary animal, such as having a tail or a horn, a person who has no devotion for Lord Ram and expects his emancipation and salvation is an odd person, an aberration, because his thoughts and expectations are against conventional wisdom and impossible to achieve.] (138)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 78 Ka of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

An exactly the same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50 which says “a person who abandons such a gracious, compassionate and benevolent Lord Ram and worships or follows some other Lord is like an animal that has no tail or horn”.

Lord Ram has said that—“The Vedas and the Purans have sung (i.e. repeatedly said) that the easiest way to obtain heavenly peace, bliss, happiness and joy here on earth, in the present life itself, is by having Bhakti (devotion, dedication, love and faith) in me (Lord Ram). Though there are many paths and means to obtain this heavenly peace, such as the path of Gyan (spiritual knowledge) and other methods prescribed by the Vedas and Purans, but they themselves assert and reiterate that none is as effective and easy as having Bhakti for the Lord. Those who do not possess Bhakti are not liked by me (Lord Ram, the Supreme Being incarnate) inspite of their making great efforts of all kind to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos.1- 4 that precede Doha no. 45.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3- 4 that precede Doha no. 119 say—“the most difficult spiritual stature of Kaivalya Mukti—literally the freedom from miseries and sorrows that are part of the cycle of birth and death in this world—is obtainable in a natural way, even without making special efforts for it, by having Bhakti for Lord Ram and worshipping the Lord faithfully with sincerity and diligence”.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 277 expressly declares that “Gyan (spiritual knowledge) that lacks Bhakti (devotion and love for the Lord) is like a boat without a captain”.]

139. जरउ सो संपति सदन सुखु सुहृद मातु पितु भाइ ।  
सनमुख होत जो रामपद करइ न सहस सहाइ ॥

139. jara'u sō sampati sadana sukhu suhrda mātu pitu bhā'i.  
sanamukha hōta jō rāmapada kara'i na sahasa sahā'i..

Such good fortunes as worldly riches, a full and contented home, happiness and joys, friends and compatriots, as well as parents and brothers etc. that do not naturally, cheerfully and willingly aid and inspire a person to turn towards Lord Ram's holy feet should perish.

[Tulsidas says that the main objective of a man's life should be to have devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, because this is the only means of finding eternal and true spiritual peace, rest, happiness and comfort in this world. The semblance of happiness and joy that one thinks one gets in this world due to various acquisitions and contacts are as temporary and unsustainable as the world itself. Therefore, a wise man is one who endeavours to develop sincere faith and devotion for the Lord, and if any of the components of the world creates any hindrance in it then he is advised to abandon it completely for his own sake.] (139)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 185 in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand.

The same idea is expressed in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 174 which says—“A person should abandon someone as his arch enemy if he or she does not have faith, love and devotion for Lord Ram and Vaidehi (Sita). Instances abound in this connection—Prahalaḍ abandoned his father, Vibhishan his brother (Ravana), and Bharat his mother (Kaikeyi who was instrumental in Lord Ram’s 14 year exile to the forest). Similarly, king Bali had forsaken his Guru (Shukracharya) in order to please Lord Hari (Vishnu), and Ganika her husband; both of them were happy to do so, and this decision of theirs made them holy and auspicious. I (Tulsidas) recognize only one relationship in this world—and it is that of Lord Ram. Say, what is the use of the eye-ointment if it makes a man blind, or what is its use for a blind man? {That is, if any of the relations or material things of this world act as an obstacle in having unhindered love and devotion for Lord Ram, then no matter how useful they may be for one’s worldly comfort, practical existential needs, and other such mundane considerations, but actually they are as useless as an eye-ointment that makes a man blind, or the eye-ointment that has no use for a man already blind.} Therefore, according to me (Tulsidas) a person who helps in developing devotion and love for Lord Ram is most dear to me, he is most honorable and worthy of praise by me.”]

140. सेइ साधु गुरु समुझि सिखि राम भगति थिरताइ ।  
लरिकाई को पैरिबो तुलसी बिसरि न जाइ ॥

140. sē'i sādhu guru samujhi sikhi rāma bhagati thiratā'i.  
larikā'ī kō pairibō tulasī bisari na jā'i..

Tulsidas gives this wise advice—“Understand and learn the essence (i.e. become enlightened about the fundamental truth of the divine form and nature) of Lord Ram from true saints and wise teachers. Observe how they have developed devotion for the Lord and how they lead their lives. Listen to them attentively and learn from what they teach. It is only then that one can expect to have stable and unwavering faith for and devotion towards the Lord, because one who learns how to swim during his childhood days never forgets it in life later on.” (140)

[Note—The ‘true nature and form of Lord Ram’ is not what he appears to be in this world—i.e. a king of Raghu’s dynasty that ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya. Lord Ram is not an ordinary human being. He is the Supreme Being himself who had manifested in a human form for a variety of reasons—such as to please his devotees who wanted the Lord to live amongst them so that they can better relate to him and find an opportunity to attain spiritual bliss and happiness by narrating and remembering the Lord’s divine story during his incarnation for all times to come in the future, to free the Gods and the earth from the tyranny of the demons, to show the world and uphold the righteous and noble path of Dharma (laws of conduct), to tell the world that being a human it is natural to suffer and have pain and grief, but that should not deter one from being upright and determined to follow the path of truth and morality, and so on and so forth.

When a student understands the basic concept that governs some formula and grasps the fundamental principles of any given concept of science and mathematics, he will be able to solve any problem by applying this basic formula and concept with due logic and intelligence. But if the fundamental concept is not clear to him and he has just learnt by rote merely to pass the school examination, then even a slight variation from what he has

learnt by heart from the text book without understanding its concept would leave him tongue-tied, perplexed and flummoxed.

For instance, if one has learnt the art of swimming during his formative days as a student, he is unlikely to forget the skill for the rest of his life though he may not be able to practice daily. This skill is absorbed by his sub-conscious mind and becomes firmly engrained in it. If someone pushes him in a river, he will spontaneously begin to swim.

Similarly, when one fully understands the true divine nature and form of Lord Ram as being the incarnate form of the Supreme Being, the reason why this Supreme Being had to take the form of a human being, and the essential teachings of the scriptures about the universality of the Consciousness called the Atma and such other related principles, then surely he would not be bewildered by the worldly activities of Lord Ram. He would then find it extremely easy to avoid confusions and distractions, and be able to have steady faith, devotion and love for the Lord instead. His detractors would not be able to make him doubtful about the holiness and divinity of the Lord.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 136/11 it is said “the fear of Dwaita (duality in this world) is eliminated by serving saints and pious people; this results in inculcating strong devotion and faith in the holy feet of Sri Raghubir (Lord Ram); this in turn helps one to get rid of all faults and taints associated with this gross body; and this finally culminates in his realizing his true form, his ‘true self’, which is the Atma (and this Atma is the same as the Supreme Atma or the Supreme Spirit of creation represented by Lord Ram)”.

The importance of good company is emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, second line of Doha no. 15 Kha, which says that ‘Gyan’ (true spiritual knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) sprouts and develops in good company, and is annihilated in bad company.]

#### The glory of Lord Ram’s devotees

141. सबइ कहावत राम के सबहि राम की आस ।  
राम कहहिं जेहि आपनो तेहि भजु तुलसीदास ॥

141. saba'i kahāvata rāma kē sabahi rāma kī āsa.  
rāma kahahir̄ jēhi āpanō tēhi bhaju tulasīdāsa..

‘All people pride themselves as being devotees of Lord Sri Ram and all say that they have hope from Lord Sri Ram alone. But, oh Tulsidas, you should instead adore and follow only those people whom Lord Sri Ram himself recognises as his devotee and follower.’ (141)

[Note—The question arises now as to who is the Lord’s true devotee? The Lord has himself outlined the virtues and characters of his true devotee in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86, to Doha no. 87 Ka.

Briefly they can be summarized as follows—“All the creatures in this world have been created by me (the Supreme Being known as Ram). I love them equally as all of them are my off-springs. Out of them, I love the humans more. Out of them, I prefer Dwij (Brahmins); out of them I prefer those who are well versed in the Vedas; out of such Brahmins I prefer those who actually follow the teachings of the Vedas (instead of just muttering their hymns and incantations); out of such Brahmins I prefer those who have developed Vairagya or renunciation and dispassion; out of them I prefer those who have gained ‘Gyan’ (knowledge of spiritual matters and having wisdom); out of such people I

prefer those who have 'Vigyan' (an in-depth clinical knowledge of spiritual matters, leading to self-realisation and enlightenment); and out of them I prefer those who are my ardent followers and are totally dependent upon me, for whom I am the only destination and refuge, the only source of succour and solace, and the only source of help and happiness. Even Brahma, the creator, is equal to an ordinary being for me if he has no Bhakti (devotion and dedication), while the humblest and lowly of all the creatures is dearest to me and closest to my heart if he has Bhakti in him. A father has many sons, but he is more inclined to favour the one who is totally devoted to his father. Similarly, I (Lord Ram) have equal mercy and grace for all living beings, but it is natural for me to love those who love me and have devotion for me."

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36, Lord Ram has described the 'nine forms of Bhakti' to Sabari, the low-caste woman devotee of the Lord. Now let us briefly see what the Lord says are the nine forms of Bhakti.

"A man lacking in devotion is as worthless as a cloud without rain. Now I shall enumerate the nine types of Bhakti that pleases me; listen carefully and cherish them in your heart and mind. (1) The first is having fellowship and communion with pious saints and holy men; (2) the second is to have liking for and eagerness to hear divine stories and episodes related to my life and deeds; (3) the third form is to humbly serve the holy lotus-feet of one's Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher); (4) the fourth form is to sing and emotionally submerge one's self in my divine glories and virtues; (5) the fifth form of devotion is to constantly and persistently repeat and remain engrossed and submerged in my holy and divine name, and have unflinching and steady faith and conviction in it's glory and divinity as revealed in the Vedas; (6) the sixth form is to have self restraint and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues such as humility, politeness, dignified existence, observing etiquette and social norms, to abstain from indulgences and remaining engrossed in multifarious worldly pursuits, and to diligently and honestly follow the righteous and noble path shown by and fit for saints and sages who are wise, erudite, enlightened and sagacious; (7) the next form of Bhakti, the seventh, is to see the whole creation as my image (i.e. to believe in the philosophy of non-duality), and treats saints and sages as more honourable and revered than me; (8) the eighth form of Bhakti is to be perpetually satisfied and contented with whatever one has got and never yearn for more, as well as to never find faults with others; and (9) finally the ninth form is to be simple hearted without any deception and fraud, without any deceit and imposturing, to be straightforward in one's dealings with all others, to have unwavering and unflinching faith, conviction and reliance upon me (and on no body else), and not to feel either exulted or depressed (under favourable or unfavourable circumstances, because he has reliance upon me and treats the good and bad happenings in the world with equanimity as affect the body which lives in the world and is affected by circumstances, and not the 'true self' which is the pure conscious Atma)."]

142. जेहि सरि रति राम सों सोइ आदरहिं सुजान ।  
रुद्रदेह तजि नेहबस बानर भे हनुमान ॥

142. jēhi sarīra rati rāma sōm sō'i ādarahim sujāna.  
rudradēha taji nēhabasa bānara bhē hanumāna..

Those who are clever respect the body through which their 'self' (i.e. their soul) can have devotion for (i.e. be able to serve) Lord Sri Ram. This is the reason why Hanuman had

abandoned his Rudra-form (one of the 11 divine forms of Lord Shiva) in favour of the body of a monkey (because he could serve Lord Ram this way). (142)

[Note—Hanuman, the most devoted monkey in the story of the Ramayana, was actually Lord Rudra in that form. Rudra is the Lord who brings about conclusion of creation, and is one of the Trinity Gods. Rudra preferred to assume the form of a monkey, a form that is generally regarded as lowly, so that he can get a chance to serve the Lord closely. Though the term ‘monkey’ is usually used derisively and sarcastically to describe someone who has low intellect and wisdom, someone who fools around stupidly, but Rudra did not mind it, and decided to serve the Supreme Being personally in this form.

Other instances are that of sage Kaagbhusund who had the body of a crow. In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 95, this sage has said himself that—“I love this body of a crow because it is in this form that I was able to have access to Bhakti for Lord Ram. It is natural for a person to love something which serves his self interest, and therefore I love this body of a crow.”

Kaagbhusund says further that “a body by which one can have devotion and love for Lord Ram should be considered as most holy and pure; a body through which the creature cannot develop devotion and love for the Lord is regarded as worthless and despicable even by the Vedas though it might be as powerful and divine as that of Vidhi, the creator”.]

143. जानि राम सेवा सरस समुझि करब अनुमान ।  
पुरुषा ते सेवक भए हर ते भे हनुमान ॥

143. jāni rāma sēvā sarasa samujhi karaba anumāna.  
puruṣā tē sēvaka bha'ē hara tē bhē hanumāna..

Realising that there was supreme pleasure in the service of Lord Sri Ram, even the ancestor of this creation (i.e. Brahma, the first of the Trinity Gods as well as the creator and the old patriarch of this visible world) and Har (i.e. Lord Shiva, the third of the Trinity Gods and the concluder of creation) chose to become Jamvant (the old bear) and Hanuman (the monkey devotee) respectively.

Tulsidas says that one must understand the meaning of this event and the secret behind it (that even such exalted Gods as Brahma and Shiva decided to assume such lowly forms as that of a bear and a monkey just so that they can get a chance to closely serve the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram). This shows the profound spiritual importance and the stupendous nature of the bliss and satisfaction that one derives by loving and serving the Lord. (143)

[Note—This Doha lays stress to the importance of serving the Lord in any way whatsoever one can, even if that means stepping down from one’s exalted position, and appearing to be doing something lowly and incompatible to one’s standing in the world. Brahma and Shiva are the two superior Gods in this creation, superior to all other Gods in the pantheon. Even they did not want to lose the chance of serving the Supreme Being, and therefore did not hesitate to become a bear and a monkey if that helped them to serve the Lord. The reason was that the Lord had to assume a human form to kill the evil demons led by their king Ravana, and this demon had done severe Tapa (penance) to achieve a boon that provided him a funny indemnity from death from all in this world, including the powerful Gods, except that if he could be killed it would be only by a human, and if anyone could oppose him or stand against him then it could be a monkey

and a bear. At the time of seeking immunity from death, the creator had told him that it is impossible to become immortal with a physical body because everything that is born must die. This is the sacrosanct law of Nature which cannot be violated, for even Brahma, who had created the world, would die when his time comes. So Ravana thought to be clever and attempted to circumvent this law by excluding humans and animals such as monkeys and bears from being able to harm and kill him, because he thought that when even the Gods would be under his command and captured by him, what can the lowly and impotent man or his more predecessor the monkey and bear do to him. This is the single loophole which the Supreme Being had to exploit in order to kill him and free the earth from his nuisance.

This is why all the Gods, including Brahma and Shiva, assumed the form of different monkeys and bears in order to help the Lord, Lord Vishnu, who had himself assumed the form of a human as Lord Ram, to kill the fierce demons.

Besides this aim, the two senior Gods saw in this an opportunity to serve the Supreme Being from close quarters in a physical form, something they could obviously not do in their primary cosmic form which has no physical body.

By doing this they had also set an example for all other living beings, the creatures of this world who are known as the Jiva, and subtly conveyed the message to them that the primary aim of all living beings should be to serve the Lord with the greatest of devotion and sincerity, and no ego or pretensions of seniority should come in the way—for Brahma and Shiva are the two most senior Gods in this creation, and even they had no second thoughts to become a bear and a monkey to serve the Lord.]

144. तुलसी रघुबर सेवकहि खल डाटत मन माखि ।  
बाजराज के बालकहि लवा दिखावत आँखि ॥

144. tulasī raghubara sēvakahi khala ḍāṭata mana mākhi.  
bājarāja kē bālakahi lavā dikhāvata āṁkhi..

Tulsidas says that miscreants angrily scold the devotees of Lord Sri Ram in the same manner as the bird quail/pheasant looks menacingly at an young chick of an eagle (out of jealousy, but is unable to harm it—because if it even attempts to do so, the eagle would immediately kill the quail/pheasant). (144)

[Note—The quail/pheasant attempting to harm the chick of the eagle but scared stiff to actually do so has been cited in Ram Charit Manas at two places—(i) in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268; and (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 230.

The Lord protects his devotees just like a mother cares for her infant child. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 43 in which Lord Ram tells sage Narad—“Listen sage, I declare emphatically that I always protect my devotees who completely rely upon me, who have no other succour and help except me, who love me, have devotion for me and serve me diligently, like a mother who takes care of her child.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 218 it is affirmed that “anyone who attempts to offend Lord Ram’s devotees is sure to get scorched (punished) by the fierce arrow representing the Lord’s anger”.

Again, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 218 it is declared by the Guru of the Gods, Lord Brihaspati, himself that “the devotee of Lord Ram is dear to the Lord like his own life or breath (‘Pran’); the Lord is

pleased by serving his devotees, and if anyone treats them as his enemy then the Lord also treats such a person as his enemy (i.e. a person who harms the Lord's devotees, incurs the Lord's wrath)".

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23, Hanuman warns Ravana that "thousands of Lord Shivas, Vishnus and Brahmas (i.e. anyone in creation, no matter how powerful and authoritative he may be) cannot protect him who is inimical to Lord Ram".

Refer also Vinai Patrika, verse no. 137 in this context. The following Doha no. 145 continues on the same theme of protection that the Lord affords to his devotees.]

145. रावन रिपुके दास तें कायर करहिं कुचालि ।  
खर दूषन मारीच ज्यों नीच जाहिंगे कालि ॥

145. rāvana ripukē dāsa tēm kāyara karahim kucāli.  
khara dūṣana mārica jyōm nīca jāhiṅgē kāli..

Only crooks and cowards think of creating mischief for the devotee of Lord Ram who had conquered even Ravana (the invincible demon king of Lanka, who was the most wicked and the most crooked creature in existence at the time)<sup>1</sup>. Those crooks will soon depart from this world (i.e. they will be severely punished) as were Khar and Dushan (the two demons who were killed by Lord Ram)<sup>2</sup>.

[This is because by tormenting Sri Ram's devotee, the wicked people antagonise Lord Sri Ram himself, which in turn would result in their elimination. The Lord does not tolerate that his devotees be subjected to any kind of pain and suffering due to mischief created by pervert creatures.] (145)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Those who ever think of creating nuisance for and playing fools with the devotee of Lord Ram are intellectually bankrupt and have no common sense because they are not aware of the horrible consequences of their wicked deeds and actions. They forget that the devotee is protected by Lord Ram, the Supreme Lord of creation. With such a powerful patron and protector, no harm can ever come to the devotee. On the other hand, the tormentor is sure to be punished for his misdeeds. The stupid and ill-witted crooks who cause problems for the devotee of Lord Ram forget that Ravana, who was so mighty and powerful that his mere name was enough to chill the spine of even the gods, was finally punished by Lord Ram when he was killed in the war of Lanka. Ravana had unleashed a reign of terror and horror across the length and breadth of the world, mercilessly killing even the innocents and devout. He was proud that he was invincible, and his dare-devilry made him steal even the Lord's wife Sita. When his wickedness and terror exceeded the upper limit of tolerance, the Lord himself went and slayed him.

Tulsidas warns sinful and evil people to take a lesson from Ravana and learn to mind their behaviour.

This Doha alludes to the event in the story of the Ramayan when Ravana had stolen Sita stealthily. He had come and had hid himself somewhere near the hermitage of Lord Ram in the forest, waiting for an opportunity when Sita would be alone. Ravana had planned things before hand. He forced another demon Marich to become a deer with a shiny golden hide so that Sita would be attracted to it and ask her husband Ram to go and fetch the deer for her. When the Lord would go pursuing the deer, Ravana would assume the form of a hermit and kidnap Sita. Ravana was a wicked demon, the king of a cruel race, and he was surely a coward because he had no courage and guts to take Sita away

when Lord Ram or his brother Laxman were present. It must be remembered that Ravana was no ordinary demon; he was so mighty and powerful that his mere name was sufficient to send a chill down the spine of gods in the heaven. These gods ran away as soon as they heard that Ravana was approaching. But the irony is that this seemingly invincible and most brave demon warrior didn't have sufficient courage to come face to face with Lord Ram!

Ravana had taken Sita away not like a brave warrior but like a thief. Sita was subjected to a lot of sufferings while she was in his captivity. Ultimately, Lord Ram punished Ravana by killing him along with his entire cruel army in the famous war of Lanka. Tulsidas alludes to this episode when he calls the tormentors of devotees of Lord Ram as 'wicked and coward' in this Doha. The story of how Ravana employed crooked means to take Sita away like a coward is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 28.

The fact that Ravana had tried various means to torture Sita is hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29 Ka.

Not only Ravana, even the other demons who had been tormenting the sages and seers used to attack stealthily, destroying religious sacrifices of sages and ransacking their hermitages when they were not present. These demons rarely had the guts to directly face the sages for fear of inviting their wrath in the form a curse; the sages could curse them to burn to death instantly.

<sup>2</sup>The episode of the slaying of the mighty demon warriors named Khar and Dushan is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

These two demons were equal in strength and valour to the demon king Ravana himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 23.]

146. पुन्य पाप जस अजस के भावी भाजन भूरि ।  
संकट तुलसीदास को राम करहिंगे दूरि ॥

146. pun'ya pāpa jasa ajasa kē bhāvī bhājana bhūri.  
saṅkaṭa tulasīdāsa kō rāma karahīngē dūri..

Tulsidas says that it is certain that his troubles and distresses would surely be eliminated by Lord Sri Ram. Of course, those who have helped him or had opposed him shall enjoy or suffer from relevant consequences in the shape of good name (glory) or bad name (ignominy) respectively.

[That is, the devotee of Lord Ram is sure to find happiness and peace as well as redemption from all miseries. In this process it does not matter to him whether anyone is helpful or act as an obstacle, for none of them can change the course of the devotee's destiny which is secured in the hands of Lord Ram. But those who help the devotee in his life get the bonus of good name and fame as good people who had helped the Lord's devotee, an act that is regarded as righteous, auspicious and holy. On the contrary, those who are jealous of the devotee and try to create hurdles for him or torment him are sure to be punished by the Lord for their mischief. Such latter persons get infamy as being unrighteous villains and mischievous crooks.] (146)

147. खेलत बालक ब्याल सँग मेलत पावक हाथ ।  
तुलसी सिसु पितु मातु ज्योँ राखत सिय रघुनाथ ॥

147. khēlata bālaka byāla samṅga mēlata pāvaka hātha.  
tulasī sisu pitu mātu jyōm̃ rākhata siya raghunātha..

Even as a child is stopped by its parents while trying to play with a snake or putting a hand in fire, so does the parent-like Lord Sri Ram prevent the child-like innocent Tulsidas when he goes towards (i.e. is attracted by) the poisonous snake-like delusions or the fire-like delusions created by attractions and temptations of the material world of sense objects. (147)

[Note—Refer: Doha no. 144 above also.

It is natural for a living being to be attracted towards the sense objects of this material world. After all, this is the way the creator has created this world—its very basis lies in delusions known as ‘Maya’. But for the devotee of Lord Ram there is nothing to fear about as the Lord would take care of him like a parent takes care of his child. The important to note here is that the devotee has to ‘become like a child’. A child’s heart is pure and free from all worldly corruptions. It is innocent. The child totally depends on its parent for protection. It does not know what is good for him or harmful for him. So, when the devotee leaves all his spiritual well-being upon the Lord and submits himself totally before the Lord—a mark of complete devotion and faith in the Lord, the Lord is duty-bound to take care of him.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 43, an exactly the same idea is expressed by Lord Ram himself while he preaches sage Narad. See note of Doha no. 144 above.]

148. तुलसी दिन भल साहु कहँ भली चोर कहँ राति ।  
निसि बासर ता कहँ भलो मानै राम इताति ॥

148. tulasī dina bhala sāhu kaham̃ bhalī cōra kaham̃ rāti.  
nisi bāsara tā kaham̃ bhalō mānai rāma itāti..

Tulsidas says a thief prefers the night while an honest man prefers day light, but for those who obey Sri Ram (i.e. follow his path of righteousness, auspiciousness, holiness, morality, ethics, probity and propriety etc.) both the day and the night are equally auspicious. (148)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17 it is said “those who take the refuge and shelter in the holy feet of Lord Hari have no hurdles or obstacles for them”.]

#### The glory of Lord Ram

149. तुलसी जाने सुनि समुझि कृपासिंधु रघुराज ।  
महँगे मनि कंचन किए सौँधे जग जल नाज ॥

149. tulasī jānē suni samujhi krpāsindhu raghurāja.  
mahamṅē mani kañcana ki'ē saundhē jaga jala nāja..

Tulsidas says that he has realised and understood, after hearing (from saints) and judging carefully (by research, discussion, introspection and experience), that Lord Sri Ram (the Supreme Being and the creator of this world) is an ocean of mercy and compassion for he has made (less important things such as) gems and gold costly in this world, while making water and cereals, which are essential to sustain life on earth, cheap (and easily available). (149)

[Note—Upon close observation we see that all the basic requirements of life, such as water, earth, air, fire and space (sky), as well as rain, sunshine, seeds, fruits, grains etc. are made freely and abundantly available to the creatures of this world by the creature. He had ensured that there is no dearth of essential commodities in life. One cannot survive without any of these things, but gold, silver and gems are luxuries without which no harm is done. Rather, these things create greed and jealousy in the world. It is another matter that the Lord's off-springs have stooped so low that they have started exploiting even the freely available resources of Mother Nature to serve their vested interests and fill their personal coffers, depriving their brethrens of their rightful share in the Supreme Father's assets which are meant to be shared by all his children. This is the reason why there is so much ill-will and hatred and strife and violence in this world—because the Lord's children have tried to usurp the kingdom of the Father and its rich treasury, meant to be enjoyed by all the creatures, for their own self. And this is the reason why the Lord would one day wipe out the entire creation in utter frustration because he would be fed up with all the squabbling and nonsense that his descendants have begun to perpetrate right under his nose.

Refer also to Doha no. 573, the last Doha, of this book.]

The glory of Lord Ram's Bhajan (remembrance & devotion)

150. सेवा सील सनेह बस करि परिहरि प्रिय लोग ।  
तुलसी ते सब राम सों सुखद संजोग बियोग ॥

150. sēvā sīla sanēha basa kari parihari priya lōga.  
tulasī tē saba rāma sōm sukhada samjōga biyōga..

Tulsidas advises that one should abandon attachments with all those who seem to be dear and one's own in this world, such as kith and kin and other relationships of this world, and instead, one should try to serve and please Lord Ram. This is because it is the Lord who decides the sort of circumstance in which a man finds himself—that is, it is the Lord who makes it possible for one to come in contact with favourable persons, or be faced by those who are inimical to him. These contacts, whether favourable or inimical, during the course of a man's life are determined by the Lord, but the man thinks that the individual concerned is personally responsible for being friendly or opposed.

Therefore, it is wiser for a man to please the Lord himself instead of pleasing those who are friendly inclined towards him, or being annoyed with those who are opposed to him—because it is neither their credit that they are friendly, nor their fault that they are opposed. (150)

[Note—One must become detached from this world and even its seemingly friendly people because all worldly relationships are based on self-interest. Two persons keep contact with one another only as long as this helps both of them satisfy their personal agenda and fulfill their personal needs and desires. Otherwise they would either break this relationship or develop indifference leading to cooling off of the relationship that once seemed exceptionally warm and cosy. Worldly bonds are tentative and selfish. Even if they last a lifetime, they will snap with death.

But this does not apply to the Lord. He is merciful, kind, benevolent, munificent and graceful to the extreme. He knows only to give and never to take. He cares for his devotees not only in this life but also ensures for his well-being in the life after death by providing his soul with liberation and deliverance. Besides this, all the creatures of this world are mortal and perishable, and are sure to die one day, but the Lord is eternal, omnipresent and imperishable. Therefore no matter how dear one person is to another, a day will come when either of them would cause immense grief of separation to the other when he dies. If one diverts the same amount of affection to the Lord who is an eternal Being, this grief of separation will not occur.

Secondly, no matter how dear a person is to another, a situation may arise when this relationship would sour if any of their interests is made to suffer because of the other. But Lord Ram is exemplarily selfless and loving; he will only take care and love his devotee even if the latter does not properly reciprocate.

If a person only has love for the Lord and calls out to him sincerely, the Lord is all out to help him in all possible ways that is beyond the caller's expectations and imaginations.

Then again, all human beings have their limitations of strength, power and abilities, so the help they can extend to their kith and kin is also limited. But Lord Ram is unlike them because he had limitless and infinite powers, strength and abilities as he is the Supreme Being personified. So why not bargain for the best?

Refer Vinai Patrika, verse no. 135/2-3 which says—“Oh you fool, have you not recognized that it is due to the grace of the Lord that the father, the Guru, the master, the body, the son, the servants, the friend etc. seem to be favourably inclined to you; have you not understood that they are all driven by self-interest as opposed to the merciful and gracious Lord who cares for all selflessly? That Lord who looks for your welfare in a selfless manner is not far and outside to find; he is there inside your own self, in your own bosom, in your own heart.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chauapi line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 48, Lord Ram tells Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, when he came to seek refuge with the Lord—“Those who detach themselves from all worldly relationships and abandon all affection for them and attachment with them, such as with one's mother, father, friend, son, wife, body, material wealth, homestead, kith and kin, compatriots and all other dear and near ones, and instead bind their Mana (mind and heart) to my holy feet (i.e. surrender before me unconditionally and completely, and treat me as their only relation in this world), those who have developed the grand virtue of equanimity and forbearance, who treat everything and everyone alike, who have no desires or expectations whatsoever, those who remain unruffled and unmoved by either happiness or sorrows, those who have no fear of any kind in their heart (obviously because they have me, the Supreme Lord, as their protector and saviour)—verily I say that such persons (devotees) are very close to my heart and dear to me much like material wealth is very dear and close to the heart of a greedy and selfish man.”

Refer also to Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 30 which essentially says—“The community of son, wife, kith and kin, friend and family is a big unfavourable place to live in for you, oh man. Understand that these bodies are all perishable, they are all human

beings as mortal as you yourself are. So, why do you stupidly ruin yourself by pursuing them? Why have you not detached yourself from all of them, develop the virtues of neutrality and equanimity towards everything (i.e. treating all living beings equally, and showing no special favour to the above listed relationships), and live amongst the community of saints (where you can learn the truth of your self, and be enlightened about the falsehood of the world)? Why—instead of wandering here and there like a greedy and hungry dog—don't you develop devotion for Lord Ram and surrender to him (to attain eternal peace and bliss)?"

151. चारि चहत मानस अगम चनक चारि को लाहु ।  
चारि परिहरें चारि को दानि चारि चख चाह ॥

151. cāri cahata mānasa agama canaka cāri kō lāhu.  
cāri pariharēm cāri kō dāni cāri cakha cāhu..

A man wants the four legendary rewards or fruits known as Kaam (fulfilment of desires), Artha (wealth), Dharma (righteousness and its accompanying fame and honour) and Moksha (salvation of soul)—but all these are difficult to attain and not accessible in entirety. In their pursuit a man spends his whole life, but he gets four grains of gram instead. [That is, in spite of making all efforts, one may be successful in getting one or the other rewards, and even all the four, but only a fraction of what he had wanted in the beginning and had expected to obtain by making so great efforts. The 'four grains of gram' is a figure of speech to mean only a miniscule fraction of what is desired or aspired for. Even if all the initial wishes are fulfilled, the desire for more would continue arising in one's mind and heart, and there is no end of them.]

Therefore, Tulidas says that it is wise to discard yearnings for such inconsequential gains, and instead of wasting time and energy by looking intently for small pieces of scattered grains (worldly rewards) one would do well rather by focusing one's sight using all his four eyes—two external eyes of the body and two internal eyes represented by the Mana (mind) and Buddhi (intellect)—upon the supreme Giver, Lord Ram, who can bestow all the fruits and rewards one seeks even without his asking for them. (151)

[Note—Instead of using the physical external eyes of the body looking for opportunities for getting worldly comforts, pleasures and gains which are nonetheless perishable and transient, and similarly using the internal eyes represented by the various faculties of the mind and the intellect at first searching for worldly things and thinking of the pleasure and comfort that one can get from them, then developing a desire for them, then planning to acquire them, then worrying to protect them, and if neither is possible then fretting and fuming for them—instead of entering this wild-goose chase, a wise man would be saving all this energy and effort, and divert them in acquiring something of eternal value. So he will seek eternal spiritual peace and comfort by turning away from the world and seeking the Lord's refuge and grace; he will use all his faculties in seeking self-realisation and God-realisation.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 231(stanza 2), Tulsidas says "oh lord, you can easily grant the boon of the four fruits of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha, but I have no desire for them; instead, I desire to have devotion for you".

Refer also to Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 73.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 301, Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has said "I have one aim—to have natural love

and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him without any selfish interest or goal, without expecting anything in return, such as the legendary fruits or rewards (in the form of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) that would automatically accrue due to such service”.]

Easy way to obtain devotion for Lord Ram, and invoke his grace

152. सूधे मन सूधे बचन सूधी सब करतूति ।  
तुलसी सूधी सकल बिधि रघुबर प्रेम प्रसूति ॥

152. sūdhē mana sūdhē bacana sūdhī saba karatūti.  
tulasī sūdhī sakala bidhi raghubara prēma prasūti..

Those who are simple, straightforward, uncorrupt and unpretentious in their heart, in their mind, in their speech and in their action (i.e. those who do not have any deceit and conceit of any kind whatsoever), for them all means by which love and devotion for Lord Raghubar (Ram) can be ignited become extremely simple and easily available.

[That is, the best way to develop devotion and love for the Lord is to have the eclectic virtues mentioned in this Doha—to be of a simple heart, to be humble in demeanours, to be free from all corruptions that may taint the mind, to speak sweet and pleasant words of truth, and to do things that are deemed to be righteous, auspicious, noble and proper. One should discard all negativites so characteristic of this material world of delusions, and instead inculcate good virtues and noble qualities.] (152)

[Note—The characteristics of saints, holy and pious people, and the spiritual importance of having their company have been enumerated in Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas in the following assorted places—

(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 6-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 37.

In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46, Lord Ram himself says “I love those who have simple and unpretentious nature, and do not harbour any kind of deceit and conceit in it”.

In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 37, the Lord says, inter alia, while describing the virtues of saints—“those who have a soft temperament which is merciful towards the meek and the humble (line no. 3); those who have the virtues of calmness, simplicity and friendliness (line no. 6); and those who never say a harsh word to others (are dear to me)”.

The comparison between saintly people and wicked people is outlined in Ram Charit Manas at the following places—

(i) In the words of Tulsidas = Baal Kand, Doha no. 5 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-9, till Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6; Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-7 that precede Doha no. 7; Baal Kand, Doha no. 8.

(ii) In the words of Lord Ram = Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37; and Doha no. 39 with all its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8, to Doha no. 40 with all its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Refer also to Doha nos. 87-88 of this book Dohawali.]

## Hurdles in attaining Lord Ram and his grace

153. बेष बिसद बोलनि मधुर मन कटु करम मलीन ।  
तुलसी राम न पाइए भएँ बिषय जल मीन ॥

153. bēṣa bisada bōlani madhura mana kaṭu karama malīna.  
tulasī rāma na pā'ī'ai bha'ēm' biṣaya jala mīna..

Tulsidas says that one may have external countenance and attire of a saint, and he may be soft spoken and pleasant in his demeanours, but if his heart and mind (collectively called the 'Mana') are emotionless, merciless and stern as a rock, and his deeds and actions are un-righteous and un-worthy, then such a person is like a fish that remains perpetually submerged in the water represented by material sense objects of this world and its attendant temptations and delusions. Such people can never ever hope to attain Lord Sri Ram.

[In other words, external appearances can deceive the world which might treat a person as a saint by his pretensions to be one, but the Lord cannot be cheated by him. Lord Ram is available or accessible only to simple-hearted and pious people. People pretend to be good and righteous so that they are shown respect in the society and people vest their trust in them, and this helps them to accomplish their cheap worldly objectives. But in the process they lose their spiritual bearing by such pretensions and conceit because they are counter-productive. Instead of helping the pretender in any worthwhile sense, they keep him rolling in the muck of worldly delusions, and entrapped in the snare of false charms of this material world, thereby pulling him away from the spiritual goal of attaining true peace and happiness as well as liberation and deliverance from the miseries of this world that arise from the continuous cycle of birth and death.] (153)

[Note—In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 102, the same idea is conveyed. It says (in line no. 5) that worldly attractions and the temptations of material sense objects are like the water from which the fish does not want to be separated even for a moment. But the creature forgets that it is the same world and its delusions that are the cause of the endless cycle of birth and death in which he is trapped since time immemorial, and therefore it cannot be the cause of his peace and happiness at all

In this context, Doha nos. 82, 83, 408 and 411 are relevant.]

154. बचन बेष तें जो बनइ सो बिगरइ परिनाम ।  
तुलसी मन तें जो बनइ बनी बनाई राम ॥

154. bacana bēṣa tēm jō bana'i sō bigara'i parināma.  
tulasī mana tēm jō bana'i banī banā'ī rāma..

Tulsidas says that success and acclaim that are obtained by deceit and fraud are bound to be undone once the deceitful means employed to achieve them come out in the open; but that success and acclaim which are obtained by truthful, honest and sincere means are always permanent and self-sustaining by the grace of Lord Sri Ram. (154)

[Note—In this context, refer Doha nos. 394-396 below.

Examples of how falsehood and deceit are bound to come into the open one day, sooner or later, leading to ruin, are cited in the Ram Charit Manas at different places. These instances are the following—

(i) Ravana assumed the form of a mendicant so that he can kidnap Sita, but once exposed this led to his killing and the elimination of the entire demon race.

(ii) Kaalnemi had taken the form of a hermit at the behest of Ravana to try and stop Hanuman when he was on his way to the Himalayas to bring the herb to revive Laxman who was mortally wounded in the battle-field of Lanka. His deceit was exposed, and he was killed by Hanuman.

(iii) Similarly, Rahu was a demon who pretended to be one of the Gods and attempted to drink Amrit, the ambrosia of eternal life, at the time of its distribution at the time of churning of the ocean by the demons and the Gods. But his deceit was exposed, resulting in his head being severed by Vishnu's Chakra (discus).

The above incidents are mentioned in the Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7.

(iv) Another incident is that of Marich who had assumed the form of a golden deer so that Ravana could abduct Sita. Again, his deceit was exposed and he was killed by Lord Ram. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24, to Doha no. 27.]

Lord Ram's grace is important for all-round welfare

155. नीच मीचु लै जाइ जो राम रजायसु पाइ ।  
तौ तुलसी तेरो भलो न तु अनभलो अघाइ ॥

155. nīca mīcu lai jā'i jō rāma rajāyasu pā'i.  
tau tulasī tērō bhalō na tu anabhalō aghā'i..

Tulsidas says, 'Oh wretched being! If death comes to you by permission of Lord Ram then that portends good for you, whereas a life that is lived without the permission of the Lord is most disgraceful and unwanted.' (155)

[Note—A world life that is decadent and disgraced, a life consumed by passion, vices, perversity, unrighteousness, worldly delusions and temptations, a life that acts as a drag on the spirit and degrades its holiness and divine nature, a life full of degrading and despicable tendencies and occupations, is worth not living. Such a life is deemed not to be graced by the holy Lord; the Lord does not permit one to lead such a life. Then what is the use of living it? On the other hand, death that leads to liberation and deliverance from such a horrible state of affairs is welcomed by those who are wise and enlightened, because such a death helps them to shed this body which is the cause of all attachments with the material world of sense objects. If the body is discarded, as it naturally happens upon death, then it is a boon in disguise as the soul is set free from its entrapping snare and allowed to regain its original form that is free from all worldly fetters and delusions.

A wise and self-realised man understands and knows for sure that death occurs to the physical gross body and not to the Atma which is the cosmic consciousness known as the eternal Soul and the Holy Spirit. The Atma is a subtle entity, an eternal and ethereal entity which never dies or perishes, unlike the gross body. So he welcomes the death of the body—it is like discarding dirty clothes after a bath to don new clothes.]

## Lord Ram's merciful and compassionate nature

156. जाति हीन अघ जन्म महि मुक्त कीन्हि असि नारि ।  
महामंद मन सुख चहसि ऐसे प्रभुहि बिसारि ॥

156. jāti hīna agha janma mahi mukta kīnhi asi nāri.  
mahāmanda mana sukha cahasi aisē prabhuhi bisāri..

Tulsidas says—‘Sabri, who was born in a low caste and was the mother of sins (i.e. was full of sins) – even she was also liberated and provided deliverance by Lord Sri Ram. Oh you foolish mind! Do you ever hope to get happiness and peace by forgetting such a benevolent Lord as Sri Ram?’ (156)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 36 of Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand.

The same idea is expressed in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 166, stanza no. 6 which says—  
“Sabari was of a low caste, was stupid and dull, was deemed to be lowly, and was castracised by both the Vedas as well as the society. But the merciful Lord Ram realised that she has true love and devotion for him, and therefore the Lord visited her personally, giving her the rare chance to see the divine Lord herself, graced her and liberated her from her gross body that made her out-caste, thereby providing her soul with emancipation and salvation.”

A brief note on Sabari is given as note to Doha no. 32 of this book.

Sabari was born in a low caste—this is also mentioned in Kavitawali, Uttar kand, verse no. 18; and Vinai Patrika, verse no. 215, stanza no. 4.]

157. बंधु बधू रत कहि कियो बचन निरुत्तर बालि ।  
तुलसी प्रभु सुग्रीव की चितइ न कछू कुचालि ॥

157. bandhu badhū rata kahi kiyō bacana niruttara bāli.  
tulasī prabhu sugrīva kī cita'i na kachū kucāli..

Lord Sri Ram made Baali speechless when the former accused the latter of being enamoured by his younger brother's (Sugriv's) wife and keeping her as his mistress, but Tulsidas says that the benevolent Lord did not pay any heed to a similar misdeed of Sugriv who was his faithful and loyal servant (i.e. devotee and follower). (157)

[Note—Refer note of Doha no. 47 above in this book.

A lot of adverse comments are made on Lord Ram ‘overlooking the misdeed of Sugriv, as described above, for which the Lord had punished Sugriv’s elder brother Baali’. Now, let us analyse what the difference was between ‘the misdeed of keeping one’s brother’s wife as a mistress’ that was committed by Baali for which he was punished by death by Lord Ram, and the one committed by Sugriv which was pardoned by the same Lord. Lord Ram is supposed to be neutral and an upholder of righteousness, so why did he change his verdict of capital punishment when it was the case of Sugriv?

Baali had had beaten his younger brother Sugriv mercilessly and had thrown him out of the kingdom of Kishkindha, thereby not only depriving Sugriv of his rightful claim to his share of the kingdom but also usurping his wife and forcing her to become his mistress. The terrified younger brother Sugriv had no option but to flee.

In the case of Sugriv, the circumstances were very different and opposite. In this case, Baali was dead, and Sugriv was the king of Kishkindha. Baali's wife Tara was now a widow, a situation quite different from the case of Sugriv's wife when she was forced to become Baali's mistress—because at that time Sugriv, the husband, was alive.

So the difference is obvious—Baali had kept his younger brother Sugriv's legal wife even while the brother was alive, whereas Sugriv was just following a tradition amongst his race wherein a widow could marry another person. Usually she married the brother of her dead husband so that the property she inherited remained within the family.

Therefore, the sin of Baali was much graver when compared to that of Sugriv, and this is the reason why Lord Ram forgave Sugriv but punished Baali.]

158. बालि बली बलसालि दलि सखा कीन्ह कपिराज ।  
तुलसी राम कृपालु को बिरद गरीब निवाज ॥

158. bāli balī balasāli dali sakhā kīnha kapirāja.  
tulasī rāma krpālu kō birada garība nivāja..

Baali, who possessed immense bodily strength and had the backing of power and support of a kingdom (of Kishkindha) and its army, was slain by Sri Ram who accepted Sugriv as his friend and made him the king of monkeys. Tulsidas says that it is in the nature of Lord Sri Ram that he protects the distressed, the poor, the helpless and the hapless ones. (158)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 5 to Doha no. 11.]

159. कहा बिभीषन लै मिल्यो कहा बिगार्यो बालि ।  
तुलसी प्रभु सरनागतहि सब दिन आए पालि ॥

159. kahā bibhīṣana lai milyō kahā bigāryō bāli.  
tulasī prabhu saranāgatahi saba dina ā'ē pāli..

What harm had Baali done to Lord Ram (that the former was killed by the Lord), and what had Vibhishan brought along with him (when he had come from Lanka seeking refuge with the Lord for which Sri Ram had given him the kingdom of Lanka and eternal fearlessness)?

Tulsidas says it is because Lord Sri Ram had always protected those who come to take refuge with him and surrendered themselves before the Lord's holy feet. (159)

[Note—Baali was killed because he had kicked his younger brother Sugriv out of the kingdom of Kishkindha and usurped his wife, and Vibhishan had come to seek refuge with the Lord because he was kicked out by his brother Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. In both the cases the Lord had taken sides with the one who had suffered at the hands of their respective brothers and kicked out of their respective kingdoms.

Again, in both the cases the Lord had made them the kings of their respective kingdoms after killing their brothers—in the case of Sugriv it was Baali, and in the case of Vibhishan it was Ravana.

Lord Ram is very merciful and kind; he wishes that all those who come seeking his refuge must be fully protected, and whatever grief they are suffering from must be removed at the earliest. Both Sugriv and Vibhishan had been insulted and humiliated by their own brothers in full public view, and the Lord deemed it fit that once they have taken his shelter it is now the Lord's moral responsibility to restore their honour and dignity on the one hand, and to eliminate their tormentors on the other hand so that they have nothing to fear in the future.

Tulsidas has cited these two examples to highlight the inherent nature of Lord Ram that he always removes the distress of those who seek shelter with him irrespective of the fact that by doing so the Lord himself might be accused of taking a partisan approach.

In this context, refer to: Doha nos. 84, 106-107, 113, 144-147, and 441.]

160. तुलसी कोसलपाल सो को सरनागत पाल ।  
भज्यो बिभीषन बंधु भय भज्यो दरिद काल ॥

160. tulasī kōsalapāla sō kō saranāgata pāla.  
bhajyō bibhīṣana bandhu bhaya bhanjyō dārida kāla..

Tulsidas wonders who else is a greater protector of refuge-seekers than Lord Sri Ram in this world. [He cites the example of Vibhishan and says—] Vibhishan had worshipped the Lord<sup>1</sup> and sought his refuge out of Ravana's fear<sup>2</sup>, but Lord Ram rewarded him by not only removing his poverty (because he was deprived of his share of the riches of the kingdom of Lanka, which was made of gold), but also granted him immunity from Kaal (harm and death at the hands of his vengeful brother Ravana, the cruel king of demons) by making him the king of Lanka for eternity<sup>3</sup>. (160)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Vibhishan used to worship Lord Ram whom he knew to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu even while he lived a terrified life inside Lanka. He had written the Lord's holy name on the entrance of his residence, and used to repeat the Lord's holy name so much so that it was the first word he uttered upon getting up in the morning everyday. This is how Hanuman had recognized him as a devotee of the Lord during his search for Sita when he was going from house to house reconnoitering for her. Hanuman saw a house where the Lord's name was marked in the front, and he also heard its resident, Vibhishan, chanting the Lord's holy name 'Ram'. This made Hanuman sure that the resident is definitely pious and a devotee of the Lord from whom he had nothing to fear, and that this person would be the correct one who can tell him about Sita.

<sup>2</sup>When they met, Vibhishan told Hanuman that his condition in Lanka was akin to the tongue that lives surrounded by sharp teeth—i.e. just as the tongue lives in constant fear of being bitten and bloodied by the teeth if it ever attempts to interfere with them, Vibhishan too lives in constant fear of death and harm if anything goes wrong and the demons surrounding him are provoked. Vibhishan found a solace and friend in Hanuman, and he saw a ray of hope for redemption and peace, because he knew that without the Lord's wish such good opportunity just cannot arrive. He now wondered when that fortunate day will come when the merciful Lord Ram would show his grace and mercy upon him so as to liberate him from his miseries and torments. Hanuman assured him that he must trust the Lord and sooner rather than later his liberation and deliverance would be a reality.

These facts are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5, till Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8.

<sup>3</sup>When finally Vibhishan took refuge with the Lord, the latter not only accepted him as one of his devotees, but also removed all his fears and anointed him as the eternal king of Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45, till Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8. Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Gha.

Even at the time of his departure from this world, when all the citizens of Ayodhya as well as the monkey and bear friends of Kiskhindha accompanied the Lord to heaven, Lord Ram had instructed Vibhishan to remain in this world and rule over the kingdom of Lanka till eternity, till the end of the Kalpa, the four-yug cycle of creation and destruction. This is clearly mentioned in—(i) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto no. 9, verse nos. 32-34; (ii) in Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 108, verse nos. 26-33½; and (iii) in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Gha. In this context, refer Doha no. 164 below.

Refer also to Kavitali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 32.

In Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 41, the luck of Vibhishan has been lauded and said “Vibhishan was extremely lucky, for he was able to please Lord Ram by merely bowing before the Lord once, and in the bargaining vanquishing all faults, all evilness, all misfortunes and all torments”.]

161. कुलिसहु चाहि कठोर अति कोमल कुसुमहु चाहि ।  
चित्त खगेस राम कर समुझि परइ कहु काहि ॥

161. kulisahu cāhi kaṭhōra ati kōmala kusumahu cāhi.  
citta khagēsa rāma kara samujhi para'i kahu kāhi..

The saint crow Kagbhusund said to the king of birds, Garuda, 'Oh King of Birds! The mind and heart of Sri Ram is strong and stern (i.e. emotionless and unrelenting) as Indra's Vajra (thunderbolt, the weapon of Indra which is regarded as the hardest material in this world and is unforgiving for the enemy), but at the same time it can be as soft, tender and delicate as a flower. Say, how can one understand the mystery of Lord Ram and the enigma surrounding him?

[The Lord presents a typical paradox—on the one hand he is as stern as the Vajra, and on the other hand he is as soft as the flower. The idea is that while dealing with sinful and evil forces of creation he acts like the Vajra, the invincible and unrelenting weapon of Indra, the king of Gods, but when it comes to his devotees, to the humble and docile creatures of creation he becomes very soft and pleasant like the flower, i.e. he becomes most merciful and compassionate. In other words, though at times the Lord acts as a ruthless ruler because he has to maintain order in this vast creation, the Lord inherently is very tender at heart as well as most kind and gracious.] (161)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 19 Ga in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

The context here is Angad's pleading with Lord Ram to keep him in his service, but the Lord refused and ordered him politely to return to Kishkindha to become its prince regent. On the other hand, when Hanuman made the same plea that he wished to remain in the Lord's service, he was granted permission. So obviously, the Lord appeared to be stern and hard when it came to Angad, and became malleable and soft when it came to Hanuman.

Though on the face of it this seems to be whimsical behaviour and a partisan way of treating two equally devoted followers, but the reason is easy to understand. Angad was

entrusted by his dying father Baali in the care of Lord Ram, and had Baali been alive Angad would have been the heir apparent. The Lord killed his father and put his uncle Sugriv on the throne, but at that time Angad was made the prince-in-waiting. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 11.

The Lord is extremely wise and knows the rules of political science more than anyone else. He could not keep a prince of another kingdom in his service, because that would be insulting to all the citizens of that kingdom and would appear to be an arrogant action on his own part. Besides this, the Lord had to keep in mind the promise that he had made to the dying Baali—that he will take proper care of Angad, and this meant that his position in the hierarchy of the kingdom of Kishkindha should be maintained with full respect, which meant that he cannot be allowed to serve another king, in this case the king of Ayodhya, because that would be tantamount to humiliation of the prince and an indirect subjugation of his kingdom.

In addition to that, the Lord knew that Sugriv is a lustful monkey and promiscuous to the core. Even Sugriv felt guilty on this count—refer Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 21. When Sugriv had pleaded with the Lord to excuse him for his passionate and lustful nature because he had become blind due to them, the Lord had ‘smiled’—it was a sort of skeptical smirk on the Lord’s face. The Lord had other thoughts in his mind, the main objective of his coming to the forest was the killing of the ferocious demons and their cruel king Ravana, and so the Lord smirked contemptuously at Sugriv, overlooking this negative trait in him so that larger objectives could be accomplished.

On the other hand, Angad was very wise and fully devoted to the Lord; he had all the good qualities one can expect from the devotee of the Lord, something Sugriv lacked. So the Lord sent him back to Kishkindha as a sort of his emissary by default to ensure that the kingdom of Kishkindha is run properly and efficiently, and Sugriv does not commit some grave sins. The presence of Angad in Kishkindha would ensure this, and it will also help the Lord to keep tabs on the developments there.

This all but sums up the reasons why the Lord had to send Angad back to Kishkindha in spite of the latter’s earnest pleading to let him serve the Lord.

None of these compulsions applied to Hanuman. He was free to stay in Ayodhya unlike Angad. Hanuman was not an heir to the kingdom of Kishkindha, nor had the Lord promised his father anything. There were other important reasons for Lord Ram to keep Hanuman at his side—(i) Hanuman could keep Sugriv as well as Angad under the command of the Lord, for it was well-known that it was Hanuman who was instrumental in making Sugriv the king of Kishkindha on the one hand, and was on friendly terms with Angad too. (ii) Hanuman possessed far superior strength than Angad, and had many unique mystical powers that Angad lacked. Keeping Hanuman with him would be a wiser choice, so thought the Lord.

Another reason why he did not keep both Angad and Hanuman with him at Ayodhya was to avoid palace intrigue and bickering amongst them. He did not want that their friendship should turn into some sort of animosity and jealousy between themselves in their attempt to come closer to the Lord and gain his attention and favour. Distance fosters love and longing, while too much closeness creates bitterness in the long run—so when Angad and Hanuman lived apart from each other, they remained friends forever, something that may not have been possible had they both stayed together in the service of the Lord.

There is one very interesting twist to this Doha when it is viewed in the context of the ordinarily held general view that the whole of the Ram Charit Manas, from start to finish, was conceived and narrated by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Parvati who is also

known as Uma. But this Doha clearly refers to the dialogue between Kaagbhusund and Garud, which however appear in detail later on in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 58, right upto Doha no. 125 Ka. So it is obvious that this divine story that Tulsidas narrates is a mixture of what Shiva narrated and what Kaagbhusund narrated. Tulsidas has used both the narrations to build his own narrative.]

162. बलकल भूषण फल असन तृन सज्या द्रुम प्रीति ।  
तिन्ह समयन लंका दई यह रघुबर की रीति ॥

162. balakala bhūṣana phala asana tr̥ṇa sajayā druma prīti.  
tinha samayana laṅkā daī yaha raghubara kī rīti..

When Lord Raghubar (Sri Ram, the brave member of king Raghu's family) was living a life of great austerities (during the fourteen years of his forest exile), wearing clothes made from leaves and barks of trees, eating fruits, sleeping on the ground with a bed made of reeds spread on it, and wandering alone with the trees of the wild as his only companions—even at that time (when he himself had no kingdom or property of his own that he could grant to someone else) the benevolent Lord had bestowed the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan. (162)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 160, 162-167 below which all refer to this event of Lord Ram granting the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan as a gift.

At a time when Lord Ram was living a humble life like a wandering mendicant who has no material wealth and physical property at his disposal, the Lord had the mystical and supernatural power as well as the supreme and unchallenged authority to grant others things that even they could not expect in their wildest of dreams. Lord Ram was the Supreme Being in a human incarnation, and the Lord's physical appearance should not lead anyone to believe that he was an ordinary man like the rest of us.

Tulsidas' intention in writing this Doha is to stress that when he advocates devotion and faith for Lord Ram he has not gone out of his head and neither is he a sycophantic bard who exaggerates the glory of his master so much so that it seems ludicrous even to believe what he is saying, let alone their actual spiritual benefits, their metaphysical importance and significance.

'No', Tulsidas seems to be saying, 'believe me when I say that Lord Ram is no ordinary prince exiled by his father because he was obliged to some greedy and selfish woman who wanted her own son to ascend the throne, and that the way the Lord behaves like an ordinary man whose wife has been kidnapped by some powerful villain is just a sort of drama the Supreme Lord has to play out in order to remove some great scar represented by the cruel demons from the face of the earth, and at the same time to use this as an opportunity to enable the great sages and saints who lived scattered in the different parts of the forest, doing severe penances and austerities so that they can have Darshan, or a divine vision of the Lord, to realise their dreams. Besides this, the surface of the earth, which was polluted by the demons and defiled by them by spilling the blood of innocent creatures, needed to be restored to its sanctity as a habitat of saints, sages, seers, monks, hermits and other such pious and holy souls. For these and for so many other countless reasons listed in the scriptures and the stories of the Ramayana, the Lord came to earth and behaved like an ordinary man. But be warned, Tulsidas seems to tell us, that Lord Ram is none other than the Supreme Being himself.

In the present case we have Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, who was granted the kingship of the demon kingdom of Lanka by Lord Ram in spite of the fact that this appeared to be the most impossible and incredulous thing to imagine at that point of time. The reasons are obvious—for on the one hand there was Ravana who was invincible and so powerful and strong that he had all the gods subjugated and bound to follow his instructions, the city of Lanka was an impregnable fort, and the army of demons was not an ordinary army—it had conquered the heaven and forced the greatest of gods to kneel down, was well-trained, well-armed and manned by hardened war veterans, while on the other hand there was Lord Ram who was alone, already physically weary from the long years in forest exile, who had no army except the unorganized and motley collection of untrained, unarmed and humble monkeys and bears who one would be inclined to regard as a joke of an army—the very thought of such a hurriedly arranged contraption defeating the formidable and well organized enemy as Ravana is simply bordering on lunacy and a flight of wild fancy.

But as the events turned out in practice, Ravana was not only eventually defeated but also killed, and Vibhishan was indeed made the king of Lanka. So Tulsidas says that one must take him seriously and follow his advice when he says that one should surrender one's self to Lord Ram in order to be granted the boon of spiritual blessedness and beatitude, of eternal fearlessness from all spiritual and mundane worldly fears, of liberation and deliverance from the horrors of this world and life in it, and of final emancipation and salvation for the soul. If Lord Ram, in the form of an exiled prince, could bestow Vibhishan the golden kingdom of Lanka when such a proposition was even wild and lunatic to imagine, then one can well imagine the enormous benefits that one can expect if he worships and devotes himself to Lord Ram with the full knowledge that he is the Lord of the entire creation, empowered, able and authorized to grant the biggest and the most difficult of boons by his mere wish.

Thus, expecting the greatest of spiritual benefits by having faith in and devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, is a realistic goal for any wise spiritual aspirant.

Another interpretation of this particular Doha is that in spite of himself living a humble life like a wandering mendicant in the forest, the Lord was eager to reward his devotee Vibhishan with the gift of a kingdom, the kingdom of Lanka from which he was thrown out by his own brother Ravana who had subjected him to public scorn and insult, not because Vibhishan had done anything wrong at Lanka or had attempted to usurp his elder brother's throne in a coup, but because he was a devotee of the Lord and was simply giving Ravana a righteous advice that he should give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid unnecessary blood-shed in a ruinous war fought because of lust for another person's wife, something absolutely unacceptable under any law of creation. Vibhishan was punished by Ravana for taking the side of Dharma, the laws of ethics and righteousness, and so Vibhishan must be rewarded and his tormentor must be punished.

Now, who can punish? Only a person in authority who not only sits in judgement but is also empowered to actually carry out the punishment can do so. Therefore, this Doha also implies that Lord Ram is the supreme Judge and the supreme Authority in this world who will grant the creature rewards or punishment according to his own deeds and actions.

Therefore it is conclusive that if a devotee approaches the Lord and seeks his intervention for redemption from the miseries of life and the torments afflicted by this world, there is no reason why the Lord will turn him away. And at the same time, if anyone behaves unrighteously then the Lord is sure to punish him.

Lord Ram here epitomises the virtues of a great giver—he will be eager to gift whatever he can to those who come to him seeking anything, not even worrying at the time whether it is actually practical and possible to do so. The victory at Lanka was a

distant dream at the point of time when the Lord granted the kingdom of it to Vibhishan, but nevertheless he did so. So if the devotee seeks refuge with the Lord and the Lord grants him his wishes, there is nothing in the world to stop it and prevent it from happening.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 162 is entirely dedicated to this theme of Lord Ram being unmatched in his quality of being a generous, kind, benevolent and magnanimous gifter. In fact, its opening lines say—“Who is more generous, benevolent and magnanimous in this world than Lord Ram.”]

163. जो संपति सिव रावनहि दीन्हि दिँ दस माथ ।  
सोइ संपदा बिभीषनहि सकुचि दीन्हि रघुनाथ ।

163. jō sampati siva rāvanahi dīnhi di'ēṁṁ dasa mātha.  
sō'i sampadā bibhīṣanahi sakuci dīnhi raghunātha.

All the wealth (the kingdom of Lanka) which Lord Shiva gave as a boon to Ravana in return for performing the extreme sacrifice of offering his head 10 times to the Lord to propitiate him, the same wealth was given by Sri Ram to Vibhishan most hesitatingly (as if it was not sufficient enough a reward for Vibhishan who had sought refuge at Lord Ram's holy feet). (163)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 49 of Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand. The context is the same as narrated in Doha no. 162 above.

A similar idea is expressed in Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 38. It says “the kingdom of Lanka that Ravana got by doing such severe penance as offering his ten heads to Lord Shiva, was granted by Lord Ram to his guest (Vibhishan) most willingly but with a sense of humility because the Lord could only offer him a sitting mat made of reed and grass when Vibhishan came to meet the Lord.”

The Lord felt a little bit of ashamed and sort of uneasy that he had nothing better to offer to Vibhishan to sit upon than a humble mat made of reed and grass. The Lord could not offer Vibhishan some costly rug or some other honourable seat befitting a future king of Lanka which the Lord is now poised to make Vibhishan.

In other words, even after gifting an entire kingdom to Vibhishan, the Lord felt it was a little less than what should have been given to him as a gift. This is an indication of the Lord's nature to oblige and fulfill the wishes of his devotees to such an extent that the Lord never tires of giving though he need not do anything more than what already done, and the devotee getting more than he could ever dream of.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 162 too echoes what has been said in this Doha. It says “the property and wealth that the ten-headed Ravana acquired by propitiating Lord Shiva by offering his ten heads, and Shiva was obliged to grant it to him, the same asset was gifted with humility to Vibhishan by Lord Ram”.]

164. अबिचल राज बिभीषनहि दीन्ह राम रघुराज ।  
अजहुँ बिराजत लंक पर तुलसी सहित समाज ॥

164. abicala rāja bibhīṣanahi dīnha rāma raghurāja.  
ajahumṁ birājata laṅka para tulasī sahita samāja..

Tulsidas says that Lord Sri Ram, the king of Raghu's dynasty ("raghurāja"), gave Vibhishan the unshakeable (i.e. eternal) crown of the kingdom of Lanka. That is why he is still enthroned (i.e. ruling) in Lanka with his kith and kin. (164)

[Note—At the time of his departure from this world, when all the citizens of Ayodhya as well as the monkey and bear friends of Kiskindhya accompanied Lord Ram to heaven, Lord Ram had instructed Vibhishan to remain in this world and rule over the kingdom of Lanka till eternity, till the end of the Kalpa, the four-yug cycle of creation and destruction. This is clearly mentioned in—(i) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto no. 9, verse nos. 32-34; (ii) in Valmiki's Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 108, verse nos. 26-33½; and (iii) in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Gha.]

165. कहा बिभीषन लै मिल्यो कहा दियो रघुनाथ ।  
तुलसी यह जाने बिना मूढ़ मीजिहैं हाथ ॥

165. kahā bibhīṣana lai milyō kahā diyō raghunātha.  
tulasī yaha jānē binā mūrḥa mījihair̥ hātha..

Vibhishan had approached Sri Raghunath (Lord Ram, the Lord of the clan of king Raghu of Ayodhya) empty-handed, but got the permanent kingship of Lanka and the Lord's eternal devotion as a reward in return.

Tulsidas says that those foolish people who do not realise such a benevolent, graceful and magnanimous nature of Lord Sri Ram, and instead of seeking refuge at his holy feet spend their lives in futile pursuit of the delusory world of material sense objects, shall remain lost in the wilderness of this world. (165)

[Note—Lord Ram had accepted Vibhishan who had nothing to fall back upon after he was kicked out of Lanka by his brother Ravana. At that point of time, Vibhishan had nothing to offer to Lord Ram as a gift when he came, except his tale of misery and of his dispossession and disenfranchisement. Vibhishan had no backing of an army for which Lord Ram might have considered accepting him as his friend. The Lord accepted him because it is in the nature of the Lord to accept anyone who comes to seek his blessing and refuge.

This fact is expressly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai Doha no. 43 and its preceding line no. 8, to Doha no. 44. In these lines, the Lord told Sugriv, the monkey king, when the latter had severe reservations about accepting Vibhishan in the Lord's camp because he feared that it was unwise to accept an enemy's brother as he may have come here to spy upon them, "Listen friend. You have given an advice that is well considered, prudent and in accordance with established laws of military science that one should never allow someone from the enemy's camp to come too close as this would be extremely dangerous. But remember one thing—I have a vow that I will protect those who come to seek refuge in my holy feet; I cannot turn them back. He who turns away a person who has come to seek refuge is committing a great sin, and such a person cannot be pardoned.

Even if one has committed such horrendous sins as killing of countless Brahmins, he should not be turned away if he comes begging for surrender and succour. When a creature comes face to face with me, all the sins committed by him over his countless births are destroyed in a moment. Remember, a sinner at heart who is wicked and corrupt cannot have devotion for me, he cannot even think of coming to me to face me, he cannot

think of surrendering before me. Verily, only those with a pure and cleansed heart and mind can hope to access me because I do not like deceit, conceit, fraud and pretensions.

Even if what you say that Ravana may have sent Vibhishan to spy upon us is true, then also you have nothing to fear because Laxman, my younger brother, is sufficient to deal, all by himself, with all of the demons who exist in this world. So there is nothing to worry on that front from the demons—that Vibhishan would be passing our secrets to them and weaken our defenses. On the other hand, if he is scared and scarred, then it is my declared vow that I will protect him as if he is my own life.”

The Lord smiled and finally instructed Sugriv “Hence, you must bring him to me in both the cases, and I must, and I will, accept Vibhishan.”

The main idea is that the Lord loves those who are humble and meek and surrender before the Lord unconditionally, seeking his protection inspite of all their personal failings. They must not attempt to act smart with the Supreme Lord of creation, who does not like pretensions and ostentations. It is impossible to please the Lord with expensive gifts and elaborate rituals.

It is said in the Holy Bible as follows:—

*Gospel of St. Matthew: 5/5:* Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

5/8: Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

23/12: And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

11/29: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

*Gospel of St. Luke: 14/11:* For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

18/14: I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.]

166. बैरि बंधु निसिचर अधम तज्यो न भरें कलंक ।  
झूठें अघ सिय परिहरी तुलसी साईं ससंक ॥

166. bairi bandhu nisicara adhama tajyō na bharēm kalaṅka.  
jhūṭhēm agha siya pariharī tulasī sā'im̐ sasaṅka..

Lord Sri Ram had accepted Vibhishan despite all his short-comings and ignominy such as his being enemy Ravana's brother, having a sinful and wretched body of a demon, and being one who had betrayed his own brother and family (at Lanka). The Lord did not reject him on any of these grounds.

On the other hand, Lord Ram had left Sita (and sent her for life-term in exile later on in life) merely on hearsay and false allegations<sup>1</sup>.

Tulsidas says that his Lord is very sensitive and particular about probity, propriety and righteous conduct in all his dealings and actions<sup>2</sup>. (166)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This alludes to Lord Ram sending Sita to exile in the forest to spend the rest of her life in the hermitage of sage Valmiki, where his two sons Lava and Kush were born to Sita, just because a washerman had cast aspersions on her character. He had scolded his own wife that he would not allow to live in the house if she stayed late out in the night because he is not like Ram who had accepted Sita even though she was in the captivity of another man for many months. This was used as a pretext by the Lord to abandon Sita at

the fag end of the Lord's incarnation on earth, and a prelude to the winding up of the Lord's earthly sojourn. The detail of all these happenings is narrated in (i) Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 43-49, and in (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, in its Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 41-63.

<sup>2</sup>In the case of Vibhishan the Lord had upheld his vow of protecting the humble and the meek, those who suffer at the hands of tyrants for no fault of theirs, and those who come to surrender and seek the blessings of the Lord. In the second case of Sita, the Lord had to behave in a way that was beyond reproach because he was the king of Ayodhya and it is expected of a king that he observes exemplary rules of ethics and morality in his personal life and ensure that no one can raise a single figure on him and his character. The king has to lead by an example, and if his own life and character is above taint it is only then that he can impose rules of proper conduct on his subjects and expect them to observe them. It may happen at times that the king has to make enormous personal sacrifices so that the subjects of his kingdom cannot cast aspersions on him, because he has to sit in judgement on similar charges leveled on the people of his kingdom. A personally corrupt king would not be able to face his subjects if they are presented in the court on similar charges of which the king himself is known to be guilty of.

In the present case, Lord Ram knew that the charges of Sita being unclean are absolutely baseless and scandalous. The reason is that Sita had to undergo the 'fire test of purity' at Lanka before the Lord had accepted her after the victory over Ravana. This is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108, to the last line of Chanda no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 109.

But the problem here is that no one from Ayodhya was witness to it. At Lanka, the only witnesses to this fire-test were Laxman, Lord Ram's brother, the monkey and bear friends of Lord Ram, the demons who had survived the war and their new king Vibhishan, and the Gods in the heaven—but not a single citizen of Ayodhya. Had the Lord carried out the same test in a field at Ayodhya the situation would have been different. The Lord realised this, and was speechless. Well, one can argue that Sita could have been put through another test and she was sure to emerge unscathed. But then the Lord would have been obliged to put all the women of Ayodhya to the same test to enforce discipline in the society—otherwise every other day some sort of nonsense would be uttered here and there. And the Lord did not wish to make the city desolate—because he knew that only few would pass this stern fire test, and if the Lord became an instrument for mass burning of women forced to prove their fidelity then he would go down in history as a tyrannical ruler, as well as the one who wrecked vengeance on his own subjects just because some rascal was having a domestic dispute with his wife. That scenario would be most horrible to face. So the Lord thought it wise to avoid all the drama and spectacle by sending Sita to exile.

Then it was also the time to wind up the Lord's sojourn on earth, and some excuse had to be found. The Lord could not become old or sick and die like a normal human being. Therefore it so happened that finally Sita entered the earth, and the Lord and his companions—who were the different Gods in disguise—discarded their mortal bodies on the bank of river Saryu on the final day of departure of the Lord from this earth to resume their original forms as divine Gods and semi-Gods, while Lord Ram reverted back to his form as Lord Vishnu.]

167. तेहि समाज कियो कठिन पन जेहिं तौल्यो कैलास ।  
तुलसी प्रभु महिमा कहौं सेवक को बिस्वास ।

167. tēhi samāja kiyō kaṭhina pana jēhir̥ṁ tauḷyō kailāsa.

tulasī prabhu mahimā kahaurṁ sēvaka kō bisvāsa.

Ravana (the demon king of Lanka) had so much courage, strength and valour that he could lift Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) in his hands. In the court of the same Ravana, Lord Ram's messenger Angad had planted his foot firmly on the ground and made a solemn vow (that if anyone could move his legs, Sri Ram would lose Sita and return without her).

Tulsidas wonders whether to assign this event to a vivid display of the strength and powers inherent in Lord Ram's divine name and to the Lord's stupendous cosmic authority and glory (which came into play as soon as Angad invoked them before planting his legs on the ground), or to the strength of the firm faith and belief of the Lord's humble servant (Angad) that he had in the Lord's divinity, majesty, unchallenged cosmic authority, stupendous supernatural powers, and the glory of the Lord and his equally glorious name. (167)

[Note—This incident is narrated in the Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 34. Angad was extremely angry when Ravana started insulting his father Baali and his Lord Sri Ram. So he put his foot firmly down on the ground and made a stern vow “oh you rascal, if you can move my leg then I lose and Ram will return without Sita”.

Angad did not think twice when he planted his foot on the ground, challenging Ravana that if he could move it or lift it then it will be deemed to be his victory and the Lord would turn back without Sita. Angad had such immense and unwavering deep rooted faith and conviction in the supremacy of Lord Ram, in the Lord's personal invincibility as much as in the invincibility of his holy and divine name that if they were invoked then it is dead sure, without an iota of doubt and confusion, that the vow of the Lord's devotee cannot go in vain. No power in creation can go against the will of the Lord's devotee. Anything else can fail, but not this.

The firmness of Angad's conviction and faith has no match in the annals of the story of Ramayan. Even the Lord's most trusted devotee to whom the Lord himself expressed life-long indebtedness, i.e. Hanuman, did not have this courage to unilaterally put the future of the war and Sita at stake by making such a stern vow as Angad had made without blinking. Hanuman had clearly said both to Sita and Ravana that he could take Sita back to Lord Ram on the one hand and kill Ravana and uproot the whole city of Lanka and dump it in the ocean on the other hand if he had the permission of the Lord, which he didn't have. So he could not do it. Refer: (i) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 6 for Sita's case, and (ii) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 13 for Ravana's case.

The confidence that Angad had in the divinity and mystical powers of the Lord is exemplary, and it is to be taken by the Lord's devotees as a shining example how the Lord keeps the vows of his devotees even if they make such a vow without seeking the Lord's prior permission. But the point to note is any vow at random would not qualify for this backing by the Lord—the intent of the vow should be dignified, holy, righteous, pure and proper. The Lord stands for Dharma, and anything done to uphold Dharma (the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethical conduct, morality, nobility and holiness) would have the Lord's backing. In the case of Angad, the vow made was for a righteous objective—it was to prove to Ravana that he was wrong in insulting the Lord and not paying heed to righteous advice.

When Tulsidas wonders which of the two was responsible for making the vow of Angad true—whether it was the strength of Lord's glory and cosmic power, or it was the strength of Angad's belief and faith in the Lord that he made the vow by planting his legs

to challenge Ravana, absolutely certain that his vow cannot be broken—he actually implies that it is hard to judge which of them was singularly responsible. In other words, both were equally responsible. That is, only when one has abiding faith and firm conviction in the Lord, only when this faith is rooted in strong devotion and unflinching commitment to the Lord, and only when a man is absolutely confident of himself and the spiritual path he has chosen for himself that he can succeed in his spiritual endeavours. It is also then that the Lord helps him in thick and thin. Doubting and procrastinating, uncertain faith and dithering nature of the mind wouldn't take the spiritual aspirant anywhere worthwhile in the long run.

It is not that Hanuman had any less firmness of faith, commitment, belief and devotion for Lord Ram than did Angad. We must remember that Hanuman had burnt Lanka without the Lord's permission just like Angad had planted his foot and wagered the future of Sita and the war on its lifting or moving. Both had driven rough-shod over Ravana's pride and had crushed it to smithereens, and both could not be subdued by the demon king no matter how hard he tried.

Then what is the difference in their actions and behaviour? Well, Angad was a prince of monkeys, while Hanuman was merely a courtier and advisor. A courtier or an advisor, no matter how senior, does not have the same authority and power as a prince. A prince is accustomed to taking unilateral decisions and enforcing them, but a courtier and advisor must seek permission from his principal, from the Lord whom he serves. That is why there appears to be a difference between the ways the two behaved in Lanka. Angad behaved like a prince—who is able to make vows and see that they are implemented. Hanuman could only threaten Ravana, but he could not bet on things beyond a certain limit.

But this should not send a wrong signal that Angad did never bother to seek permission from Lord Ram before taking any action, or that he always overlooked the need to seek the Lord's permission before acting. Just prior to this incident of planting of the leg, Angad had told Ravana that—"I am capable of breaking all your ten heads and wringing your ten necks, but I don't have the Lord's permission to do so. I am so angry that I would have battered all your ten heads and dumped Lanka into the ocean." Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 34.

That indirectly implies that he had the subtle permission of the Lord to bet the future by planting his legs? Well, at the time of his sending to Ravana as an emissary, the Lord had told him to do as he thinks fit and proper according to the circumstance, because, the Lord told him, he was wise enough to take independent decisions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 17. So, Angad decided against personally harming Ravana, and instead crush his ego and pride of being all-powerful and very strong, the one who had defeated all the Gods and effortlessly held Mt. Kailash in his hands. Battering of Ravana's head and bloodying it can be done during the battle, but now was the chance to show him that he is mistaken when he thinks that he can overcome Lord Ram by the might of his arms just because he had managed to lift some single mountain. Such mountains are merely like small inconsequential warts on the cosmic body of the Supreme Being.

When Ravana came and knelt down to touch Angad's foot, Angad rebuked him, saying that it would have been far better and wiser if he, Ravana, could kneel down before the Lord, Sri Ram, instead of his humble servant, Angad. Ravana was humiliated and crest-fallen. This was his answer for using his legs to kick Vibhishan in a full court earlier.]

168. सभा सभासद निरखि पट पकरि उठायो हाथ ।

तुलसी कियो इगारहों बसन बेस जदुनाथ ॥

168. *sabhā sabhāsada nirakhi paṭa pakari uṭhāyō hātha.*  
*tulasī kiyō igārahōm basana bēsa jadunātha..*

At the time when Draupadi, in utter desperation, clutched her Sari (the body-wrapping garment) with one hand and raised the other calling the Lord to save her from being disrobed in the court of Dushashan, Lord Krishna, the Lord of the Yadu-clan, had manifested himself as the 11<sup>th</sup> incarnation (of Lord Vishnu) in the form of cloth. [The result was that the Kaurav clan became tired of pulling the Sari, but the cloth never seemed to end, and Draupadi's dignity was preserved.] (168)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 169 below also.

This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Sabha-parva, Cantos 65-71.

As long as Draupadi sought help from her Pandava husbands, the Lord kept silent. Let them try, the Lord thought. As long as she tried to clutch her garment to prevent being disrobed, she failed. Let her try her strength, the Lord thought. But when Draupadi lost all hopes and raised both her arms in complete surrender, seeking the Lord's help and intervention, the miracle happened in the time of a mini-second. A mountain of cloth formed as Draupadi spun like a top spinning rapidly while Dushashan pulled and pulled violently at her garment at the best speed he could. A time came when Dushashan's strong and muscular arms ached and became strained by pulling and pulling but the Sari had no end, and Draupadi swung around like a top spinning violently, but never did the Sari fell down from her body or found an end. The assembly sat amazed and dumbfounded by the sight of this spectacle.

The central idea in this incident is that the Lord comes rushing forward to help his devotee when the latter cries out for help sincerely, and without relying on anyone else, or without having any other support or succour to fall back to. If the devotee has doubts, or if he is testing the might of the Lord, then he does so at his own peril—for then the Lord would not come to help him.]

169. त्राहि तीनि कह्यो द्रौपदी तुलसी राज समाज ।  
 प्रथम बड़े पट बिय बिकल चहत चकित निज काज ॥

169. *trāhi tīni kahyō draupadī tulasī rāja samāja.*  
*prathama barhē paṭa biya bikala cahata cakita nija kāja..*

Tulsidas says that in the court when Dushashan started pulling Draupadi's sari to disrobe her, she cried out thrice—'Save me, Lord!' At the first cry, the cloth started expanding, at the second cry the Lord became uneasy and angry, and at the third cry the Lord finally decided to exterminate Draupadi's tormentors. (169)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 168 above.]

170. सुख जीवन सब कोउ चहत सुख जीवन हरि हाथ ।  
 तुलसी दाता मागनेउ देखिअत अबुध अनाथ ॥

170. *sukha jīvana saba kō'u cahata sukha jīvana hari hātha.*

tulasī dātā māganē'u dēkhi'ata abudha anātha..

Everyone wants a happy life, but that is in the hands of Lord Hari<sup>1</sup>. Tulsidas thinks that both the giver (donor) and the receiver (alms-seeker) are foolish and helpless in this world<sup>2</sup>. (170)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The word 'Hari' applies to Lord Vishnu, and it latterly means one who takes away or steals or removes. Since the Lord removes all the wants in his devotees' mind and heart, he is honoured by this epithet. A true devotee of the Lord is left with nothing to want—all his needs are well taken care of the Lord who is the Supreme Giver in this creation. Since the Lord also removes all the misfortunes, grief, miseries and torments of his devotees on the one hand, and their negative qualities and the evil consequences of their sins on the other hand, the term 'Hari', i.e. one who removes, is most suitable for the Lord.

<sup>2</sup>The 'donor' is a fool because he is proud that he gives, without realising that he is not the owner of what he gives; the 'receiver' is a fool because he seeks from mortal creatures things which would perish, instead of seeking directly from the Supreme Lord things which are non-perishable and eternal.

The donor or giver becomes proud of his good deed, but this stokes the negative quality of ego and pride in him. He does not understand that what he gives does not belong to him, for it was granted to him by the supreme Giver who had given this thing to him as a conduit to pass it over to the person for whom it is meant. The donor himself is a recipient of the Lord's largesse. If the Lord wants, he would also become a beggar. Whatever he possesses is a reward of his past good deed, and like the rest of the material world it too is perishable and transient—here today and gone tomorrow.

The receiver is so stupid and short-sighted that he begs from cashiers and accountants of the Supreme Master, instead of from the Master himself. The so-called donor or giver has his limitations; he cannot grant beyond his means. But if the seeker had been wise and asked from the Supreme Giver, i.e. Lord God, the grant would have been enormous, much beyond expectations.

A worldly donor would always expect acknowledgement and gratitude, or at least recognition as one who gave something to the recipient. He expects credit. But the Lord feels shy when anyone stands and credits him with the boons that the Lord has granted. The Lord feels shy that the grant is limited, and it does not behove for an emperor to give such a small grant to the alms seeker; it ought to have been larger and more befitting the Lord's stature as the supreme Granter.

The Lord has given the world all the treasures that the man enjoys, but the Lord never expects some thank for them. On the other hand, a man tells others that he has done this and that for them.

Refer to Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 26 in which Tulsidas says that it is matter of great shame when he would ask for anything from anyone other than the Lord of Sita, i.e. Lord Ram. A person who seeks anything from anybody else is like a dog that wags its tail for morsels of stale and leftover bits of scrap food.]

171. कृपिन देइ पाइअ परो बिनु साधें सिधि होइ ।  
सीतापति सनमुख समुझि जो कीजै सुभ सोइ ॥

171. kṛipana dē'i pā'i'a parō binu sādheṁ sidhi hō'i.  
sītāpati sanamukha samujhi jō kījai subha sō'i..

A miser gives (against his natural inclination to hoard instead of give and share), something useful is found unexpected (due to a stroke of good luck), and great mystical powers are acquired and successes achieved (without the least effort)—in other words, the most impossible and unexpected things can happen if one depends on the Lord of Sita (i.e. on Lord Sri Ram). (171)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 172 below.

The Lord is the Supreme Giver and the Supreme Lord of creation. If he wants to give something to someone, it just happens as if by magic. Ordinary people say it is sheer good luck, but a wise man sees in these acquisitions and achievements the invisible divine hand of his Lord, Sri Ram. Most unexpected fortunes can come literally on a platter for a person if he has complete faith and reliance upon Lord Ram and his mystical cosmic powers.

This Doha appears in Tulsidas' book called Ram Agya Prashnawali, as verse no. 7/4/3 in it.

The main idea is that if one is surrounded by misfortunes and hopes to overcome his miseries easily then the best way to do is to develop faith in Lord Ram and leave the rest on the Lord. After sometime his bad days would begin to disappear, and good times would dawn one by one.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114 it is asserted "whatever you (the crow sage Kaagbhusund) desire in your heart and whatever your mind wishes will not be unfulfilled, inaccessible or unattainable for you because of the graceful blessings of Lord Hari". In other words, all of one's desires and wishes would be fulfilled if the Lord God wants, if he is pleased, and for making the Lord kind upon us all we need are the virtues of faith, love, devotion and surrender to God.]

172. दंडक बन पावन करन चरन सरोज प्रभाउ ।  
ऊसर जामहिं खल तरहिं होइ रंक ते राउ ॥

172. daṇḍaka bana pāvana karana carana sarōja prabhā'u.  
ūsara jāmahim̐ khala tarahim̐ hō'i raṅka tē rā'u..

By the grace of the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram—which had converted the inhabitable Dandak forest from being cursed to being one that was blessed and holy (i.e. from being harsh, inhospitable and riddled with fierce blood seeking demons and cruel animals, into a verdant green forest rich in pleasant flora and fauna)—even infertile land can yield crops, miscreants and rascals can be liberated (i.e. provided freedom from the burden of their accumulated sins and their horrible consequences), and a pauper (i.e. a penniless destitute) can become a king. (172)

[Note—This particular Doha appears in Tulsidas' book called Ram Agya Prashnawali, as verse no. 3/1/1 in it.

Refer also to Doha no. 171 above. These two Dohas compliment each other.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 13, sage Agastya, also known as Kumbhaj, has requested Lord Ram to go to the Dandak forest and make it free from the horrible curse cast upon it by a sage (Sukracharya), bless the sages who reside there doing severe penances and austerities, and spend some time himself living there to make the place holy and divine by the Lord's presence.

Initially, the *Dandak forest* was a verdant green forest with a rich repository of pleasant trees and docile animals. It was burnt by a curse of Sukracharya, the Guru of the demon race. It then turned into a most inhospitable terrain, full of ferocious demons and cruel animals. When Lord Ram visited the place during his wanderings and put his holy feet on its soil, the curse was removed and the forest regained its original glory. It was in this forest that the Lord met the vulture king Jatau (Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13), and had killed the demons Khar, Dushan, Trishira and their 14 thousand companions (Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18, to Doha no. 20).

Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 257, line nos. 6-7 which say that the forest of Dandak which was barren with burnt out trees and full of thorns was converted into a verdant forest full of flower and fruit bearing trees as soon as Lord Ram put his holy feet on its floor.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14 it is narrated how the Dandak forest was transformed—“Ever since Lord Ram came to live in this forest, the sages, hermits and seers who lived there became happy and all their torments ended. The hills, the forest, the rivers, the ponds and lakes in this forest began to look charming and beautiful; they were delightful to behold. Their magnificence and beauty changed and appeared to improve every passing day; each new day made them appear more beautiful and enthralling than the previous day. The hordes and flocks of animals and birds that populated this forest lived happily and joyously, without any worry in the world. The forest reverberated with the humming of the black bee. Even the king of serpents, Lord Seshnath, is unable to describe the pleasant environs of the forest where Lord Ram, the Lord of the universe, himself resides.”]

173. बिनहीं रितु तरुबर फरत सिला द्रवति जल जोर ।  
राम लखन सिय करि कृपा जब चितवत जेहि ओर ॥

173. binahīm ritu tarubara pharata silā dravati jala jōra.  
rāma lakhana siya kari krpā jaba citavata jēhi ōra..

When the Trinity consisting of Lord Sri Ram himself, his brother Laxman and the Lord's divine consort Sita become benevolent, favourable and benign, then even trees bear fruits without proper season and water sprouts from stones (i.e. events which are unnatural and un-imaginable become possible).

[In other words, when the Lord becomes pleased with someone, nothing remains beyond his reach; everything is accessible and possible by the grace of the Lord. Hence, a wise man is he who makes effort to please the Lord of the world and become eligible to have the Lord's blessings and grace. This will ensure the devotee's all-round welfare: both at the temporal level as well as the spiritual level.] (173)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 5 it is described that “all trees became laden with fruits without taking into consideration whether it was the proper time and season to bear fruits or not”.

The mountain where Lord Ram stayed at Chitrakoot also became a mountain of verdant greenery, bubbling rivers with crystal clean water, chirping birds, trees full of succulent fruits and colourful flowers, and in general full of pleasures and pleasant sights—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 279. They say—“The mountain transformed into an enthralling mountain of

exceptional beauty and magnificence that was cheering for the mind and the heart, satisfying all their desires for happiness, pleasures, comforts, cheerful sights and pleasant environs. Merely seeing them was an exhilarating sight that cheered up the mind and heart and removed all their sorrows. Everywhere there, in the lakes, ponds and rivers, in the surrounding forest and ground below, it appeared that happiness, joys, love and pleasure were spilling over. Trees and creepers were laden with fruits and flowers. Birds, animals and black bees (insects) made cheerful sounds. The wind that blew was fragrant, soft and sweet. All in all, the place overflowed with auspiciousness and cheerfulness, and pulsed with positive energy.”

“The waterfalls poured water which was like ambrosia (Amrit)”—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 249.

In other words, when the Trinity becomes favourable, the entire creation becomes blessed and there is felicity and beatitude everywhere. If this Trinity is unfavourable, no other force in creation can give peace and rest to the creature.

From the metaphysical point of view, the Trinity consists of the three forces of creation, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the protector, nourisher and sustainer, and Shiva the concluder. From the perspective of Lord Vishnu as the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, the Trinity would consist of Lord Vishnu himself manifested as Lord Ram, the Lord’s Maya Shakti, the cosmic power of the Lord to create, is represented by Sita, and the Lord’s power to conclude this creation is represented by Laxman.]

174. सिला सुतिय भइ गिरि तरे मृतक जिए जग जान ।  
राम अनुग्रह सगुन सुभ सुलभ सकल कल्यान ॥

174. silā sutiya bha'i giri tarē mṛṭaka ji'ē jaga jāna.  
rāma anugraha saguna subha sulabha sakala kalyāna..

The whole world knows that by the grace of Lord Ram the rock became a beautiful lady [this incident refers to the story of Ahilya who had turned into a stone by her husband's curse but was restored to herself by the dust of Sri Ram's feet]<sup>1</sup>, boulders floated on the ocean [this refers to the construction of the bridge across the ocean by which the Lord’s army had crossed over to Lanka before the start of the epic Ram-Ravana war]<sup>2</sup>, and the bears and monkeys who were killed in the war were all revived back to life [this refers to the rain of Amrit, the elixir of life, that was poured on battle-field by Indra, the king of Gods, on the instructions of Lord Ram at the end of the war, which resulted in the monkeys who were either dead or mortally wounded coming back to life and becoming healthy once again]<sup>3</sup>.

Tulsidas says that likewise, by the grace of Sri Ram, one can get all good virtues and auspiciousness quite easily. (174)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prshanawali book of Tulsidas, as no. 6/5/6.

<sup>1</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 210 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-2, till Doha no. 211.

Also to (i) Doha no. 175 below; (ii) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 10, line no. 1; and (iii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57 to 60.

(iv) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 100, line no. 7 says “she was extremely miserable and full of grief in the form of a stone, but her miseries became a thing of the past as soon as the Lord’s holy and divine feet touched her”.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 59; Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 60; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 1, till Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4.

Also to Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse no.6.

<sup>3</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 114.

See also to Doha no. 176 below.]

175. सिला साप मोचन चरन सुमिरहु तुलसीदास ।  
तजहु सोच संकट मिटिहिं पूजहि मनकी आस ॥

175. silā sāpa mōcana carana sumirahu tulasīdāsa.  
tajahu sōca saṅkaṭa miṭihim pūjahī manakī āsa..

Tulsidas says that one should remember the holy feet of Lord Sri Ram, which had liberated Ahilya (in the form of a stone) from her curse, and thereby become free from all sorts of worries. By thus remembering Sri Ram continuously, all worries and troubles would be eliminated, and all desires fulfilled. (175)

176. मुए जिआए भालु कपि अवध बिप्रको पूत ।  
सुमिरहु तुलसी ताहि तू जाको मारुति दूत ॥

176. mu'ē jī'ā'ē bhālu kapi avadha biprakō pūta.  
sumirahu tulasī tāhi tū jākō māruti dūta..

Tulsidas addresses himself and says—‘Oh Tulsidas, you must always remember the benevolent Lord who had revived the dead bears and monkeys after the war ended in Lanka<sup>1</sup>, and who had also brought back to life a Brahmin's dead son at Ayodhya<sup>2</sup>.

You (i.e. Tulsidas) must remember such a Lord (Sri Ram) whose messenger is Hanuman, the son of the Wind-God.’

[Hanuman had revived Laxman in the battle-field by bringing the Sanjivani herb from the Himalayas. Hanuman was the most able and brave aide of Lord Ram. So, Tulsidas means here that if a person has firm faith in Lord Ram, and if due to any past bad deeds of that person he is subjected to some unavoidable suffering, then Lord Ram would intervene and find out some way to provide succour to the suffering devotee. The Lord will not let him die due to his suffering. Surely the Lord will send his trusted aide, Hanuman, to take care of his devotee and fight off evil forces that had been the cause of the devotee's sufferings. Hanuman's bringing the herb to revive Laxman in the battle-field is an allusion to this principle. It is an allegory to emphasise that even if the worst comes to happen, Lord Ram's devotee need not worry.]<sup>3</sup> (176)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 113 and Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that follow it. It so happened that at the end of the war, all the Gods had assembled to pay their obeisance to Lord Ram and thank him for eliminating the cruel demons. The king of gods, Indra, prayed to Lord Ram and asked him what he could do for the Lord. Lord Ram ordered him to rain Amrit (nectar of life) on the battle field so that the monkeys and bears

who had laid down their lives in the service of the Lord could be revived. So, Indra showered rain in the form of Amrit. This rain revived the monkeys and bears but not the demons.

It seems a partisan attitude for the Lord to have revived only the monkeys and bears, and not the demons. But the reason is that the Lord had his reservations: he was apprehensive that after their revival, the demons could revert to their old evil ways, and then all the trouble taken to eliminate this evil from the world would be nullified in one stroke. Of course, this would never be a wise action. So the Lord tweaked the things in such a way that only the monkeys and the bears were revived when Amrit rained down upon the battle-field.

But at the same time, Lord Ram is the neutral and benevolent Lord God of creation and the world. For him, all Jivas (living beings) are equal. He punishes some and excuses others not because he is biased against anyone but because he has to maintain order and law in his creation, and for this it is absolutely that the guilty, the sinful and the evil Jivas must be duly punished for their misdeeds. It is because while being equal to all and remaining above prejudices and bias, the Lord also has a great responsibility that the innocent, the helpless and the weak creatures in his kingdom are not subjected to terror by the powerful and strong.

So therefore, he had to punish the demons for their misdeeds and sins, but the Lord also ensured that after death the souls of all the demons would get deliverance. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Refer: Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 24, line no. 4.

The full story of how Lord Ram helped the Brahmin's dead son being revived to life has been described in the Anand Ramayan, Rajya Kand, Purvaardha, verse nos. 50 to 120.

Briefly it is as follows—Once a Brahmin's five year old son died. Both the parents came to the palace gates of Lord Ram, grieving and wailing. When the Lord asked them the reason they replied that some sort of wrong activities are going on in his kingdom, and since a king is responsible for everything that happens in his kingdom, the Lord cannot absolve himself from the negative consequences of such acts. When the king is marred by the taint of sin, the subjects suffer by way of pre-mature death, diseases, natural calamities etc. Now therefore, since the son has died due to the king's share of sins, if the Lord does not do anything to revive the dead son, the parents threatened to die also, and then the Lord Ram would be squarely responsible for the horrendous consequences.

The Lord assured the Brahmin that he would ensure that the dead son is revived, but till that time his dead body was put in a tub of oil to prevent decomposition. He even assured the Brahmin parents that if he is unable to revive the dead son then he will offer his own two sons, Lav and Kush to them as compensation.

Lord Ram consulted his Guru Vashistha, and on his advice he mounted on the Pushpak plane to survey his kingdom and find out where any wrong is being done. During the inspection he was confronted with six more dead persons who had died before ripe age. One was a husband whose wife was wailing inconsolably, the second was the dead body of a Kshatriya living in a village called Madhupur, the third was that of a prostitute living in Prayag (Triveni; Allahabad), the fourth was that of an oil merchant from Hastinapur, the fifth was that of a daughter-in-law of an ironsmith of Haridwar, and the sixth was that of a daughter of a woman tanner or cobbler. All the corpses were kept in oil at Ayodhya till the Lord returned.

Meanwhile, the Lord saw at a place that a Shudra (a low caste man) was performing severe penances by hanging upside down from a tree over a fire on the ground and

inhaling smoke. This man wished to attain liberation and deliverance, and so he was doing severe form of Tapa. The Lord intervened and said that a Shudra is not supposed to do Tapa because his duty is to serve the society and if he does it diligently then it is equivalent to doing severe Tapa for him. He had violated the sanctified way of code of conduct proclaimed by the Vedas, and since it was a violation of the edict of the scripture it was indeed a sin and a wrongful conduct. It was this wrongful act of his that violated the sanctions of the Vedas which indirectly created a situation when unwarranted deaths and grieving overcame the kingdom of Ayodhya.

The Shudra asked the Lord to give him an easy means to attain liberation and deliverance of his soul if he is not supposed to do Tapa. Seeing that the soul of the Shudra had all the right to attain its emancipation and salvation though it was not supposed to do Tapa, the Lord provided him a simple key—‘My holy name ‘RAM’ is the easiest way for obtaining spiritual liberation and deliverance. So repeat it, and you shall get your desired destination. But since your act that violates the sanction of the Vedas has brought misfortune to my kingdom and others are suffering due to it, I must punish you by killing you. Concentrate your mind upon my divine Name ‘RAM’, and though you have to die now you will definitely find emancipation and salvation for yourself. When you die at my hands, you will go straight to my abode in the heaven, the divine abode of Lord Vishnu which is called Vaikunth.’ Thus, the Shudra found the heavenly abode of the Supreme Lord very easily.

As soon as this Shudra was punished by the Lord by way of killing him, all the dead persons—including the Brahmin’s son—were revived because the sin of violating the sanctions of the scriptures had been eliminated.

<sup>3</sup>This incident is mentioned in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 54, till Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62.

Refer also to Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 5-9, and 15; and Kavitaawali, Lanka Kand, verse nos. 52-55.]

177. काल करम गुन दोष जग जीव तिहारे हाथ ।  
तुलसी रघुबर रावरो जानु जानकीनाथ ॥

177. kāla karama guna dōṣa jaga jīva tihārē hātha.  
tulasī raghubara rāvarō jānu jānakīnātha..

Tulsidas prays to Lord Ram, saying, 'Oh Janki-Nath (Lord Sri Ram, the beloved husband of Sita)! Kaal (time; circumstance; era; death), Karma (deeds and actions, and their rewards or punishments), Guna (qualities and virtues), Dosha (faults, shortcomings and drawbacks), Jaga (the world) and its Jivas (creatures; living beings) – all are controlled by you and are under your inviolable command. [This is because Lord Ram is the personified form of the Supreme Being.]

Therefore, oh Lord, you must also accept me (Tulsidas) as one of your own (i.e. as one of your servants and devotees)'. (177)

[Note—‘Kaal’ can force a man to do things that he would otherwise not want to do. All his plans and ambitions for the future suddenly tumble down when death comes without notice. Similarly, ‘Karma’ decides what fruit a person is entitled to enjoy or miseries he would suffer from. Then the three ‘Gunas’, i.e. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna act as the millstone around the neck to decide overall nature,

personality and behaviour of a person, leaving little space for independence. The ‘world’ of course forces the ‘creature’ to act according to its demands and requirements if the latter wishes to live in it. Taken together, these elements act as a strong fetter that shackle a living being and robs his independence.

But one thing is overlooked in this situation—all these elements themselves are subordinate to and controlled by the supreme Commander who controls each and every unit of creation. It is like the case of an emperor’s vast empire where the officers appointed by him have a lot of leeway, a lot of space and freedom to act independently, but they are under the overall command of the emperor; they cannot violate the orders of the emperor. So if the emperor is pleased with someone, the officers of the empire better not give this gentleman a chance to complain to the emperor against them. Similarly, the entities referred to above have a lot of freedom to govern the creature under various forces and laws of creation and Nature. But they have to be careful with the devotees of the Supreme Being because they occupy a privileged position.

This is the idea here. Lord Ram is the Supreme Being here, and if one takes his refuge and becomes his devotee, the entities listed in this verse do not dare to unnecessary annoy him and create mischief for him.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 114, sage Kaagbhushund has been specifically blessed with immunity from the horrors and turbulence created by Kaal, Karma, Guna, Dosha and natural inclinations called Subhava.

Refer Vinai Patrika, verse no. 151 which is dedicated to this theme. In its line no. 7 it says—“If you would have liked (i.e. had devotion and love for and faith in) Lord Ram, then you would have been liked by all the rest (i.e. they would have been favourable to you). All the elements or entities that have been the cause of your torments and worries, such as Kaal, Karma and Kul (kith and kin), would have let you alone, and would not have been angry (inimical, annoyed, jealous, irritated) at you. Rather, they would have been favourable and friendly to you (i.e. instead of being a source of nuisance for you, they would have been cooperative and helpful for you).”

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 112, line no. 5 it is said “Kaal and Karma, as well as a happy future or a sad future for the Jiva (living being)—all are dependent upon Lord Hari’s will”. That is, it is the Lord who determines whether or not any creature would be happy, and all the other factors merely play a secondary role. So the best choice that a wise creature would make is to seek the blessings of the Lord, and then go about his daily routine life with a full assurance that then all the other factors of creation that control all aspects of existence would automatically become favourable to him. They would abstain from enjoying the sight of his falling prey to miseries and remaining trapped in the cycle of birth and death, of endless chain of troubles and grief, of unfulfilled desires and un-addressed grievances, etc.

A similar idea is expressed in Doha no. 22 of this book Dohawali.]

178. रोग निकर तनु जरठपनु तुलसी संग कुलोग ।  
राम कृपा लै पालिए दीन पालिबे जोग ॥

178. rōga nikara tanu jarathapanu tulasī saṅga kulōga.  
rāma krpā lai pāli'ē dīna pālibē jōga..

Tulsidas pleads with Lord Sri Ram, 'Oh Ram! My body is a mine of diseases<sup>1</sup>; it has become old, and to make matters worse, it has the company of bad people all around<sup>2</sup>. Please accept me and sustain me, for this poor fellow (Tulsidas) is worthy of being

looked after by you<sup>3</sup>. [This is because the Lord is renowned as the one who looks after the weak and the meek, the humble and the lowly.] (178)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are said to be two types of diseases—one sort is that which afflict the physical body, and the other sort is that which afflict the mind.

Old age, feeble body, the various affections and malfunctioning of the organs, both the external and the internal, various types of illnesses such as cough, rheumatism, fever, headache, pains and aches, numerous physical deformities, and countless other forms of diseases with which the creatures of this world are overwhelmed and with which as many countless hospitals and dispensaries are overcrowded—these are the numerous diseases pertaining to the physical body.

The diseases of the mind are again of countless types—such as fickleness of mind, delusions, ignorance, hallucinations, lack of intelligent, analytical and discrimination abilities, weak memory, unable to focus, pay attention and concentrate the mind on any task, unable to understand, unable to express one's ideas properly, unable to follow instructions correctly and always inclined to go wrong, and so on and so forth.

Then there are the untold problems and compulsions associated with worldly responsibilities and householder's responsibilities. In this context, refer Vinai Patrika, verse no. 136/8 in which Tulsidas lists these horrors as follows—"the body has become decrepit, and extremely weak and feeble due to old age; numerous illnesses and pains are continuously tormenting me; the head has begun to shake involuntarily; the organs have lost their energy and vigour, their ability to do anything; and no one wants to hear what I say (they shun me and avoid speaking to me)".

<sup>2</sup>'Bad company' is the greatest spiritual hurdle for any aspirant. It is a block that must be removed if one wants his welfare and well-being, both spiritual as well as mundane. Bad company has a profound negative impact on the creature as opposed to good company. If one keeps bad company then all the goodness that he already has will be sooner rather than later dried up and exhausted like water in a desert. Just like drinking contaminated water is bound to ruin one's health and become a cause of so many other illnesses which would have not bothered the man otherwise, bad company eats into the fabric of morality and righteousness, and makes even the best of men into a beast.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 46 it is clearly stated "it is far better to live in hell than in the company of the wicked, the corrupt, the evil and the pervert".

The Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-20, 34 that precede Doha no. 121 outline the evil character of people who come under the category of bad company. Briefly these lines say that—"These people, inter alia, are the cause of sorrow for other people; they derive sadistic pleasure in seeing others bound in shackles and/or suffering from pain even if they have nothing tangible to gain from the sufferings of others; they are like a mouse which runs around amock in the house destroying so many things of the householder though the mouse gains nothing by causing this destruction; they ruin others inspite of themselves getting ruined simultaneously like the case of the hail that destroys the crop inspite of dissolving into nothing shortly thereafter. Verily, they come into being just to torment and create horrors for the rest of the world, though they have nothing to gain from any of their activities except nuisance; they are like the malignant stars and comets that are harbingers of evil omen."

<sup>3</sup>The Holy Bible, Gospel of St. Matthew, 5/3-12, 14, says—

'Blessed are the poor (humble), for their's is the kingdom of heaven; blessed are they that mourn (regret), for they shall be comforted; blessed are the meek (simple and humble, docile and quiet), for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; blessed are the peace makers,

for they shall be called the children of God; blessed are when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil things against you—rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; ...ye are the light of world (i.e. are wise, erudite and enlightened souls)’

[Refer also to Doha no. 505 below.]

179. मो सम दीन न दीन हित तुम्ह समान रघुबीर ।  
अस बिचारि रघुबंस मनि हरहु बिषम भव भीर ॥

179. mō sama dīna na dīna hita tumha samāna raghubīra.  
asa bicāri raghubansa mani harahu biṣama bhava bhīra..

Tulsidas prays to Lord Ram as follows—‘Oh Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram, the brave Lord of king Raghu’s dynasty)! There is no one more wretched and poorer than me on the one hand, and on the other hand there is no one like you who is a greater friend of the distressed and the miserable<sup>1</sup>.

Oh Raghuvansha-mani (literally meaning Lord Ram who is like a gem in the Raghu dynasty)! Considering this fact and keeping in mind your own glorious fame on this count, I beseech you to please destroy the great fear of birth and death which is characteristic of this mortal world that torments me endlessly<sup>2</sup>.’ (179)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 130 Ka of Uttar Kand, Ram Charit Manas.

<sup>1</sup>Vinai Patrika, verse no. 242, is entirely dedicated to this theme. There is no one more merciful and gracious in this world than Lord Ram, and he is the only one who cares for them who are not cared by anyone else.

The Lord has himself declared that he will give unquestioned protection to anyone who comes to surrender himself before the Lord and seek the Lord’s refuge and protection— Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos.1-8 that precedes Doha no. 44. In line no. 8, the Lord expressly declares “he who is terrified and comes to me seeking my refuge and protection, verily I say that I protect him like I would protect my own life”.

<sup>2</sup>The physical world is mortal and gross; it is entangling and web-like. No one will be eternal here but still everyone wishes to get involved in it and enjoy its pleasures and comforts for eternity. Birth and death in this world are invariably associated with uncountable horrors and pains of great enormity, but still the creature wishes to take a new birth to fulfill his yet unfulfilled desires and complete the leftover tasks, as well as to enjoy the world more.

From the metaphysical perspective, the creature who is born must die, but death is not the actual end to his miseries, for he has to take birth again. This is called the cycle of birth and death, and it goes on and on endlessly. The reason of this cycle continuing is that the foolish creature thinks that the body is his true self and identity, and that the world is something real. So he gets involved in doing numerous deeds, deriving pleasures from their rewards or suffering from their consequences, then doing something more and new, and the cycle continues. He also has countless desires and ambitions which he wishes to fulfill; he wishes to acquire name and fame and wealth for instance. This is regardless of the fact that none of them will sustain him for long.

Horrors of birth and death are experienced by the creature first hand, but their recollection is extremely short-lived. The creature forgets about them so soon that he is neither able to describe them to others, nor remember them long enough to remind

himself of the miseries suffered at that time. So, being short in memory, when he comes in contact with the charms and temptations of this world of material sense objects, he gets enticed and attracted to it, forgetting at that time that this same involvement had led to his taking birth again at the time of shedding his earlier body in his previous life. In this, the gross organs of his body play an active role because they have an innate tendency to get attracted towards their respective objects in this world. It's a formidable bondage; a shackle difficult to break free from.

The real freedom from this cycle comes when the soul, the subtle Atma, the ethereal Spirit that is the truthful 'self' of the creature, frees its self from the bondage of the body in which it lives in any given birth, and disassociates its self from the surrounding world. This means that the creature does not allow his inner 'truthful self' to get involved with anything the body does in this world. He also stops yearning for the material sense objects of the gross physical world from which he expects to derive sustainable comfort and pleasure when he becomes wise with the knowledge that all such things merely create an illusion of comfort and pleasure because in reality they themselves are artificial, temporary and perishable.

With acquisition of spiritual wisdom and the dawn of enlightenment on the horizon of a person's intellectual mind, he comes to understand that the involvement with the gross world and identifying oneself with the equally gross body are the two prominent reasons for being forced to remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Until this wisdom has made a creature wise, he had allowed himself to be trapped in the vicious cycle of doing various deeds in order to fulfill the desires of his mind and the demands of the body (which he had erroneously regarded as his true self). Each deed of his resulted in producing some result for which only he is responsible. In accordance to the simple law of Nature that every action has a corresponding reaction, he gets sucked in a vortex of doing deeds, then either enjoying or suffering from their consequences, then making new efforts to either enhancing his source of enjoyment, pleasure and comfort, or doing something to overcome his sufferings, and this cycle continues. Then suddenly death comes, descending upon him from the blue—and he leaves the body and the world most reluctantly. We must remember here that this applies to the ignorant creature who thinks that the gross physical body is his 'true self', instead of the subtle Atma.

But when the same man becomes wise, self-realised and enlightened, he understands that his 'truthful self' is not the body but the Atma which is pure consciousness, which is an ethereal Spirit that is separate from the body as well as the world, and which is a fraction or a reflection of the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram. Once this happens, the creature does not accumulate any consequences of the deeds done by the body—simply because the doer now is *not* the Atma, which is his truthful self, *but* the body which is a separate entity. It is the body that would either enjoy or suffer from the deeds done by it, without affecting the Atma at all. Therefore, the Atma is not affected by the law of Karma (deeds) which states that one is bound by the result of his actions.

Besides this, a wise person knows that the world is artificial and deluding, so it is best to avoid its illusionary charms and traps. How can one expect to quench his thirst by running behind a mirage in a hot desert? Therefore, such a man stops harbouring desires and having lust for the material objects of this world. No desires means there is no need to fulfill them.

Since new birth directly depends upon the cumulative effects of the deeds done by a creature in the current life as well as the hoard of unfulfilled desires that he has at the instant of the physical death of his body, a wise creature who has become self-realised and enlightened about his truthful identity as being the ethereal Atma instead of the gross

physical would have neither of the burdens (of deeds and desires) on him at the time of shedding the gross body, which he nevertheless knows is perishable and destined to die.

So he dies peacefully, and his Atma, his ethereal soul, merges with the cosmic Soul, instead of searching for a new slot to enter into and come back to this world. This results in his finding Mukti or liberation and deliverance.

On the other hand, the ignorant creature who was neck-deep involved in the body and the world would be assigned a new body and take a birth depending upon two factors—one is the past deeds done by him, and the other is the hoard of unfulfilled desires needed to be taken care of.]

180. भव भुअंग तुलसी नकुल डसत ग्यान हरि लेत ।  
चित्रकूट एक औषधी चितवत होत सचेत ॥

180. bhava bhu'aṅga tulasī nakula ḍasata gyāna hari lēta.  
citrakūṭa ēka auṣadhī citavata hōta sacēta..

The serpent-like world bites the mongoose-like Tulsidas and immediately deprives him of all wisdom, but Chitrakoot is such a remedy that on merely seeing it (i.e. thinking of it or remembering it or visualising it) he (Tulsidas) regains consciousness almost immediately. (180)

[Note—The snake and the mongoose are born natural enemies. The mongoose knows of an herb that helps to counter the poisonous effects of snake bite. So as soon as it is bitten by the snake, it runs to the nearest plant and sniffs it before losing consciousness. This helps the mongoose to survive the fatal affects of snake bite. Then the same mongoose pounces back on the snake, and sometimes it happens that it is able to kill the serepent, its tormentor.

Tulsidas is referring to this natural phenomenon. Like the cruel serpent, the world has a natural habit to bite the unsuspecting. Its bite is so vicious that the bitten begins to lose awareness of his senses, i.e. he begins to hallucinate. The person who is bitten by the bug known as the world of material sense objects becomes deluded, loses his moral anchor and mental bearing, and temptations of this world forces him to get sucked in a whirlpool of desires and cravings, of attachments and attractions, of wrong knowledge that is more dangerous than pure ignorance, and of their attendant pain, misery, tribulations and sorrows. He begins to reel under their combined onslaught, and like a man bitten by a poisonous snake, he becomes extremely restless, agitated and miserable. It appears that his spiritual life is about to get extinct, and there seems to be no chance of his finding peace and deliverance from the worldly torments. He keeps turning in the worldly whirlpool so rapidly that he sees the whole world and the whole life-cycle running around him in circles, and there seems to be no time to let the mind rest and regain its bearing. How can one ever expect peace and happiness in this horrible condition of existence?

Tulsidas has a solution. He says that in such a spiritual dilemma, the only solution is to remember Lord Ram, invoke his grace and mercy, and take shelter with the Lord—but do it before it's too late. Just like the mongoose managing to retain its consciousness if it manages to reach the herb before it is too late and the poison of the snake bite takes effect, the creature must wake up as early as possible to overcome the moral and spiritual poison that the world has injected in him, and take the remedy of Lord Ram as quickly as possible. If he does so, his liberation and deliverance, i.e. his Mukti, from the worldly torments and shackles, and his freedom from the vice-like grip of the cycle of birth and death, are easily taken care of. The soul will find eternal peace and comfort; the creature

will be free from all the horrors of this world and he will have the umbrella of protection from none other than the Lord of this creation. And all comes free of charge for him!

It appears that Chitrakoot has great attraction, morally and spiritually, for Tulsidas; he has a great affinity for this place. It was in Chitrakoot that (a) Sri Ram had met Bharat most emotionally and affectionately when the latter had gone to ask the Lord to forgive him for all the troubles that the Lord had to suffer due to his mother Kaikeyi who had sent the Lord to forest exile, and to come back to Ayodhya to accept the throne; it was here that the Lord had made public his love and affection for Bharat though he did not return; it was here that Bharat got the Lord's sandals which he put on the throne of Ayodhya upon his return as a symbol of the Lord's presence. (b) Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman had led a peaceful life here before Sita's abduction by Ravana and the tumult and turbulence that followed. And (c) Chitrakoot provides immense opportunity for serenity, solitude and peace of mind, something any spiritual aspirant would long for. The fabulous natural beauty of the surrounding areas of this place make it ideal place for spiritual practices, such as doing contemplation, meditation, penances etc., and in general leading a spiritual, quiet, mystic way of life away from the hectic hustle and bustle of the world.

Of all the geographical places associated with the story of Lord Ram, Chitrakoot has the best natural environment that is conducive to spiritual pursuit. Since Lord Ram had spent some days in peace here, this calm and placid place has special importance for the devotees of the Lord. Its serene and tranquil atmosphere along with its exceptional natural beauty appears to draw the soul closer to the Supreme Being and Mother Nature.

Tulsidas' fascination with Chitrakoot is exemplified in *Vinai Patrika*, verse no. 24 in which the saint exhorts the mind and the sub-conscious to go and dwell in the pleasant environment of this place in order to invigorate and rejuvenate themselves spiritually. Its glories and laurels are sung in *Vinai Patrika*, verse no. 23 also, which essentially emphasise that Chitrakoot has the mystical ability to free the creature from all types of torments, troubles and tribulations.

The natural beauty and spiritual environment of Chitrakoot as well as the peaceful and comfortable days that Lord Ram passed here have been described elaborately in *Ram Charit Manas*, *Ayodhya Kand*, *Chaupai* line no. 3 that precedes *Doha* no. 132, to *Chaupai* line no. 3 that precedes *Doha* no. 142.

Refer also to—(i) *Kavitawali*, *Uttar Kand*, verse nos. 141-143; (ii) *Geetawali*, *Ayodhya Kand*, verse nos. 43-50.]

181. हौंहु कहावत सबु कहत राम सहत उपहास ।  
साहिब सीतानाथ सो सेवक तुलसीदास ॥

181. haunhu kahāvata sabu kahata rāma sahata upahāsa.  
sāhiba sītānātha sō sēvaka tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas says, 'Everyone calls me a servant (i.e. a sincere and faithful devotee and follower) of Lord Sri Ram, and I (am so shameless that I) endorse it unabashedly without any hesitation. Lord Ram is so magnanimous, kind-hearted and merciful that he tolerates this joke (because I am not worthy of being called his servant or devotee at all, but still the world teases me with this honourable epithet and I say 'yes, I am' just to avoid embarrassment).

Say, how tolerant and accepting the Lord is indeed (that he does not mind this great joke being played upon his honourable name and the dignity of the exalted position of being the Lord's servant and follower, for neither am I eligible for this great honour nor am I able to serve the Lord the way a true devotee is expected to).' (181)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 28 of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand.

This Doha shows how humble, simple and unpretentious Tulsidas was. There is no doubting of the fact that the Lord was especially kind upon Tulsidas and he was the Lord's chosen one, that he was indeed a blessed soul who had the greatest respect for Lord Ram and the highest level of reverence, devotion, dedication, love and faith in the Lord who was the very essence of Tulsidas' life and existence. But still Tulsidas says in all humbleness that he is not worthy of the exalted position of being the Lord's servant, nor is he competent to be able to serve the Lord and be called his lowest of servants.

The word used in the text is 'Sevak' which literally means 'one who serves'. The term 'servant' should not be taken to mean a menial servant here, but one who serves the Lord and is absolutely loyal, committed and devoted to him like a faithful and obedient servant. The word refers to the Lord's faithful and sincere follower, disciple, devotee and apostle who is completely devoted and dedicated to the Lord, for whom no one else matters in this world. All his deeds and actions are done for the Lord, are meant to serve the Lord, and are submitted to the Lord. Nothing is expected in return; no rewards and honours are accepted as remuneration for this service. Personal ego and pride have no place in this service, and the Lord's will is sacrosanct. Such a servant has his mind focused on the Lord, and he is keen on doing the best he can to please his Lord.

Obviously of course, any Lord who has this kind of servant is bound to have a soft corner for the latter in his heart. The supreme Lord, Lord Ram, excels in the virtues of compassion, mercy, kindness, benevolence, magnanimity, grace, munificence, the feeling of indebtedness and gratitude towards someone who has done something for him, and so on. The Lord looks for such virtues as love, devotion, dedication, sincerity, faith, humility, commitment, keenness, truthfulness and honesty in the person coming to seek the Lord's grace, and there is no other consideration or criterion to be accepted by the Lord. Therefore, when he finds that his devotee is totally dedicated to him, and has submitted himself before the Lord without any reservations, the Lord gracefully, willingly and cheerfully accepts him with an open arm.]

182. राम राज राजत सकल धरम निरत नर नारि ।  
रग न रोष न दोष दुख सुलभ पदारथ चारि ॥

182. rāma rāja rājata sakala dharama nirata nara nāri.  
rāga na rōṣa na dōṣa dukha sulabha padāratha cāri..

During the reign of Sri Ram (at Ayodhya), all the citizens (men and women) followed their assigned righteous paths and did their duties in the right way. Their lives and demeanours were exemplary and glorious<sup>1</sup>. There were no vices and negative tendencies such as Raag (attachments and infatuations), Rosha (anger, vengeance, wrathfulness), Dosha (different faults and shortcomings), and Dukha (sorrows, grief, torments, miseries) etc. anywhere<sup>2</sup>. The four celebrated fruits of being good, noble and righteous (known as Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) were readily available to everyone<sup>3</sup>. (182)

[Note— The time and life during the reign of Lord Ram has been described in (i) Ram Charit Manas in great detail in its Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20, to Doha no. 23; and (ii) Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 1, 19-24.

<sup>1</sup>The citizens followed the path that was auspicious, righteous, noble, proper and truthful. This being the way of life, the natural consequence was there was happiness and prosperity everywhere. Refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 20, Chaupai line nos. 2-3, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 21, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 22 etc. They basically say that during the reign of Lord Ram, the people obediently, voluntarily and diligently followed the righteous and noble path of day to day life and conduct as laid down by the Vedas etc., i.e. in accordance to the law of proper conduct as ordained by the scriptures. All the members of the society followed the laws that governed their particular segment, and did their assigned duties religiously. All of them were of a charitable nature, and used to give respect to their elders. They were loyal to their spouses, and there was an environment of trust, good faith and brotherhood everywhere. Hence, they were always happy and contented. They were friendly and cordial towards each other, and there was a general congenial atmosphere in the society.

<sup>2</sup>Grief, misfortunes, troubles and tribulations happen when one does not obey the laws of Nature and God as laid down in the ancient scriptures, which are collectively called Dharma. But when Dharma is followed faithfully, positive energy permeates everywhere, and there is well-being and cheer all around. Refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 20, Doha no. 21 and Chaupai line nos. 1, 5-6 that precede, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22 etc. They basically say that during the reign of Lord Ram, there was no grief and sorrow of any kind, nor were there any of the worldly taints that are normally found everywhere else in this gross world of mundane existence. Hence the people were very happy and cheerful and contented.

See Doha no. 183 below.

<sup>3</sup>With Lord Ram—who was a personified form of the Supreme Being as well as of Dharma, whose personal life was immaculate and beyond reproach, who belived in obeying the laws himself first before preaching others, i.e. who led by example—as the king, it is naturally expected the subjects to be followers of Dharma and be happy because the subjects of a kingdom do as their king does. Refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 21, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22, Doha no. 23, etc. They primarily say that all the people were devoted to Lord Ram and led an auspicious life so much so that all the celebrated rewards of goodnees and righteousness were easily available to them.

The four acclaimed legendary rewards of leading a righteous life in accordance to the laws of Dharma are ‘Artha’—meaning financial well-being, ‘Dharma’—meaning a natural tendency to follow the path that is righteous, noble, auspicious and proper, without prodding or coercion, ‘Kaam’—meaning fulfillment of all desires, leading to contentment, and ‘Moksha’—meaning liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. In other words, a person who leads an honourable and conscientious life in accordance with the laws of righteousness and proper conduct is automatically entitled to all round welfare and well-being, both of the mundane kind as well as of the spiritual kind.]

183. राम राज संतोष सुख घर बन सकल सुपास ।  
तरु सुरतरु सुरधेनु महि अभिमत भोग बिलास ॥

183. rāma rāja santōṣa sukha ghara bana sakala supāsa.

taru surataru suradhēnu mahi abhimata bhōga bilāsa..

During the reign of Sri Ram, there was contentment and all-round happiness of all kinds everywhere. All facilities for a comfortable and cheerful life were available both in the forest as well as in the household.

The trees were like the celestial Kalpa tree of the Gods (which is the all wish-fulfilling and evergreen tree of the Gods), and the earth resembled the Kamdhenu cow (that also provided all the necessary things of life in great abundance like this cow of the Gods that can give an endless supply of wholesome and nourishing milk as well as any other eatable that is wished by the creature)<sup>1</sup>.

[In other words, there was no dearth of anything. All the necessities of life and comfort were abundantly available.] (183)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 6/3/3 of Tulsidas' book 'Ram Agya Prashnawali'.

<sup>1</sup>The Kalpa Tree and the Kamdhenu cow are the two entities that provided whatever the Gods wished to have. They are used here as metaphors for all round abundance and fulfillment of all desires. Everything desired by the citizens were easily made available to them. Nothing wished remained out of reach. The earth produced rich crops and harvest; the land was fertile and productive; the landscape was rich and vibrant with signs of a happy, cheerful and contented life; it had green fruit-bearing trees and lush greenery everywhere. Life was full of vibrancy, happiness and cheerfulness associated with abundance of good fortune, and lack of worries and pain. There was greenery everywhere; crops were abundant; the granary and larder were always full; the earth yielded precious metals, gems and minerals; the trees gave sweet and succulent fruits as well as colourful and fragrant flowers. It appeared in general that heaven had descended upon earth during the reign of Lord Ram.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, the first part of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23 especially refers to the 'Kalpa Tree' when it says that "the Kalpa tree bore fruits and flowers at all times".

Similarly, Doha no. 23 and its preceding Chaupais, from the second part of line no. 1 to line no.10, of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, extol the magnificence, the charm, the beauty, the glory, the grandeur, the vibrancy, and the general environment of peace, brotherhood, happiness, abundance and cheerfulness that prevailed on all the corners of the 'earth' during the reign of Lord Ram.

A brief description of the Kalpa Tree and the Kamdhenu cow is as follows—

The *Kalpa Tree*—It is the evergreen tree of the Gods. It is said to possess mystical powers and can bestow all that is desired by an aspirant or seeker. The Botanical name of the Kalpa Tree is *Adansonia Digitta*; it is also called 'Parijaat' meaning 'descended from the sea', and 'Harsingar' meaning 'the decoration of the Gods, especially Lord Hari'. The English name of it is Coral Jasmine; in Latin it is called *Nyctanthes Arbor Tristis* (nyctanthes means the night flower, while arbor tristis means the sad tree). Its flower is said to be worn by the Gods. The orange colour of the flower is used for dyeing silk and cotton, a practice originating with Buddhist monks. According to legends, it was produced during the churning of the ocean for the search of Amrit, or the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, by the Demons and the Gods. The king of the Gods, Indra, took it away and planted it in his capital at Amravati. According to another legend (in Vishnu Puran), a princess named Parijaat fell in love with the Sun God and followed him throughout the day. As night approached, the Sun became disenchanted with her and did not like her overtures any longer. Disillusioned and despaired, she died, and a tree grew up from the ashes at the site of her funeral pyre. The flower of this tree could not bear the sight of the

Sun, and therefore it blooms during the night, and with the crack of dawn, it falls and dies.

The Anand Ramayan (said to be written by sage Valmiki) narrates how the Kalpa Tree was brought to Ayodhya in its Rajya Kand (Purvaardha), Sarga (Canto) 2 full.

The *Kamdhenu Cow*—She is the celestial cow of the Gods, and was produced at the time of the celestial ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity. She was taken away by Indra, the king of Gods. It is believed that this cow fulfills all wishes of the devotee who serves her.

Sage Vashistha's cow whose name was Nandini is often belived to the Kamdhenu Cow. According to another version, Prajapati Daksha had a daughter by the name of Surabhi. Her off-spring was named Rohini, and Kamdhenu was Rohini's daughter.

This cow has white colour. Its four feet represent the four Vedas. Its four udders can fulfill all the four wishes of a man—these are Artha or financial well-being, Dharma or fulfillment of religious requirements in life, Kaam or fulfillment of all other wishes, and Moksha or attainment of liberation and deliverance from this world.]

184. खेती बनि विद्या बनिज सेवा सिलिप सुकाज ।  
तुलसी सुरतरु सरिस सब सुफल राम के राज ॥

184. khētī bani vidyā banija sēvā silipa sukāja.  
tulasī surataru sarisa saba suphala rāma kēm rāja..

Tulsidas says that during the reign of Lord Sri Ram, all efforts, enterprises, endeavours, vocations and professions, such as farming, manual labour, teaching and learning (education), business, service, artistry and craftsmanship etc.—all of them yielded desired rewards (results) to those who undertook them (or pursued them).

That is, all efforts and enterprises were always successful, and were rewarding for their practitioners who got the desired results from their endeavour, and never had to face failure and frustration. All these pursuits were like the legendary Kalpa Tree which provides beautiful fruits as desired by the wisher—i.e. the aim and objective for which the people did anything was always attained or achieved by them. (184)

185. दंड जतिन्ह कर भेद जहँ नर्तक नृत्य समाज ।  
जीतहु मनहि सुनिअ अस रामचंद्र के राज ॥

185. daṇḍa jatinha kara bhēda jaham̃ nartaka nr̥tya samāja.  
jītaḥu manahi suni'a asa rāmacandra kēm rāja..

'Danda' (an ascetic's stick, cane or staff) was seen in the hands of ascetics and recluses only (i.e. it was never used to punish anyone)<sup>1</sup>; 'Bheda' (dissension, variety, debates, contradictions, differences of opinion) was used only in dance parties and intellectual debates (i.e. rift, deceit, cunning, dissension etc. was never used by people against each other)<sup>2</sup>; and 'Jita' (meaning conquer, vanquish, subdue, subjugate, overcome, trounce etc.) was a word that was used only with reference to the mind and thought (i.e. not against other kingdoms or lands)<sup>3</sup>. Such was the righteous and noble reign of Sri Ram. (185)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 22 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand.

<sup>1</sup>The stick was not used to threaten others or cause them bodily harm; it was not meant to be a symbol of coercion and force. Rather, it was greatly respected in the society and was a symbol of high esteem, attracting the greatest of reverence, instead of fear, because it was used by revered and holy ascetics and sages who had developed exemplary noble virtues, had achieved the highest of self-restraint, renunciation and dispassion, and had attained the spiritually exalted stature of self-realisation, wisdom and enlightenment.

<sup>2</sup>Debates and discussions as to which is better and what is right was restricted to worldly things of pleasure, such as dance parties, games and other such mundane pleasures in which the people entered in healthy debates as to which or what is the proper musical note and tone that is to be played, which or what song is better than the other, which or what is the correct step in the dance, which game is better and for what reason, and so on. But finding faults and pricking holes was never used to embarrass people, to insult them or to bite them behind their backs. It was never employed to trick others and cause ill-will and spread animosity in the society.

<sup>3</sup>Similarly, the words 'defeat, subdue, overcome, trounce etc.' were also used exclusively in pursuit of mundane pleasures as games, competitions, intellectual debates etc. Since there was no enemy during the reign of Lord Ram, since there was harmony and brotherhood everywhere, there was no question of conquering or defeating or subduing or vanquishing or overcoming any opponent.

A king uses the four instruments of political jurisprudence and statecraft to keep control over his kingdom and its subject, to spy on dissidents and traitors, and to protect his kingdom from prying eyes and opportunistic jealous enemies. These four instruments are known as 'Saam'—gentlemanly behaviour; politeness and courteousness (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 21); 'Daan'—liberal largesses, aids and donations, as well as other forms of material and financial help so that the recipient is obliged (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22); 'Danda'—coercion, force, punishment and threatening (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 107); and 'Bhed'—creating or sowing seeds of dissention, discord, contradictions, doubts, disloyalty etc. (ref.—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43).

These four were standard methods used by kings and emperors as a matter of state policy. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38. The rulers maintained hold over their kingdom, found about disloyal subjects, evil designs of neighbouring countries, and in the case of war to subdue, defeat and conquer a much larger and stronger enemy by employing these four techniques in varying proportions.]

186. कोपें सोच न पोच कर करिअ निहोर न काज ।  
तुलसी परमिति प्रीति की रीति राम कें राज ॥

186. kōpēm sōca na pōca kara kari'a nihōra na kāja.  
tulasī paramiti prīti kī rīti rāma kēm rāja..

Tulsidas says that during the reign of Lord Sri Ram, the custom of love and affectionate behaviour, the good virtues of being amiable, congenial, friendly, cordial and social had reached its zenith. As a result, no one bothered (paid any heed) if anyone became angry, no one felt insulted or humiliated when someone became angry and used harsh words, and therefore there was no desire for vengeance, revenge or retribution. Everyone did

each others' work cheerfully, affectionately and willingly, in an atmosphere of general cooperation and brotherhood, without feeling any compulsion or obligation to do so. That is, everyone helped each other voluntarily and with cheerfulness. No one asked the other person to lend a helping hand, for help and aid came voluntarily and with no strings attached. No one expected to be thanked for any help extended to his neighbour, and neither did he helped the other person to oblige him and use this as a means to exploit him later on. (186)

[Note—This is due to the high level of enlightenment of the citizens of the kingdom of Lord Ram who were well aware of the eclectic spiritual and metaphysical wisdom that all living beings are one or the other forms of the same Supreme Being, and that the same Atma, the universal Holy Spirit and the cosmic Consciousness, resides in all of them. Since there was no animosity and jealousy between the citizens, they cheerfully and willingly helped each other as if the whole kingdom was one large extended family where each member loves the other, and where joys and pains are shared amongst all the members equally.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 3 which says that all the creatures serve the same Supreme Being who has manifested himself in all the forms that exist in this creation, and who is the universal Lord of all living beings.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 112 Kha, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma that those who are completely and honestly devoted and submitted to Lord Ram and his holy feet have no enemies because they see their Lord everywhere and in each living being in this world.]

187. मुकुर निरखि मुख राम भ्रू गनत गुनहि दै दोष ।  
तुलसी से सठ सेवकन्हि लिखि जनि परहिं सरोष ॥

187. mukura nirakhi mukha rāma bhrū ganata gunahi dai dōṣa.  
tulasī sē saṭha sēvakanhi lakhi jani parahiṃ sarōṣa..

When Lord Ram watches his own face in a mirror, he sees the bow-like curvature of his eyes-brows, and wonders if his servants (followers, devotees, those who serve the Lord) like Tulsidas, who are sinners, mischievous, wicked, rascals and scoundrels, would be scared on seeing them, thinking that Lord Ram is angry at them. That is, the Lord is so kind-hearted, merciful, compassionate, gracious, benevolent and magnanimous that he does not want that any part or posture of his body should frighten his devotees by depicting any trace of annoyance, anger or grimace of any kind. (187)

[Note—In other words, the Lord is so careful in his demeanours and behaviour, in his deeds and actions, and even in the natural postures of his body and its individual organs that they should never convey the notion that the Lord is offended or annoyed or angry with his devotees, followers and those who serve him. The gracious Lord does not want that anyone should be unnecessarily offended or scared in the least by him or his demeanours; he wants to appear warm, pleasing, welcoming, friendly, amiable and affectionate. The Lord's form and visual appearance should be attracting and not repelling or frightening. The devotee must feel free to say anything he likes to the Lord and approach him without fear.

So, when he observes the curved eye-brows, which are naturally curved and not so because he is angry or annoyed or upset, he fears that this may scare the devotee. But what can he do with it; he can't help. So the Lord takes extra precaution and always

sports a broad smile on his face so that the wrong impression given by his naturally curved eye-brow is off-set by his cheerful demeanours, warm gestures of welcome, a sweet voice, and a broad and pleasant smile.

Tulsidas has used this Doha to simply emphasise the fact that Lord Ram is of an extremely loving nature, and it is impossible to find a Lord in this world who is more kind and considerate than Lord Ram. The loving, benevolent and magnanimous Lord Ram's constant endeavour is that all his devotees, followers and those who serve him should be happy and cheerful.]

188. सहसनाम मुनि भनित सुनि तुलसी बल्लभ नाम ।  
सकुचित हियँ हँसि निरखि सिय धरम धुरंधर राम ॥

188. sahasanāma muni bhanita suni tulasī ballabha nāma.  
sakucita hiyaṁ haṁsi nirakhi siya dharama dhurandhara rāma..

Amongst the 1000 names of the Lord God as pronounced by the sage, one name is 'Tulsi Ballav'<sup>1</sup>. [The word 'Ballav' means a husband; beloved; one who is dear. Hence, the name of the Lord, 'Tulsi Ballav', literally means the Lord who is a protector, a benefactor and a beloved Lord of Tulsi.]

On hearing this word, Lord Sri Ram, who is a 'Dharma-dhurandhar'—i.e. an expert in the laws governing righteousness, nobility, propriety and other good virtues, blushed and looked at Sita (his divine consort) with a shy smile<sup>2</sup>. (188)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer also Doha nos. 395 and 542 of this book.

The story goes that the demon Jalandhar had become invincible on the strength of his pure and chaste wife called Brinda (pronounced as Brindaa). There was no way to kill this cruel demon except to violate the chastity vow of Brinda. In order to take care of peace and welfare of the rest of the world, and to maintain law and order in creation, Lord Vishnu had no choice but to disguise himself as the demon to violate the honourable lady's chastity. But having done this and allowing Lord Shiva to kill the demon, Vishnu had blessed her with a boon that in the form of 'Tulsi' (the holy Basil plant) she would be absolutely necessary to sanctify all food offered to the Lord, and he would wear her on top of his Shaligram-form. This Shaligram form of the Lord is the curse that Brinda cast upon the Lord when she realised what had happened. She cursed him to become a stone. The Shaligram is a rounded piece of smooth stone, generally black in colour that is found on the banks of the holy river Narmada. Shaligram has a great symbolic value—it denotes the formless shape of the Supreme Being, a form that has no specific features as a hand or a head. It is more like an egg in its shape, symbolizing the cosmic egg from which the rest of the creation has emerged.

Worship of Lord Vishnu as the cosmic Lord who is without attributes and forms is done in the Shaligram in a symbolic manner. But for this worship, leaves of the Tulsi plant (Basil plant) are an absolute necessity to mark this event and the fact that the magnanimous Lord had to do something that was wrong but necessary for the larger welfare and interest of his creation because that was also his duty and responsibility. The Lord was ready to suffer ignominy and the curse of becoming a stone that rolls and tosses about in the current of the river, literally condemned to lead a life that is virtually as gross and inane as a worthless stone, just in order to uphold the requirements of Dharma that the wrongdoer must be punished even if it means one has to suffer himself in the process. But the Lord knew that Brinda was immaculate and irreproachable, so he blessed

her that since she had accepted him as her husband, the Lord is ready to accept her as his eternally beloved one.

For the Lord, accepting and elevating Brinda to the same pedestal as his celestial divine consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was a kind and loving gesture towards Brinda that she is not only pardoned for cursing the Lord to become a stone but also accepted by him as his most beloved one who is deemed to be so close and essential for the Lord that his worship would never be completed with her symbolic presence in the form of the Tulsi leaves.

It is remarkable to note that the only offering needed to honour and pay one's obeisance to Lord Vishnu in the form of Shaligram is the leaf of the holy Tulsi plant. No amount of offering in the form of money and material things will please the Lord if there is no leaf of the Tulsi plant. A single Tulsi leaf is all that is required to worship Shaligram, and there is no need for anything else.

<sup>2</sup>In the present case of our Doha, Tulsidas is playing on the word 'Tulsi' of the Lord's name Tulsi-Ballav. He means here that Sri Ram's affection and love for him is no less than what he had for the legendary Tulsi, which was a notch higher than for Laxmi or Sita. This is probably the reason why Sri Ram 'blushed' at the mention of the word in the presence of Sita.

Tulsidas' warmth of devotion is remarkable indeed! His effervescent and fluorescent love and affection for Lord Sri Ram is a shared emotion, it is mutual. That is, his love and affection for Lord Ram is matched by the Lord's love and affection for him. This is true because there is no one dearer to Lord Ram than his humble devotee and follower who have no one else to call his own except the Lord.]

189. गौतम तिय गति सुरति करि नहिं परसति पग पानि ।  
मन बिहँसे रघुबंसमनि प्रीति अलौकिक जानि ॥

189. gautama tiya gati surati kari nahirñ parasati paga pāni.  
mana bihamśē raghubansamani prīti alaukika jāni..

At the time of Lord Sri Ram's marriage with Sita, the latter did not touch the Lord's feet as is customary, inspite of her companions and friends prodding her to do so, because she recalled the fate of the wife of sage Gautam (i.e. Ahilya who was transformed from a stone to a divine lady when the Lord touched her with his foot) and feared about her own fate<sup>1</sup>.

Realising this extraordinary love of Sita (that she feared separation from him should touching the Lord's holy feet would turn her into some divine goddess who will be forced to go to heaven), Sri Ram felt extremely glad, and he smiled politely and secretly<sup>2</sup>. (189)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 265 of Baal Kand in Ram Charit Manas.

<sup>1</sup>The chaste wife of sage Gautam, named *Ahilya*, had been turned into a stone by a curse. When Sri Ram's feet touched this stone while he was on the way to Janakpur to attend Sita's marriage ceremony, Ahilya was freed of her curse and was transformed into her original form. She was liberated from the curse and delivered from the gross form in which she had lived for so long time. She then ascended to the sky or heaven, and went to join her husband, sage Gautam.

Sita was worried that she will also become Goddess Laxmi, her original form as the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, if she touched the holy feet of Lord Ram just as Ahilya became sage Gautam's wife.

The story of *Ahilya*— She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.

Refer also to Doha nos. 174-175 above. The story of Ahilya finding her original form from being a stone is narrated in—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 210 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-12, to Doha no. 211. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 57-60.

<sup>2</sup>The Lord smiled at Sita's innocence. How is it possible for her to go to heaven to join Lord Vishnu when the latter is standing right in her front as Lord Ram?

The Lord smiled at the profound impact his Maya (delusion creating powers) has that it has even taken Goddess Laxmi, personified as Sita, for a ride. Lord Ram smiled in amazement that couldn't Sita realise that Lord Vishnu is here on earth with some divine mission, and therefore there is no question of the Lord's divine consort Laxmi, which she is, to go to heaven while the Lord is still here on earth?]

### The glory of Lord Ram

190. तुलसी बिलसत नखत निसि सरद सुधाकर साथ ।  
मुकुता झालरि झलक जनु राम सुजसु सिसु हाथ ॥

190. tulasī bilasata nakhata nisi sarada sudhākara sātha.  
mukutā jhālari jhalaka janu rāma sujasu sisu hātha..

Tulsidas says that the full moon of the night of the Sharad Purnima (roughly, the full moon of October) along with the twinkling stars in the sky appears like a pearl necklace

(or garland or chain) in the hands of a child representing Lord Sri Ram's divine glory, fabulous fame and immaculate reputation. (190)

[Note—Here, Lord Ram's countless virtues are like the countless twinkling stars that fill the sky, and the Lord's grand reputation, divine glory and immensity of fame are compared to the full moon. Since the body of the Lord is dark-hued, it is comparable to the sky.

The idea is that the Lord's countless virtues are so huge and many in number that it is impossible to count them and individually glorify them. But taken together, they all help to multiply manifold and add glitter to the already grand and magnificent beauty of the Lord's overall reputation and glory.

The Lord's grand reputation and glory has spread to all the corners of this world just like the sweet and pleasant light of the full moon covers all the corners of earth and stretches as far as the sky.

Refer Doha nos. 191 and 192 below.]

191. रघुपति कीरति कामिनी क्यो कहै तुलसीदासु ।  
सरद अकास प्रकास ससि चारु चिबुक तिल जासु ॥

191. raghupati kīrati kāmīnī kyōm kahai tulasīdāsu.  
sarada akāsa prakāsa sasi cāru cibuka tila jāsu..

Tulsidas wonders how to describe or narrate the beauty of the charming damsel representing Lord Sri Ram's glorious fame and grand reputation. It appears that the glowing full moon of the night of Sharad Purnima (as described in Doha no. 190) is merely like a mole on the chin of that damsel. (191)

[Note—After having compared the full moon to the Lord's fame, glory and reputation, Tulsidas adds this Doha to remove the impression that it is not as brilliant and shining as the sun. Tulsidas has written in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 292 “the moon appears dull and the sun appears cool when they are compared to the immense fame, reputation and glory of Lord Ram”.

So well, the saint-poet has added this Doha to put the record straight. The mole is dark and like a blob on the skin. But the wonder is that this little mole only adds charm to the face. So, after saying that the Lord Ram's fame and glories are like the beautiful full moon, Tulsidas now adds to say that when the different qualities and virtues of the Supreme Being during his single incarnation as Lord Ram are compared to other aspects of the Supreme Being when seen in his cosmic role and countless forms and manifestations, then this single role fades into oblivion.

The sun and the moon are like the two eyes of the Supreme Being known as the Viraat Purush, another name of Lord Vishnu whose incarnation is Lord Ram. This is endorsed in the Upanishads. Refer: The Atharva Veda's *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak 2, section 1, verse no. 4 which states that the sun and the moon are like the two eyes of the Viraat Purush. To quote—

“verse no. 4 = That whose head or crown is the fire element, the sun and the moon the two eyes, the directions the ears, the famous Vedas the speech, the air or wind the Pran (the vital life sustaining winds that keep the living being alive), the entire world the heart, and from whose legs the earth has been created—verily, that supreme cosmic transcendental Brahm is established as the Atma that resides in the inner self of all living beings in creation (4).”

The Lord's glory, fame and divinity are so vast, measureless and fathomless that no one can ever scratch even their surface. Any attempt to do so amounts to a bird trying to measure the depth of the sky when it flies in it. This is said in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 91 when sage Kaagbhusund explains the immensity and profundity of Lord Ram's glory and divinity to the bird Garuda, the mount of Lord Vishnu, who had gone to the former to remove his doubts about Lord Ram.

The beauty of the full moon is also no comparison to the beauty of Lord Ram's form as stated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243 which says "the beauty of the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) is so stupendous, magnificent, bewitching, enthralling and captivating that millions of cupids, the god of passion and love who is renowned for his beauty and charm, would appear miniscule in its comparison".]

192. प्रभु गुन गन भूषन बसन बिसद बिसेष सुबेस ।  
राम सुकीरति कामिनी तुलसी करतब केस ॥

192. prabhu guna gana bhūṣana basana bisada bisēṣa subēsa.  
rāma sukīrati kāmīnī tulasī karataba kēsa..

The collective glorious, the divine virtues and excellent qualities of Lord Sri Ram are like the freshly cleaned and beautiful clothes and attractive jewellery that adorns the charming damsel representing the glorious fame and reputation of Lord Sri Ram, whereas her dark hair represents the (un-worthy) attempt of Tulsidas at trying to describe them (for which he is not at all qualified and competent). (192)

[Note—In Doha nos. 190-191, the metaphor of the moon and the stars has been used to describe the beauty and the countless numbers of Lord Ram's divine glories. Now in this Doha another metaphor of the cloth and the jewellery worn by a beautiful woman is used for the same purpose.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 10 say "this poetry of mine (Tulsidas') would become charming and attractive for pious and noble people because it is associated with and attempts to narrate the grand and magnificent glory, reputation, divinity and fame of Lord Ram (Raghupati), for it is common knowledge that even the impure and dirty ash of the cremation ground becomes worthy of respect and adulation when it gets associated with Lord Shiva who picks it up and applies it on his body".

Tulsidas says in this Doha that he is not a worthy and competent writer; he is not an expert and acclaimed poet. His compositions lack expertise, beauty, charm and depth. They are mediocre and lack-lustre; they are dull, dark and boring. But remember: he is simply trying to pay his obeisance and express his thanksgiving to his beloved Lord God Sri Ram by narrating the Lord's story and divine glories in the best possible way he can. Had it not been for Lord Ram, his writings would have been dumped as worthy not even of a glance, let alone being read and honoured. But since they are related to singing the divine glories and magnificent deeds of the Supreme Being in his human form of Lord Ram, the same writing has acquired immense value, respect and acclaim in this world. The credit for the honour that Tulsidas has got due to his writings is due to the grace of Lord Ram. It is due to the Lord that Tulsidas' poems and the writings that are crystallised forms of the outpourings of his heart have acquired the status of a holy book; it is due to the grace of the Lord that Tulsidas has acquired such an exalted status in the hierarchy of poets and authors. It is indeed the grace of Lord Ram that has elevated the virtually

unknown and incompetent person known as Tulsidas to a high pedestal of universal respect, honour and acclaim.

In this verse, Tulsidas compares his writings, his poetry and prose narrating the Lord's story to the long black hairs of a beautiful lady. The hairs are themselves lifeless, dark and useless long threads, but when they adorn the head of a beautiful lady their importance and value as well as their beauty and charm are enhanced multiple times. The same hair which is described with contempt when one calls them 'dark and black' becomes a subject of adoration and honour when it adorns the face of a beautiful lady, for now people begin to appreciate it and praise its black colour. The colour 'black' is looked down with disdain in other contexts, but when it is applied to the colour of the hair on the head of a beautiful fair-complexioned lady, it acquires immense charm and beauty of its own.]

193. राम चरित राकेस कर सरिस सुखद सब काहु ।  
सज्जन कुमुद चकोर चित हित बिसेषि बड़ लाहु ॥

193. rāma carita rākēsa kara sarisa sukhada saba kāhu.  
sajjana kumuda cakōra cita hita bisēṣi baṛa lāhu..

The divine story and the glories of Lord Sri Ram give peace and joy to all equally in this world like the soothing and the comforting rays of the full moon, but they are especially attractive and highly beneficial for, and greatly loved by gentlemen who are pious and noble at heart (such as the Lord's devotees and those who are of a spiritual inclination). For the mind and intellect of such people, the Lord's divine story and his equally divine glories have the same effect as the rays of the full moon has on the lotus flower and the bird known as Chakor. (193)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 32 of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand.

The full moon looks adorable and beautiful in the sky. Its rays act as a soothing balm on nerves and cool them down. As compared to the scorching rays of the sun, the rays of the moon are always welcome and invigorating for the heart. The moonlight illuminates the world softly and tenderly; it is free from the ferocity of the sunlight. All living beings find comfort and cheer under the rays of the moon, but the lotus flower and the Chakor bird (the Indian red-legged partridge) have special affection for the moon. The lotus flower opens its petals wide when the moon is at its radiant best, and the Chakor bird keeps its gaze fixed on its bright rounded disc as it moves across the sky. They derive extraordinary pleasure and comfort at the sight of the full moon.

Tulsidas cites this instance to emphasise that the divine story and the holy deeds of Lord Ram are charming and spiritually comforting for all the creatures in equal measure, but those who are the Lord's devotees, followers and spiritually oriented find extra pleasure and benefit from them. They feel exhilarated, joys and ecstatic when they hear the Lord's holy and divine name and stories being sung and narrated anywhere.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 20 says "the divine story of Lord Ram is beneficial for the world and illuminates it (with spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and truthful knowledge about the Supreme Being whose revealed form is this whole world, and there is no entity that is separate and different from the Lord who resides in one's own inner self as the Atma, the Soul) like the sun and the moon".

Now let us examine why Tulsidas has chosen the example of the 'lotus' and the bird 'Chakor' in this verse. Lotus is a flower, not a living being par se. It has no mobility characteristic of the living being such as the bird Chakor. They represent two types of spiritual aspirants or seekers—one who remains involved in the affairs of the mundane external world but still manages to follow the spiritual path of doing auspicious deeds and worshipping the Lord in order to attain liberation and deliverance, and the other who renounces everything in the external world to turn inwards to seek the same spiritual goal by realizing that his Atma is none but the Parmatma, the cosmic Soul, the cosmic Consciousness, the supreme Brahm, who resides nowhere outside but in the individual's own inner self.

The 'Lotus' grows in the dirty water of a pond but still manages to remain clean. When it sees the face of the moon, its petals begin to open in a gesture showing the lotus' extreme happiness and joy. Hence it is like the former spiritual aspirant who remains involved in the gross affairs of mundane existence in this world but manages to keep his mind and sub-conscious aloof from them and focused on the Lord. Thus, though he appears to be going about his normal duties in this world in a normal way, yet his mind and heart are submerged in the thoughts of the Lord and enjoy remembering the Lord's divine name and deeds.

The bird Chakor, on the other hand, can fly; it is mobile like other living creatures as compared to the lotus which is bound to its surrounding environment of the dirty pond. If a particular place is not liked by the Chakor, it can immediately leave it and go to another more suitable perch, something the lotus can't do. Therefore, in this sense, the Chakor is more privileged than the lotus. The Chakor is like the wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant, such as self-realised ascetics, saints, sages, hermits and others who have renounced the world and tempting charms because they have realised that it is a trap that would keep them eternally turning in the wheel of birth and death and their attendant pain and suffering. So they break their relationships from the world and roam around like a mendicant. They are not bound to this world or the body like the bird Chakor that is not bound to any particular tree or garden, but is free to go anywhere that it likes.

Like the Chakor which fixes its gaze on the full moon, such self-realised and enlightened souls keep their mind and attention fixed on their spiritual goal which is to attain liberation and deliverance, salvation and emancipation for their 'self'. In this endeavour, they become contemplative and meditate upon the Atma residing in their inner self, besides studying the scriptures and analyzing their true meaning so as to search and find the truthful answer as to what these terms actually mean.

So we observe that both the types of spiritual aspirants or seekers have the same goal, though their approach and circumstances are different like the two instances of the lotus and the bird Chakor cited here. Both have the same degree of affection for the moon, but are poles apart in the hierarchy of creation—one is a plant that is studied under the field of science known as Botany, while the other is a living creature coming under the zoological kingdom and studied in Zoology.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 47 it is affirmed that "the divine story of Lord Ram is like the beautiful and charming rays of the full moon, while saints, holy and pious people are like the bird Chakor (that is so enamoured of the moon and its beauty that it keeps its gaze fixed on the latter)". In other words, such holy people keep their mind and attention fixed on the divine story and auspicious glories of Lord Sri Ram, who is a personified form of the Supreme Being.]

194. रघुबर कीरति सज्जननि सीतल खलनि सुताति ।  
ज्यो चकोर चय चक्कवनि तुलसी चाँदनि राति ॥

194. raghubara kīrati sajjanani sītala khalani sutāti.  
jyōm cakōra caya cakkavani tulasī cāmdani rāti..

The full moon night is a provider of comfort, solace, peace and joy to the bird called Chakor (as described in Doha no. 193), while it is tormenting for the bird called Chakava<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, Tulsidas says that the glories, the fame and the divine stories of Lord Sri Ram provide peace, tranquility, happiness and joy to good people (gentlemen; those who are pure and gentle at heart, those who are pious, holy, noble and spiritually inclined), but the holy name of the Lord and his divine stories (or any talk about him and even the mention of him) creates torments, annoyance, irritation and heart-burn among miscreants and evil people. (194)

[Note—The Chakva is the ruddy goose or an ostrich. The Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge. The same light of the full moon appears to torment the Chakva while it pleases the Chakor. The Chakor feels happy at the sight of the moon, while the Chakva shuns it. These two birds are used as metaphors to describe how the divine stories of Lord Ram—and for that matter any thing related to spiritualism—is liked by saintly and noble people, but abhorred by non-saintly and wicked people. It also emphasizes how the same story is interpreted differently by these people.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 16 says—“Lord Sri Ram manifested in this world like the full moon coming up in the eastern horizon to give happiness to saintly people and act like the frost or snow for the lotus flower symbolizing those who are wicked and evil.” The same lotus blooms when it sees the full moon in an ordinary night, but it shrivels and dies when the same moon rises in a night that is biting cold, when there is frost and it begins to snow. In the present context it means that the same story of Lord Ram gives immense pleasure and spiritual comfort to those who are noble and saintly, while tormenting and annoying those who are evil and wicked.

Evil, sinful, pervert and wicked people have a natural tendency to see the wrong side of everything. They are compared to the bird Chakva which is angry when the full moon rises on the horizon because it torments this bird. While this moon is welcomed by the rest of the creatures, this is the only bird which abhors it, hates it, and treats the full moon with utter disdain and contempt.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64 says “cool (good, pleasant) advice that should have been soothing and comforting (for Sita) appeared to torment her like the fire of hell just as the case of the Chakva which feels extremely unhappy and agitated during the night of the full moon of the Sharad Purnima (though this moon provides comfort, peace, solace and happiness to the rest of the world)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 1, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma that—“Lord Ram’s divine glories and eclectic qualities are extremely sublime, and are very mysterious and enigmatic—i.e. they are not easily understandable by all. While saints and wise people who hear them and do understand them develop spiritual wisdom and the virtue of renunciation, those who are of low and corrupt intellect, those who are opposed to the Lord and have no spiritual inclination or desire to follow the righteous path of Dharma (proper thought and noble intentions in life) prick holes in it and twist the story to suit their vested interests. They therefore get sucked in the endless vortex of

delusions and confusions, while the saintly people find liberation and deliverance from the same story.”

For instance, saintly persons find in the story the nectar-like message of the importance of having devotion and submission for the Lord as an easy means of attaining spiritual emancipation and salvation; they analyse the different aspects of the story and pick up gems of spiritual wisdom and countless advices for leading a life that is auspicious, righteous, noble and holy; they read the story and hear it being told as a tool for obtaining peace, solace, succour and comfort for their mind and heart.

The wicked people and those with pervert mind find countless faults in it and point out so many taints in the character of Lord Ram. They treat it as some fictional writing which is meant to entertain.]

### The Glory of Lord Ram’s Divine Story

195. राम कथा मंदाकिनी चित्रकूट चित चारु ।  
तुलसी सुभग सनेह बन सिय रघुबीर बिहारु ॥

195. rāma kathā mandākinī citrakūṭa cita cāru.  
tulasī subhaga sanēha bana siya raghubīra bihāru..

Tulsidas says that the divine story (‘Kathaa’) of Lord Sri Ram is like the river Mandakini, the pure and clean mind and sub-conscious (‘Chitta’) is like Chitrakoot, and love and affection (towards the Lord) is the beautiful forest (‘Van’) wherein reside (or move about, wander) Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram) and his divine consort Siya (Sita). (195)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 31 of Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas. It is part of the narration where the great poet Tulsidas is praising the divine story of the Lord and compares it with many unique entities that have glorious value and their magnificence and importance are matchless in themselves.

Presently he is comparing the divine story of the Lord with river Mandakini, a river which is crystal clean, has sparkling water, and is unaffected by all sorts of pollutions which afflict all other great rivers in today’s world. The river Mandakini is a branch of the holy river Ganges, and it was brought to its present location by great penances done by the sage Atri and his holy wife Anusuiya. It emerges as a waterfall from the high hills that surround the place where the sage once had his holy hermitage, and is located about ten miles south of the town of Chitrakoot. Here it merges with another river known as Payaswani, and later on with another holy river called Yamuna.

Chitrakoot likewise is a forest that is also not intruded upon by the modern man; it is still not littered by debris and its natural treasures yet not exploited or harmed in the name of modernity and development. Hence, it manages to still retain its pristine natural beauty, verdant greenery and bewitching charm that it possessed since times immemorial. Chitrakoot is the place where Lord Ram had resided for a long time after his forest exile, and it is the place where the Lord lived peacefully and happily before the next phase of turmoil when Sita was abducted by the demon Ravana and the tumultuous events that followed it, leading to the great war of Lanka. Tulsidas uses this metaphor to stress that when one hears the divine story of Lord Ram, his mind and sub-conscious too become as pleasant and calm, and as great a provider of peace and bliss to him as this serene and beautiful forest known as Chitrakoot.

When this becomes a reality, the spiritual aspirant or the devotee of the Lord experiences eternal bliss and happiness, an extreme sense of beatitude and felicity inside his bosom. This is equivalent to realizing the presence of the Supreme Being inside one's own inner-self as the Atma, the pure Consciousness. This 'inner-self' is like the inner area of the forest where the Lord himself lived, and the realisation of the Atma, a microcosmic form of the Parmatma, inside this inner chamber is like the vision of Lord Ram, the personified form of the Supreme Being, the Parmatma, present deep inside the dense forest known as Chitrakoot.

The inner area of any great forest is cut-off from any contact with the outside world. It means that when a spiritual aspirant becomes self-realised, when he becomes focused on his 'self' where the Atma lives, and when he experiences the attending bliss and peace inside his own self, he becomes averse to having anything to do with the outside world of constant misery and turmoil. He becomes immune to the outside world and its countless temptations; he becomes totally detached from and unconcerned with the outside world of material sense objects. He becomes calm, poised, peaceful and serene; his mind and heart find eternal beatitude and felicity.

After all, this is the chief objective of any spiritual pursuit.]

196. स्याम सुरभि पय बिसद अति गुनद करहिं सब पान ।  
गिरा ग्राम्य सिय राम जस गावहिं सुनहिं सुजान ॥

196. syāma surabhi paya bisada ati gunada karahim saba pāna.  
girā grāmya siya rāma jasa gāvahim sunahim sujāna..

The milk of a black-skinned cow is as white as milk can ever be, and it is highly appreciated for its health benefits and excellent qualities. That is why it is drunk by the people with great cherish, and is much sought after (as compared to milk of other types of cows).

In the same manner, wise and erudite saints accept, hear and sing, with great pleasure and relish, Lord Sri Ram's holy fame and glories narrated in any story describing them in any way whatsoever, though they may be written in a rustic, un-refined, untrained, non-scholarly and colloquial language. (196)

[Note—It is believed that milk from a dark-skinned cow has many medicinal properties, such as its ability to fight rheumatism. Just as the dark colour of the cow's skin has no bearing on the quality and whiteness of its milk, the roughness and the lack of refinement in the words used to describe Lord Ram's holy story has nothing to do with its greatness, its glories, its magnificence and charm, its spiritual value, its divinity and its holiness.

Tulsidas is alluding to the fact that he has chosen to write the divine story of Lord Ram in the local language of the people, i.e. in Hindi, especially the dialect known as 'Avadhi' that is spoken in the region of Ayodhya, instead of using the language of Indian scholars, which is Sanskrit. His main objective is to make this nectar-like story come within the reach of the common man, and not restricted to the high and the mighty. He probably had faced opposition from orthodox Brahmins who held the rigid view that the language used to say anything related to God should be in a language in which the ancient scriptures were written, because Sanskrit is regarded as the language of the Gods.

Tulsidas was a reformer-philosopher, and obviously he faced stiff opposition from orthodoxy. Salvation and emancipation of the soul, the liberation and deliverance of the Atma, is the right of all living beings, and not the privileged prerogative of the learned

and those of high and noble birth, he thought rightly. The supreme Father loves all his children equally, and come to think of it, he must love his deprived children more than those who are well-off. So why should they, who do not know Sanskrit, be denied the right to say or sing the Lord's divine story in their own language? So, Tulsidas wrote in the colloquial language, thereby raising the hackles of orthodox people.

[Refer Doha no. 197 below.]

197. हरि हर जस सुर नर गिरहुँ बरनहिं सुकबि समाज ।  
हाँड़ी हाटक घटित चरु राँधे स्वाद सुनाज ॥

197. hari hara jasa sura nara girahum'baranahim sukabi samāja.  
hāmṛī hāṭaka ghaṭita caru rāmdhē svāda sunāja..

Expert and wise poets describe the glories and virtues of Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu) and Lord Har (Shiva) both in Sanskrit (considered to be the language of the educated elite) as well as in the local dialect. Good food will always taste delicious whether it is cooked in clay-utensils or those made of gold. (197)

[Note—This Doha continues with the idea expressed in the previous Doha no. 196. Refer also to Doha no. 572 later on in this book. The point that is stressed here is the nutritional value of the food eaten, and not on the pot in which it was cooked. Junk and harmful food wrapped in silver foil will remain junk and harmful for the body, and nutritional food presented on an ordinary platter will not lose its value for the body just because it was not presented in some fancy package.

Similarly, the story of Lord Ram is uplifting and rejuvenating for the soul and it does not at all matter in which language it is being narrated. On the hand, there are countless poetries and plays, and as innumerable proses and verses as there are expert poets, story tellers, bards and composers in this material world, but they have no spiritual connect or content. What good are they for the benefit of the soul, what good do they serve for the spiritual welfare of the creature, what spiritual peace and bliss do they give to the tormented person burdened by the problems of day-to-day existence—even though they use highly refined courtly language?]

### The Mystery of Lord Ram's Creation

198. तिल पर राखेउ सकल जग बिदित बिलोकत लोग ।  
तुलसी महिमा राम की कौन जानिबे जोग ॥

198. tila para rākhē'u sakala jaga bidita bilōkata lōga.  
tulasī mahimā rāma kī kauna jānibē jōga..

Tulsidas wonders who is qualified enough in this world to know, to understand, to grasp, to fathom or to measure the immensity and the magnificence of the divine glory and fame of Lord Sri Ram as the supreme Creator whose mysterious ways and creative genius are exceptionallty enigmatic and beyond imagination?

[That is, no one can fully grasp the reality of the Supreme Being; no one can say for certainty that he 'knows' Lord Ram well. One only tries his best, but that is all.]

Just imagine, the Creator is so skilled and expert and imaginative that he has put the entire visible world with its vast and endless dimensions into a small slit known as the 'pupil of the eye'!

[One can see the whole external world through the pupil present in the center of the iris of the eye. If the pupil is blocked or damaged, the world vanishes from sight for all practical purposes. Tulsidas is awestruck at this wonderful craftsmanship of the Lord.

Say, if the Lord is able to put this vast world in such a tiny hole as an iris of the eye, what huge dimensions of creation, with colossal proportions and immensity of variations, will he accommodate in the huge body of his that measures and stretches as much as the spread of the cosmos? (198)

### The Enigmatic nature of Lord Ram

199. राम सरूप तुम्हार बचन अगोचर बुद्धिपर ।  
अबिगत अकथ अपार नेति नेति नित निगम कह ॥

199. rāma sarūpa tumhāra bacana agōcara bud'dhipara.  
abigata akatha apāra nēti nēti nita nigama kaha..

'Oh Lord Ram! Your divine 'form' is indescribable by the tongue; it is beyond comprehension by the mind. No one has ever been able to know or realise it, nor describe it or fathom it. And this is why the Vedas (i.e. the ancient scriptures) have always described you by saying 'Neti-Neti' (i.e. the Lord is not this, not this; the Lord is neither this nor that).' (199)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 126 of Ayodhya Kand of the epic Ram Charit Manas. It relates to a conversation between Lord Ram and the great sage Valmiki. The Lord had asked the sage to advise him a place where he can put up a small thatched cottage and live in the forest during his forest exile. Then the sage praised the Lord and sang his divine glories, and this Doha is part of this prayer.

Lord Ram is not the human being he appears to be; he is the visible form of the invisible cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. He is the Supreme Lord of creation in a visible form. That is, the visible form of Lord Ram is actually a manifestation of the invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing, immanent and almighty Supreme Being known in the Upanishads and other sacred texts as Brahm. He is the Parmatma, the supreme Atma and the supreme Soul of creation. Valmiki specially mentions this to emphasise the point that he knows who the Lord is, and one should not be misled by the Lord's visible form and his worldly behaviour to think that he is an ordinary person who has been exiled to the forest by his father. No, it is not that. The Supreme Lord had manifested with a purpose in mind, and it was to free the earth from the burden of cruel and ferocious demons as well as to enable great sages and saints who had been doing severe penances and observing austerity for very very long time with the avowed aim of having a chance to meet the Lord and see him personally in physical terms. The Lord had to fulfill their wishes, besides vanquishing the evil forces represented by the demons.

The earth had become polluted and had lost its holy nature by horrible sins, perversions, evil, vices, blood-spilling and cruelty that were being perpetrated on its surface with impunity, and it could be made holy and its pristine original form as one of

the clean elements of creation (the others being sky, air, water and fire) restored only by putting the Lord's holy feet on it. Obviously then, the Supreme Lord had to 'walk' on this earth, and though he could have freed the earth of the scourge of the cruel demons even while sitting in the heaven, this later purpose could not be possible without his actually coming down personally on the surface of the earth and walking barefoot on it!

The scriptural term 'Neti-Neti' literally means 'not this-not this'. In other words, it is impossible to assign any form, any definition, any specific attribute or virtue or glory to the Lord and say that 'this defines the Lord'. Say for instance, it is not correct to say that the Supreme Being is 'invisible'—because the entire visible creation is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Similarly, it is incorrect to say that if anything is visible it cannot be invisible at the same time—because the visible creation is just a mirror image of the enigmatic and mysterious Divine Entity that we cannot see. In brief, one cannot pinpoint and say that 'here' is the Lord and he is 'not there'—for he is here as well as there.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10 which also says that the true form of Lord Ram is not what the physical eyes see, and his virtues and glories are so immense and incomprehensible that the Vedas had tried their best to enumerate them and define them but in the end surrendered and said 'Neti-Neti'. 'No', they said, 'it is not only what we have said or defined, it is not it, but it is much beyond what we have said'.

The next Doha builds upon this idea.]

200. माया जीव सुभाव गुण काल करम महदादि ।  
ईस अंक ते बढत सब ईस अंक बिनु बादि ॥

200. māyā jīva subhāva guna kāla karama mahadādi.  
īsa aṅka tēm baṛhata saba īsa aṅka binu bādi..

All the different aspects of creation—such as Maya (delusions of the mind which resulted in this illusionary world coming into being and believed to be true by the creature), Jiva (the mortal living being having a physical gross body), the Subhaav (nature, habit and temperament), Gunas (qualities and virtues<sup>1</sup>), Kaal (the factor of time and circumstances), Karma (deeds), Mahattatva (importance, value, glory etc.) are like the 'zero'—and they will be naught and meaningless without the presence of the 'numeral one' which stands for the Isha, the Supreme Lord of creation. All the entities of this visible, living creation get their value and importance because of this single factor of 'Isha'—and if this factor, which is the common denominator in all living being, is removed, everything vanishes and becomes irrelevant. (200)

[Note—According to the philosophy of the Upanishads, the entire living creation is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma or Brahm, and this cosmic Consciousness is an immanent entity that pervades throughout this creation uniformly in a universal form.

A simple example would explain this phenomenon. All pots and toys made of clay have the 'clay' as the common factor and denominator in them, and if this 'clay' is removed from them then obviously their existence vanishes.

Similarly, the 'Isha' is the Supreme Lord represented by the Consciousness, and if this Consciousness is removed from this living world, nothing matters; it would be dead and worthless.

Therefore, all the characteristic features of this creation have any meaning only as long as there is the presence of the Isha or the cosmic Consciousness in it. Just like a kingdom crumbling and falling apart if it has no king to helm its affairs, the vast kingdom of creation would also fall apart if there was no Supreme Lord to take care of it and control its functions. All the different activities and deeds would be non-existent if there was no 'life' in this world, and 'life' is synonymous with Consciousness, which in turn is another way of expressing the presence of the Lord in this creation.

The 'Jiva' is the living being, the creature. The Jiva has a gross body in which lives the 'consciousness'. The Jiva would be dead without this consciousness. So all the characteristics of life that the Jiva displays, such as having delusion itself, or doing various deeds, or exhibiting some quality, or having any habit etc.—all depend upon one single factor, the factor of 'life', because a dead body does not do anything, it will have no delusions or habits. These are the characteristics possessed by a living organism, and not by dead entity.

When the mother Earth and the Gods prayed to Lord Vishnu to relieve them of the torments inflicted upon them by the cruel demons in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda that precedes Doha no. 186, they also said "the Lord is the one who has created this creation/world all by himself, without any aid".

Just like the case when the king is pleased with one of his subjects and helps him rise from being a non-entity to someone well-established in society, and the royal patronage might even lead to this person rapidly rising to prominence in the hierarchy of the administration of the kingdom, the creature who serves the Supreme Lord and pleases him with his devotion and service too finds favour with the Lord, and all the good virtues that he naturally possesses get enhanced and multiplied.

Coming to the point of 'Gunas', the scriptures tell us that there are primarily three basic Gunas which determine the character of all living beings in this creation in the ratio that they are present in each individual. These three Gunas are the Satvic, the Rajasic and the Tamasic.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satvic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature,

agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

If our lives are devoid of the 'Ishwar' factor, then we become worthless and as good as zero which has no value. The same zero gets a positive meaning, even multiplied manifold times, when attached to numerals or Ishwar factor. In other words, our existence would become bland or in vain if there is no devotion, spiritualism and faith in our lives. In this context, refer also to Doha no. 10.]

### Compassionate Nature of Lord Ram

201. हित उदास रघुबर बिरह बिकल सकल नर नारि ।  
भरत लखन सिय गति समुझि प्रभु चख सदा सुबारि ॥

201. hita udāsa raghubīra biraha bikala sakala nara nārī.  
bharata lakhana siya gati samujhi prabhu cakha sadā subāri..

It is true that suffering from the agony of separation from Lord Raghubar (Sri Ram), not only his friends but all the men and women of the kingdom of Ayodhya had become miserable and grief-stricken, but the Lord's eyes were always filled with tears when he thought of the immense miserable condition and great grief of Laxman, Bharat and Sita. (201)

[Note—It is the intensity of devotion and love that matters. Though Lord Sri Ram loved all his subjects equally, it was the intense nature of the three persons above named which made the Lord constantly remember them, worry for them, and empathise with their sorrows and grief so much so that he was always sad himself and his eyes were always filled with tears of sorrow and pain when he thought of their remorseful and contrite condition. This shows that though everyone was full of sorrows and felt miserable

because of the Lord's forest exile, the condition of Bharat, Laxman and Sita attracted the attention of the Lord because their condition was exceptionally wretched and miserable. They were more close to the Lord than the rest of the subjects. See Doha no. 202 below.

From the perspective of spiritualism it means that the greater is a person's closeness with the Lord, the greater he longs for the Lord and has devotion and love for him, the Lord reciprocates in the same measure.

It should be noted here that this Doha must not be misinterpreted to mean that the Lord did not care for the rest of his subjects or was less moved by their love for him. It is expressly said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 141 that "whenever the Lord remembered Ayodhya (and its citizens), his eyes welled-up with tears; whenever he remembered his father, mother, brothers and other kin, whenever he remembered the great love and affection that Bharat had for him, the Lord, who is an ocean of compassion and kindness, became overwhelmed with sorrow and grief".]

Immensity of love for Lord Ram that Sita, Laxman and Bharat had

202. सीय सुमित्रा सुवन गति भरत सनेह सुभाउ ।  
कहिबे को सारद सरस जनिबे को रघुराउ ॥

202. *siya sumitrā suvana gati bharata sanēha subhā'u.*  
*kahibē kō sārada sarasa janibē kō raghurā'u..*

Only Saraswati (the Goddess of learning, wisdom, intellect and speech) is competent to narrate and only Lord Sri Ram is able to understand the profundity and the intensity of the love and affection that Sita and Laxman had towards the Lord (Sri Ram), as well as Bharat's devotion towards him and the latter's pious and immaculate nature. (202)

[Note—(i) The greatness of love that Lord Ram had for Sita is emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 15 in which Hanuman conveys the Lord's message to Sita when he met her in Lanka where she was held in captivity by the demon king Ravana. Another instance is Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307. The context here is the marriage ceremony of Sita. The marriage party from Ayodhya was so well provided for and looked after in Janakpur, the city of Sita's father Janak, that it was clear that it is supernatural powers of some divine Being playing its role. Lord Ram realised that this power was none other but that of Sita, the cosmic Mother, doing her bid to make all comfortable.

(ii) The greatness of Laxman's love for Lord Ram has been highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 71-72 with all the line nos. 1-8 of the intervening Chaupai. The context is preparation for Lord Ram's departure for the forest. Laxman wishes to accompany the Lord, and he expresses his unflinching commitment, loyalty, devotion and affection for the Lord to stress that he must be allowed to accompany the Lord to the forest. In Doha no. 71 Laxman says "Oh Lord, I am your humble servant and you are my only Lord; say then, if you leave me, what succour do I have left?" Lord Ram himself praises Laxman in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-10 that precede Doha no. 61. Here the context is Laxman's fainting during the fierce war at Lanka and Lord Ram's lamentations for him. Lord Ram has acknowledged that Laxman had sacrificed the comforts of the kingdom to serve him during his bad days. The Lord went to the extent of saying that had he known that he would lose his dear brother

(Laxman), he would have defied his father's orders and would not have come to the forest.

(iii) The greatness of Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram is legendary and matchless in the annals of history. It has been repeatedly and on many occasions emphasized. Refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 in which Bharat has asked the three holy rivers at Triveni Sanam (i.e. rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) that he wants only one blessing that he should have love and devotion for Lord Ram in all the generations that he is born. He does not want anything else, not even the much sought-after four great fruits of 'Artha' or material prosperity, 'Dharma' or acclaim that comes with leading an auspicious life, 'Kaam' or fulfillment of wishes, and 'Moksha' or emancipation and salvation. The holy rivers then declared—"Listen Bharat. Do not have any regret. You are pious and holy, and your love and devotion for Lord Ram as well as your submission at the august feet of the Lord is fathomless and unquestioned. No one is dearer to Lord Ram than you."

Later on, sage Bharadwaj has also expressed the same idea with unreserved affirmation in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 207 to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210 in which the great and learned sage has heaped immense praises on Bharat and tells him that no one is as fortunate as he in this world because while the rest of the world remembers Lord Ram as a matter of auspicious thought, the Lord himself remembers Bharat. The sage even told him that all the great sages, seers and saints residing there and nearby hermitages are extremely lucky and happy at having had the rare opportunity of meeting Bharat and having his communion. This has made them all auspicious and redeemed.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 283 says that the glory of Bharat is so great that only Saraswati can know about it, and an attempt to even mention it in brief is like the futile attempt to empty the ocean by throwing out its water with cupped palms of the hands.

Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 289 it is said "only Lord Ram knows about the immensity of Bharat's divine glories and virtues".

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 233 it is said "Bharat's exceptional good qualities and divine virtues, which are beyond reach of great scholars, are known only to Lord Ram."

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231, Lord Ram has told Laxman "Listen Laxman. There is no one more good, more pious and more holy than Bharat in the entire creation—no one has been ever heard of or seen anywhere who can match Bharat."

When Lord Ram remembered Bharat he became submerged in an ocean of blissful love for him, an emotion of affection for Bharat that was so overwhelming that it literally drowned the Lord—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 232.

Bharat's love and devotion for Lord Ram was of such magnitude and intensity, of such great depth and density that even the mind of the creator Brahma or of Shiva was unable to measure or fathom it—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 241.]

203. जानी राम न कहि सके भरत लखन सिय प्रीति ।  
सो सुनि गुनि तुलसी कहत हठ सठता की रीति ॥

203. jānī rāma na kahi sakē bharata lakhana siya prīti.

sō suni guni tulasī kahata haṭha saṭhatā kī rīti..

Even Lord Sri Ram could not define or narrate the love and devotion that Laxman, Bharat or Sita had towards him. Tulsidas says that he (Tulsidas) is such an adamant idiot or a stubborn stupid that inspite of being aware of this, he has attempted to describe it (i.e. love and affection of the three for Lord Ram). (203)

[Note—The idea is that Laxman, Bharat and Sita had immense love and devotion for the Lord. It was of such a great intensity, had such divine magnificence, had such great depth and density that even Lord Ram was overwhelmed by it—refer Doha nos. 201-202. Now, being a poet, Tulsidas has attempted to narrate this love and devotion for Lord Ram in his own words. He feels uneasy that he might be transgressing his right and authority to do so, or trying to be overconfident about his poetic skills in attempting to be successful at narrating something that even the Gods could not do. Only goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of learning and skills, is competent to narrate the love and devotion that Laxman, Bharat and Sita had for the Lord—refer Doha no. 202.

But Tulsidas is not deterred, and he goes ahead with his narration. Isn't he stupid? Well, he accepts it, but there is a hidden message here. Tulsidas feels that he is not doing anything wrong, and Lord Ram will understand his emotions and intentions. The Lord is so merciful and gracious as well as understanding that he will forgive Tulsidas for his follies and crossing of the boundaries because the Lord will realise that Tulsidas' intention is not self-praise and to exhibit his skill as a poet, but it is a noble and pure intent to honour and pay his utmost respects to the divine virtues of love, devotion, submission and self-less service for the Supreme Lord, Lord Sri Ram, that the three—Laxman, Bharat and Sita—had that he has gathered the courage and the temerity to narrate them. Tulsidas is not trying to show-off his writing acumen or expertise, but only paying his obeisance to the Lord as well as to these grand and auspicious virtues of love, devotion, submission and selfless service for the Lord. So he is pardonable.

There is another benefit of narrating these virtues. It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 304 that—“Who will not develop deep love and abounding devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita if he narrates and listens to the auspicious devotional emotions of Bharat and his righteous character and behaviour? If love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram do not become easily attainable or accessible by someone who even remembers these grand virtues that Bharat had for the Lord, then say who is more unfortunate and unlucky than such a stupid person?”

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 326 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8. Briefly it emphasizes that the glorious virtues of Bharat are so magnificent, auspicious and holy that anybody who regularly narrates, listens to or even remembers Bharat and his divine acts is sure to overcome the spiritual torments that afflicts him in this mundane world of birth and death, is sure to develop detachment and dispassion towards it, and is sure to find emancipation and salvation for his soul.

Therefore the intention of Tulsidas is obvious and clear—he is narrating these grand, sublime and eclectic virtues because they give him immense spiritual bliss and peace, because they are divine and holy, because this narration serves his purpose of honouring the great devotees of Lord Ram who possess these virtues, because he helps in spreading the message of love, devotion, affection, submission and service for the Lord as an easy and ultimate mean of liberation and deliverance from the entrapments of this world, and because since he is incompetent to create any great literature of his own imagination so it

is better to narrate, to the best of his abilities, what is already there and well known in this world.

Now a pertinent question arises that we have cited Ram Charit Manas to justify Tulsidas' decision to narrate the glories of Bharat, but this Ram Charit Manas is also his writing, so it is equivalent to self-quotation to justify something that is unusual. Now here is the catch—the epic Ram Charit Manas is 'not' Tulsidas' creation, for it is a 'revealed' holy text. It was created in the heart of Lord Shiva, the great Lord who is known as Maheshwar for his enlightened and self-realised knowledge of the Truth of creation, and narrated by him to his divine cosmic consort Parvati, also known as Uma. This is clearly mentioned by Tulsidas in the same epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30 as well as in Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35. Therefore, it is not 'self-quotation'.]

204. सब बिधि समरथ सकल कह सहि साँसति दिन राति ।  
भलो निबाहेउ सुनि समुझि स्वामिधर्म सब भाँति ।।

204. saba bidhi samaratha sakala kaha sahi sāṁsati dina rāti.  
bhalō nibāhē'u suni samujhi svāmidharma saba bhāmṭi..

[Tulsidas says that—] 'The Lord (Sri Ram) is capable, potent, almighty, proficient and adept in every possible way'—this is a universal statement of all those who are wise and in the knowing of things. The Lord strived daily to uphold his vows of righteous conduct, auspiciousness, probity and propriety that is expected of a great Lord, and it is truthfully said in unequivocal terms that the Lord had lived up to that immaculate reputation in a perfect manner.

The result was that the Supreme Lord of creation, in his form as the king of Ayodhya, had to suffer daily to live up to his exalted stature and its incumbent reputation, to uphold his own vows, and to be always vigilant towards his responsibilities as the Lord of this world. (204)

[Note—Lord Ram was no ordinary man or king. He was a personified form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being. So he was almighty and all-able; he could do everything by his mere wish. But still he passed through all the sufferance that an ordinary man has to in this world. For instance, he could have killed the demons by just wishing and a swipe of his fingers could have cleaned the surface of the earth of their scourge. But the Lord did not do so, and instead came down as a man to walk barefoot to Lanka to kill them. The intent of the Lord was to purify the surface of the earth by the touch of his holy feet after it was polluted by evil and sinful creatures. The Lord also wished to show the rest of the human race that if one has courage everything is possible for him, and one can uphold the laws of righteousness inspite of the gravest of provocations.

The principle of metaphysics and spiritualism as enshrined in the Upanishads and the Vedas were out of reach of the common man, so the Lord came down and used his close partners such as Sita, Laxman and Bharat to spread the message of devotion and love for the Lord as an easy means of attaining spiritual bliss and emancipation of the soul that could be obtained otherwise by following complicated and arduous religious practices.

Among the many spiritual ideas enshrined in the epic story of Lord Ram is the message that if one has devotion for the Lord, the Lord takes care of him in equal measure, the Lord reciprocates love in equal terms. For instance we have the example of

Bharat, the younger brother of the Lord. The sort of devotion and love that Bharat had for Lord Ram is legendary and unmatched in the annals of history and religious literature. For Bharat, Lord Ram was everything in his life; everything else came second. The Lord reciprocated this sentiment of Bharat by remembering him always in his heart. Similarly, the Lord had a special place in his heart for Sita and Laxman who had devoted their entire life in the service of the Lord. But this does not mean that the Lord paid no attention to others—for he equally loved and took full care of all the subjects of his kingdom. This fact is endorsed repeatedly in Ram Charit Manas. Refer note of Doha nos. 201-202 above.]

#### Glory of Bharat (brother of Lord Ram)

205. भरतहि होइ न राजमदु बिधि हरिहर पद पाइ ।  
कबहुँ कि काँजी सीकरनि छीरसिंधु बिनसाइ ॥

205. bharatahi hō'i na rājamadu bidhi harihara pada pā'i.  
kabahum'ki kāmjī sīkarani chīrasindhu binasā'i..

It is impossible that Bharat would ever become haughty and arrogant even he had got the crown of the kingdom of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation). Say, is it ever possible that a drop of lemon juice can curdle the milky-waters of the mighty Kshir-saagar (the celestial ocean of milk which is said to be the abode of Lord Vishnu)? (205)

[Note—This Doha is in praise of Bharat and his glorious virtues. It appears in Ram Charit Manas as no. 231 of Ayodhya Kand. These are the words spoken by Lord Ram himself in praise of Bharat. The Lord was pacifying Laxman who thought that Bharat was coming to fight with Lord Ram in the forest when Bharat arrived in Chitrakoot with a huge retinue of courtiers, citizens and soldiers of Ayodhya. Laxman did not know that Bharat was coming to beg forgiveness from Lord Ram and attempt to persuade the Lord to come back to the city and accept the crown. But Lord Ram was so confident of Bharat and his integrity that he assured Laxman that it is impossible that Bharat would become so haughty and reckless on obtaining the crown that he would fall from his virtuous nature so much that he would come and fight with them in the forest. This Doha is said in this context.

The Lord was confident that Bharat was extremely humble and righteous, he had no pretensions or ego, and he possessed such a high level of auspicious virtues and divine qualities in him that he would never had become rogue enough to accept the kingdom of Ayodhya, the crown of which rightfully belonged to his elder brother Sri Ram, though his mother had carefully planned the coup and forced his father kind Dasrath to send Sri Ram to the forest in exile and declare Bharat as the king. Bharat was not at all arrogant and proud of his new-found stature of becoming a king of Ayodhya. He always considered himself a subordinate of Lord Ram, and could never even dream of superceding the Lord in any manner whatsoever. What to talk of this small kingdom of Ayodhya on earth, even if Bharat was offered the kingdom of the entire creation he would still have refused it if that meant insulting his beloved Lord Sri Ram and undermining his supreme authority.

Tulsidas has sung laurels for Bharat in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 39.

The significance of Bharat and his other two step-brothers Laxman and Shatrughan vis-à-vis the story of Lord Ram is outlined in brief in a note to Doha no. 213 below.]

206. संपति चकई भरत चक मुनि आयस खेलवार ।  
तेहि निसि आश्रम पिंजरँ राखे भा भिनुसार ॥

206. sampati cakaī bharata caka muni āyasa khēlavāra.  
tēhi nisi āśrama pinjarām rākhē bhā bhinusāra..

'The orders of sage Bharadwaj was like a player (a magician) who had trapped Bharat (compared to the bird known as Chakva—the ruddy goose) in the snare of comfort (compared with the female bird known as Chakvi, the female counterpart of Chakva). The morning appeared, but neither of them (Chakva-Chakvi) were attracted towards each other inspite of them spending the whole night together.

[That is, the artificial comforts and pleasures that the mystical powers of sage Bharadwaj created when Bharat and his entourage arrived at the sage's hermitage in Prayag, to both test the integrity and sincerity of Bharat and also to give the weary citizens who accompanied him a little bit of rest and physical comfort on their journey to Chitrakoot to bring Lord Ram back from his forest exile, could not lure Bharat and tempt him to deviate him from his chosen path of austerities and renunciation. The bird Chakva and his female counterpart the Chakvi may spend the whole night together but the male pays no attention to the female. This metaphor is used by Tulsidas to emphasise the sincerity and steadfastness of Bharat in keeping his vows of not enjoying any of the material comforts of this world as long as Lord Ram lives a life of a renunciate mendicant in the forest.] (206)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 215 of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand.

Bharat had decided not to accept the crown of the kingdom for which his beloved Lord Sri Ram was forced to go to the forest by his selfish mother. So he decided to proceed to the Chitrakoot forest to bring Lord Ram back from there to Ayodhya and anonint him on the throne of the kingdom. On the way, the royal entourage made a night's halt at the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj. The sage had stupendous mystical powers, and wished to extend warm hospitality to Bharat as a mark of his respect for him. So the sage employed these powers, known as Riddhi and Siddhi, to create an artificial camp for Bharat and his party at his hermitage. This over-night camp had all the facilities and instruments of comfort and pleasure that are usually available in a large city, and to which both Bharat and his party were normally accustomed to. Bharadwaj wished to make them as comfortable and rested as possible so that they can overcome the weariness of the journey. But he had another agenda—on the one hand he wished to check the integrity and sincerity of Bharat and see if he is true to his word of adopting a life of austerity, penance and renunciation just like Lord Ram was observing in the forest; he wished to ascertain whether Bharat can be steadfast in his vows, and on the other hand he wished to tell the world at large the glorious virtues of Bharat and to put his stamp of approval on the eclectic and divine nature of Bharat's love, devotion and submission towards Lord Ram.

In this Doha, Tulsidas alludes to that incident and says that no material temptations of this world are strong enough to make Bharat waver and wobble from his path of righteousness and auspiciousness, that his devotion and love for Lord Ram are of the highest quality and the best of their kind, and this is one character in him that has made him famous, praised, lauded and applauded by all in the annals of history.

This entire episode is described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 213 to Doha no. 215.]

207. सधन चोर मग मुदित मन धनी गही ज्यों फेंट ।  
त्यो सुग्रीव बिभीषनहि भई भरतकी भेंट ॥

207. sadhana cōra maga mudita mana dhanī gahī jyōm phēṅṭa.  
tyōm sugrīva bibhīṣanahi bhaī bharatakī bhēṅṭa..

The condition of Sugriv and Vibhishan on meeting Bharat was similar to the thoughts of a thief who, having stolen wealth from a rich man, is going on his way happily, full of pride at having acquired so much wealth without the least effort. Then, by chance, this thief is caught by the same man whose wealth he had stolen, or he meets another rich man who has wealth manifold times more self-generated wealth than the meager wealth stolen by the thief. (207)

[The thief has never seen wealth in his life and his conscience is heavy with a sense of guilt. He has managed to steal a handful of wealth from another man, and in his foolishness thinks himself to be 'rich and wealthy'. He goes about boasting of his wealth amongst his compatriots and thinks himself to be a king amongst beggars. His friends do not know from where he got his wealth, and he tells them that he had gone to a foreign land to make his riches. But it so happens that one day unfortunately he is caught by the rightful owner of the wealth, and all beans are spilled. The thief becomes terrified and extremely ashamed of himself. All his pride and pelf vanishes, and he becomes a subject of scorn and ridicule and rejection by the society even if he is spared punishment by the rightful owner on compassionate grounds.

In the other scenario, when a thief meets another man who posses wealth created by his own sincere efforts, the former is overcome with a grave sense of guilt and remorse. He feels ashamed at himself, and his ill-gotten wealth bears heavily on his heart and conscience.

Sugriv, the monkey king, and Vibhishan, the demon king, were both proud of their devotion for Lord Ram. They both thought that they were honoured and respected for this quality in them. But when they met Bharat their heads bowed in shame and guilt. Why? Because both of them (Sugriv and Vibhishan) had betrayed their own brothers, and they took the shelter of Lord Ram because they were kicked out of their kingdoms by their own brothers and had wished to take revenge. They had some selfish motive in submitting themselves before the Lord. Now they have Bharat standing in front of them—Bharat had rejected the offer of the crown of the kingdom of Ayodhya, which was many times more prosperous and vast than either of the two kingdoms that Sugriv and Vibhishan had acquired by means of betrayal of their brothers. Bharat had returned the kingdom to his brother Lord Sri Ram, whereas these two had got their brothers killed for their respective kingdoms—Sugriv had got the kingdom of Kishkindha after having his elder brother Baali killed, and Vibhishan had got the kingdom of Lanka after being instrumental in the killing of his elder brother Ravana. Therefore, Sugriv and Vibhishan felt ashamed of themselves and had no moral strength to stand erect with a high head when confronted by Bharat whose sense of morality, ethics, propriety, probity, selfless duty and dedication towards his elder brother Lord Ram were exemplary and beyond reproach.

Sugriv and Vibhishan now realized that they have no right to claim that they were true devotees of the Lord because both of them had joined Lord Ram and served him out of selfish considerations. On the other hand there was Bharat whose service and dedication had become legendary by now. Even renowned sages and seers of the time, as well as the holy river Ganges had praised and lauded Bharat openly and without reservations for his noble character and moral values that he upheld—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 205 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 (praise by holy river Ganges) (ii) from Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 210 (praise by sage Bharadwaj); (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 325 (praise by Seshnath, Ganesh, Saraswati etc.); and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 326 (praise by people in all the ten corners of the world, as well as great sages and seers).

Not only that, after ascending their respective thrones they had led a life of passionate enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures incumbent with kingship. On the other hand was Bharat who had voluntarily renounced all worldly comforts and pleasure at the altar of serving Lord Ram selflessly throughout his life. During the period of fourteen years of the Lord's forest exile, Bharat had put the Lord's wooden sandals on the throne of Ayodhya and led an exemplary life of a renunciate hermit at a place outside the city, living and observing the same austere life that Lord Ram had been living in the forest. Even the Gods were wonderstruck at Bharat's level of devotion and austerity, and were lost for words to praise him for his divine virtues and glories. This entire narration is described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 of Doha no. 323 to Doha no. 326.

Refer Doha no. 208 below in this context.]

208. राम सराहे भरत उठि मिले राम सम जानि ।  
तदपि बिभीषन कीसपति तुलसी गरत गलानि ॥

208. rāma sarāhē bharata uṭhi milē rāma sama jāni.  
tadapi bibhīṣana kīsapati tulasī garata galāni..

Tulsidas says that though both Sugriv and Vibhishan were praised by Lord Sri Ram, and even Bharat had met them respectfully and had given them the same regard that he gave to Lord Sri Ram, the two (Sugriv and Vibhishan) were overwhelmed by a sense of shame, remorse, regret and guilt (because they had acquired the friendship with Sri Ram at the cost of betraying and killing their own elder brothers, Baali and Ravana respectively, while in contrast Bharat had rejected the crown of Ayodhya to prove his love for his elder brother Lord Ram.) (208)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 207 and its accompanying note in this context.

It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram knew what went on in their minds, and to help them overcome their embarrassment the Lord had praised them before his Guru, sage Vasishtha, and told him that he had the same love for them as he had for Bharat. After all, though they had sided with the Lord and had served him for selfish interests, but it was incumbent upon the Lord to show graciousness and acknowledge their service. The Lord did not wish to let them feel humiliated or belittled, so when he observed that they were feeling red-faced seeing Bharat's selfless submission before his elder brother and his undiluted devotion for the Lord when compared to their own character, he sought

to neutralize their embarrassment, and help them feel at ease and at home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 8.]

209. भरत स्याम तन राम सम सब गुन रूप निधान ।  
सेवक सुखदायक सुलभ सुमिरत सब कल्याण ॥

209. bharata syāma tana rāma sama saba guna rūpa nidhāna.  
sēvaka sukhadāyaka sulabha sumirata saba kalyāna..

Bharat has a dark complexion similar to that of Lord Sri Ram. Bharat is a mine of auspicious and virtuous qualities, and is benevolent towards those who serve him, providing them with comfort and happiness and taking good care of them. All auspiciousness and welfare become easily accessible by remembering him and his divine qualities. [So, Bharat is similar to Lord Sri Ram by all means.] (209)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 4/4/2 of Tulsidas' Ram Agya Prashnawali.

It highlights the fact that a sincere and true devotee of the Lord acquires the same stature as that of the Lord. It is explicitly affirmed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 304 that the eclectic and divine virtue of having devotion and love for Lord Ram and his holy feet become easy for anyone who adores Bharat and remembers him with respect. Then again, the same emotion is repeated albeit slightly differently in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 326 which says that it is certain that one will develop intense love and devotion for Lord Ram and his holy feet, besides getting the bonus of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetter of this mundane existence, if he remembers with respect Bharat's immaculate character, his pious nature, his divine virtues and his holy deeds.

Bharat has the same role in taking care of this creation as that of the Supreme Being himself. In other words, Bharat represents that aspect of the supreme Lord, who himself was revealed in the body of Lord Ram, which is responsible for sustenance, protection and nourishment of this vast creation. This aspect is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 197 when the family priest, sage Vashistha, was naming the four brothers at the time of their birth.

Lord Ram and sage Vasishtha have jointly praised Bharat and said that if anyone ever casts doubts on the integrity and holiness of Bharat then such a man becomes condemnable in this world and all his accumulated good virtues and rewards of good deeds would be nullified. They unequivocally declared—"There is no one comparable to you (Bharat) in the entire world having three dimensions (the past, the present and the future; the heaven, the earth and the nether worlds) in possessing all the virtues that are considered grand, sublime, divine, holy, auspicious, righteous, proper and noble. Anyone who casts aspersions on you (Bharat) or doubts your integrity and devotion is sure to be condemned in the world and lose whatever good name he might have in this life, besides ruining his future (i.e. even after his death people will not forgive him for his ill-spoken words for you). Verily, by remembering your auspicious name, all negativities and the burden of inauspiciousness, evil and sins vanish, and one is not only able to acquire good name and fame in this world but also ensure all happiness and joys in the world hereinafter." Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 263 and Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

Glory of Laxman (brother of Lord Ram)

210. ललित लखन मूरति मधुर सुमिरहु सहित सनेह ।  
सुख संपति कीरति बिजय सगुन सुमंगल गेह ॥

210. lalita lakhana mūrati madhura sumirahu sahita sanēha.  
sukha sampati kīrati bijaya saguna sumaṅgala gēha..

Tulsidas advises that one should remember with affection the charming form of Laxman (the younger brother of Lord Ram who had abandoned the comforts of Ayodhya to accompany the Lord to the forest in order to serve him selflessly) who is an abode and an embodiment of happiness that comes automatically by leading a life of selfless service, righteousness and virtuousness, who possesses the divine wealth in the form of submission, devotion and love for Lord Ram, whose auspicious deeds and glorious virtues are legendary and famous in this world, who is always victorious in conquering evil, vices and sins in this world, who is a treasure trove of all the good and magnificent virtues that exist in this world, and who is an abode of auspiciousness, righteousness and well-being. (210)

[Note—This Doha appears in Tulsidas' Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 3/4/6.

At the time of birth, sage Vasishtha had given a reason for naming him 'Laxman'. In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 it is this—"the child who was a treasury of all good and auspicious virtues, who was very dear to Lord Sri Ram, who was the foundation that supported the world from below, and who was benevolent and gracious by nature was given the grand name of 'Laxman' by sage Vashistha".

According to the Purans, Laxman is a manifestation of the Seshnath, the huge celestial serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu rests on the surface of the Kshir-sagar, the celestial ocean of milk. It is believed that this visible world is supported on the hoods of this serpent. Hence the statement that refers to Laxman supporting the world from below.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 37-38 in which Tulsidas says prayers to Laxman.

Tulsidas has prayed to Laxman and sought his blessings in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 17. He says—"I bow and pay my respects at the holy feet of Laxman who is calm and soothing like cool water and provides comfort and happiness to his devotees. For the flag of Lord Ram's immaculate glories, he (Laxman) along with his fame is like the flag-post. He is a manifestation of the thousand-hooded celestial serpent known as Lord Seshnath who is instrumental in making it possible for the world to exist (because he supports the world from below on his hoods and prevents it from sinking into the bottomless abyss of the cosmos). Let this son of Sumitra, i.e. Laxman, who is a fount of goodness and auspicious virtues, be always pleased with me and be benevolent upon me".

Laxman was exceptionally charming and attractive to look in his physical form. King Janak, the father of Sita, was awe-struck when he saw him for the first time, and was dumbfounded by Laxman's physical beauty—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215, and line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 217. Further, sage Vishwamitra himself says that the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, are a treasury of beauty, auspiciousness, strength, valour and good virtues.

The two brothers had the entire citizenry of Janakpur in thrall by their bewitching beauty—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220, right upto line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221.

Refer also to Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 8, and Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 62-65.]

#### Glory of Shatrughan (brother of Lord Ram)

211. नाम सत्रुसूदन सुभग सुषमा सील निकेत ।  
सेवत सुमिरत सुलभ सुख सकल सुमंगल देत ॥

211. nāma satrusūdana subhaga suṣamā sīla nikēta.  
sēvata sumirata sulabha sukha sakala sumaṅgala dēta..

He whose name is Shatru-sudan (literally meaning one who vanquishes enemies; also known as Shatrughan or Shatrughna) is very charming as well as a treasury of goodness and good virtues such as politeness. If one remembers him and worships (adores) him, everything becomes accessible for such a person because he (Shatrughan) is a provider of all-round welfare and good fortunes. (211)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 4/4/6.

Vinai Patrika of Tulsidas also has verse no. 40 which is in praise of Shatrughan. He was the youngest brother of Lord Ram, and a sibling of Laxman.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 197 it is said that sage Vashistha named him ‘Shatrughan’ because anyone who would remember him would be able to vanquish his enemies.

Tulsidas pays his respects to Shatrughan in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 17 by saying “I most respectfully bow at the holy feet of Ripusudan (i.e. Shatrughan) who is exceptionally valiant, most polite, and a sincere follower of Bharat (his elder brother)”. The word ‘Ripusudan’ has two parts—‘Ripu’ meaning an enemy, and ‘Sudan’ meaning to vanquish, to crush and to conquer.

The significant role that Shatrughan played in the story of Lord Ram is outlined in a note of Doha no. 213 below.]

#### Glory of Kaushalya (mother of Lord Ram)

212. कौसल्या कल्याणमइ मूरति करत प्रनाम ।  
सगुन सुमंगल काज सुभ कृपा करहिं सियराम ॥

212. kausalyā kalyānāma'i mūrati karata pranāma.  
saguna sumaṅgala kāja subha kṛpā karahim siyarāma..

Sri Kaushalya (mother of Ram) is an icon (image) of welfare and wellbeing. Bowing to her gives all auspiciousness, good omens, and success in all endeavours. Lord Sri Ram also shows benevolence and grace upon a person who pays his respects to her. (212)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali of Tulsidas as no. 7/3/3.

Being the mother of Lord Ram, such virtues and greatness are naturally expected of her. And it is equally natural for Lord Ram to be pleased with someone who shows respects to his mother.

Tulsidas pays his obeisance to Kaushalya in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 16 by saying “I pay my respects to Kaushalya whose greatness can be compared to the eastern horizon where the beautiful moon represented by Lord Ram rose (took birth), the moon which gives immense happiness and peace to the world on the one hand, and which acts like the frost that kills the lotus flower representing all the wicked and the sinful in this world”.

Anyone who bows at the feet of Kaushalya becomes as dear to her as Lord Ram himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8 Ka. Here, Kaushalya blesses all the companions and friends of Lord Ram who accompanied him back to Ayodhya after the victory at Lanka. They consisted of monkeys such as Sugriv, Angad, Hanuman etc., bears such as Jamvant, and demons such as Vibhishan and his chief ministers. When the mother called them ‘as dear as Lord Ram’, the Gods in the heaven showered flowers on them to celebrate this honour and show their own respects to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8 Kha.]

#### Glory of Sumitra (mother of Laxman)

213. सुमिरि सुमित्रा नाम जग जे तिय लेहिं सनेम ।  
सुअन लखन रिपुदवन से पावहिं पति पद प्रेम ॥

213. sumiri sumitrā nāma jaga jē tiya lēhirī sanēma.  
su'ana lakhana ripudavana sē pāvahirī pati pada prēma..

In this world, those womenfolk who take the vow of fidelity and loyalty towards their respective husbands by remembering (invoking) Sumitra (mother of Laxman) are not only blessed with sons similar in character and qualities to Laxman and Shatrughan, but also develop great love, devotion and respect for the revered feet of their husbands (just like Sumitra had for her husband, king Dasrath). (213)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali of Tulsidas as no. 7/3/4.

She was specially privileged because she had two sons who were devoted to Lord Ram—one was Laxman who had accompanied the Lord to the forest and shared every single moment of the Lord’s life’s pleasures and sorrows as if he was the Lord’s second body, and the other was Shatrughan who silently carried on with his responsibilities of taking care of the duties of taking care of the kingdom of Ayodhya in the Lord’s absence. After Lord Ram went to the forest exile and refused to come back even after all attempts made by Bharat failed, Bharat became a recluse and retired from active life to himself live like a hermit at a place away from the capital. The burden of taking care of the day-to-day running of the affairs of the kingdom fell on the shoulders of Shatrughan. So in a way he served Lord Ram in equal terms as his sibling Laxman—because while Laxman took care of the Lord in the forest, Shatrughan took up the responsibilities of fulfilling the Lord’s duties in the kingdom.

So, Sumitra’s both sons served the Lord in physical terms. They can be called ‘Karma Yogis’—those who worship the Supreme Being by doing deeds selflessly, auspiciously and righteously, and then submitting all the results to the Lord and crediting all the success to the Lord, themselves remaining in the background.

Bharat, in this context, is like the ‘Gyani ascetic or hermit’ who renounces the world and its charms, and turns inwards to seek the Lord by Yoga and Dhyān, or by meditation and contemplation.

Bharat did severe Tapa (penance, austerity and sufferance) and regular Japa (repetition of the Lord’s holy name) to worship the Lord, and he exemplified what Vairāgya (renunciation and detachment) actually meant. Shatrughan and Laxman, on the other hand, exemplified what the theory of ‘Karma’ means—to do selfless service of the Lord.

Since Sumitra had offered both her sons in the service of Lord Ram, the Lord was specially obliged to her, and obviously anyone who pays respects to Sumitra is blessed by the Lord. One can compare Sumitra with Kaikeyi, the other step-mother of Lord Ram and the blood mother of Bharat. Kaikeyi was extremely selfish and cunning; she was the person who had sent Lord Ram to the forest, and she was the one character that threw the entire kingdom in turmoil by her selfish act. Naturally no one would wish to adore such a woman who exemplified wickedness, selfishness, deceit and cunning. And this is why no praise is given to Kaikeyi in any of the versions of the Ramayana. Refer Doha no. 216 below.]

#### Glory of Sita (the divine consort of Lord Ram)

214. सीताचरन प्रनाम करि सुमिरि सुनाम सुनेम ।  
होहिं तीय पतिदेवता प्राननाथ प्रिय प्रेम ॥

214. sītācarana pranāma kari sumiri sunāma sunēma.  
hōhīm tīya patidēvatā prānanātha priya prēma..

By properly and systematically bowing at the revered feet of Sita and remembering (invoking) her divine name regularly, womenfolk become loyal towards their respective husbands (just as Sita was towards her beloved husband, Lord Ram), and such womenfolk receive love from them (just like Sita did from her beloved husband, Lord Ram). (214)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali of Tulsidas as no. 3/4/5.

Vinai Patrika’s verse nos. 40 Ka, and 41-42 are in honour of Sita.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 103 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8, the holy river Ganges praises Sita and blesses her. The personified form of the holy river told her that her good fame and glory is known to everyone, and that she is very beloved of Lord Ram. Her mere glance is sufficient to make an ordinary person acquire the stature of a Lokpaal, a guardian of the world or a king. All the different Siddhis (mystical powers and glorious achievements) stand before her obediently with folded hands.

At the hermitage of sage Atri, the sage’s holy wife named Anusuiya had heaped praises on Sita and her immaculate character by saying—“Listen Sita; womenfolk regard you as their ideal and they invoke you to get your blessing while serving their respective husbands. They hold you in the highest esteem.” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 Kha.

According to the scriptures, Sita was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi who is a divine consort of Lord Vishnu who himself was revealed in the form of Lord Ram.]

## Greatness of Sugriv, Vibhishan etc.

215. तुलसी केवल कामतरु रामचरित आराम ।  
कलितरु कपि निसिचर कहत हमहिं किए बिधि बाम ॥

215. tulasī kēvala kāmataru rāmacarita ārāma.  
kalitaru kapi nisicara kahata hamahim̐ ki'ē bidhi bāma..

Tulsidas praises the glories and the virtues of the story of Lord Sri Ram and says that in the garden of Sri Ram's activities in this world (which constitute his stories), there are only Kalpa Trees (i.e. only those creatures who are pious, holy and of a clean and devoted heart) to be found. The monkeys such as Sugriv and the demons such as Vibhishan consider themselves extremely lucky and privileged in their respective races because though the creator was very malevolent as he had given them a physical body (of a monkey and a demon respectively) which was regarded as sinful, despicable, unholy and gross, their Lord Sri Ram is so benevolent, merciful and gracious that he allowed them to reside in his garden (as described above), and thereby become as holy and privileged as the other devotees of the Lord.

[That is, inspite of Sugriv being born as a monkey and Vibhishan as a demon, their association with Lord Ram had made them renowned in the world and worthy of praise and honour that is normally reserved for very exalted persons and those who are especially privileged. They were showered with flowers and heaped with praises that great devotees of the Lord and great saints and sages deserved. They became eternally associated with the divine play of the Supreme Being and inseparably attached to the divine story.] (215)

[Note—Sugriv was born a monkey, and Vibhishan a demon. Under normal circumstances these two births are not highly regarded in the hierarchy of creation. The word 'monkey' is used sarcastically as a metaphor for stupidity, ill-wittedness, hilarity, fickle-mindedness, greed, grossness, lack of culture and civility, and other animal-like characteristics. After all, a monkey is an animal, and it cannot deserve a praise reserved for an exalted creature such as a highly learned and privileged human being. Similarly, the word 'demon' is synonymous with cruelty, harshness, sinfulness, evil and perversions of all kinds. A man who derives pleasure in tormenting others without rhyme or reason is said to be a demon in the guise of a human being. So, both Sugriv and Vibhishan could not expect in their dreams that they will ever be given the same respect as other devotees of Lord Ram who are praised even by the Gods, and that they will go down in the annals of history as worthy and honorable persons instead of being derided and looked down upon as evil creatures.

Both of them had other taints in their character besides the lowly nature of the physical body that they had. Both were more inclined to enjoy the sensual pleasures of the material world than to lead a life of austerity and penance; both had betrayed their respective brothers in order to get the throne of their respective kingdoms. Sugriv had been the cause of the death of his elder brother Baali so that he can get the crown of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, and Vibhishan was instrumental in the slaying of his elder brother Ravana before ascending the throne of Lanka. But inspite of these and many other flaws in their characters, both Sugriv and Vibhishan have been remembered with great respect in all the versions of the story of Lord Ram because of the simple reason

that they had served the Lord and had helped him to achieve the great objective of eliminating the cruel demons from the surface of the earth so that the rest of the Supreme Lord's creation could live in peace.

This Doha highlights the gracious, compassionate, merciful, friendly, benevolent, forgiving and tolerant nature of Lord Ram. The Lord is so gracious that he overlooks all infirmities and drawbacks in the character of his devotees and those who surrender before him—refer Doha no. 47 of this book Dohawali.

The Lord enjoys lifting others to an exalted position while remaining humble himself—refer Doha no. 50 of this book.

The Lord is greatly moved by the distress, misery and grief of his friends and those who have surrendered themselves unconditionally before him. When Sugriv became the Lord's friend and narrated to the Lord how his elder brother Baali had unrightfully beaten him violently and thrown him out of the kingdom based on assumptions and misunderstanding that he wished to usurp the crown though he had no such evil intentions at all because he was forced by circumstances to ascend the throne in Baali's absence, the Lord immediately vowed to avenge his insult and promised to restore his rights by killing Baali. If one looks carefully, no where had Sugriv even as much as hinted to Lord Ram that he wished to get the crown of Kishkindha. It was the Lord himself who gifted it to him to restore his pride and honour. This has been explicitly narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 4 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8, to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 7.

Almost an identical situation occurred when Vibhishan came to seek Lord Ram's refuge when he was kicked out by his elder brother Ravana when Vibhishan advised him to avoid bloodshed for an unrighteous and unethical cause revolving around kidnapping another person's wife, in this case Sita who was the wife of Lord Ram. When Lord Ram accepted him as one of the members of his army and his friend, he anointed Vibhishan to the throne in a symbolic manner by putting a sign of anointment on his forehead. Vibhishan too had not expected it and neither had he ever asked for the crown. This entire incident is vividly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43, right upto Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.

Lord Ram went to the extent of praising all the other monkeys and demons who were in his camp by calling them his dear brothers and friends. The Lord had introduced them to his Guru, sage Vasishtha, upon his return to Ayodhya from forest exile as 'friends who are as dear to him as his own brother Bharat'—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 8.

Even mother Kaushalya had expressed her affection for them and appreciated them by calling them to be as dear to her as Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8 Ka.

The Gods showed their respect to them by showering flowers upon them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8 Kha.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 106, Tulsidas has lauded the magnificent nature of Lord Ram and the greatness of his divine and holy name that even those who were most lowly in the hierarchy of creation became honoured and praise-worthy when they became associated with the Lord or took the shelter of his holy name by remembering it, by invoking it, by using it as the only spiritual anchor for their souls. In this particular verse, Tulsidas lists such entites that benefitted by the grace of Lord Ram—the stone (alluding to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who had been converted into a stone but was liberated from her curse by the touch of Lord Ram's holy feet), Kewat (the boatman who washed the Lord's holy feet and drank the sanctified water as a holy drink that provided him and his entire clan liberation and deliverance), the monkeys (such as Surgriv, Hanuman, Angad etc.), the bears (such as Jamvant), the demons (such as Vibhishan), Sabari (the

low-caste woman devotee whose fed the Lord with her own hands and the Lord performed her last rites when she left her mortal coil by the power of Yoga), the vulture (named Jatau who had fought Ravana in an attempt to save Sita while she was being abducted by the demon, was mortally wounded, and whose last rites too was performed by the Lord himself, a privilege even his worldly father king Dasrath was denied). All the listed characters herein above had not done any good deed or possessed any good character which would empower them to attain salvation on its own strength.]

The Wickedness of Kaikeyi  
(The step-mother of Lord Ram)

216. मातु सकल सानुज भरत गुरु पुर लोग सुभाउ ।  
देखत देख न कैकइहि लंकापति कपिराउ ॥

216. mātu sakala sānuja bharata guru pura lōga subhā'u.  
dēkhata dēkha na kaika'ihī laṅkāpati kapirā'u..

Vibhishan (the king of Lanka) and Sugriv (the king of monkeys) watch with great reverence and loving emotion the behaviour of all the mothers of Lord Ram, Bharat along with his brothers, the sages and seers and the citizens of Ayodhya—all of whom have deep love and affection for Lord Sri Ram. But they (Vibhishan and Sugriv) can't stand the sight of Kaikeyi (i.e. they become disturbed and annoyed when they see her due to her nature of opposition to Sri Ram). (216)

[Note—Kaikeyi was the step-mother of Lord Ram who was responsible for the Lord's forest exile. She had some pending promises to be fulfilled by her husband king Dasrath, and on the crooked advice of her trusted maid named Manthara she asked him to redeem these promises by (i) sending Sri Ram to the forest for 14 years, and (ii) putting her son Bharat on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya.

Even her own Bharat had taken her severely to task for the nuisance she created without consulting him, an action of hers that threw the whole kingdom into a tailspin of miseries and grief, resulted in the death of king Dasrath, and Lord Ram going to the forest along with his wife Sita and his brother Laxman.

The way Bharat had scorchingly scolded his mother Kaikeyi and treated her with utmost contempt and disdain have been graphically described in (i) Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse nos. 60-61; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 160 to Doha no. 162.

Bharat was so angry at his mother that he never looked at her face or talked with her for the rest of his life—refer: Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.

Kaikeyi stands out in the whole story of the Ramayana as a selfish and wicked woman, and even the forgiving Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram who had embraced Bharat when he went to her to express solidarity with her and express his sincere innocence in the entire affair without any rancour, ill-will or suspicion at being a conspirator, had silently regretted at Kaikeyi's evil nature and bemoaned her selfish and evil nature vis-à-vis her son Bharat who had a character just the opposite to his mother—refer: Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 83 and 85 respectively.

Refer the next Doha no. 217 also.]

217. सहज सरल रघुबर बचन कुमति कुटिल करि जान ।

चलइ जोंक जल बक्रगति जद्यपि सलिलु समान ॥

217. sahaja sarala raghubara bacana kumati kuṭīla kari jāna.  
cala'i jōnka jala bakragati jadyapi salilu samāna..

The inherently and naturally simple, polite, honest, friendly and straight forward words of Lord Sri Ram were misinterpreted as crooked and deceitful by the evil-minded Kaikeyi. Even if the water is static, uniformly soft and easy to pass through, a leech has a bad habit of always moving in a zig-zag manner in it. (217)

[Note—The leech cannot move in a straight line but always takes a crooked and warped path—i.e. it traverses in water in a series of turns, twists and twirls, swinging to the right and then to the left in a series of 'S' and 'U' movements. This is a metaphoric way of saying that a wicked person will always adopt a cunning demeanour or a warped attitude or a cunning posture no matter what happens and no matter how honest the other person is.

The important point to note here is that Kaikeyi has been compared to a 'leech', of all the creatures! A leech is a parasite which thrives on the blood of other living organisms. This derogatory, contemptuous, insinuating, defamatory and insulting term 'leech' that is used for Kaikeyi indicates to the extent she has been condemned, decried and derided in history for her villainous role in sending Lord Ram to the forest and demanding the kingdom for her son Bharat in an extremely selfish manner and pervert manner.

This Doha appears as no. 42 of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. Prior to this Doha, Lord Ram had politely accepted her orders to go to the forest and let Bharat ascend the throne. He then asked why king Dasrath was distressed so much for this little thing. Obviously, there was nothing crooked or sarcastic in this statement of Lord Ram, but the wicked Kaikeyi took it otherwise and felt outrageous at it. She thought to herself that Sri Ram was being polite as a ploy to make her change her decision out of mercy or courtesy, or she probably thought that Sri Ram was using sarcastic words to tease her and taunt her when he said that the forest will be very comfortable for him if his father so wants it for him. She also thought that Sri Ram is attempting to incite king Dasrath to renegade on his promises and take back his words given by him to her, and instead order the Lord to stay at Ayodhya by defying Kaikeyi's words because he had not accepted them with a free will.]

Glory of Dasrath (father of Lord Ram)

218. दसरथ नाम सुकामतरु फलइ सकल कल्याण ।  
धरनि धाम धन धरम सुत सदगुन रूप निधान ॥
218. dasaratha nāma sukāmataru phala'i sakala kalyāna.  
dharani dhāma dhana dharama suta sadaguna rūpa nidhāna..

The name of Dasrath (the father of Lord Ram) is like a Kalpa-Tree; it bears all the fruits of good fortunes—such as possession of land and wealth (i.e. having prosperity and fame on earth), a happy and contented household, fulfillment of all the requirements of Dharma (i.e. being able to live up to the standards of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility), having excellent sons (who are strong, healthy, obedient,

intelligent and wise), possessing all the good qualities that are much sought after in this world, and having a body that is healthy, strong, handsome and active.

[In other words, those who pay their respects to the father of Lord Ram, who was no ordinary man but a privileged soul because the Supreme Being was so pleased with him that the Lord of the world agreed to his request to become his son and play in his laps. Say, of the millions and trillions of those who are born in the human race, who has this great fortune? In his previous life, Dasrath was Manu, the first human Male, and he and his wife Satrupa had done severe penance to please Lord Vishnu. When the Lord appeared before them, the couple asked the Lord to become their child. It was this request that Visnnu fulfilled by becoming their son when Manu became Dasrath and Satrupa became Kaushlya in their next birth.] (218)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 7/3/5 of Tulsidas' Ram Agya Prashnawali.

Dasrath was a very famous king of his time, ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya, and his glories were spread in all the directions of the world. He was well established in practicing the tenets of Dharma and fought for its implementation in this creation. He had always helped the Gods in all their endeavours. He had immense devotion for Lord Vishnu who holds the divine bow known as the Saarang—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 188.

The holiness and piety of Dasrath and his privileged stature can be gauged by the simple factor that the Lord of creation, Lord Vishnu, chose him to be his father when the Lord had to come down to earth to fulfill his role as the supreme protector and sustainer of creation by killing the cruel demons who had been wreaking havoc in the world. Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 156 that say—“Dasrath got the great reward of taking birth in this world and dying (because everyone who is born must die, but rarely does one get an opportunity to have the Supreme Being as his beloved son). His glories spread in the entire creation like the brilliant rays of the sun. While he was alive he lived watching affectionately the beautiful moon-like face of Lord Ram at close quarters and to his heart's content; and he died remembering the Lord and muttering his holy name (that is famed for providing emancipation and salvation to the soul of the dying man).”

Then later on, sage Vasistha also praised him when he was trying to soothe the grief and agony of Bharat upon his return to Ayodhya and learning of sending Lord Ram to exile in the forest and the death of his father. In the assembly that congregated after the funeral was over, the sage had greatly praised the divine glories of king Dasrath and emphasized his steadfastness in upholding the doctrines of Dharma (righteousness and probity) and Satya (truth)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 171.

Then the sage told Bharat about the category of persons who should be lamented for in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172, to Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 173. This is because after they die, their souls do not find liberation and deliverance, but have to suffer the horrible consequences of their sinful and unrighteous lives. Now let us see who such persons are—

“Listen Bharat dear. King Dasrath was an extremely privileged and noble soul, and there is no cause for regretting or lamenting for him. One must regret and lament for a Brahmin (a member of the learned class) who has fallen from the auspicious path shown by the Vedas, for a king who does not know and obey the laws and ethics of kingship and for whom his subjects is not as dear as his own life, one must regret and lament for a Vaishya (trader or businessman) who is extremely miserly and does not show respect and hospitality to a guest in spite of him being rich and able, who is not devoted to the Lord in his heart and who is not gentle and friendly in nature, one must regret and lament for a

Shudra (a member of the serving class) who finds pleasure in insulting a Brahmin (those who are senior and learned), is haughty and lacks the basics of wisdom and intelligence, one must regret and lament for a woman who has fallen from her vows of chastity and loyalty towards her husband, who loves being wicked and pervert, and who enjoys conceit and dirty tricks, one must regret and lament for a mendicant or a monk who falls from his chosen path of Sanyas (renunciation, detachment, self restraint etc.), one must regret and lament for those who do not obey their Gurus (teachers, moral preceptors, guides and advisors), one must regret and lament for a Grihastha (householder) who falls from his path and violates the laws of ethical conduct and life that is prescribed in the scriptures for him, one must regret and lament for an ascetic who does not obey the rules of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, who is engrossed in all sorts of worldly affairs, and who has no wisdom and enlightenment, one must regret and lament for a Vaanprastha (a forest dweller) who does not do Tapa (austerity and penance) but has his attention fixed on enjoyments of the material pleasures and comforts of this world of sense objects, one must regret and lament for a person who is a tattler and back-biter who does not hesitate in betraying, one must regret and lament for a person who has a natural habit of being angry at the triflest of things or for no rhyme or reason, one must regret and lament for a person who is always inimical towards or opposed to his parents, his Guru and his friends, one must regret and lament for a person who always harms the interest and well-being of others though he has nothing to gain from it, and one must regret and lament for a person who does not abandon all deceit and conceit to become an honest and truthful person who is also a devotee of Lord Hari (Vishnu; the Supreme Lord).”

Then sage Vasishtha gives the reason why Dasrath is not to grieve for—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 172, to Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 174. They say—“The king of Kaushal, i.e. Dasrath, is not someone who should be lamented and grieved for. His auspicious deeds, his magnificent glory, his righteous character and his noble demeanour are well known and established in all the four corners of the world. Oh Bharat! There has never been and will never again be a king who can be compared with your father Dasrath. Brahma (the creator), Hari (Vishnu the sustainer), Shiva (the concluder), and the king of Gods (Indra)—all of them laud him and sing his praises in unequivocal terms. Say, who can sufficiently praise a man who has had the great and rare fortune to have sons like Lord Ram, Laxman, Shatrughan and you (Bharat). The king is praise-worthy by all accounts, and there is no cause why one should lament, regret or grieve for him.”]

219. तुलसी जान्यो दसरथहिं धरमु न सत्य समान ।  
रामु तजे जेहि लागि बिनु राम परिहरे प्रान ॥

219. tulasī jān'yō dasarathahim dharamu na satya samāna.  
rāmu tajē jēhi lāgi binu rāma pariharē prāna..

Tulsidas says that it was only Dasrath who had realised that there was no law and principle in this world that is greater than 'Truthfulness'. [That is, adherence to 'Truth' is the best moral and ethical principle that a person should practice.]

He had sacrificed his own life and abandoned his most beloved son Sri Ram at the altar of 'Truth'<sup>1</sup>. (219)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This alludes to Dasrath not telling Kaikeyi that he will not honour his vows or promises that he had made to her in private long ago and which were pending with him.

He could easily have done it on more than one pretext—the most important one is that he cannot bargain the future of the kingdom and matters of state policy for some personal promise that he had made to his wife. The promise that Dasrath had made to Kaikeyi was a personal matter and not some kind of treaty or accord made between two heads of states which was binding on both the kings and was a matter of public concern. The kingdom was not his personal property that he could play around with it as he wished. So, if he had told Kaikeyi that he is not prepared to honour such promises that compromise on state policy he would have been perfectly within his rights as a king who has moral responsibilities towards his subjects also. Any promise made to one's wife has no bearing with public affairs.

But Dasrath was renowned for being true to his words, even if that meant dying to keep them. He had made two promises—and Kaikeyi demanded that he fulfill them both. She asked him to send Lord Ram to the forest to fulfill one pending promise, and to put her son Bharat on the throne of Ayodhya as a fulfillment of the second promise.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 95, Lord Ram has himself endorsed this doctrine that being truthful is the greatest principle in this world, and no other law or principle is equivalent to it in terms of sanctity and perfection. Even the ancient scriptures endorse this view.

Now, there is a very interesting and pertinent question that arises here—if Dasrath was so renowned for his righteous character and adherence to laws of proper conduct and ethics so much lauded in the scriptures so that he was praised by the learned sage Vashistha himself, and the fact that he had died crying for Lord Ram and uttering the Lord's holy name that is famed as the 'Tarak Mantra', i.e. the spiritual word that immediately provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of the dying man, then why did he not attain salvation after death, and why did he become a Ghost, a Spirit? Dasrath's final deliverance came only after Lord Ram's victory at Lanka when Dasrath's Ghost had gone to the battle-field to bless the Lord and the Lord had then himself preached him 'Gyan', i.e. the essential tenets of the teachings of the Upanishads and other exalted scriptures which enlightened Dasrath about the supreme knowledge of the Absolute Truth, about the fact that true emancipation and salvation comes when one realises that the Atma or soul residing in his physical gross body is his true identity, and not the physical body, that this Atma and the supreme Atma known as the 'Parmatma' are one and the same thing, and that there is no one who is a father or a son because all these relationships are limited to the gross physical temporal world which is mortal, perishable, mundane and deluding, and not to the Spirit which is an universal entity that is eternal, imperishable, immanent, constant and truthful. It is then that Dasrath went to the heaven. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 112.

There are a number of reasons why such an exalted king as Dasrath did not find immediate Mukti or liberation and deliverance upon death. It's a great paradox that a person (Dasrath in this case) who has the Supreme Being as his son, who was regarded as the most exalted king who was like a benchmark for everything that is righteous, noble and truthful, who had himself practiced the laws of Dharma (auspicious and righteous conduct) as preached by the scriptures throughout his life most steadfastly, and who had uttered the holy name 'Ram' of the Supreme Being which the scriptures have unanimously defined as the 'Tarak Mantra', i.e. the spiritual formula that provides the soul of a creature instant freedom from all fetters that shackle him to this mundane and temporal world of delusions and torments, should be denied the privilege of Mukti or instant deliverance upon death, and instead become a Ghost!

Let us now examine some of the reasons as to why this sort of thing happened, and what lessons we can learn from them. One of the apparent reasons is that Dasrath had

forgotten in his love for the Lord that the latter was not an ordinary man but the divine and holy Supreme Being himself in a human form. So, when he lamented woefully and cried out the Lord's name, his mind and sub-conscious was focused on 'Ram' who was his 'son', rather than the 'Ram' who was the 'Supreme Being'. This has a clear message for us—that it matters a lot where the mind is, what our internal thoughts are, where our sub-conscious is hitched, what our internal thoughts and intentions are. The Supreme Lord is said to be 'Antaryaami'—i.e. one who resides in one's inner-self, one's bosom, one's heart, and therefore knows all our internal thoughts and feelings. Mere lip service may deceive the world, but not the Lord.

The Atma, the soul, obtains a destination to which it is logged or focused or thinking of or hitched at the time of death. So, had Dasrath focused his mind and sub-conscious on the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul of creation, he would not have wailed and cried as he did, but would have passed away silently, cheerfully and fully contented that he was a fortunate human being to have the Supreme Being as his son whom he had loved and adored so much so closely, a privilege denied to all others in the human race. He would have focused his Atma and attention on the holy feet of this formed form of the Supreme Being and uttered the Lord's holy name with reverence and with a sense of worship instead of woefully crying for his 'son whom he loved so much, whom he had wanted to see as the king of Ayodhya, and whom he will not see for a long time again'. Why, did Dasrath not realise that 'Ram' resided in his heart itself as its 'Atma', as its soul? Why did he not understand that the 'Ram' he was crying for, the physical body of the Holy Spirit, was not its true identity, and true spiritual liberation is freedom from this ignorance?

Final emancipation and salvation of the creature that comes with true enlightenment about the Atma, the nature of the 'self' as the Supreme Consciousness known as Brahm, eluded Dasrath. 'Maya'—the delusions and its attending fetters of ignorance—that has ensnared the whole world managed to cast its grip on Dasrath and eclipsed his wisdom, in spite of the fact that he was such an exalted and holy person that the Supreme Being had felt sufficiently obliged to become his son just to please him. It's a great paradox and a lesson for the rest of the human kind. The lesson is simple—merely being near to the physical form of the Lord is not sufficient a ground for the final emancipation and deliverance of the soul. For this, 'Gyan' or truthful knowledge, self-realisation and enlightenment are essential requirements. For instance, merely going to a good and reputed school is not enough for a child to become a great man, though of course the school does play a positive, effective and determined role in shaping his character and overall personality, but then in the final run it is the student who has to decide himself or herself what he or she will make of the future of life.

So we come face to face here with another great spiritual dilemma of creation. The power of 'Maya', the power of delusions, is so overpoweringly great that it trounces and crushes underfoot even the most exalted of souls, and a creature who is able to manage his freedom from the clutches of this Maya is really and indeed the most fortunate—for only he is entitled to get true and wholesome 'Mukti' and 'Moksha', i.e. liberation and deliverance, or emancipation and salvation in a comprehensive and wholesome manner.

The fact that Dasrath had not realised who 'Lord Ram' actually was is also evident elsewhere—when sage Vishwamitra had come to take the Lord with him so that the demons who had been defiling his fire sacrifices could be punished and his religious activities could be completed, Dasrath had strongly resisted and was most reluctant to part with Lord Ram and Laxman. He had worried that his dear sons would be harmed, and that they had never seen the harsh realities of a forest where the sage lived as the boys had been brought up in royal comfort. At that time, sage Vashistha, the royal priest, had prevailed upon Dasrath and told him the reality of who Ram was. Refer: Ram Charit

Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 206, right upto Doha no. 208.

Maya is so powerful that it took the better hold of Dasrath once again and he forgot what Vashishtha had said at that time when he wailed and wept and lamented woefully for his 'son Ram who has gone to the forest'.

Another reason for Dasrath not going to the heaven immediately after death is that he had died with an unfulfilled wish—and it was to see Sri Ram as the king of Ayodhya. Preparations for the Lord's anointment were on in full swing when Kaikeyi played spoilsport. According to the scriptures, if a man dies with some unfulfilled desire, he does not find final liberation and deliverance for his soul; the soul remains trapped somewhere. This is the reason why Dasrath had not reached the heaven upon death, and had become a Spirit instead—because his desire of seeing Lord Ram on the throne could not be fulfilled. At the end of the war it became certain that now the Lord will go back to Ayodhya and be anointed on the throne because the promised 14 year period of exile had also ended. So, after meeting Sri Ram on the battle-field of Lanka, Dasrath's Spirit went to heaven.

It ought to be noted here that Dasrath had remained in a Spirit or Ghost form for 14 long years during which he did not find his liberation and deliverance in the true sense inspite of his being one of the most respected souls of his time. He was truthful, he had the Supreme Being as his son, he had always practiced Dharma, and he had died uttering the Lord's holy name. All these positive factors were pulling him towards the heaven, but one single factor was bearing heavily on him and pulling his soul down to countermand all the positive factors so much so that his soul remained dangling between the heaven and the earth in the form of a Spirit. This factor is his unfulfilled desire or wish to see Sri Ram, his 'son', on the throne of Ayodhya. He was deluded by Maya; he did not realise or understand that whatever is happening is decided not by him but by the supreme Creator.

Under the effect of the overpowering Maya, Dasrath had been deluded on two counts—one, he had thought that Ram was his son, and that he could not see him crowned as the king of Ayodhya. He would have treated the entire episode with stoic indifference had he realised that 'Ram' had other vital and important things to do instead of just routinely carrying out the formalities of running a kingdom.

What lesson do we learn from this incident of the Ramayana? It is simple and straightforward—one should teach one's self to become detached from all deeds and actions, to do deeds and take actions but leave their results in the hands of God, and not to have any sort of expectations and desires pertaining to the result of such deeds or actions. This will not come easily and in a day like the case that one does not learn any worldly skill overnight. It requires constant practice. So when the last breath leaves the body, such a wise and enlightened man will have no hopes and desire left pending; he will die without any desires requiring fulfillment. He will be a contented soul at the instant of death. If this happens, the entire exercise of studying the scriptures or following their advices throughout one's life is rewarded and becomes fruitful.

Another lesson that we draw from Dasrath's incident is that it is one's own inclinations and deeds, one's own self that is responsible for his final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration and its attendant agonies and torments, and no one else. Just imagine—with the Supreme Being becoming his son, how more fortunate could Dasrath have been? But still his soul did not find Mukti or liberation and deliverance.

Come to think of it—even the lowly Jatau, the vulture king, found immediate emancipation and salvation upon death, and his last rites were performed by Lord Ram himself. But this privilege could not be availed of by Dasrath inspite of the fact that he had the first right-of-way to die such an honourable death. Jatau's death is highly lauded

in the scriptures, and Doha nos. 222-227 below of this book Dohawali are dedicated to praising him especially for obtaining such a remarkable death.

Our great scriptures have subtly told us many esoteric spiritual secrets by way of stories and parables, and it is upon us how we interpret and use them for our welfare. Let us, for instance, take the example of Ajaamil and compare his story with that of Dasrath. Ajaamil was a fallen, sinful, ignorant and illiterate man who had attained the abode of Lord Vishnu immediately upon death when he had also called out the name of his 'son' named 'Narayan' to help him when the ferocious messengers of Yam, the God of Death, had come to take his soul to hell. But as soon as he shouted 'Narayan', the messengers of Lord Vishnu rushed forward and took him to heaven—in spite of the fact that Ajaamil, like Dasrath, was not invoking Lord Narayan (Vishnu) but calling out for his son of the same name to be at his side and help him overcome the fear of the messengers of Yam. Dasrath had also called out for his 'son' named 'Ram' at the time of death, then why did he not find heaven though the name 'Ram' is the holy name of the Supreme Being and the only Tarak Mantra as enunciated in the Upahishads? The reason is this—while Ajaamil was an ignorant, illiterate and sinful man, Dasrath was just the opposite. Therefore, they cannot be judged equally and treated with the same yardstick. A knowing and wise man cannot be excused for any wrong doing for which an ignorant and stupid man is granted pardon. The punishment and reward should be awarded after taking into consideration the person who has done a particular deed and his circumstances. Dasrath was an extremely fortunate man as to have the Supreme Being himself playing around in his household, but Ajaamil was a sinful man who had no opportunity to experience the presence of the Lord so close to him. The fact that the Lord's divine name has a sufficient power to deliver the soul of a living being if the latter remembers the Lord, albeit indirectly, unintentionally and informally even for a fleeting moment and under any pretext, is exemplified by the story of Ajaamil. But that does not mean that a wise man such as Dasrath should fall in the trap laid out by Maya and forget the truthful form of the Lord. Well come to think of it—all the while since the Supreme Being's manifestation in the household of king Dasrath as Lord Ram, the king had been treating him as his worldly 'son'. Dasrath had longed for a 'son' and not for the 'Supreme Being' when he did the fire sacrifice to beget a son who would take care of the kingdom as he was becoming old and infirm. This fact is absolutely clear in the reading of the Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 189.

Therefore, there is no ground why Dasrath should be given immediate liberation and deliverance. His lack of true spiritual knowledge and his delusions caused by the affect of Maya is so evident that Lord Ram has himself had to teach him Gyan on the battle-field of Lanka so that Dasrath could find deliverance—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 112.]

220. राम बिरहँ दसरथ मरन मुनि मन अगम सुमीचु ।  
तुलसी मंगल मरन तरु सुचि सनेह जल सींचु ॥

220. rāma biraham̐ dasaratha marana muni mana agama sumīcu.  
tulasī maṅgala marana taru suci sanēha jala sīñcu..

Dasrath died due to the agony and sorrow caused by separation from Lord Sri Ram, a death which was inaccessible even for the mind of great sages (i.e. they could never ever imagine that they would ever die such an honourable and desirable death).

Tulsidas advises that if one has an equivalent love for Sri Ram, such a rare death can also be achieved by him or her. For this purpose, one should constantly water the tree representing the desire for such an auspicious death by always remembering Lord Sri Ram and having high intensity of love and immense devotion for the Lord. (220)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 2/3/7.]

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 16. Tulsidas says that Dasrath is highly respected and he (Tulsidas) praises him so much because the king's love for Lord Ram was unquestioned and very deep so much so that the king left his mortal body like a blade of grass as soon as he was separated from his beloved son Lord Ram who is very compassionate and kind to the wretched and the meek.

Death comes to all living being, but that death which comes while the creature remembers the Supreme Being is very rare. Dasrath is highly praised because he died remembering the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 156.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 171 says “the king followed the laws of Dharma (righteousness and auspiciousness) in a most truthful manner; he had left or discarded his mortal body to establish and prove his immense love for Lord Ram”.

Bharat has also endorsed this fact that Dasrath had left his mortal body, which is nonetheless perishable, because of his deep love for Lord Ram, and therefore there is no question for lamenting upon his death—because it is a fortunate and a desirable form of death for all living beings—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 211.

See also note of Doha nos. 218-219 above, and Doha no. 221 below.]

221. जीवन मरन सुनाम जैसे दसरथ राय को ।  
जियत खिलाए राम राम बिरहँ तनु परिहरेउ ॥

221. jīvana marana sunāma jaisēm dasaratha rāya kō.  
jiyata khilā'ē rāma rāma biraham'tanu pariharē'u..

The fame that Dasrath got is not possible for anyone to acquire—because when he was alive he played with the Supreme Being himself when the Lord became his child known as 'Ram', and when he died he did so because of the great agony of separation from the Lord when 'Ram' was sent to exile in the forest. (221)

[Note—Detailed note on this is appended to Doha nos. 218-220 above.]

Glory of Jatau (the vulture)

222. प्रभुहि बिलोकत गोद गत सिय हित घायल नीचु ।  
तुलसी पाई गीधपति मुकुति मनोहर मीचु ॥

222. prabhuhi bilōkata gōda gata siya hita ghāyala nīcu.  
tulasī pā'ī gīdhapati mukuti manōhara mīcu..

Tulsidas says that the old vulture king Jatau is most lucky and glorious for he was mortally wounded in his attempt to rescue Sita (from the clutches of Ravana while he was abducting her to Lanka on his chariot), and though he possessed an evil body of a meat-eating vulture, he died in the lap of Lord Sri Ram while gazing intently at his beautiful face. Tulsidas praises Jatau and is awe-struck at his great fortune. He wonders that is it indeed a beautiful way to die and attain emancipation of the soul. (222)

[Note—The story of Jatau is legendary. He was a vulture by birth, and was a friend of king Dasrath. He had met Lord Ram previously in the forest and had assured the Lord that he will stay in close proximity with them (Ram, Sita and Laxman) in the forest to keep a vigilant eye and give them protection to the best of his might—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-7. This fact is also endorsed by Tulsidas in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 12, stanza no. 2.

So when Ravana abducted Sita and she wailed loudly, it was Jatau who leapt immediately into the air and fought a fierce battle with Ravana. But ultimately Ravana cut his wings and the mighty bird fell to the ground, mortally wounded and muttering the holy name of Lord Ram, waiting for the time when the Lord would come that way while searching for Sita so that Jatau could convey to the Lord the direction in which she was taken away and, at the same time, get an opportunity to breathe his last in the presence of the Supreme Being standing right in front of him. What more would any living being want and hope for?

Eventually as it happened, Lord Ram did come to him, showered his affection on the dying Jatau so much so that the Lord wiped his wounds with his own hands using the plaits of his hermit-like long hairs, and finally performed Jatau's last rites himself. This privilege was denied to the Lord's own father Dasrath because when the latter died the Lord was in the forest, and not in Ayodhya. Dasrath's last rites were performed by Bharat.

This sort of death made Jatau an extremely divine being and a most honourable one in the entire story of Ramayana. The only other character whose last rites were performed by the Supreme Being himself was Sabari, the low-caste woman.

The entire episode of Jatau is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29, till Doha no. 32 when Jatau attained the divine abode of Lord Hari or Lord Vishnu.

Refer also to Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 12-16.

“Lord Ram lifted Jatau onto his lap and washed his wounds with the tears streaming from his (Ram's) eyes”—this is said in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 13, stanza no. 1, while Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30 says that “the Lord moved his loving hand caressingly on his head”.

Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32 explicitly says that Lord Ram performed the last rites of Jatau with his own hands.

Jatau's most holy death has been praised by Tulsidas in Doha nos. 222-227.]

223. बिरत करम रत भगत मुनि सिद्ध ऊँच अरु नीचु ।  
तुलसी सकल सिहात सुनि गीधराज की मीचु ॥

223. birata karama rata bhagata muni sid'dha ūm̐ca aru nīcu.  
tulasī sakala sihāta suni gīdharāja kī mīcu..

Tulsidas says that on hearing the news of how Jatau, the king of vultures, had died, the great ascetics, the Karmayogis (those who do their duties in a righteous manner), the devotees, the wise-men, the sages, the mystics, the hermits, the higher and lower borns, et al—in short, all living beings became jealous of him on the one hand, and praised him and applauded him for the auspicious death he got. (223)

[Note—When people came to know how Jatau had died while being caressed by Lord Ram as he lay cradled in the Lord’s arms, and how the Lord had himself performed his last rites, they all praised Jatau and wished that they too could die the same way. They all became convinced that of all the living beings on earth, no one was as fortunate and lucky as Jatau—because all those who have taken a birth must die, but it’s rarer than the rarest occasion when the Supreme Being himself comes down walking upto a dying man to move his divine hands on his head, to cradle the dying man in his arms, and to do his last rites with his own hands. Their becoming ‘jealous’ is a figure of speech to emphasise how much they envied Jatau because envy is a sort of praise and honour. One becomes envious of another person only when the latter has something that is highly praiseworthy and valuable, and which the other person who is jealous does not have nor expects to have any time in the future.

Jealousy and envy is an indirect way of immense praise. One is not jealous of an evil character in a person, because such character is denounced by the society. One is jealous and envious of a person only if he possesses some noble virtue or skill or asset for which the world lauds him and applauds him.

Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 13, stanza no. 4 explicitly says that when Lord Ram asked Jatau that if he wished to live then the Lord can grant him a longer life, Jatau had replied—“Lord, well, tell me one thing—to be in the presence of the Supreme Lord at the time of death is most difficult even for great ascetics and sages to achieve, and this magnificent opportunity has come to me out of its own free will. Where will I get it again? I will not be cheated of this golden chance by bargaining it for a life that is nonetheless transient, mortal, false, deluding and decayable. Therefore, I do not wish to live any longer!”

Then again, in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 15, stanza no. 4, Jatau says—“Oh Lord, believe me. My death is so honourable and desirable that not even the four commendable noble fruits that the scriptures say one gets by living a life of full auspiciousness and righteousness (i.e. the rewards of Artha—worldly prosperity and well-being, Dharma—honour that comes with being rightful and righteous), Kaam—fulfilment of all desires, and Moksha—spiritual liberation and deliverance) can ever compare with it. Tell me, is there any such other honourable and divine reward more desirable than the way I am dying?” Lord Ram was left speechless, for he had no answer to this question!

What other factor, besides the fact that Jatau died in the arms of the Supreme Being, made his death so desirable and laudable? He had died in a selfless manner serving the Lord in trying to protect Sita, Lord Ram’s honourable wife, from the clutches of the demon Ravana who had abducted her and was taking her away to his city of Lanka. ‘Selfless service’ is one of the greatest deeds for a person to do, and this single action of Jatau made him perfectly eligible for immediate deliverance upon death. In other words, if one dies doing selfless service, and offers his services to the Lord God while actually undertaking the exercise, then his emancipation and salvation is a surety. Such a creature is praised by all the saints and sages—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 84.

Nothing is in-accessible or un-attainable for a creature who has the good of others in his heart, who thinks for the welfare of others, and who is not selfish—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 31.

In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 27, Angad praised Jatau when he said—“There is no one more praiseworthy and honourable than Jatau in this world. He is most adorable because he had left his mortal body in the selfless service of Lord Ram, and had gone to the divine abode of Lord Hari (Vishnu) after death.”

Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no. 3 says that “the king of vultures assumed a divine form and went to heaven after bowing at the holy feet of Lord Ram and enshrining the Lord’s beautiful and holy image in his heart even as he heard his own glories and those of the Lord’s being sung all around in the world”.

Jatau’s special death which made him a subject of jealousy and envy for all other exalted persons as narrated in the Doha above has one unique aspect—in spite of him being a vulture by birth and body, he was given an honour befitting a father by none else than the Supreme Being (Lord Ram) himself when the Lord performed his last rites himself—refer: (i) Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no. 4; verse no. 14, stanza no. 1; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32; (iii) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 16, line no. 3; (iv) Doha no. 227 of this book Dohawali; (v) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 164, stanza no. 2; verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1 says that Lord Ram offered a ‘Pinda’, a ball of cereals that is offered to the soul of one’s departed parent, to Jatau after the bird left its physical body.

The remarkable thing is that Lord Ram has called Jatau ‘his father’ in clear terms in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 15, stanza no. 1 when the Lord requests Jatau to live a little longer for some more days so that he (Ram) can enjoy his company as a father and becomes privileged to receive his blessings as a son gets from his father.]

224. मुए मरत मरिहैं सकल घरी पहरके बीचु ।  
लही न काहूँ आजु लौं गीधराज की मीचु ॥

224. mu'ē marata marihairiṁ sakala gharī paharakē bīcu.  
lahī na kāhūṁ āju lauṁ gīdharāja kī mīcu..

So many have died till now; so many are dying at present; and so many will die in the future with the passage of time—but till today, and not ever in the future, will anyone get the privilege of dying the way Jatau had died. (224)

225. मुएँ मुकुत जीवत मुकुत मुकुत मुकुत हूँ बीचु ।  
तुलसी सबही तें अधिक गीधराज की मीचु ॥

225. mu'ēm̄ mukuta jīvata mukuta mukuta mukuta hūṁ bīcu.  
tulasī sabahī tēm̄ adhika gīdharāja kī mīcu..

Some find ‘Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance of the soul) after death of the physical body, whereas there are others who obtain it during their life times while they are still

alive (e.g. sages, seers, mystics, hermits etc.). There are different types and variations of Mukti<sup>1</sup>.

Tulsidas says that Jatau's death and liberation of his soul was far better than and superior to any known type of Mukti<sup>2</sup>. (225)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>There are many types or forms of 'Mukti' as described in the Upanishads. Basically there are three types of Mukti—Jivan Mukti which is obtained while the creature is alive, Videha Mukti that is obtained after death, and Kaivalya Mukti which is unique in the sense that once it is obtained there is no taking birth again. Usually, the last form is attained by ascetics who do Yoga and leave their bodies voluntarily.

<sup>2</sup>Why it is so has been explained extensively in detailed notes appended to Doha nos. 222 and 223 above. Two factors stand out as unique in the case of Jatau—one is that he had died serving the Lord selflessly, and the other is that he had the Lord God himself attending to his wounds and standing right in his front as he breathed his last. It is next to impossible to have this privilege, especially when we realise that Jatau was a vulture, a bird that feeds on meat and cadavers. He was not a holy ascetic or sage who did Yoga or went to pilgrimage or performed any elaborate religious deed or chanted some holy Mantra. Those who did throughout their lives could not get the privilege of the Lord God in the form of Sri Ram himself standing in their front as they breathed their last and then perform their last rites himself. So obviously Jatau's salvation and emancipation was unique and made others jealous of him—refer Doha no. 223 above. ]

226. रघुबर बिकल बिहंग लखि सो बिलोकि दो बीर ।  
सिय सुधि कहि सिय राम कहि देह तजी मति धीर ॥

226. raghubara bikala bihaᅅga lakhi sō bilōki dō bīra.  
siya sudhi kahi siya rāma kahi dēha tajī mati dhīra..

Lord Sri Ram looked at the wounded and immensely suffering Jatau; that (stable-minded and steadfast) creature also looked back at the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) to his heart's content<sup>1</sup>.

[That is, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman silently watched Jatau as he lay wounded, repeating the Lord's holy name 'Sita-Ram'. Jatau, in turn, also watched intently and affectionately as the Lord stood in his front, till the time his (Jatau's) heart was contented fully. Obviously, quite some time must have passed while they watched each other. The Lord wished to give Jatau one last chance to have the Supreme Being's divine view to his full satisfaction before death. What a glorious occasion presenting a divinely magnificent sight that can uplift the soul to lofty heights of ecstasy and exhilaration it must have been!]

Then after telling the two brave brothers (Ram and Laxman) the news of Sita (and the direction she was taken by Ravana)<sup>2</sup>, and fervently chanting the glorious holy name of Sita-Ram, Jatau left his mortal coil (i.e. his mortal physical body) to attain a glorious death<sup>3</sup>. (226)

[Note—This Doha is part of Ram Aagya Prashnawali of Tulsidas as verse no. 3/3/5.

This particular sight of Jatau and Lord Ram watching each other affectionately, Jatau having his mind focused in the holy feet of Lord Ram, and the merciful Lord kneeling down and moving his divine hands on Jatau's head which removed all the sufferings of

Jatau have been wonderfully depicted in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30 and Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes it.

In Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 11, stanza no. 4 it is said that “Lord Ram forgot about Sita when he saw Jatau, who was remembering the Lord, and his wretched condition”.

<sup>2</sup>Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 31 describe the same thing when they say—“Jatau told Lord Sri Ram that Ravana has inflicted this grave injury to him, and he has abducted Sita and taken her in the south direction. She was wailing woefully like a trapped bird. Oh Lord, I have managed to keep myself alive just to have your vision, and now that has been done so I wish to depart.”

<sup>3</sup>The privileged death of Jatau made him a subject of jealousy for other ascetics and hermits etc.—refer Doha no. 223. No one has ever got, nor would anyone ever get a death like the one Jatau got—refer Doha no. 224.

Detailed notes have been appended to Doha no. 222-225 to elaborate upon this aspect of Jatau’s death.]

227. दसरथ तें दसगुन भगति सहित तासु करि काजु ।  
सोचत बंधु समेत प्रभु कृपासिंधु रघुराजु ॥

227. dasaratha tēm dasaguna bhagati sahita tāsū kari kāju.  
sōcata bandhu samēta prabhu krpāsindhu raghurāju..

Lord Sri Ram, who is an ocean of graciousness and mercy, performed the last rites of Jatau with a devotion and fervour which was ten times more than what he had for his own father Dasrath, and having done so, he, along with his brother Laxman, gravely mourned his (Jatau's) death. (227)

[Note—This Doha is part of Ram Aagya Prashnawali of Tulsidas as verse no. 3/3/6.  
See note of Doha nos. 222 and 223 above.]

#### The Gracious Nature of Lord Ram

228. केवट निसिचर बिहग मृग किए साधु सनमानि ।  
तुलसी रघुबर की कृपा सकल सुमंगल खानि ॥

228. kēvaṭa nisicara bihaga mrga ki'ē sādhu sanamāni.  
tulasī raghubara kī krpā sakala sumaṅgala khāni..

Tulsidas says that graciousness and benevolence of Lord Sri Ram is like a mine of all auspiciousness, welfare and good fortune. It is this fabulous and grand quality in the nature of the Lord that had transformed or converted such lowly persons as Kewat (the boatman), a demon (Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana), a bird (Jatau, the vulture) as well as animals (such as the monkeys and bears whom the Lord befriended at Kishkindha, such as Sugriv, the king of monkeys, and Jamvant, the king of bears) into saint-like figures who became revered and subject of great acclaim and honour in this world. (228)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Aagya Prashnawali as no. 6/5/7.

Refer also Doha nos. 158-167 which deal with the same eclectic theme.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 215 reflects the ideas expressed in the present Doha no. 228 almost in identical terms.

All the listed creatures were of low birth and had not done anything great from the religious point of view that they should be lauded in the world as someone who was entitled to great honour and reverence that is usually reserved for great saints, sages, ascetics and pious souls. It was their association with Lord Ram that raised them to an exalted stature. It was the Lord's grace that lifted them from being a non-entity to someone remembered in history with the greatest of respect.

Lord Ram was so great and magnanimous that he treated even the humblest and the lowliest with the greatest of respect. He had honoured Sabari, the low-caste woman so much so that not only did he eat the raw fruits offered by her when the Lord visited her hermitage but also performed her last rites like he would have done for his own mother. This incident is narrated in full in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34, till Doha no. 36.

Coming to the present Doha of our study, we see that the Lord had himself shown great respect to Kewat. In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 321, Lord Ram has asked Nishad, the head of the boatman community, very respectfully to return to his village after the latter had taken the Lord across the river and then accompanied him to a great distance beyond.

Then again, after the coronation ceremony at Ayodhya that was held after the Lord's return to the city at the end of the victorious war at Lanka, Lord Ram had personally given rich gifts to Nishad and saw him off with great courtesy—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 20. The Lord had seen off the rest of his friends from Kishkindha and Lanka, such as the monkeys, bears and demons who had accompanied Lord Ram to Ayodhya from the battle-field of Lanka, but he told Nishad to return to his kingdom only at the end. When we have a ceremony in our home and guests from far off places come to attend us, and the functions are over and it is time to see all of them off, it is a common practice that those who are very close to the host are seen off at the end, after the rest of the guests are send away.

In the present case we find that Lord Ram had warmly seen off all the other guests and then only in the end did he ask Nishad to leave. This will be absolutely clear by reading Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, text that covers Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16, till Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.

Nishad, also known as Kewat because he was a boatman by vocation, was very poor, and depended upon an old wooden boat in which he ferried passengers across the river for a fee to sustain his large family—this is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 100. He had first refused to ferry the Lord across the river fearing that if the Lord touched his boat then it would be converted into some divine lady and he will lose his livelihood. He was alluding to the incident when Ahilya had turned from a stone to a divine lady when Lord Ram had touched her on the way to Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210, till Doha no. 211.

After landing on the other side of the river, the Lord had tried his best to pay Nishad for the fare, but he refused. This made the Lord eternally indebted to Nishad—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 102 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

Nishad has been praised in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 152, stanza no. 7 that says that inspite of being very poor and someone who had eaten the meat of all sorts of creatures, Nishad was shown affection by Lord Ram as if he was his dearest of friends.

Geetawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 46, stanza no. 6, line no. 1 says “all the forest dwelling hunters and their female partners became holy, pious and equivalent to saints and hermits upon their having had the holy sight of Lord Ram”. They have themselves

acknowledged that they are very fortunate at having the Lord amidst them. They had served Lord Ram cheerfully and lovingly whilst the Lord stayed at Chitrakoot. When his younger brother Bharat came there to plead with Lord Ram to forgive him and return to Ayodhya, the forest dwelling tribals had served Bharat and his party with great devotion. They brought fruits and eatables of different varieties for all the members of Bharat's entourage with their arm full, and had refused to be compensated for these gifts in any manner. They told Bharat—"Oh Lord, we are all lowly and sinful; we harm other creatures by the virtue of our vocation of being hunters. What can we give you or how can we serve you properly as we have nothing for you. That we do not steal whatever you have is a sort of service to you by us because it is our nature and habit to rob travelers. We spend our days and nights in committing horrific sins, but our stomachs are still not full, we are still not satisfied. The very fact that we have had the desire to serve you and not rob you is due to the spiritual upliftment we have been privileged to get by the virtue of our association with Lord Ram and his blessings upon us. The very fact that we have even dreamt of doing some noble deed (such as serving you) is due to the mystical effects of the divine presence of Lord Ram in our midst and the auspicious effects of the Lord's holy feet which has made this land divine. Ever since we have had the privilege of seeing the holy feet of Lord Ram, all our spiritual sorrows and miseries have been dispelled"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250, right upto Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251.

Not only Nishad, Lord Ram had shown equal respect to all other companions of his—he had shown the greatest of respect and honour to all his monkey, bear and demon friends, without distinction—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 16; and Doha no. 17 Ka with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8. Here it is narrated that Lord Ram called all his companions after the celebrations for his coronation at Ayodhya ended, and expressed his sincere gratitude to all of them, thanking them for the help and service they rendered to the Lord in obtaining victory at Lanka. Lord Ram requested them to proceed to their respective kingdoms, and expressed his desire that they will remember him as their closest friend for the rest of their lives. The Lord told them that he is highly obliged of them, and they are dearer to him as compared to everything else—even his wife Sita, his younger brothers, his household and all the wealth he possesses as a great king. All our miniscule when compared to the Lord's love and affection for them. He promised them his abiding friendship and warm relationship for all times to come.

Before this, when the Lord and his party arrived back at Ayodhya from Lanka and met the royal Guru, sage Vasishtha, Lord Ram had then also introduced all of them to the sage by saying that they are his dearest of friends who had chosen to sacrifice their lives for his service and cause. Lord Ram went to the extent of saying that all of them were dearer to him than Bharat. Obviously this made his friends extremely happy and grateful to the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-9 that precede Doha no. 8.

The special treatment that Jatau got from Lord Ram is legendary. Refer—Doha nos. 222-227 above in this context.]

### The Glory of Hanuman

229. मंजुल मंगल मोदमय मूरति मारुत पूत ।  
सकल सिद्ध कर कमल तल सुमिरत रघुबर दूत ॥

229. mañjula maṅgala mōdamaya mūrati māruta pūta.

sakala sid'dha kara kamala tala sumirata raghubara dūta..

The messenger of Lord Sri Ram and a son of the Wind-God, Hanuman, is an icon of auspiciousness, sweetness and bliss (or spiritual happiness and contentedness). Just by remembering him, all achievements and mystical powers that are collectively called the various 'Siddhis' become easily accessible. (229)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Aagya Prashnawali also as no. 6/4/1.

The *Siddhis* are exceptional supernatural powers and mystical abilities that one acquires. They are variously said to be nine, eight or two in numbers. These Siddhis are:- Anima, Mahima, Garima, Laghima, Praapti, Praakramya, Ishwatwa, Vashitwa, and Praakaashya.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 16 refers to *nine Siddhis*. They are the following—(i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; to become small like an atom; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and skills; to become huge like a mountain, thereby standing out and being unique or special in a crowd; (iii) 'Garima' is to be heavy-weight in any field, to have special qualities that give one's ideas and words a great amount of importance and weight; to have stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance; (iv) 'Laghima' is the grand virtue of being simple and humble inspite of being great, powerful and authoritative; it is to have simplicity and humility despite possessing grandeur, majesty, power, authority and magnificence; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain, gain or obtain anything wished or desired for; (vi) 'Praakramya' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over everything else; to be able to rule over others; (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others, and exert influence on them so much so that they become obedient and subservient; and (ix) 'Praakaashya' is to be able to assume any form one wishes.

Sometimes, Paraakramya is replaced by 'Praakaamya' which means irresistible will. But they imply the same thing because one obtains victory and glory only when one has an irresistible desire to attain it.

According to some versions, 'Mukti', or to obtain liberation and deliverance from all sorts of bondages and fetters, is also regarded as one of the Siddhis. It is closely related to 'Moksha' meaning final spiritual emancipation and deliverance of the aspirant.

According to some other accounts, 'Bhukti'—i.e. the ability to enjoy whatever one wishes to acquire and enjoy, is also one of the nine Siddhis.

Hanuman has been praised and glorified universally as the most blessed of all the devotees of Lord Ram. In Vinai Patrika, a number of verses are dedicated to Hanuman—reference: verse nos. 25-36. No other attendant of Lord Ram, even his dear brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, are given this honour of having as many as 12 verses exclusively dedicated to them as is the case with Hanuman.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 30 has a message that is identical to this present Doha no. 229. It sings the divine glory and laurels of Hanuman when it says—"Anyone who relies on Hanuman is certain to have his vows fulfilled; this is an inviolable principle. This is because Hanuman has the mystical authority and divine power to make possible something that is otherwise impossible, and vice versa. In other words, he comes to possess Siddhis or mystical powers in a natural way, even without making any special efforts to acquire them. As soon as one remembers the auspicious and holy image or form

of Hanuman, all his miseries, difficulties, grief and problems are dispelled instantly. Oh Tulsidas! Anyone upon whom Hanuman casts his gracious sight and benevolence, even great Gods and Goddesses such as Parvati (the divine Mother of creation and the divine consort of Lord Shiva), Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation, and the greatest God in the pantheon of Gods), Laxman (the younger brother of Lord Ram), Lord Ram himself, and Sita (the divine consort of Lord Ram) too become benevolent and gracious. [This is because such a person becomes extremely lucky, holy and auspicious. He develops good characters and noble virtues. The Gods always favour such a person.]”.

What has been said in our present Doha no. 229 also finds a resonance in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 36, stanza nos. 1-2 which says—“Hanuman, the son of the Wind God, is an image of auspiciousness and goodness. He is the one who completely eliminates and uproots all sorts of inauspiciousness and evil. He is the exalted son of the Wind God, and a well-wisher of saints and pious people. The Supreme Lord who lived in Ayodhya (as Lord Ram) lives in his heart constantly.”

Then again in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 134, stanza no. 6, Hanuman has been praised as having acquired the same glory and mystical powers as those possessed by Lord Ram himself. It is also said in this stanza that whenever anyone says the name of Hanuman, Lord Ram becomes immediately happy and pleased with such a person. There is no wonder than that the present Doha no. 229 which says that all Siddhis are accessible by saying the name of Hanuman, and the earlier Doha no. 28 of this book Dohawali which says that all the Siddhis are accessible by saying the holy name of Lord Ram are almost identical in their blessings.]

230. धीर बीर रघुबीर प्रिय सुमिरि समीर कुमार ।  
अगम सुगम सब काज करु करतल सिद्धि बिचारु ॥

230. dhīra bīra raghubīra priya sumiri samīra kumāru.  
agama sugama saba kāja karu karatala sid'dhi bicāru..

Tulsidas gives this advice—‘If you do any work, whether possible (i.e. easy) or impossible (i.e. difficult), by first invoking the son of the Wind God (i.e. Hanuman) who is not only exceptionally courageous, steadfast, valiant and brave but also extremely dear to Lord Ram (Raghubir), and remembering him constantly during the course of the undertaking, you can be assured that success is in your hands with certainty, no matter what happens (i.e. success will be yours under all circumstances).’ (230)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Aagya Prashnawali also as no. 2/4/1.

The fact that Hanuman is very close to Lord Ram is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32 wherein the Lord tell him—“Oh Hanuman! No one has done so much for me, and I am obliged to no one else more than I am obliged to you. I am grateful to no God, no human being, no sage or anyone else who has a physical body (i.e. no living being) as much as I am to you. I do not know how I can ever compensate you or repay my debts to you sufficiently.” The context here is that Hanuman had returned to Lord Ram with the good news that Sita had been found, and that he had successfully taken revenge upon the demon king Ravana by burning the city of Lanka, and thereby crushing the demon’s pride and arrogance.

The same idea is repeated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62. Here also Lord Ram has expressed his immense sense of gratitude to Hanuman. The context here is that Hanuman had brought the herb which was used to

revive the unconscious Laxman who was hit by an arrow and lay dying in the battle-field of Lanka.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 30, stanza no. 3 says—“all the gods and goddesses, such as Parvati, Shiva, Laxman, Bharat, Lord Ram and Sita, are benevolent and gracious towards someone on whom Hanuman is benevolent and gracious”.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 31, stanza no. 5 says—“Even great kings and guardians of the world wish to have a benevolent sight of Hanuman fall upon them. Hence, anyone who serves Hanuman has nothing to fear from any quarter or anyone, is always victorious over his enemies, obtains all the comforts and happiness that are available in this world while alive, and ultimately attains the auspicious destination for their souls in the form of Moksha or final emancipation and salvation of the soul at the time of death.”

If one makes Hanuman his patron deity, it is certain that he will be able to overcome all obstacles that come in his path. This is because no obstacle is strong enough to create a hurdle for Hanuman, his patron deity. Even the Gods had tested Hanuman’s ability to overcome hurdles and formidable obstacles, and he had passed with flying colours. The Gods had sent the mother of serpents named Sursa expressly with this purpose in mind when Hanuman was cruising through the sky over the ocean on his way to Lanka in search of Sita. The way Hanuman overcome her resistance made her praise him, and she herself declared the purpose of her coming and the result she found that nothing can ever stop Hanuman as he is matchless in intelligence, wit, courage, valour and resilience. This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 2 and the entire Chaupai before it.

Hanuman had met other resistances also en-route to Lanka. For instance, he met an obstacle in the form of a colossus mountain known as Mainaak that rose as a barrier from the ocean; then there was a demoness who lived underwater and captured anyone flying overhead by catching his shadow; then there was Lankini, the demoness who guarded the entrance to the city of Lanka. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 1 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 9; Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 3; from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4, till Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5.

After meeting Sita, Hanuman had single-handedly not only laid waste the royal garden of Ravana but eventually burnt the whole city of Lanka to ashes. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18, right upto Doha no. 26. (ii) Kavitali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 3-25.

At Lanka, he had a heated argument with Ravana—and the remarkable point is that inspite of being all alone in the middle of extremely strong and merciless demons for whom blood-spilling was a sport, Hanuman behaved with great boldness and courage so much so that he rebuffed and ridiculed their king in full court with impunity, without an iota of fear and anxiety. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 20, right upto Doha no. 23. (ii) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 12-13.

In Tulsidas’ book in honour of Hanuman, titled ‘Hanuman Baahuk’, verse no. 4 it is said—“Hanuman had the great courage to study metaphysics from the Sun God. He was a personified form of courage, valour, steadfastness and resilience. His back was like the hard shell of the legendary Tortoise on whose back the world was supported when the Gods and the demons had churned the ancient ocean in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternal life. Tulsidas says with confidence that there has never been in the past and there will never be in the future anyone as strong and valiant as Hanuman anywhere in this creation known as Triloki.”

Jamvant, the old bear king, has praised Hanuman in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 30 in order to encourage him to pick

up the cudgel of crossing the formidable ocean in search of Sita at Lanka. Jamvant emphasized that it was only Hanuman who can accomplish this most difficult task on behalf of the Lord because his birth is precisely for serving the Lord and carrying out his orders. Jamvant said—“The strength of the son of the Wind God is like his divine father. He is a treasury of strength, valour, intelligence, wit and wisdom. Say son, what work is there in this world that is too difficult for you to do; which is that thing that is so difficult that you can't do it? You have taken birth to accomplish the task of Lord Ram. So get up and do it.”]

231. सुख मुद मंगल कुमुद बिधु सगुन सरोरुह भानु ।  
करहु काज सब सिद्धि सुभ आनि हिँ हनुमानु ॥

231. sukha muda maṅgala kumuda bidhu saguna sarōruha bhānu.  
karahu kāja saba sid'dhi subha āni hi'ēṁ hanumānu..

Start all endeavours by sincerely invoking Hanuman in your heart (i.e. by sincerely praying to him). He is akin to the moon (i.e. moon-light) to help the Kumudini flowers (the water-lily which opens its petals fully under the full moon's light) representing happiness, joys, pleasant circumstances and auspiciousness to develop and bloom (thrive). Similarly, he is like the sun to help develop and bloom the lotus flowers representing good and noble virtues. If one follows this advice, all efforts made by him will be successful and rewarding; they will produce results that are auspicious and glorious. (231)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Aagya Prashnawali also as no. 7/1/2.

The water-lily blooms under the light of the full moon, while the lotus in the light of the sun. By invoking these two instances Tulsidas means that if one takes the blessings of Hanuman, who is especially empowered to remove all problems of his devotees because Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, is so obliged to him that if Hanuman decides to anything then no power in creation can dare to defy him, then that person is assured of freedom from all his problems and is certain that he will not have to be disappointed. The citing of the 'moon' and the 'sun' implies that Hanuman can be invoked at any time of the day and night, at any moment in life, and under any circumstances. Hanuman will not only provide succour to his devotee from torments and tormentors, but also give a bonus in the form of happiness and good virtues to him.

Refer Doha nos. 229-230 and their accompanying notes.]

232. सकल काज सुभ समउ भल सगुन सुमंगल जानु ।  
कीरति बिजय बिभूति भलि हियँ हनुमानहि आनु ॥

232. sakala kāja subha sama'u bhala saguna sumaṅgala jānu.  
kīrati bijaya bibhūti bhali hiyam hanumānahi ānu..

Invoke (remember, prayer to, have devotion for and establish) Hanuman in your heart and be rest assured that all your work (endeavour, effort, enterprise, desire or wish) shall be successful (fulfilled, accomplished, rewarded), good times and tidings shall come to

you, and all auspiciousness, good virtues, fame, victory, glory and achievements shall be soon accessible to you, and you will be rewarded by these fruits. (232)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Aagya Prashnawali also as no. 3/4/1.]

233. सुर सिरोमनि साहसी सुमति समीर कुमार ।  
सुमिरत सब सुख संपदा मुद मंगल दातार ॥

233. sura sirōmani sāhasī sumati samīra kumāra.  
sumirata saba sukha sampadā muda maṅgala dātāra..

The son of the Wind-God (i.e. Hanuman)—who is the bravest and the most valiant amongst the great warriors in this world, who is extremely courageous, and who is the wisest amongst the wise—grants all sorts of happiness, joy, comfort, pleasures, prosperity, wealth, bliss, peace, favourable and fortunate circumstances, and auspiciousness of all kinds. [That is, by invoking Hanuman, his devotee is assured of all goodness and happiness.] (233)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Aagya Prashnawali also as no. 5/4/1.

Refer Doha no. 229-232 in this context.

Hanuman's valour and courage has been cited in notes appended to Doha nos. 229-230.

Hanuman was a treasure trove of wisdom, knowledge, intelligence and wit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

#### Pain in Tulsidas' Shoulder and Arms

234. तुलसी तनु सर सुख जलज भुज रुज गज बरजोर ।  
दलत दयानिधि देखिऐ कपि केसरी किसोर ॥

234. tulasī tanu sara sukha jalaja bhuja ruja gaja barajōra.  
dalata dayānidhi dēkhi'ai kapi kēsārī kisōra..

Tulsidas prays to Hanuman, and says—'Oh merciful Lord Hanuman! See, this happiness-like lotus of Tulsidas' lake-like body is being forcefully destroyed by an elephant representing the disease in his shoulders<sup>1</sup>.

You are the son of 'Kesari'<sup>2</sup>! Have mercy upon me; look at my wretched condition and do something about it.' (234)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Tulsidas had been suffering from severe pain in his shoulder-blades and arms. He had written a book of prayers for Hanuman during this time. It is called 'Hanuman Baahuk'. Doha nos. 234-236 of our book Dohawali were also written by him during this time.

In 'Hanuman Baahuk', there is a magnificent verse no. 32 that fits in perfectly into what is said about Hanuman in this Doha. The context is also the same—Tulsidas was suffering horribly from pain in his arms, and he had then invoked Lord Hanuman's blessing to get rid of his sufferings. It is believed that he was indeed cured of his pain soon thereafter.

Let us read what this particular verse no. 32 of Hanuman Baahuk says—“All the goddesses and gods, all the demons and humans who have been born with a physical body, all the sages and mystics, all the serpents (earth-bound creatures), all the creatures who are big and all those who are small, all those who mobile and even those who are immobile (such as plants); blood sucking vampires, demons and demonesses who are always inclined to be opposed—verily, all of them, without exception, obediently follow the orders of the messenger of Lord Ram (i.e. they all respect Hanuman and obey him without demurring).

All horrific affects of black magic, harmful worship instruments, evil formulas (Mantras) etc. (that are used in occult forms of religious practices and black magic rituals to divert the negativity of malignant stars upon the subject who is targeted to be harmed), the result of being victimization by cunning, deceit, conceit, falsehood and lies, all forms of malignant diseases and afflictions that torment a living being—all of them become terrified and abandon the household (the person on whom their evil eye has been cast) to run away (leave the person and stop tormenting him any longer) as soon as they hear that Hanuman is coming home (to help his devotee).

Oh Hanuman! Be angry at my evil deeds that have landed me in difficulties, but remember me with mercy; crush those who have been tormenting me and giving me sorrows, pain and grief.”

In the present Doha, he compares his body with a lake in which grows the lotus flower which is compared to the peace and happiness he had been enjoying earlier when his body had no pain in its shoulders. Then the elephant symbolizing the pain in his arms invaded and uprooted the lotus flower—that is, the pain has robbed Tulsidas of his peace of mind and bodily comfort. Now, he is suffering horrifically because of this pain. Therefore he requests Hanuman to kill this cruel elephant—i.e. he request Hanuman to free him of this pain.

<sup>2</sup>Hanuman is compared to a lion’s cub. The lion is a king of the forest, and he is easily able to kill an elephant by jumping on its back from behind and then sinking its claws and teeth on the animal’s neck and head.

Hanuman’s father was named Kesari. The word ‘Kesari’ in Hindi also means a lion, and ‘Kishore’ means a young son. Hence, the combined phrase ‘Kesari Kishore’ means a lion’s cub, the lion’s young son. This is a fascinating metaphor. Just like the case of a rogue elephant that is going berserk in the forest, uprooting trees, trampling plants underfoot, ruining lakes by splashing into them and spoiling their aquatic plants and dirtying the clean water, being overcome and killed by a lion because he is the ‘king of the jungle responsible to maintain law and order in it or ensure that no single animal can disturb its ecological balance’, and also because ‘only the lion can overcome a rogue elephant on its ruining spree’, Tulsidas invokes Hanuman—whom he likens to the lion’s cub—to overcome and trounce any evil spirit or the bad consequences of some inadvertent mistake that he may have made that has resulted in the horrible pain in his shoulder.

Tulsidas means that if anyone is capable and competent to remove his pain then it is only Hanuman, and no one else.]

235. भुज तरु कोटर रोग अहि बरबस कियो प्रबेस ।  
बिहगराज बाहन तुरत काढ़िअ मिटै कलेस ॥

235. bhuja taru kōṭara rōga ahi barabasa kiyō prabēsa.  
bihagarāja bāhana turata kāḍhia miṭai kalēsa..

[In this Doha, Tulsidas prays to Lord Vishnu to relieve the pain in his arms.] ‘My arms are like a hole in a tree in which the disease-like serpent has forcefully entered. Oh Hari (Lord Vishnu) who rides on Garuda (Vishnu’s mount)! Remove it soon so that my agony and suffering comes to an end.’ (235)

[Note—Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. So in this Doha, Tulsidas is invoking the Lord to give him relief from pain. Garud is famous for eating serpents. Therefore, Tulsidas treats his pain as the serpent so that Lord Ram can order his most trusted mount Garuda to immediately provide help to Tulsidas.

This choice of the metaphor of the serpent and the Garuda is employed by Tulsidas in reference to an incident that occurred in the war at Lanka when Lord Ram and Laxman were trapped in a snare of deadly serpents created by Meghnad, the cunning son of Ravana, the king of demons, in the thick of battle. Then Lord Ram had invoked Garuda who came swooping down from the heaven to kill all the serpents and free the brothers from their snare. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 73 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-13, and Doha no. 74 Ka and its preceding Chaupai line no. 10.]

236. बाहु बिटप सुख बिहँग थलु लगी कुपीर कुआगि ।  
राम कृपा जल सींचिए बेगि दीन हित लागि ।।

236. bāhu biṭapa sukha bihamṅga thalu lagī kupīra ku'āgi.  
rāma krpā jala sīnci'ē bēgi dīna hita lāgi..

[In this Doha, Tulsidas prays to Hanuman to relieve the pain in his arms.] ‘My tree-like arm was the abode (a nest) of the bird of happiness and peace, but it has caught a raging fire representing my wretched disease. [That is, the pain in Tulsidas’ arms had ruined all the peace and happiness that he had just like a violent fire that engulfs a huge tree not only chars it ashes but chases away all the birds that have their nests on this tree. Here, Tulsidas’ mental peace and happiness have been compared to the number of birds that live on a tree, and the pain in his arms to the fierce fire that burns this tree and makes the birds fly off immediately.]

Oh Hanuman! Sprinkle the water of Lord Sri Ram's grace on this fire as soon as you can so as to douse it for the benefit of this distressed Tulsidas. [This is because Lord Ram is very obliged of you and loves you very much so that if you request the Lord on my behalf to give me relief from this tormenting pain, the Lord is sure to listen to you. You can easily and effortlessly invoke Sri Ram's mercy and grace, and the Lord will definitely listen to you and provide me succour from this hellish suffering.]’ (236)

[Note—In Doha no. 235, Tulsidas has prayed to Lord Ram, and now he requests Hanuman to help him because the latter has closeness with the Lord. The pain in Tulsidas’ arms made him miserable, and he seemed to be in great agony because when one is in great distress he loses confidence in himself and his abilities, and begins to seek immediate help from any quarter that comes to his mind. The fact that Hanuman is very close to Lord Ram is well known to Tulsidas, so he pleads with him to intercede on his behalf and ask Lord Ram to cure him of his pain.]

Glory of Kashi (Varanasi)

237. मुक्ति जन्म महि जानि ग्यान खानि अघ हानि कर ।  
जहँ बस संभु भवानि सो कासी सेइअ कस न ॥

237. mukti janma mahi jāni gyāna khāni agha hāni kara.  
jaham̃ basa sambhu bhavāni sō kāśī sē'i'a kasa na..

[Tulsidas says—] ‘Why should one not enjoy (i.e. dwell in) Kashi<sup>1</sup> (the holy pilgrim city of Varanasi) for it is said to be the abode of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, is the place where one’s sins are destroyed, where one can acquire spiritual wisdom, and where means and help for the liberation and deliverance of the soul are abundantly available.’<sup>2</sup>

[In other words, if it is at possible for a man, he should spend at least some of his time in Kashi so that his soul is benefitted by the holy city’s spiritual aura and environment.] (237)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Kashi is also known as Varanasi. In the temporal world, it is a city in northern India, but in metaphysics it is called the ‘Avimukta Kshetra’. This latter concept is elaborately described in the following Upanishads—(i) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 3; Tarsar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1. (ii) Atharva Veda’s Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Canto 2, verse no. 3; Canto 4, verse nos. 1-16; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11.

The word *Avimukta* literally means ‘that which is not free; that which is bound or shackled, requiring freedom’. In the original Sanskrit word, the second alphabet ‘va’ is pronounced as in the English word *avert*, and its suffixed vowel sound of the Sanskrit vowel ‘e’ as pronounced like the English letter ‘i’ in the word *if*. The word ‘Kshetra’ means an area, a place.

Hence, the phrase ‘Avimukta Kshetra’ means a place that has the potential to set free those who are shackled by providing them liberation and deliverance from their bondage. In the temporal world, Kashi is a holy pilgrim place in northern India where Lord Shiva is said to reside eternally on this earth and provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man by uttering the Tarak Mantra in his ears. This site is described in the Atharva Veda’s Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1.

The Avimukta Kshetra is the place where all those whose Atma (soul) are shackled come searching to find a way to break free from their worldly bondage. It is like a spiritual reformatory where people needing reformation are allowed to live. All of them desire salvation and emancipation, all are shackled and tormented by the world and its endless agonies, all have sinned in one way or the other. This Avimukta Kshetra has the necessary wherewithal to provide the spiritual seeker with liberation and deliverance, because of the eternal presence of Lord Shiva, the wisest and the most enlightened of the pantheon of Gods who constantly preaches the dying man about the great Mantra for salvation, has his temporal abode at this place.

But the person seeking such freedom has to have the will and the motivation himself, just like the case where a reformation prison can help only those who wish to repent and relent on their past misdeeds, but it cannot improve stubborn characters. Mere presence in such a place would not be of much value if there is no sincere desire and will on the part of the creature to seek emancipation and salvation for his soul. The environment is conducive for such enlightenment because he hears the tale of woes of many others like him who have suffered immensely for their misdeeds, thereby igniting a sense of detachment for and repugnance towards this world in the creature. He realises that this world is full of sorrows and pains, and therefore he should endeavour not to do anything

that would force his soul to revert to this horror once again. But at the same time if he is not vigilant and self-thinking, this same Avimukta Kshetra can prove to be counter-productive because he would learn dirtier tricks from other inmates of this spiritual prison.

The reason why Kashi (Varanasi) is called the 'Avimukta Kshetra' has been elaborately explained in the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-16 (i.e. in the full Canto); and in Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11.

The symbolic location and the spiritual significance of Kashi (Varanasi) has been elaborately described in the Atharva Veda's Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 4, 9, 11, 16-19, 22.

In the Bhasma Jabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11, Lord Shiva has himself told sage Jabal Bhusund that Kashi (Varanasi) is the Abhimukta Kshetra where those who reside get Mukti (liberation and deliverance).

Kashi or Varanasi is believed to be a very ancient city of India, and is one of the highly respected pilgrim sites of the country. It is believed that those who die here are provided the opportunity of obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance so much so that they do not have to take birth again.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Shiva has said himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 118 that "When I see some creature ('Jantu') dying in Kashi, I make him free from sorrows on the strength of the Lord's holy and divine name (which is 'Ram')".

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19, it is expressly emphasized while praising the glory of Lord Ram's holy name that "this is the great Mantra that Lord Shiva uses to do Japa (repetition of a divine name of the God done during meditation, and also otherwise during the course of life), and this is the great Mantra that Lord Shiva employs while giving Mukti or spiritual deliverance to a dying creature in Kashi".

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 22 is exclusively dedicated to the praise of Kashi.

Similarly, Kavita wali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 169-177 are also dedicated to Kashi.]

### Prayers to Lord Shiva

238. जरत सकल सुर बृंद बिषम गरल जेहिं पान किय ।  
तेहि न भजसि मन मंद को कृपालु संकर सरिस ॥

238. jarata sakala sura bṛṇḍa biṣama garala jēhiṁ pāna kiya.  
tēhi na bhajasi mana manda kō kṛpālu saṅkara sarisa..

[Tulsidas addresses himself and his mind, and admonishes the latter, saying—]

'Oh you foolish mind! Why don't you worship Lord Shiva who had gulped the terrible poison, the toxicity of which had been scorching and scalding all the Gods (at the time the ancient ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity, when the horrible poison known as Halaahal was produced)?

Say, who is more gracious and merciful and a benefactor for this creation than Lord Shiva (who did not care about his own welfare and safety but drank the poison so that the rest of the Gods and the creation could be saved from its horrendous effects)?' (238)

[Note—This Doha alludes to the incident when the gods and the demons had churned the mighty ancient ocean to produce the nectar of eternity and happiness, known as Amrit. They had used the huge python called Seshnath as the rope, the colossus mountain by the name of Madrachal as the churning rod. Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of the Tortoise to support the rod and the world from sinking to the nether world during this churning. During the process many things were produced from this ocean, and one of it was the scorching froth, which was the scum of the ocean containing concentrated poison. It was so hot and scalding that the entire creation began to get scorched and burnt by it.

At that time, Lord Shiva had said the holy and divine name of Lord Ram and gulped it. But he kept the poison in his throat—because if the poison had entered his stomach the whole world would have been fried alive. This is the reason why Lord Shiva's throat turned dark blue or purple—it was due to this poison.

Only Shiva had the ability to do this. He is the patron god of death, and is depicted as being a great ascetic. His severe penances and austerities had enabled and empowered him with mystical abilities that the rest of the gods, demons and anybody else lacked. Lord Shiva is known as a 'Maha-deva'—the greatest of God. He is the wisest, highly self-realised and the most enlightened deity.

He knew the miraculous powers of Lord Ram's holy name—that by simply invoking it no harm could ever come. So he cheerfully drank the poison. The message in this mythological tale is that the divine name of the Lord, i.e. 'Ram', can help one to overcome even the most ferocious sins and their most scalding consequences if the creature has the faith and the strength of the spirit to know and be firmly established in this wisdom.

This story of Shiva drinking the Halaahal poison is narrated in Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 18. In its verse no. 18 it is stated that—(i) Lord Shiva had drunk the poison while invoking and repeating the holy Mantra, and of course that Mantra was the holy name of Lord Ram because the Lord is Shiva's patron deity, and (ii) this is the reason why his throat became dark blue or purple, because he had retained the poison in his throat instead of gulping it down in his stomach.

The same fact is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19.

Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 3-14 are exclusively dedicated to the praise of Lord Shiva.

Similarly, Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 149-168 are also dedicated to the praise of Lord Shiva. Out of these verses, nos. 157-158 allude to Lord Shiva drinking the Halaahal poison.

Refer also to the Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 11, 16.]

239. बासर ढासनि के ढका रजनीं चहुँ दिसि चोर ।  
संकर निज पुर राखिए चितै सुलोचन कोर ॥

239. bāsara ḍhāsani kē ḍhakā rajanīṁ cahum̃ṁ disi cōra.  
saṅkara nija pura rākhi'ai citai sulōcana kōra..

[Tulsidas was being harassed by the Pandits/Brahmins of Varanasi. So he prays to Lord Shiva, the patron God of the city, to protect him from their constant harassment—]

'Oh Lord Shiva! During the day, I am hounded by thugs (scoundrels and miscreants), and during the night, thieves torment me. Be merciful and gracious towards me, and look

at me with compassion. Please protect me in your city (known as Kashipuri) from the constant torments that I am suffering due to these people.’ (239)

[Note—The Pundits of Kashi were jealous of Tulsidas, of his knowledge, learning and wisdom, as well as his popularity. It’s such an irony that these people, the so-called expert and wise men, the ‘Pundits’ who were born in the high caste of a ‘Brahmin’, who were supposed to teach the world about the tenets of the scriptures that unanimously abhor such negative thoughts, had themselves learnt nothing.

We have a lesson to learn from this Doha—that mere learning or knowledge of the scriptures does not make a man either wise or holy, and neither is he eligible for liberation and deliverance only on this basis. What is needed is internal purity and awakening, and therefore even so-called illiterate and lowly creatures have found spiritual deliverance which had eluded and evaded those who had spent their lifetimes learning the scriptures and preaching them but who did not themselves practiced what they preached.

Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 171-172, 174-175 also refers to this position in Kashi. In it, Tulsidas laments that though it is such a holy place still scoundrels and unholy people throng it and saturate it with corruption. He says that it is due to the negative effects of Kali-Yug, the fourth era of the four-epoch one cycle of creation and destruction according to the Hindu belief. Currently we are passing through this era.

Tulsidas was so annoyed and subjected to constant harassment that he has prayed to Lord Shiva to deliver him from this nuisance, because Lord Shiva is the patron deity of Kashi and his blessings are needed to overcome this horror.]

240. अपनी बीसीं आपुहीं पुरिहिं लगाए हाथ ।  
केहि बिधि बिनती बिस्व की करौं बिस्व के नाथ ॥

240. apanī bīsīm āpuhīm purihim lagā’ē hātha.  
kēhi bidhi binatī bisva kī karaum bisva kē nātha..

‘Oh Lord of the Universe (‘Vishwanaath’, i.e. Lord Shiva)! True to your inherent nature of being the concluder of creation, it appears that you are effectively playing your role to annihilate and destroy everything during the period of time (known as the ‘Bisi’) that is allotted to you for this purpose. You have started wrecking havoc and destruction in your own city. How can I then pray to you, on behalf of this world, to protect it?’ (240)

[Note—It is said that during the time of Tulsidas' time when he lived in Varanasi, a severe plague had spread across the city. This verse refers to the event.

When read in the context of the previous Doha no. 239, the present Doha assumes two meanings. One is that after pleading with Lord Shiva to protect him from constant torment, Tulsidas realised that it is the affect of Kali-Yug. And second, he also realises that Lord Shiva might have heard his prayers as the Lord has now decided to punish the corrupt and the sinful who have flocked to this holy city by spreading some terrible disease, such as the plague, which would wipe out large section of such people or chase them away from Kashi.

In Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 171, the same idea is expressed as in this Doha. In Hindu mythology, ever sixty-year period consists of three units of twenty-years. Each such twenty-year period is called a ‘Bisi’. The word ‘Bisi’ means twenty.

Since there are three Gods in the divine Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder, each of these Gods presides over one

such Bisi in a cyclic manner. Thus, the patron deity of the first Bisi is Brahma. During his presidency time there is growth and development. The second Bisi has Vishnu as the presiding deity. During this time there is prosperity and happiness all around. The last Bisi belongs to Shiva, and during this time there is destruction and havoc in the world. According to astrological calculations, the Shiva's 'Bisi' fell between Vikram Samvat 1665 to 1685, corresponding to C.E. 1608-1628. The plague in Kashi occurred in Samvat 1671 (C.E. 1614). Its ferocity is narrated in Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 169-170, and 176-177. Perhaps, plague was followed by cholera and skin diseases such as rash etc as is evident in these last two verse nos. 176, line nos. 1-4, and verse no. 177, line nos. 1-2 respectively.

According to historical accounts of India, the first recorded plague and cholera outbreak occurred during the reign of the Moghul emperor Jahangir. He ascended the Moghul throne in Samvat 1662 (C.E. 1605). In his official biography, known as 'Jahangiri', it is written that plague occurred in the state of Punjab in Samvat 1672-73, and in Agra in Samvat 1674-75.]

### The mysterious ways of God

241. और करै अपराधु कोउ और पाव फल भोगु ।  
अति बिचित्र भगवंत गति को जग जानै जोगु ॥

241. aura karai aparādhu kō'u aura pāva phala bhōgu.  
ati bicitra bhagavanta gati kō jaga jānai jōgu..

[Tulsidas wonders at the mysterious ways of the Lord God, ways that defy logic and explanation—] No one can know the ways of the all-mighty God and the way He acts. One is often seen to be convicted or at least accused for misdeeds or crimes committed by others, though this is against logic, rationality, probity and fair-play. (241)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, as Doha no. 77. The context is Dasrath lamenting at his predicament that forced Lord Ram to go to the forest for 14 long years. History accuses Dasrath of ordering Lord Ram to go to the forest, but actually he had never uttered any such thing. It was some long pending promise that he had made to his third queen Kaikeyi which she exploited in a bid to put her own son Bharat on the throne of Ayodhya, and Lord Ram was sent to forest to ensure that Bharat could ascend the throne without any confrontation and coup. Since Dasrath was a man true to his words, he was in a fix because he could not say that he had not given Kaikeyi a promise that was yet to be redeemed. This event sent the entire kingdom in a tailspin of miseries, grief, agony and turmoil, and Dasrath died in a miserable condition as a result of it though he was not at fault and neither was he a sinful man who would die the way he did. Dasrath did not go to heaven, but became a ghost or a spirit. Refer note of Doha no. 219-220.

Not only this, Lord Ram—who was of an extremely friendly and affable nature, had given his step-mother Kaikeyi the same respect that he had given his own blood mother Kaushalya, and who had loved all his brothers equally, and had a special corner in his heart for Bharat—had suddenly, for no fault of his, been thrown out of the kingdom to suffer the horrors of a forest life. The irony was compounded by the fact that his innocent wife Sita and his equally innocent brother Laxman, both of whom decided to accompany the Lord, were also forced to suffer though Kaikeyi had not asked for their forest exile.

Lord Ram's mother Kaushalya had done no harm to Kaikeyi, and she loved Bharat as much as she loved her own son Ram. But she was also sucked in the vortex of miseries and grief which spun out of control.

The greatest part of the irony is that Kaikeyi has herself loved Lord Ram as much as she loved Bharat, and the Lord reciprocated her affection in equal terms, never letting her feel for even a fleeting moment that there is a difference between him and Bharat. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 17.

So, when Dasrath said the words of this Doha, he was lamenting at the mysterious ways of this world where those who have committed no fault are made to suffer silently, sufferance over which they have no control.

There is one very interesting observation that one can make here. This particular Doha appears just after Doha no. 240 in which Tulsidas has looked with awe the death and destruction that was unfolding around him in Kashi when plague and cholera broke out. Many thousands of innocent persons might have died in it. Earlier in Doha no. 239 Tulsidas has asked Lord Shiva to afford him protection from scoundrels who are tormenting him, and then in Doha no. 240 he describes about death and destruction. The natural corollary is that Lord Shiva seems to have heard his prayers and decided to punish the residents of Kashi in a severe manner because they have given the Lord a bad name and their deeds and behaviours have cast a scar on the divine nature of this holy city. So Lord Shiva sent in the plague and the cholera. But as it happens in such cases, innocent people also get crushed along with the culprits. This has pained a saint's compassionate heart in Tulsidas, and that is why he has written this Doha here—wondering at the mysterious ways of the world when innocents are made to suffer for the misdeeds of the sinful.]

#### The obstacles in love

242. प्रेम सरीर प्रपंच रुज उपजी अधिक उपाधि ।  
तुलसी भली सुबैदई बेगि बाँधिऐ ब्याधि ॥

242. prēma sarīra prapañca ruja upajī adhika upādhi.  
tulasī bhalī subaida'ī bēgi bām'dhi'ai byādhi..

Tulsidas says that if the body representing love and devotion (towards the Lord) becomes diseased with the malaise of attachments and involvements with the sense-objects of this world, it produces great suffering. A good doctor is one who immediately stops the disease from spreading, or becoming chronic and deep-seated. (242)

[Note—The Upanishads have consistently and persistently insisted on this aspect of spiritualism and metaphysics. A wise man is he who exercises exemplary control over his sense organs and mind, and if this is not achieved any spiritual practice is unsuccessful. The sense organs are regarded as horses, the body as the chariot, the mind as the charioteer, and the Atma, the soul and the true self of the creature, as the passenger. If the horses are not properly tamed and trained, they will rock the chariot and throw the passenger to the ground. Even if this worst situation does not happen, the passenger is so terrified that his journey becomes a big ordeal, and when he arrives at his destination, he is tired and weary. Instead of spiritually enjoying the journey of life, a man who has no control over his sense organs lives a life as an unhappy and discontented man.

Refer Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4; and Krishna Yajur Veda's Katho-panishad, 1/3/3-4.

Some of the other causes that act as hindrances in establishing permanent and robust love for God in one's heart are—'Kaam' or worldly passions, 'Krodha' or anger, 'Lobh' or greed and avarice, and 'Moha' or attractions, attachments and delusions pertaining to the world—refer: Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 101, line no. 2.

Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos.1-4 that precede Doha no. 47 lists the obstacles that prevent in having true love, devotion and submission towards the Lord as Lobha, Moha, Matsar (jealousy, envy and ill-will), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, hypocrisy and false pride), Mamta (infatuations, longing, attractions and attachments), as well as Raag and Dwesh (infatuation and attachment on the one hand, and animosity and hatred on the other hand).

Lord Ram has said himself that "I accept with open arms anyone who comes to seek shelter with me after he has abandoned such vices and negativities as Mada, Moha, Kapat and Chal (deceit, conceit, cunning, falsehood, lies and pretensions) of all kinds"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 48.

This being the case, what are then the virtues that make a man dear to Lord Ram, the Supreme Being? Well, some of the good virtues are listed Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos.1-2 that precede Doha no. 49. These are the following—Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name), Tapa (austerity and penance), Niyam (adherence to laws and rules on a regular and consistent basis), one's own Dharma (laws of personal purity and cleanliness of the heart and mind; the laws of probity, propriety, ethics, morality, righteousness and goodness), all possible deeds that come under the broad category of Dharma or of goodness, auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety and charity, Gyan (acquisition of true knowledge), Daya (mercy, compassion and charity), Dama (self-restraint), Tirtha (going on pilgrimage to atone for one's sins), and Majjan (cleanliness of the body and the mind; the external as well as internal cleanliness).

Then again we have Lord Ram telling his dearest devotee Hanuman the characteristics of a saint in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38 along with the preceding Chaupai line nos.1-8. The virtues that makes a creature dear to the Lord are briefly the following—"He should be free from attachments with and attractions for the worldly sense objects, he should be polite and pious, he should have empathy and sympathy for others and their sufferings, he should be Sama (have equanimity, neutrality, fortitude, forbearance, equality and tolerance, treating everyone alike, without discriminating between two people or situations that suits his interest), he must not have Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and ego), he should have Vairagya (deep sense of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and neutrality), he must not have Lobha (greed) and Matsarya (jealousy, envy), he must be so neutral that he does not feel Harsha (a sense of worldly happiness), he should be free from Bhaya (fears), he must have a sweet, pleasant, affable and amiable temperament and nature, he must have compassion and mercy for those who are miserable and unfortunate, he should have no Maya (delusions), he must be fully and honestly devoted to me with his mind, heart, deeds and thoughts, he must be able to give respect to other but expect no honour himself, he should be free from the snare of Kaam (lust, passion, desires etc.), and devoted to my holy name 'Ram', he should be of a calm and friendly demeanours and temperament, he should be simple and unpretentious, he should have respect for elders and learned people, he should follow the tenets of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety etc.) diligently, he should inculcate and practice the principles of Sama (equanimity and neutrality), Dam (self-control and restraint), Niyam (diligent following of the various laws), and Niti (rules and principles of ethics, morality and proper conduct), he should not use any harsh words against anyone, he should not unduly criticize others and remain himself serene and quiet in the

face of criticism and praise by others, and have devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram.”

To sum up the above discussion, we can cite the following line of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33 which says that one must not like or tolerate too much of Prapanch—deceit, conceit, falsehood, pretensions and dishonesty.

The word ‘Prapanch’ used in our current Doha no. 242 refers to any characteristic that is the opposite of being truthful and honest. Therefore, anything or any deed that cheats the Atma, the soul, of its true aim in life, and entangles it in worldly delusions instead is Prapanch.]

### The negative effects of Pride and Ego

243. हम हमार आचार बड़ भूरि भार धरि सीस ।  
हठि सठ परबस परत जिमि कीर कोस कृमि कीस ॥

243. hama hamāra ācāra baṛa bhūri bhāra dhari sīsa.  
haṭhi saṭha parabasa parata jimī kīra kōsa kṛmi kīsa..

‘We are superior to others, and our deeds and behaviours are the best and better than others’; ‘we are so great, and all the achievements and glories and acclaim are ours’; ‘we are renowned and honourable, and we deserve praise and honour and respect’, and so on and so forth.

Tulsidas says that if one keeps the weight of such false pride, ego, haughtiness and vanity on one’s head then he foolishly gets himself trapped like a parrot<sup>1</sup>, a silk-worm<sup>2</sup>, or a monkey<sup>3</sup> does.

[That is, if a person wishes to be free from any sort of spiritual fetters that shackle him to negativities and trap him in delusions of false grandeur, then he must eliminate a sense of pride in his achievements, in his deeds, in his knowledge, in his birth in a high race, and generally anything else that might stoke a sense of ego, haughtiness, hypocrisy and arrogance in him, as these negative qualities become the cause of his downfall and spiritual undoing. One should discard the thoughts of seniority and vanity at all costs if one expects wisdom and upliftment. This Doha emphasizes that vanity is not a good quality.] (243)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A *parrot* is trapped by a snare created by the bird-catcher. It consists of two vertical sticks on which a horizontal stick is put. This stick passes through a hollow bamboo to which is dangled some ears of corn. The parrot comes to eat the corn, but as soon as it alights on the bamboo and attempts to reach for the corn ears, the bamboo rotates and inverts the parrot. The bird thinks that it will fall, and so clasps the bamboo rod more tightly. It is so greedy and foolish that neither does it realise that it knows how to fly and therefore there is no question of its falling to the ground, nor would it abandon its greed for the corn. The bird-catcher, who keeps an eye from a distance, comes and catches hold of the poor bird, and traps it in a cage.

The parrot thought that I can eat this corn, it is meant for me, I can’t let it go, and I won’t let anyone else eat it. Then it clings to the inverted bamboo rod firmly thinking that I know how to grasp the perch, and I will not fall no matter what someone does to make me fall and rob me of the opportunity to eat the corn!

The analogy is simple—a person who has a sense of ego and pride will not let go of this world and its material charms that he thinks he has acquired with so much great effort, and therefore they rightfully belonged to him and he must enjoy them. He exhibits his achievements and acquisitions and his good virtues like some gadget on display in an exhibition, and then looks around proudly with hands on hips to lord over them as if they are the subjects of his exclusive claim. Once the world begins to praise him for his glories, he would cling to them with his life because he feels that if he loses them he will lose everything in this world like a king dis-possessed of his crown.

The Jiva, the individual creature, is a fraction of the Isha, the Supreme Being. The Jiva cannot match the Supreme Being, but in its ignorance it becomes boastful and haughty. It should serve the Lord of creation, but it begins to serve his self interest instead. This is because of the influence of Maya, the delusions of this world. Just like the bamboo that turns and inverts the parrot, the Maya turns the intellect and the mind of the Jiva upside down; the Jiva begins to think in the wrong direction when he allows himself to be overcome or influenced by Maya. Had the Jiva known that it is not an ordinary creature that is subjected sufferings and pains of this mundane world, but the pure cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma that is a fraction of the supreme Consciousness known as the Parmatma, and that the body which gets fame and praise is a perishable entity that is gross and inane unlike the Atma that is eternal and sublime, he would not be proud of anything related to his body—such as his high birth, attractiveness of the body, his physical strength and achievements etc. He will never think that he is purer or holier than or superior and wiser to the man in front—because the Atma is the same in all living beings. He will not be proud of his good conduct or behaviour because it is expected of him, and he is simply obeying laws of Dharma, so there is nothing to brag about.

On the contrary, a self-realised and enlightened Jiva thinks that his body is not his true self, and therefore he has nothing to be proud of with what the body achieves or is honoured for.

A deluded Jiva, a deluded person, on the other hand has a sense of ego and possession. He thinks that I possess this thing or this quality, and I own it, it belongs to me, and I am glorified for it.

The fact that false pride, vanity and ego have a negative affect on the spiritual well-being of the creature and pulls him down from his exalted stature is also highlighted in Doha no. 390 of this book Dohawali.

<sup>2</sup>A *silk-worm* weaves a cocoon around its own self, and then gets trapped in it. Those who make the thread of silk put the cocoon in hot water, resulting in the silk-worm dying. This example also alludes to the fact that a person gets deluded by a false of grandeur and glory if he begins to have pride and ego in himself and his achievements. One must, on the other hand, inculcate the virtues of humility and simplicity which will not only make him elevated and praised in the society but also keep him on his feet instead of making him float in air from where he is bound to fall.

<sup>3</sup>A *monkey* puts its hand through a narrow-necked pitcher containing germinated grams and greedily grasps a fist-full of it. The closed fist gets stuck in the pitcher's neck and the monkey is caught. In its greed it won't let go of the grams, and this means that it will get caught by the monkey-charmer for the rest of its life.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 117 endorse the observations made in this note in general regarding the Jiva getting caught in a snare laid by Maya (delusions). It says—“The Jiva is a fraction of the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, and hence is eternal and imperishable like its principal. But out of ignorance and influence of Maya it gets tied in a snare just like the case of a worm and a monkey getting caught out of their ignorance and delusions.”]

The Jiva is like an image in a mirror

244. केहिं मग प्रबिसति जाति केहिं कहु दरपन में छाहँ ।  
तुलसी ज्यो जग जीव गति करी जीव के नाहँ ॥

244. kēhiṁ maga prabisati jāti kēhiṁ kahu darapana mēm chāham̃ .  
tulasī jyōm jaga jīva gati karī jīva kē nāham̃ ..

No one can tell the way, the route, by which an image or a reflection of any object enters or leaves a mirror. Similarly, Tulsidas says that the Lord of the Jivas (i.e. the Supreme Being, the Lord God) has also established a mysterious path for all the Jivas (the living beings) of this world by which they enter and exit it.

[That is, no one knows for certain how the soul enters this world, and how it leaves. This is the greatest mystery of creation. This is like the case of an image seen in a mirror. It appears inside the mirror mysteriously and miraculously, and vanishes or exits from the mirror just as mysteriously and inexplicably. There is no opening in the mirror through which this image can enter or exit it.

Similarly, it is an enigmatic mystery of creation as to how a 'Jiva' (a living being) is produced, how a lump of flesh and blood is magically converted into a 'living being', and how the same lump of flesh that was a living being the other moment becomes lifeless and begins to rot in another moment.] (244)

[Note—The image in the mirror is exactly like the principal object of which it is an exact replica. As soon as the object is removed, the image vanishes though the mirror is there. In this analogy, the gross body of the Jiva, the creature, is like the mirror; the subtle and invisible entity known as the Atma that injects life into this gross body and converts it into a living being is like the image in the mirror that appears to move and show all signs of life, and the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Soul of creation, known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Lord of creation, is the principal object whose image is seen in the mirror.

'Life' is synonymous with 'Consciousness', both at the microcosmic level as well as the macrocosmic level of creation. At the macrocosmic level, this cosmic Consciousness is known as the Parmatma, and at the micro level it is known as the Atma. The Atma is the entity that lends life to the otherwise lifeless body which is gross and inane if taken independently.

Just as the case of the image in the mirror being illusionary and deceptive as regards its physical existence and life, the Jiva too has no independent existence of its own, for it exists only as long as the Parmatma exists.

Hence, to be proud of the Jiva is a foolish proposition for the enlightened soul.

The Parmatma lives in this world in countless forms just like the same principal object can produce countless images depending upon the number of mirrors that are present around it, without drawing from the matter of the object and reducing it even by a fraction of a milligram. All these images behave in the same way, but seen from different angles and in different sizes and shapes of the reflecting mirror they all appear to have independent existence and variety of forms. But at the same time, their basic origin and nature are the same—they are all representative of the principal object, and they are all images that have no physical existence of their own.

If either the mirror or the object is removed, the image vanishes. Similarly, if the Parmatma and his Maya (delusion creating powers) that creates this world which appears to be so real and truthful that it is a perfect image of the invisible world in which the

cosmic Consciousness exists, are removed, there would be no such thing as the Jiva and the visible, physical, mundane world in which it lives.

This analogy proves firstly that the existence of the Jiva is directly dependent upon the Parmatma—just like the images of the mirror depending directly on the presence of the principal object. Secondly, it also proves how the Jiva begins to think that he has an independent existence just like the many mirrors producing independent images of the same principal object. And thirdly it shows how and why the delusion of the Jiva being separate from the Parmatma came into being—because the mirror and the object are two separate entities, and there appears no apparent link or contact or connect between the two.

There is no reason therefore why the Jiva should be proud of himself just like the case of a slave who has no cause for celebrating his existence in bondage; he is not independent; all his actions are strictly monitored. If the Jiva does manage some great feat it is because the Atma living inside the gross body has achieved its spiritual potentials and exhibited its mystical powers. But this Atma is not the Jiva, for it is a reflection of the Supreme Atma and its equally supreme powers and abilities. So again the Jiva has no reason to be proud of his achievements.

This particular Doha is an extension of the philosophy initiated in the previous Doha no. 243 above, and is followed by Doha nos. 245-249 below.

Please also refer to Doha no. 198 in the context of our current Doha no. 244.]

#### The mystery of Creation

245. सुखसागर सुख नींद बस सपने सब करतार ।  
माया मायानाथ की को जग जाननिहार ॥

245. sukhasāgara sukha nīnda basa sapanē saba karatāra.  
māyā māyānātha kī kō jaga jānanihāra..

The Supreme Lord of creation, who is an ocean of eternal bliss, sleeps peacefully, but during this sleep he does so many things in a surreal world as if it was for real. [The Lord is sleeping blissfully, but he dreams. In his dream he conjures up a fascinating imaginary world and gets involved in its imaginary charms. But all this imaginary activity does not alter the fact that the Lord is sleeping.]

This is called Maya—something that has no actual existence but appears to be real. The Lord who conjures up this magical world in his dream also has the ability to eliminate it—because as soon as he wakes up this surreal world vanishes. That is why he is called ‘Maya-Nath’, i.e. the Lord of Maya, the Lord who creates and control delusions.

Say, who in this creation is able to know the stupendous powers and effects of Maya, and more so about the Lord who is able to generate Maya and eliminate it. (245)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 69 and 200 above, and nos. 263 and 276 below in this book Dohawali. Their accompanying notes explain the effects of Maya on the creature.

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 117 says that “the Jiva is a fractional image of the Ishwar, the Supreme Being who is a personified form of consciousness, is faultless and taintless, is simple, i.e. without pretensions, and is a treasury of bliss and happiness”.

According to metaphysical concept of creation, it is as imaginary as one’s dream. This entire living world is a manifestation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness; it is a

reflection of this Consciousness just like the image of any object seen in a mirror as described in the previous Doha no. 244. Dreams are not real, but during the course of the dream the dreamer thinks that he lives in the world created in the dream, and he does so many things in it. The dream is a reflection of the sub-conscious mind; it is an attempt by the sub-conscious to do something that the creature is unable to actually do in the physical world but yearns very much to do. Imagination lends wings to the Atma's ability to achieve magical feats.

So, this world is actually a dream of the Supreme Being. He lives in it as the Jiva, the living being. While living in this state the Supreme Being indulges in so many activities, but in reality he is doing nothing as he is asleep. This world would vanish just like the dream should the Lord wish so.

It ought to be noted here that Consciousness exists in different planes—viz. the waking plane known as Jagrat, the dreaming plane known as Swapna, the deep sleep state known as Sushupta, and the transcendental plane called the Turiya. The physical world exists only during the waking state of the consciousness, but even during sleep there are two stages—one is when the creature dreams, and the other when he sleeps soundly. The dream has a world of its own, albeit in an imaginary form. So if the creature dreams during sleep, his condition is alike that of a creature during the waking state—because in both the cases the mind is busy doing this and that. The only difference is that while during the waking state the physical body is active, during the dreaming state it is inactive.

Suppose a man is weary of his surroundings; he feels agony and pain while awake. But when he gets to sleep, all his weariness and pains vanish because his physical body gets rest, though he might be having a dream in which he appears to be very active.

This is the great mystery and paradox of creation. On the one hand it appears to be real, and on the other hand it is said to be unreal. On the one hand the Jiva appears to be absolutely independent and has to suffer for his deeds, and on the other hand it is said that the Jiva is an image of the Parmatma. When we examine this mystery and paradox from close quarters with an analytical mind we find that this is what is called 'Maya'—delusions and confusions caused by ignorance of the facts. When a man is under the influence of delusions, he begins to hallucinate and imagine many things that have no pith and substance.

Therefore, the wise creature is advised through this Doha to be wary of the Maya if he wants peace of mind and freedom from confusions and consternations.]

The three states of existence of Consciousness  
(Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta)

246. जीव सीव सम सुख सयन सपनें कछु करतूति ।  
जागत दीन मलीन सोइ बिकल बिषाद बिभूति ॥

246. jīva sīva sama sukha sayana sapanēm kachu karatūti.  
jāgata dīna malīna sō'i bikala biṣāda bibhūti..

[The consciousness has three states of existence. These are being described briefly in this Doha.]

The Jiva is like Lord Shiva (i.e. he lives in an eternal state of bliss, peace, and non-involvement or detachment from all affairs of the gross mundane world) while he is

in the deep sleep state of existence (that is known as the ‘Sushupta state of consciousness’)<sup>1</sup>.

During the dreaming state or the Swapna state of existence, the same Jiva gets involved in some activity which he does in an imaginary world conjured up by his mind and sub-conscious. Hence, the Jiva may lose his peace, happiness and blissfulness by any negative experiences that he might have in his dreams, but his distress is short-lived because as soon as he wakes up in to the real world from his dream all his anguish and sorrows vanish<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, when he wakes up and gets involved in the activities of this gross mundane world, he begins to feel real pain and sorrows; he begins to experience real loss of peace and happiness in physical terms. This makes the same Jiva who is like ‘Shiva’ during the deep sleep state of existence as said above, become distressed, miserable and overcome with pain and sorrows during the waking state<sup>3</sup>. (246)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The Sushupta is is the third state of existence of consciousness as conceptualized in metaphysics. The first state is called the Jagrat or waking state, and the second is the Swapna or dreaming state. During the Sushupta state, the consciousness is free from any sort of disturbance caused either by the physical world perceived by the sense organs of perception or action as done during the waking state, or by the subtle world of dreams that is conjured up by the mind and the sub-conscious as done during the dreaming state. The Jiva (the creature; the living being) is therefore in a complete blissful state that is regarded as being equivalent to the state in which Lord Shiva lives, as long as he stays in this state.

During the deep sleep state of consciousness, both the physical gross organs of perception and action of the gross body, as well as the subtle organs consisting of the mind and intellect are inactive. Thus, during the deep sleep state, the Jiva lives in a state of peace and blissfulness that is equivalent to his truthful state of existence. This truthful form of the Jiva is known as the Atma, the soul. It is nothing but pure consciousness.

In other words, as soon as the Jiva abandons his involvement with the gross physical world, both at the gross level consisting of the various sense organs of the physical body, as well as at the subtle level consisting of the mind-intellect and sub-conscious, then it attains a state of living that is nearest to or equivalent to his truthful ‘self’ which is nothing but pure consciousness. This ‘self’ is characterized by the virtues of peace, tranquility, blissfulness and truthfulness—which in turn are the characteristic qualities of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva is not only a name given to one of the gods of the Trinity but is also synonymous with the eclectic virtues of peace, tranquility, blissfulness and truth that come with self-realisation. He is also synonymous with the practice of meditation and contemplation—because these exercises also brings profound peace and tranquility to the practitioner. Lord Shiva is known to be an ascetic—one who is detached from anything related to the material world of sense objects, one who is a renunciate hermit, one who remains un-involved in the affairs of the world and who is perpetually in a state of ecstasy and blissfulness.

The above described state is experienced by the Jiva during the Sushupta state of consciousness.

<sup>2</sup>Even during the dreaming state of existence, the loss of peace and blissfulness is not complete, it is partial—because this world of dreams is imaginary, and therefore the Jiva’s actual interests and welfare etc. in the real physical world are not affected. The physical gross body is not involved for doing anything during the dreaming state, simply because the body is at rest while the Jiva sleeps and dreams. Therefore, any harm done to the body during dreams also does not affect the Jiva. In brief, though the Jiva is active fully during the dreaming state of existence vis-à-vis the deep sleep state when there is

absolutely no activity, his loss of peace and tranquility because of such activity are temporary and as imaginary as the dream itself. Such pains and sorrows that he is subjected to while he lives in the world of dreams has no bearing on his physical well-being and happiness in the world where he actually lives during his waking state.

<sup>3</sup>In this case, the physical body is fully involved in whatever the Jiva does. Therefore, the perception of pain or of loss of peace that the mind experiences during this waking state is very stark and lingering. This is because during the waking state of existence, the whole body of the Jiva becomes alert and active; all the organs of his body, the gross and the subtle, are involved in any activity that he undertakes during the waking state of existence. As compared to this, only the mind and the sub-conscious were involved during the dreaming state of existence, and with the physical body asleep at that time, the Jiva's external perception of pain and sorrow were non-existent. Hence, whatever pain etc. that a Jiva feels during the dreaming state is only a fraction of what he experiences while in the waking state.

In the next higher state of deep sleep state of existence, the Sushupta state, when even the subtle component of the body, i.e. the mind and sub-conscious, stop functioning, the remnants of pain and sorrows also vanish. There is a state of absolute calmness and peace; there is no activity and its attendant weariness and repercussions. This is the state that is compared to the state in which Lord Shiva lives—the state described in stanza no. 1 of this Doha.

It ought to be noted here that these three states of existence of consciousness are the subject matter of extensive discussion and elucidation in the Upanishads. Some of the prominent instances are the following Upanishads—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm/Amrit Bindu, verse no. 11; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 20-23, 27-32. (c) Atharva Veda—Prashna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-6; Tripur Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 11.]

The world is like a dream; it is illusionary

247. सपनेहु होइ भिखारि नृपु रंकु नाकपति होइ ।  
जागें लाभु न हानि कछु तिमि प्रपंच जियँ जोइ ॥

247. sapanēhu hō'i bhikhāri nrpu rañku nākapati hō'i.  
jāgēm lābhu na hāni kachu timi prapañca jiyam' jō'i..

While asleep, a king may become a beggar, and vice-versa. But no gain is made or loss suffered once the dreamer wakes up. Similarly, one should regard this world of material sense objects and sensory perceptions as a mirage, and as illusionary as the world of dreams. (247)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand as Doha no. 92.

In this Doha, Laxman is comforting Nishad, the chief of the boatman community, when the latter was highly distressed on seeing the injustice that was done to Lord Ram, his wife Sita and brother Laxman by king Dasrath who had sent them to forest for no fault of theirs.

This Doha is highly metaphysical in its content. According to metaphysical philosophy, the physical material world is an illusion created by the mind; it has no truthful and real existence. The simple logic for this is that anything that is 'truthful' must be constant, eternal, everlasting and un-perishable—because 'truth' is constant and steady

as it does not change due to circumstance or time. The world, on the other hand, is perishable and ever changing, hence it 'cannot be true'. Anything that is not true must be false. Hence, the world is false. It is a mere conception of the imaginative mind—just like a dream, the only difference being in the level of the Jiva's involvement in this imaginary world. Whereas in the dream only the mind and the sub-conscious are active, in the waking state of the world the Jiva's physical body with its sense organs of perception and action are also active along with the mind and the sub-conscious. But they are otherwise the same—imaginary, illusionary and deluding.

To help explain this phenomenon, the instance of a king becoming a pauper in his dream is taken. As long as the dream lasts, the king feels utterly distressed, dismayed and downtrodden, cursing his misfortunes that have made him a pauper. But when he wakes up in the real world he finds that everything was rubbish. As soon as he realises that it was a nightmare, he becomes happy once again. His depression vanishes like the shadow of night as soon as the sun rises.

The same thing is reversed in the case of a pauper. In his dream he might eat, drink, dress and live like a king, but does it change his physical life or its existential problems one bit for him? The answer is obviously 'no'. His kingly comfort that he had experienced in his dreams remain just that—a dream!

The same thing happens to the Atma, the real 'self' of the Jiva, when one analyses the actual effect of the world on it. The Atma feels pain and joy when it comes in contact with the gross world because of the way the different organs of perception perceive the world. These organs of perception are the eyes which sees the material objects, the tongue that tastes the things, the ears that hear sounds emanating from these objects, the skin that feels the touch of these things, and the nose that smells these objects.

If the Atma turns its attention away from the objects of these perceptions in this material world then to that extent that part of the world ceases to exist. The same part of the world begins to bother the Atma if it pays attention to it once again.

All relations of this world are in existence because of the gross body, as it is the latter that actually interacts with the equally gross world. The Atma has no direct contact with the world; it relates itself to the world through the medium of the body—both its gross components consisting of the sense organs, and the subtle component consisting of the mind-intellect and the sub-conscious. If the Atma simply manages to rein-in these components of the body then it can easily manage its relationship with the world. It will have no enemy or friend; it will not have any pain or feel joyous. It will exist in a neutral plane.

When a wise man understands the analogy of how it does not matter either to the king or the pauper what they became in their dreams vis-à-vis their actual life in this physical world, he also begins to understand how his 'true self' known as the Atma is not affected by whatever happens in the world around him. He becomes calm and peaceful. No pain or upheaval of the gross world would any longer ruffle him or disturb his peace of mind. He realises that all the sufferings and joys that he experiences in this gross existence are nothing but dream-like as far as his Atma is concerned. In other words, the Atma remains pure and holy inspite of the creature's involvement in this world.

When this awareness dawns upon the mental horizon of a person, he is said to have become truly wise and self-realised; he is indeed enlightened.]

#### Death can come anytime

248. तुलसी देखत अनुभवत सुनत न समुझत नीच ।  
चपरि चपेटे देत नित केस गहें कर मीच ॥

248. tulasī dēkhata anubhavata sunata na samujhata nīca.  
capari capēṭē dēta nita kēsa gahēm kara mīca..

Tulsidas warns, ‘Oh you foolish inhabitants of this world! ‘Death’ holds you by your hairs and gives you a slap right across your face every day of your life, but the irony is you won't understand and realise the irrefutable truth (that ‘Death’ holds the better of you and will drag you out whenever it wishes) even when you are repeatedly told about it, warned about it, and shown the fate of others who die daily. You also experience this happening all around you, but still you won't become alert and careful about your own fate.’ (248)

[Note—Tulsidas means that the body is subject to decay constantly, and each passing day brings the end so much the closer. In fact, the instant the creature is born his death has been fixed by the creator. But under the influence of Maya (deluding effects of creation) which prevents the creature from seeing the truth inspite of it gazing down on one's face, the creature thinks that he is going to live for eternity. He goes on and on pursuing this world and its material comforts and pleasures, hoarding things and running madly behind the objects of sense organs as if he would be able to lord over them for infinity. He does not understand and realise in this process that the gross body that he mistakenly thinks as his identity is itself perishable and decaying rapidly, so the day may come any time when it would finally collapse, and then nothing will matter; no power in creation can stop this happening.

On the other hand, the Atma is constant, unchanging, imperishable and eternal. This Atma is a living being's truthful identity; it is his true ‘self’, and it is a cosmic all-pervading entity unlike the gross body. The Atma is divine, sublime and subtle, and it does not disintegrate like the gross body.

A foolish man does not realise the transient and perishable nature of his gross body, he forgets this ultimate and stark truth, and therefore indulges in pleasures of the sense organs. He sees people dying around him daily, but still does not develop the virtues of renunciation and detachment from either the body or the world.

The fact that life in this mortal world is very short and unpredictable is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda stanza no. 2, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 102 that says “life lasts for a brief and uncertain period of say ten or five years, but pride and arrogance are so huge, robust and well-established as if they will not come to an end even when the creation ends at the end of its time”.

In Tulsidas' Barvai Ramayan there is a verse no. 46 that says the same thing that is said in this Doha. It says “Death (Kaal) is very fierce and terrifying. Look at it and become alert while there is still time. Do Japa (repetition) with due affection, devotion and faith using Lord Ram's holy and divine name.”

In other words, the philosopher and saint in Tulsidas advise us to be careful in our lives, and realise the fragile nature of life. If a man is aware of the transient and perishable nature of this world as well as the body, then anyone in his right senses will not waste time upon such a thing. What is the use of temporary relief if this lands a person in greater troubles? Why not, instead, devote the limited resources one has, and the limited time that he has in his hands to obtain some reward that will sustain him for eternity? Once this realisation dawns upon an intelligent man, he will immediately pull up his stockings and focus his attention on obtaining permanent peace and tranquility for his ‘self’ by abstaining from the temptations of the world that not only drags him in a

cesspool of worldly troubles and an endless cycle of unhappiness but also drains him of his energy and time.

No one and no thing escapes ‘death’ or Kaal. Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 94 say—“In this world, everyone and every thing, whether it is mobile or immobile, whether it is a human being (an evolved creature) or a serpent (primary forms of land bound creatures) or any other form, are all akin to fodder for Kaal. The Kaal is relentless and unforgiving; it devours entire universes.”

The constant awareness of death will prevent a man from any sort of wrong-doing and indulgences. See Doha no. 249 below.

There is a saying that translates into English as follows—“As soon as a child is born, he first sneezes, and then starts wailing loudly—lamenting at his soul’s arrival at an inauspicious and dirty place where he feels trapped.” ‘Oh Lord’, he wails, ‘I can’t get out of this nightmare now!’ The nature of this world is such that the people around him don’t understand the cause of his crying, and they laugh and feel happy at the cost of the newborn’s grief. The shadow of Maya, or delusions is so effective that by and by the child too forgets why he was lamenting at the time of birth, and as he grows up he starts enjoying toys and other things that are offered to him as temptations. When this scenario is extended to the world at large in a general way it is easy to understand how an adult gets trapped in the snare of Maya and forgets that the day when he will no longer be physically alive to enjoy or suffer in this world has already been fixed at the time of his birth, and therefore he should not waste time in either enjoying or grieving for anything. Because this will also pass away like the days of his life. Even if his destiny has sufferings for the entire run of his life, then still there is nothing to worry about—because a life-span of say 40-50 years is just like a speck of time in the scale of the cosmic life of the soul, the time that lasts for eternity.

In other words, the suffering which is making a man uneasy will come to an end one day automatically when the soul, the Atma, leaves the gross body at the time of the man’s physical death. This is because all perceptions of either suffering or enjoyments are limited to the gross body that has a very limited life-span as opposed to the Atma that is eternal. After that, i.e. after the death of the physical body, ‘he’ will regain his eternal state of happiness and blissfulness—because that is the natural state of the Atma, his ‘true self and identity’. Here the pronoun ‘he’ relates to a self-realised man, and not to a foolish man who thinks that the gross body is his ‘self’, and it is he whom Tulsidas warns.]

249. करम खरी कर मोह थल अंक चराचर जाल ।  
हनत गुनत गनि गुनि हनत जगत ज्यौतिषी काल ॥

249. karama kharī kara mōha thala aṅka carācara jāla.  
hanata gunata gani guni hanata jagata jyautiṣī kāla..

In this world, ‘Kaal (death and time personified) acts as an astrologer. He holds a ‘slate’ symbolized by ‘Moha’ (all sorts of worldly of delusions, temptations, attachments and allurements), and using a ‘chalk’ that represents the creature’s deeds he makes his astrological calculations by writing and erasing constantly the ‘numerals’ representing the creatures of this mortal world.

[Here, 'Kaal' is a metaphor for death and time. Both of them favour none; they are ruthless and unpardoning for all. A creature gets the reward of what he does without fear or favour at the hands of 'time' and 'death'. 'Time' will not wait for him; if a creature does not do what he is supposed to do at any given time, the chance will be lost for ever. The time will not stand and wait for him to do what he is supposed to do; it will move on.

Similarly, the 'Death' God will not excuse a man from dying at the instant his life-span ends, no matter what happens, no matter how great the man is, and no matter how sinful or holy he might have been during his lifetime. Even the different incarnations of the Supreme Being himself, the different prophets and great sages and seers who are born in this world die at a pre-determined and fixed time.] (249)

[Note—This Doha is an extension of the previous Doha no. 248. Tulsidas means that 'Time' spares no one, and so is also the case with 'Death'.

'Kaal' is like an astrologer, and like an astrologer calculating the future of a client by writing and erasing so many astrological calculations to arrive at the final reading, the Kaal also carefully observes each deed and action of the creature, which are compared to the different numerals used in the calculations of one's destiny. The parallel is significant because the destiny of a creature is dependent upon the deeds done by him and their accumulated effects. In other words, the creature can change his destiny by controlling his deeds. This is symbolized by the constant writing and erasing of the numerals on the slate—because each good or bad action or deed changes the destiny to that extent though it was fixed at the beginning. This also means that 'Kaal' keeps a constant vigil on the creature and keeps him in tight leash. The creature cannot hoodwink the Kaal.

'Moha' is the root cause of all troubles for the creature because it creates a web of delusions and its attendant hallucinations. Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 29 that precedes Doha no. 121 says that "Moha is the root of all troubles and tribulations for the creature in this world". This is why it is compared to the slate, the platform upon which a man's destiny rests and depends. If one can control Moha, he can change his destiny proportionately.

The central idea in this Doha is that in spite of the fact that one comes in this world with a baggage of past deeds and their consequences that have fixed his destiny, he can still mould it by the virtue of his deeds and actions that he undertakes in his current life. Kaal watches his steps each passing moment like a vigilant guardian. The very fact that Kaal constantly changes his calculations shows that nothing is fixed, and the right moves can still change the destiny of a creature for good as would any wrong step that he takes.]

#### The wise use of the sense organs

250. कहिबे कहँ रसना रची सुनिबे कहँ किये कान ।  
धरिबे कहँ चित हित सहित परमारथहि सुजान ॥

250. kahibē kaham̐ rasanā racī sunibē kaham̐ kiyē kāna.  
dharibē kaham̐ cita hita sahita paramārathahi sujāna..

The clever creator created the tongue to sing the praises and glories of the Lord, the ears to hear them, and the memory and sub-conscious to remember them (constantly). (250)

[Note—This Doha tells us the correct way these sense organs of the body should be used, and how they determine the destiny of the creature, how Kaal manages to hold control

over the future of the creature. The same tongue can be used to speak the truth and auspicious things, to help others, to teach them and show the society the path ahead, and it can also be used to say lies, to speak evil and spread hatred, to sow seeds of strife, dissension and confusions, to mislead the world to satisfy one's vested self-interest. A wise man is one who would use the tongue for the former purpose instead of the latter.

The supreme Creator made the man 'enabled'; he gave him the instrument of the tongue and enabled him to speak and let his mind and its thought known to the outside world. Everyone who is born is not automatically enabled to speak, for we have countless people who are dumb. Now, there are so many ways and uses to which this single instrument of empowerment can be used by the man. This is his discretion. This usage determines his destiny, and this is where Kaal plays its role.

A simple example will clear the point. If a learned man and wise man has one fault in his character, say if he is short-tempered and angry at trifles. Then though he uses this instrument of the tongue wisely most of the time and therefore accumulates a treasury of fame and good name for himself which bring acclaim and fortunes at his doorstep, but one wrong slip of the tongue made out of anger at the wrong time and place may land him in horrible trouble from which he may not be able to extricate himself for the rest of his life. The course of his destiny has changed dramatically in an instant.

Take another instant. Suppose a man is illiterate and stupid. But he has picked up from somewhere that one should repeat the holy name of the Lord God by his tongue as this simple formula will certainly free him from the fetters of this world and give him eternal rest and peace. Then he uses this tongue to do Japa with the Lord's name, and spread the Lord's name that has a strong divine aura around it as the only thing he can speak about. Say then wouldn't this man change the destiny of his soul and of those of others around him in spite of his not chanting any of the complicated hymns of the scriptures or preaching spiritualism or philosophy or metaphysics to others? Certainly the answer is 'yes'.

The same analogy applies to the rest of the organs of the body—viz. the ears and the sub-conscious mind and its faculty of memory.

The word 'Parmaarath' in the text (2<sup>nd</sup> last word of the Doha) refers to one's spiritual destiny. The last word 'Sujaan' means a wise, learned and enlightened man. Therefore, a wise man is he who uses these faculties to ensure an auspicious destiny for his soul. For a devotee, his auspicious destiny is attaining the holy feet of Lord Ram. Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 93 says "Lord Sri Ram is a personified form of the Parmaarath or an auspicious destiny of the soul".

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 67, line no. 1 of stanza 5 says "love for Lord Ram and his divine name is the essence of Parmaarath or an auspicious spiritual destiny of the creature".

Ram Charit Manas, Sunder Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 23 says "the *tongue* does not find its glory without the name of Lord Ram".

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 113 summarises the usefulness of the organs of the body as follows—"The *ears* of those who have not heard and do not hear the divine story of Lord Hari (Vishnu; Lord Ram) is like the serpent's hole (2). The *eyes* that have not seen saints and holy people are like the decorative eyes on the peacock's feather (3). The *head* that does not bow to the holy feet of Lord Hari and a Guru in reverence is like a sour pumpkin (4). A person who does not enshrine devotion and love for the Lord Hari in his *heart* has a body that is as good as a corpse (5). The *tongue* that does not sing the divine glories of the Lord is like the tongue of a frog (6). The *heart* that does not become ecstatic and exhilarated, that does not become mellowed and softened upon hearing the eclectic and sublime stories of Lord

Hari is stern and hard like the rock and the Vajra (the weapon of Indra, the king of gods, said to be made of a very hard material) (7)”.]

The relationship between the Saguna and Nirguna forms of Lord God

251. ग्यान कहै अग्यान बिनु तम बिनु कहै प्रकास ।  
निरगुन कहै जो सगुन बिनु सो गुरु तुलसीदास ॥

251. gyāna kahai agyāna binu tama binu kahai prakāsa.  
niraguna kahai jō saguna binu sō guru tulasīdāsa..

If anyone preaches about ‘Gyan’ (knowledge of the Absolute Truth, about Consciousness, about the benefits of being enlightened and wise) without first describing what is ‘Agyan’ (literally meaning ignorance, or lack of knowledge about the reality and the truth), if anyone attempts to describe the nature and beneficial effects of ‘Prakash’ (light and illumination) without first telling what is ‘Tam’ or darkness (and its negative effects and attending problems), and if one attempts to teach and enlighten others about the ‘Nirguna’ or formless aspect of the Supreme Being without first teaching and understanding himself about the ‘Saguna’ aspect of the same Divinity—then Tulsidas says that such a man is fit to become his ‘Guru’ or teacher.

[Tulsidas means that it is impossible and ridiculous to do so. The term ‘Guru’ means a wise man who is knowledgeable and qualified enough to teach others about any topic or subject. Here the term is used in a sarcastic manner to emphasise that the things described in this Doha are impossible, and if a man claims that he can do it or does it to prove that he is an expert then he is simply misleading others because it is impossible to do it. He is really worthy of praise because he is performing an amazing feat and a miracle of sorts.] (251)

[Note—When a teacher teaches something to his disciples, the best approach is to start from the known and gradually graduate to the unknown by step-by-step logic. A student is better able to grasp a subject or concept with which he is conversant instead of being directly exposed to something about which he has no experience or idea.

The best example is the understanding of the importance of ‘light’ vis-à-vis ‘darkness’. Only when one knows what is night can he understand the importance and real meaning of the term day and daylight. When one has been long exposed to a bright source of light, he may not recognize that even a small lamp has the ability to illuminate anything. But when he remains in a dark room or cave and then sees a small oil lamp, he then understands its importance. The darkness makes him instantaneously realise the importance of ‘light’ because he now can see and have a first hand knowledge of so many things which he knew nothing about in the previous darkness.

A man who has known and experienced the pain of physical injury will know how it feels, and he will then understand the importance of healing and the heart-felt blessing the injured gives to the healer.

A person who has experienced starvation knows better the importance of not wasting food as compared to another man who has lived a filthy rich life during which not leaving behind any half-eaten food on the plate is deemed to be below his dignity and social status; his friends will think that he is greedy, poor and starving. So he wastes food in spite of the fact that he was hungry and had wanted to eat the whole thing, and also

inspite of the fact that there are hungry millions who do not have even dry crumbs of bread on their plates.

The same logic is applicable here. Ordinary human beings are not fully aware of the great spiritual truths as enunciated in the scriptures, and their normal lives revolve around mundane affairs and the grind of this world. So in order to pull them away from the falsehood of this world and onto the path of spirituality, it is essential to first make them enlightened about what is falsehood by citing instances and proper examples. Then gradually they should be made to compare their own experience of this world and its pains and sufferings with the peace, happiness, joy and bliss that is obtained in the spiritual field by great men who understood the truth and reality of this world and its delusions. This knowledge that will now be acquired by them will be firmly grasped, and it will be logical, sustainable and permanent. A student cannot be taught computer science in a day; he must first be made to understand the difficulties and hassles that man had to face when there was no such thing as a computer. Then he will understand the importance and significance of this machine. He will realise that a computer is not meant to simply play games and surf the internet, but it is an instrument of great use and help in making life so easy for him in the modern world with its fast pace of life; it is an instrument that aids access to and acquisition of infinite knowledge about limitless things; it is an indispensable aid to help him in his intellectual endeavours and expanding his mental and physical abilities because the computer takes a vast part of the load off his mind and makes it possible for him to do things that would have been extremely tiring and time consuming if done physically—such as for example complicated calculations.

Gyan is synonymous with light as it illuminates one's inner self and mind, and Agyan with darkness. This light of knowledge is of a subtle dimension, and like the physical light which removes physical darkness, the light of Gyan illuminates the innerself of the creature and removes the darkness of his spiritual ignorance.

The 'Saguna' form of God is easy to relate to and his presence easy to understand because there is so much known about him in the form of stories written in the scriptures, because the ordinary mind is better positioned and conditioned to grasp things that have physical dimensions and attributes in the physical gross world rather than things that are formless, things that are subtle and sublime in nature. Anything that is visible, that has determinable characteristics and qualities and features, and is well known in the world, is easy to grasp and understand by the mind than something that no one has never seen as it becomes very difficult to visualize or imagine it, and it also becomes too abstract for his mind to understand. The Supreme Being is invisible, formless, attributeless and sublime; he is omnipresent and all-pervading; he is atomic on one hand and colossus on the other hand. Just like the case of only a few selected students out of the thousands and hundreds who pass out each year from countless universities and colleges in the world reaching great heights and making new discoveries while the rest settling down in routine affairs of life and satisfied with a cosy job, only a selected few fortunate people possess the high level of intellectual ability, the mental powers of insight and the spiritual strength to experience and understand what is meant by the 'Nirguna' aspect of Divinity and Supreme Consciousness. For ordinary creatures, the concept of Nirguna is too abstract and awe-inspiring; it becomes a hard nut for them to crack. So a wise teacher is one who first tells the world about things that are well-known and well-related with, and then gradually unfold the mystery behind it to enlighten the disciple about the subtler aspects of the world and the hidden truth that lies behind the external façade of gross things that are visible.

The Upanishads also deal with this metaphysical concept of Brahm's two enigmatic forms known as Saguna and Nirguna. The Saguna Brahm is also known as the 'Murti Brahm', and the Niguna Brahm is known as the 'Amurti Brahm'. The Upanishads that

deal with this concept are, inter alia, the following—(i) Shukla Yajur Veda—Mandal Brahmin Upanishad in its Brahman 1, section 3, verse no. 1-4; Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 10. (ii) Atharva Veda—Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 4; Canto 2, paragraph 1-10; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 3 (last stanza), and verse no. 8.]

252. अंक अगुन आखर सगुन समुझिअ उभय प्रकार ।  
खोएँ राखें आपु भल तुलसी चारु बिचार ॥

252. aṅka aguna ākhara saguna samujhi'a ubhaya prakāra.  
khō'ēm̃ rākhēm̃ āpu bhala tulasī cāru bicāra..

[This verse compares Nirgun and Saguna variants of God].

Tulsidas says that the 'Nirguna' aspect of Brahm (the Supreme Being) is like the numerals 1, 2, 3 etc., whereas the 'Saguna' aspect is like the words one, two, three etc. Both represent the same idea and the same truth about an entity, but the concept is different.

[The first entity (Nirguna or numerals) can be often misunderstood or be misleading (e.g. by placing any numeral at the wrong place even inadvertently will create a wrong idea about the actual number of things, or by adding or removing any numeral an illusion of excess or deficit is created), but when the same figure is written in words (to support and compliment what has been written in the numerical form) then there is no chance of misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the actual figure.]

Taking this reality into consideration, it is left upon the wise man to choose which to pick up and which to leave, or which to prefer over the other, or which is more certain than the other. (252)

[Note—If we represent the quantum or quantity of any given thing only in the numeral form then any inadvertent error in writing these numerals or reading them can cause a lot of confusion between the actual situation and what one understands it to be. But if the numerals are accompanied by their word form then there can be no confusion at all. For instance, suppose we have a figure with five zeros that follow one—i.e. 100000. Any error in reading the number of zeros can cause a huge difference between the actual number of things present and our information of their numbers based on the erroneous reading of the numerals. But if the same set of numerals is accompanied by their word form, in this case 'one hundred thousand', then there can be no confusion or misreading or miscalculation at all. That is why businessmen always write their amounts both in numeral as well as in word form to be doubly sure, and to prevent any chance of fraud or misunderstanding.]

In the context of this Doha, Brahm in its primary form that is 'Nirguna', literally meaning an entity that is invisible, formless, without attributes and specific characters, becomes too abstract an entity for the ordinary mind to grasp easily. But when the same Brahm is attempted to be understood through the 'Saguna' form, i.e. a form that has a physical existence with specific and easily understandable characters and attributes that can be physically verified, a form that is visible, discernible, perceivable and easily related to, then even an ordinary mind can easily understand what Brahm is and it can easily relate to it. Therefore the path to Brahm-realisation becomes practical and easy through the medium of the Saguna rather than the Nirguna.

According to the Upanishads and other scriptures, the entire creation, including the physical world in which we live and with which we come in direct contact on a daily basis, is a revelation or manifestation of the same Brahman. Without Brahman there would be no creation. The entire world with its multifarious variations is like the many branches of the same tree known as Brahman. But the tree that is visible has originated from a seed that was buried in the ground and was invisible. Further, the part of the tree that is above the ground and visible actually draws its support and nourishment from its invisible part known as the root that lies under the ground. If there was no seed or root there will be no visible tree with its many branches, leaves and fruits.

In all these instances we see that the visible aspect of the tree is not the complete story of the tree; there are many vital parts of the tree that are not visible but are nevertheless absolutely indispensable for the very existence of the tree—such as the seed or the root. But when one talks about the ‘tree’ then it is the visible part that first comes to the mind and makes one understand about the object being discussed. By merely talking about the seed and the root without first showing the tree, the student or any lay listener or observer will find it too difficult to grasp what is being referred to, discussed or talked about.

Similarly, when one is taught about the ‘Saguna’ aspect of the Supreme Being by way of his various manifestations or revelations, then it becomes easy for the learner or the spiritual aspirant to understand the existence of the ‘Nirguna’ aspect of Brahman. It is easy for any man to relate with and understand about anything with which he has interacted or dealt with first hand. This is why practical training is more important than mere theoretical understanding of any subject when a student is in college or school. It helps him to grasp the subject better and make the related conceptions get firmly established in his mind.

In the spiritual field the same principle applies. A man finds it very easy to reach the higher level of understanding of the ‘Nirguna’ aspect of Brahman by first becoming aware of and understanding the ‘Saguna’ aspect of Brahman. The latter is the stepping stone to reach the former. The Saguna aspect is easy for a person because he has a first hand experience of the world in which he lives, as well as by reading the many scriptures that describe in detail about the Saguna manifestations, revelations or incarnations of Brahman. Once he has this knowledge, his intellect will automatically tell him that there must be something very definitely true, extremely mighty and powerful that regulates this entire world from behind the curtain. He starts thinking, pondering and researching, and finally a stage comes when he becomes certain about the existence of the ‘Nirguna’ aspect of Brahman.

Brahman no longer remains a mystery for him, for now he can understand that unknown Brahman (Nirguna) by the medium of the known Brahman (Saguna). The visible and tangible proof of existence of Brahman prevents him from doubting the invisible and intangible aspect of Brahman just like the presence of the physical tree that is visible right in front of the observer makes it undeniably certain for him that there must be an invisible root as well as a seed from which this particular tree was born.

In the context of this present Doha, refer also to Doha no. 19 of this book Dohawali.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 73 Kha it is said—“The Nirguna form of the Lord God is very easy to understand with the help of the Saguna form, but otherwise it is extremely difficult and no one has known it for certain. The actual form of the Lord is extremely enigmatic, mystical and esoteric so much so that even great sages and hermits get confused and uncertain in spite of hearing of them again and again.”

Even the great saintly crow named Kaagbhusund found it difficult to comprehend the Nirguna form of the Lord God. He insisted that his Guru (preceptor) must first preach him about the Saguna form of the Lord in his incarnation as Lord Ram, and only then

would he be competent enough to understand the Nirguna aspect—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-13 that precede Doha no. 111.

His insistence went to such an extent that his Guru became annoyed and cursed him, but immediately after that he realised his mistake and blessed Kaagbhusund profusely, granting him immense devotion for Lord Ram as well as life of eternity and contentedness as long as he wishes to live. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 111, to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114.

To avoid any confusion as to which of the two aspects of Brahm is the authentic one, Tulsidas has explicitly and affirmatively declared in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23 that—“Both the Nirguna and Saguna forms are of the same divine entity known as Brahm in equal measure; there is no difference between them. The real form of Brahm is so esoteric, mystical and enigmatic that it cannot be described or told; it is measureless and fathomless, it is without a beginning or an end, it is most beautiful, and it is unique by its inherent nature.”]

### True Knowledge and True Renunciation

253. परमारथ पहिचानि मति लसति बिषयँ लपटानि ।  
निकसि चिता तें अधजरित मानहुँ सती परानि ॥

253. paramāratha pahicāni mati lasati biṣayam̐ lapaṭāni.  
nikasi citā tēm̐ adhajarita mānahum̐ satī parāni..

Even after recognising the Absolute Truth and Reality of creation<sup>1</sup>, if one falls prey to the temptations of the sense objects of this deluding world and indulges in gratifying the sense organs of the body, then he is indeed like a ‘Sati’ who first (pretends to be extremely religious and holy as she) enters the funeral pyre of her dead husband (to uphold her vow of remaining with him for the rest of her life, and to authentic not only her loyalty and love for her husband but also to show that she is eligible for liberation and deliverance as she has acted according to the scriptures by regarding her husband as a defacto Lord God as far as she is concerned because she has voluntarily decided to burn herself along with her husband’s dead body when it is cremated) and then suddenly jumps out half-burnt from lit pyre and runs away from it (only to become a subject of lifelong ridicule, scorn, rebuke and castigation)<sup>2</sup>. (253)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A self-realised, wise and enlightened man understands that the surrounding world is an illusion; it is deluding and entrapping. The reality in this world is very different from what appears on the surface. He is deemed to have realised that his ‘true self’ is not the body but the Atma, the soul. This Atma is a sublime and divine entity that is nothing but pure consciousness. It is a microcosmic form of the all-pervading supreme Consciousness known as Brahm. It is the only entity that is ‘true and real’ in the seemingly true world; devoid of the consciousness this world is as good as a dead piece of wood, as transient and impermanent as a cloud in the sky, and as illusionary as the water of the mirage in the hot desert sand.

Therefore it is obviously very futile to seek permanent peace and happiness by pursuing such an illusionary thing as this world. It is like running behind a mirage in a desert in search of water, or seeking to build a house to live in the floating cloud in the sky.

So, when a truth-realised, highly wise and enlightened man gets deluded to the extent that he begins to get indulgent in this world in spite of knowing about its true nature, then he is indeed a subject of great concern as well as an object of extreme ridicule and scorn. It goes to show that all his claims of knowledge and wisdom were to cheat the world for selfish ends and pecuniary benefits, and he is not what he claims to be. Such a foolish and deluded man not only himself falls in the deep chasm of eternal restlessness, unhappiness and worldly entrapments that keep him chained for eternity to countless miseries and endless grief associated with this world and the never-ending cycle of birth and death, but he also drags other innocent persons behind him who had believed in him, who had vested their trust in him, and who had followed his advice in good faith that he will lead them to their spiritual goal of obtaining eternal peace and happiness as well as liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions.

Half-baked spiritual knowledge and wisdom creates only temporary happiness, and it is a very dangerous thing because the fall is very sharp and painful. A man who has not developed a true and deep sense of real detachment and renunciation from the world by being firmly convinced of its illusionary nature, and the fact that any kind of involvement in it is like falling prey to the temptation of seeking water in a hot desert mirage, is sure to get distracted very easily by the wonderful charms of this colourful and fascinating world of material sense objects. Therefore, the little spiritual benefit that he might have accumulated by reading of the scriptures or observing spiritual practices become null and void, and he falls in the grip of vice-like trap laid by the enchantments of the world and the natural tendency of the organs of his own body to seek gratification.

Then what happens? All his claims of wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation fly off in wind. And obviously he is entitled to a more severe punishment than a man who had not claimed to be spiritual or wise—because the former has pulled so many other innocent souls in the pit of darkness and miseries alongside him.

Tulsidas says that such a man is a deceit, a pretentious and pseudo spiritual man, and he is like a Sati who attempts to show off herself as being very righteous and auspicious and holy by trying to burn herself along with the dead body of her husband but suddenly gets up and runs away half-burnt in the belief that she has a long life to live in this world and she would be better off enjoying it than burning herself to find liberation and deliverance. The Sati is utterly foolish as she does not realise that she will be abhorred by the society for the rest of her life, that she would be an out-caste and treated like a witch who had not only taken the life of her husband but had also become a ghost as she has risen from the funeral pyre. She does not realise the horrendous aftermath of her decision to leave the funeral pyre after once having entered it. She does not understand that her life in this world would be turned into a living hell for her henceforth.

Tulsidas draws a parallel between the two and says that a man who becomes indulgent in the sense objects of this world and a slave of his sense organs is just as unfortunate and stupid as the Sati. Instead of finding even a trace of happiness, peace and praise in this world, he will be laughed upon and sneered at. Even if he thinks that he is getting pleasure and comfort in the world, he is mistaken because all his happiness and joy is short-lived like the world itself. How can one expect to get permanent peace, comfort, happiness and bliss from something that has no permanence itself?

Such a man becomes an object of sanction and ridicule by the very world for which he has abandoned his true spiritual goal even as the Sati who runs away from the funeral pyre of her dead husband is made to lead the rest of her life in a virtual hell.

<sup>2</sup>Sati—In ancient and medieval India there was a tradition that chaste and loyal woman used to die by burning herself in the funeral pyre of her dead husband. This originated from the belief that for a married woman her husband was like a God for her; she was expected to serve her husband as a living God. She died along with her husband

to prove that she was virtuous, righteous and holy as well as chaste and loyal to her husband. The traditional belief was that by doing so she will get instant liberation and deliverance for herself—i.e. all her sins would be forgiven and she will accompany her husband to the heaven.

A woman performed a Sati either voluntarily because she believed that by doing so she will go to heaven, or she was forced to do so by orthodox members of the society. In the latter case she was usually forced on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, and as soon as the fire was lit she got so terrified that she rushed out screaming, half-burnt. Later on as modern ideas and thoughts developed, a need was felt to eradicate this evil and cruel practice as it emerged that usually this practice was perpetuated to usurp the dead man's property, and this practice is now banned everywhere.

In cases where the Sati was done voluntarily, if the woman was firm in her conviction that if she died with her husband she will go to heaven and all her sins would be forgiven, she was not intimidated by the fire and maintained her poise. Such a woman would surely not run away from the funeral pyre, and for her courage and faith she is honoured later on with great veneration and respect. On the contrary, if a woman is not convinced of this idea and goes to the pyre indecisively inspite of her family members advising her not to do so, she is sure to run away scared and terrified as soon as the fire starts blazing around her. It is this type of woman who is being referred to by Tulsidas to prove his point. This Doha has nothing to do with the correctness or not of the practice of Sati; it is simply employed as an analogy.

This analogy of the Sati vis-à-vis a self-realised, wise and enlightened man is to stress that such a man became highly venerated in the world and he acquired great spiritual powers. But if he got deluded and distracted from his path then his condition was like a fallen Sati who is treated like a witch and a vampire in the world.

The term 'Sati' is both a common noun as well as a verb. The lady who burnt herself with the dead body of her husband was called a 'Sati'—a common noun to denote a virtuous, righteous and chaste woman generally. Such a woman was later on venerated and worshipped by the people because she was believed to have attained a stature similar to that of a goddess. The term 'Sati' is also a verb because the entire process by which a lady came to be recognized as a Sati was also known by the same term.

From a broader perspective, the term 'Sati' also meant a woman who had acquired special mystical powers by the virtue of serving her husband most diligently and loyally while he is alive as if he is a living God. These mystical powers are otherwise available by doing a lot of Tapa (austerity and penance) and observing strict religious vows. Such a woman was worshipped even during her lifetime.]

254. सीस उघारन किन कहेउ बरजि रहे प्रिय लोग ।  
घरहीं सती कहावती जरती नाह बियोग ॥

254. sīsa ughārana kina kahē'u baraji rahē priya lōga.  
gharahīm̐ satī kahāvati jaratī nāha biyōga..

[Here Tulsidas admonishes fake hermits and ascetics, comparing them to a woman who pretends to be a Sati but is actually not.]

Who had asked such a woman to remove the veil on her head and declare her intention to become a Sati? [When the husband dies, a loyal and chaste wife removes the covering from her head as a sign of bereavement. The 'removal of the covering' also

symbolizes that she has lost the protection of her husband by his passing away. Then she would declare that she will become a 'Sati'. Refer Doha no. 253.]

All her family members and relatives were stopping her from doing so. [They had tried their best to persuade her to abandon the idea of doing the ritual of Sati if she is not sincere about it. At that time she was trying to impress others and pretended to be holy and morally strong as she insisted to become a Sati. But what happened? All her pretensions vanished in thin air as soon as the ferocious fire came raging at her.]

It would have been far better for her to stay in her home and be called a (true) Sati by spending the rest of her life burning internally (i.e. mentally) in the fire of her husband's remembrance. [This would have been like burning in the fire of Tapa or austerity and penances. People would have praised her exemplary life which she could have devoted to some constructive purpose for the welfare of the society. Instead of this, she tried to smart by pretending to be holy enough to go straight to heaven by burning in the funeral fire. Her false claims of holiness and moral strength and spiritual powers crumbled like nine pins when the fire started. What was the result of this pretension? All the rest of her life she was treated like a witch; she was chased away like a vampire and hounded by the society. She herself is to blame for her horrible fate.] (254)

[Note—Tulsidas means that to become a truly holy person and to obtain true spiritual peace and bliss it is essential for an aspirant to abandon pretension and deceit—because sooner rather than later his true colour will be known, and this will land him in immense trouble. Not only will he lose whatever respect he had in the society, but he will be ridiculed and scoffed at as being a cunning and dishonest man.

If one does not have an honest and internal sense of renunciation and detachment from the world then it is better for him to go on with his life in a normal manner but take care not to do anything unrighteous and unethical, and to devote all his deeds and their results to the Lord God. This will give him the same spiritual reward and the same sort of peace and happiness that an ascetic or hermit gets by completely renouncing the world and going to the forest to do Tapa (penance) and Yoga (meditation and contemplation) in order to attain emancipation and salvation.

On the other hand, there is no use in donning the garb of an ascetic or a hermit or a monk or a mendicant to deceive the world if the mind and heart are fixed in the world and its material sense objects. Rather, it is counter-productive as it makes the man belong to neither here nor there. He can neither properly enjoy the world as he feels ashamed to do so once he has declared himself a hermit or a monk, nor does he get the spiritual benefits of leading a life of renunciation and detachment or by doing Tapa and Yoga as his mind and heart are fixed in the world and not in what he is doing. It is outright cheating.

Tulsidas compares his condition to a woman who first pretended to be holy by declaring her intention to become a Sati, but then running away. Just as this false Sati is worthy of great rebuke and ridicule in the society, the pseudo wise and enlightened man too is an object of scorn and contempt.]

#### What is True Vairagya (renunciation)

255. खरिया खरी कपूर सब उचित न पिय तिय त्याग ।  
कै खरिया मोहि मेलि कै बिमल बिबेक बिराग ॥

255. khariyā kharī kapūra saba ucita na piya tiya tyāga.  
kai khariyā mōhi mēli kai bimala bibēka birāga..

[Tulsidas' wife once saw him carrying a sling-bag on his shoulder. This bag contained a piece of camphor and a little length of white chalk. She got annoyed, and sternly rebuked him in the following words—]

'Oh dear! If you can keep such things in your bag that accompanies you wherever you go (i.e. if you can't leave them and live without them), then it is not appropriate for you to abandon me.

[In other words, if you have truly abandoned the world and declare that you have nothing to do with it, then why are you so obsessed with these lifeless things such as the camphor and the chalk? Not only this, you carry a bag to keep them safely with you. If you are so concerned with these material things, then is it not unethical that you have abandoned your loyal wife who is so devoted to you, and whose life has been ruined by your leaving her? Is it not a grave sin that you are causing such great agony and misery to a living being by abandoning her because you proclaim that you have taken the vows of renunciation and detachment from this world, whereas you are so obsessed and attached with such useless things as camphor and chalk? Well then, if you constantly keep this bag with its camphor and chalk with you, surely you can't claim that you have no attachment, and that you do not want any company, and that you have renounced the world. If this is the case, as it surely is, then you have no right to leave me. You are committing a great mistake that is unpardonable and unethical. As compared to these lifeless things, I am a human being who is being subjected to immense grief at your leaving the house and abandoning me. At the time of marriage you had taken the religious vow of keeping my company and protecting me for the rest of your life. You have not kept that promise, and had rescinded on it, which in itself is a sin. But that would have been pardoned and I would have had no complaints if you had truly renounced the world and proceeded ahead on the spiritual path of self-realisation and attainment of liberation from the fetters of the world. I would have gladly contributed my might in helping you on your spiritual path. But as things stand, it is not so. You are attached to such useless things as camphor and white chalk.

You will argue that you carry them to fulfill your religious duties of making the Tilak mark with the chalk and light the worship lamp with the camphor. But say, if you are so concerned with observing religious duties, then is taking care of your wife not your religious duty? Is keeping company with lifeless things any different from keeping company with a living being such as your wife, for whom even the scriptures prescribe certain duties and obligations on the part of the husband?]

Hence, either keep me with you as you keep the camphor and the chalk in the bag that is constantly slung on your shoulder, or else be true to your vows of renunciation and detachment from this world by abandoning these material things that have no spiritual value whatsoever if you do not want to keep me with you.

[Be a true and honest person by accepting the pure form of renunciation and detachment that will help you attain the higher level of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment for which you have set out from the house. True spiritual enlightenment will come only with true renunciation and detachment with all things false and artificial, such as the misconception that it is necessary to observe religious rituals to attain liberation and deliverance. True liberation and deliverance is abandonment of all attachments with this material world of artificiality and sense objects that are

impermanent. You have not done this—because you find it necessary to keep the camphor and the chalk with you. So in effect you are pretending to have taken the vows of *Sanyas*, whereas in actual practice you are as attached to this material world and bound to the fetters of ignorance and delusions as other ordinary men who are tied to this moribund existence in a world of spiritual delusions and entrapments.

Say, if you do not pay heed to what I say, then it is clear that you are deceiving the world as well as your own self.]” (255)

[Note—After *Tulsidas* had renounced his household and became a mendicant saint, he once chanced to meet his wife. Seeing a bag containing white chalk used to make the mark of the *Tilak* on the forehead and camphor used to light the fire for rituals slung on his shoulders, she rebuked him. She told him that if he has abandoned her because he has taken the vows of *Sanyas*, which means the vow of leading a life of renunciation and detachment from all things worldly, then why is he keeping this bag constantly with him, why is he so attached to the chalk and the camphor? If he is indeed a true mendicant who is supposed to have no attachment with anything material and worldly as he professes himself to be, then he should not be so obsessed with the bag and its contents of the chalk and the camphor. Are they not accompanying him everywhere he goes? If he is so attached with lifeless things, then what harm will come to him if she also accompanies him in life? After all, she is a living person as compared to the chalk, the camphor and the bag which are lifeless and gross things. If he is so concerned with keeping company with them, is he not committing a great error tantamount to a grave sin by putting a living being (herself) to such horrifying grief and misery by abandoning her?

It is believed that this rebuke of his wife opened the eyes of wisdom of *Tulsidas*. He immediately threw away this meager cheap possession of his which had no spiritual value but was carried by him to do his daily rituals involving putting the *Tilak* mark on his forehead with the chalk, and to light the little lamp with the camphor to show it to his Lord *Ram* during worship ritual. The sling bag served the purpose of carrying these essential worship items, along with the need to keep aside any extra alms that he might get during his begging rounds. That is all; he did not keep the bag to stuff it with money. So, *Tulsidas* threw everything away that instant as if his internal eyes of wisdom were opened. Henceforth, he led a life of a true mendicant who begs for food and keeps no possessions with him. He became a true saint and hermit who is deemed to have become self-realised. Such a man has nothing with him except the body which carries his *Atma*, the soul and his truthful ‘self’. When the time comes, he (i.e. his *Atma*, his soul) discards this ‘possession’ (the body) also to attain final liberation and deliverance, the ultimate emancipation and salvation.

A true *Sanyasi*, i.e. a person who has left his household and wife to take the vows of complete renunciation and detachment from the world and its affairs, is not expected to carry anything. No formal worship rituals are needed to be done by him, and therefore there is no need for the camphor and the white chalk. *Tulsidas* was a learned Brahmin, and as such he was used to performing routine rituals and undertaking certain religious formalities as prescribed for Brahmin in the scriptures. But this point missed him—that the path to self-realisation and attainment of *Brahm* has no formal route and no formal procedure. In other words, merely observance of rituals and adhering to formalities does not mean that the concerned person is *Brahm*-realised.

The spiritual message that the great saint *Tulsidas* got from his wife’s admonishment is that true renunciation comes from within and not from without. If he has truly renounced the world then he should abandon all sorts of attachments—even with rituals and formal forms of worship. This eclectic spiritual concept is endorsed in the *Upanishads* dealing with *Sanyas* which unanimously affirm that in the higher states of

Sanyas and self-realisation, the spiritual aspirant is expected to abandon even the basic insignia of this spiritual way of life—such as carrying the water pot called the Kamandalu, the sacred thread on the body called the Yogyopavit, the ascetic's rod or staff called the Danda, and the tuft of hair on the head called the Shikha. He is also expected to abandon all clothes except a piece to cover his private parts. He eats and drinks directly from the hands by cupping his palms; he wears the sky as his overgarment; he wears the ash of the fire sacrifice as his shawl. He is not expected to do any fire sacrifice either, as his breath itself is the oblation that is made to the sacred fire burning inside his body which is deemed to have turned into a living fire pit of the fire sacrifice. He need not repeat any specific Mantra also, as his breath that comes in and goes out of this body involuntarily makes the sound of 'Hans-Hans', which in itself is a great divine spiritual formula for the supreme Brahm.

In this context, the constant carrying of the sling bag by Tulsidas was deemed to be a spiritual impediment by his wife. So she sternly took him to task. Her rebuke proved to be a blessing in disguise for Tulsidas because by throwing the bag and its contents for all times to come, this great soul entered the final frontier of spiritual practice as an exalted Sanyasi who has no possession with him except his Atma (i.e. his soul, which is pure consciousness) that lives in the physical body. This stage is attained in the higher stages of Sanyas, and is the stepping stone for the final liberation from all attachments—i.e. the final stage when the Atma leaves the body and finds eternal freedom.]

256. घर कीन्हें घर जात है घर छाँड़े घर जाइ ।  
तुलसी घर बन बीचहीं राम प्रेम पुर छाइ ॥

256. ghara kīnhēm ghara jāta hai ghara chāṁṛē ghara jā'i.  
tulasī ghara bana bīchhīn rāma prēma pura chā'i..

Tulsidas says that if one remains indulgent in the world as a householder, he will lose the chance of protecting his spiritual abode (i.e. the chance to obtain spiritual peace by becoming detached from all sorts of involvements and entanglements with this world. On the other hand, if he takes care of the latter (i.e. his spiritual welfare and destiny), his worldly abode (i.e. his household and its affairs) suffer.

Therefore, the best thing for a wise man to do is to adopt a middle path. He should adopt a life style that lies on the median path between the two extreme ways of life—the first way as an indulgent, restless and over-exerted householder who remains deeply engrossed in the affairs of the material world, worrying for his family and spending all his time and energy to fulfill the material needs of the members of the household which leaves him literally breathless and uncomfortable at all times in his life, and the other extreme way as the forest-dwelling mendicant or hermit who snaps all his ties with the world, abandons his household duties and responsibilities to escape from their burden, and subjects himself to great discomfort by living a stern life of austerity and penance in the forest for which his physical body is not prepared. (256)

[Note—Both these two types of people—the indulgent householder who is ignorant about the real method of obtaining spiritual peace as outlined in the scriptures, and the ascetic who has not developed internal sense of renunciation and spiritual wisdom inspite of leaving the world behind and coming to the forest to practice spiritual methods that can lead him to liberation and deliverance—do not find peace, happiness and rest.

The householder who remains engrossed in the world and the affairs of the house always remains unhappy and restless because he has so many worries on his head and so many obligations to fulfill that he gets exhausted at the end of the day. Since it is impossible for any man to accomplish all that he wants, he lives in constant wants and shortages. This is a never-ending situation, and it keeps him running around in circles for the rest of his life.

Similarly, if a forest-dwelling hermit has not attained true and sincere enlightenment about the futility of pursuing this deluding world and the worthiness of seeking eternal peace and rest for his Atma, in whom the virtues of renunciation, dispassion and detachment have not sprouted in the inner-self before he left the house and headed for the forest, then such a person too will never find real peace and rest there. He will be suffering from bodily discomfort and pain as he will be deprived of even the basic amenities of physical comfort in the forest that were easily available to him in his house. His mind will yearn for those household comforts, pleasures and amenities, and their lack in the forest will become a source of eternal restlessness and unhappiness for him. He will begin to regret his decision to come to the forest, but out of shame will not be able to go back home again. Obviously therefore, the very purpose of leaving the house and coming to the forest will be defeated. He will be a man who is frustrated and jealous. How can anyone in his senses expect peace and tranquility in such a man?

A householder who has not understood where true spiritual peace lies will also feel guilty if he does not leave the house when he becomes old enough to go to the forest as a Sanyasi. He will fear scorn and rebuke from the society. So even if he does not want to do so, he will be forced to go to the forest. Say, how can he ever find peace in such a condition where he is torn between remaining a householder and becoming a Sanyasi to head for the forest? It is like riding on two boats at the same time. So we see that both the householder and the forest-dwelling hermit have no peace of mind and rest for the soul if they have not trained themselves to attain true wisdom and enlightenment which would teach them how to attain real peace, real rest and real happiness in any given circumstance.

Therefore, the best path is to take the middle line—i.e. to remain in the world and go about one's duties as an ordinary householder at the physical plane of the body, but keep the mind and sub-conscious in a state that is obtained by a forest-dwelling ascetic or hermit.

This state of existence entails that the person is mentally and emotionally detached from all things, he is not affected by anything, he keeps his inner-self free from any desires and expectations, he does deeds and takes actions as they come along without getting unduly perturbed by them, he does not hanker for rewards for the deeds done and actions undertaken by him, he does everything selflessly as a mere duty done as ordained by the Lord God, he leaves everything on the Lord and never thinks that 'I am the doer or the sufferer or the enjoyer of anything', he learns the art of remaining aloof, detached, composed and calm internally like a hermit and a monk who is unconcerned with whatever happens in the surrounding material world, and so on and so forth.

By practicing this way of life the practitioner is able to get the benefit of the two worlds—one as the householder, and the other as the forest-dwelling Sanyasi. He gets the benefit of basic comforts and utilities that are abundantly available in the house but lack completely in the forest, he is able to avoid the harshness of a forest life and having to beg even to fill his stomach with the bare necessity of food, he is able to avoid the constant restlessness, worries and turmoil that are natural for a man who lives involved in the world as a householder, and so on.

When he becomes self-realised, wise and enlightened he obtains spiritual bliss and peace irrespective of where he lives and what his physical body does. This is because he

has realised that his 'true self' is his Atma, the pure consciousness that lives in his innerself, and not the body. This body is merely a habitat for the Atma. The Atma is an independent entity from the body. The Atma is eternal, sublime and subtle as compared to the body which is gross and perishable. So, his wisdom motivates him to become detached from whatever the body does; he becomes a mere spectator watching what the body does.

Therefore, inspite of him outwardly appearing to be involved in the myriad activities of this material world as a householder, internally he is at peace with his true self. He has got the added bonus of having got the same spiritual rewards of eternal spiritual peace and happiness that an ascetic attains by doing so many hard religious practices as Tapa (austerity and penance), Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Japa (repetition of divine formulae that gives the soul sufficient power that it attains liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this deluding and entrapping world), various Yagyas (fire sacrifices and other religious deeds) etc. in the forest.

It must be pointed out here that the life a Hindu man was divided into four segments or sections. These are known as 'Ashrams'. The four Ashrams are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas.

(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4<sup>th</sup> and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and mediation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

In brief, the 'Brahmacharis' are celibates students who must exercise the greatest self-restraint in order to concentrate their energy on their studies. It is the first phase of life. The 'Grihastha' is the householder. After study, the student marries to raise a family and contribute to the continuation of the cycle of creation. This marks the second phase of life. The 'Vaan-prastha' is a person who hands over the responsibilities of worldly affairs to his heir and prepares to lead a retired life, literally though the word means to 'retire to the forest'. This is the third phase of life. And finally, the 'Sanyasi' is a person who has renounced the world and spends his time in meditation and contemplation. This is the fourth and the final phase of life.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called *Ashramo-panishad* belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition. Refer also to *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 3 in the context of one

taking the vows of Sanyas, the renunciate way of life which is the fourth and the last phase in the life of a man which prepares him for his final liberation and deliverance from this world.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 6 says that true Moksha or Mukti for the creature is obtained when he rises above the limitations of these four Ashrams.

The *Duration* of each Ashram—The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 2 states the number of years one Ashram should ideally consist of. According to it, Brahmacharya Ashram lasts for twelve years, Grihastha Ashram for twenty five years, Vanparashtha Ashram for another twenty five years, and then comes the Sanyas Ashram for the rest of one's life.]

257. दिँ पीठि पाछें लगेँ सनमुख होत पराइ ।  
तुलसी संपति छाँह ज्यों लखि दिन बैठि गँवाइ ॥

257. di'ēm̐ pīṭhi pāchēm̐ lagai sanamukha hōta parā'i.  
tulasī sampati chām̐ha jyōm̐ lakhi dina baiṭhi gamvā'i..

Tulsidas says that wealth, fame and worldly possessions are like a man's shadow which follows a person from behind, but it (the shadow) tries to run away if one faces it or attempts to follow it.

[The meaning of this Doha is that those wise and enlightened men who take the path of truth and spiritual pursuits that is represented by moving in the direction of a source of light, then all worldly fame, wealth and acclaim follow them automatically like the shadow following a man from behind as he moves towards light. He will have no trouble seeking any basic thing for his sustenance.

On the contrary, if he tries to pursue the same wealth and fame by turning his back to knowledge and wisdom, then no matter how hard he tries they will be out of his reach even as it is impossible for a man to catch the shadow though it is right in his front.

The more a person moves towards the shadow the farther away it goes from him, whereas the more he moves away from the shadow the more closely it follows him from behind. Therefore, the more a man pursues this material world of sense objects and its delusory charms the more it becomes inaccessible for him. On the other hand, the more he moves away from such things the more they follow him closely. The same basic necessities of life and its comforts that he had failed to gain when he had been trying hard to acquire them now begin to be easily available to him once he decides to renounce the world and turn towards the spiritual path.

There is another way at looking at this Doha. The more one tries to obtain peace and comfort in this world by remaining indulgent in in, the more difficult they become to access. He will spend his entire life fretting and fuming but never find real peace and happiness. Never once will he find that his desires and wishes have been fulfilled to his full satisfaction. On the other hand, if he decides that he wants nothing, that he will do with whatever he has, then peace and happiness will be his in abundance.]

Therefore, Tulsidas advises that the best thing to do is to stay calmly in one's own household instead of going to the forest in pursuit of Mukti (liberation and deliverance).

[That is, if one is steady in his spiritual path, if he is wise and enlightened, if he has attained true self-realisation and practices the various tenets of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety) and spiritual practices such as Yoga (meditation), Dhyān (contemplation), Sham and Dam (self restraint, equanimity, tolerance, neutrality etc.) and so on and so forth—then it is not necessary to go to the forest to become a hermit or a monk in order to attain emancipation and salvation by doing severe Tapa (austerity and penance etc.) and inflicting the body with so much avoidable suffering in the hope that such practices would help clean the soul of its accumulated taints.

Tulsidas says that it is futile to do all such things because if one has not renounced the world internally, if one has not developed sincere and true detachment and dispassion towards worldly things and material comforts and pleasures of sense objects, if the mind is hooked to them and obsessed with them, if one continues to harbour desires, yearnings, greed and obsessions of any kind—then merely going to the forest will serve no purpose. On the other hand, the situation will develop into something worse when the fire of unrequited passions and lust that are forcefully suppressed would lead to eternal frustration and depression. The person would be deceiving himself and the world at large.

In this scenario, there is no hope or chance of his ever finding mental peace and tranquility, or spiritual bliss for which he had set out to the forest in the first place, nor will he get the basic physical comfort that he used to get while living in the household.

Therefore, the best path for a wise and enlightened man is to stay in the house and lead a life of internal contentment by practicing the tenets of Dharma on the one hand, and focusing his heart, mind and sub-conscious on having devotion and love for the Lord God on the other hand. By doing so he will get the best from the two worlds—he will spare his body the torture of a harsh forest way of life, and he will attain eternal spiritual and mental peace, tranquility, happiness and bliss at the same time.] (257)

[Note—From the perspective of metaphysics, this Doha can also be interpreted as follows—The shadow is formed behind the back of a person when he moves towards light. If he turns behind and faces this shadow, it stops pursuing him instantly. This is an analogy used to explain how these things of the material world follow a man from behind. They never come in the front; they can never obstruct his progress towards the source of light. Here the word 'light' is a metaphor for attainment of truth, knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation. In this context all worldly things such as fame, wealth and material possessions are like the dark 'shadow'. Just like the shadow that forms automatically behind a person when he moves towards a source of light, worldly fame, material wealth, honours, respect and acclaim naturally follow a person who has attained wisdom, enlightenment and truthful knowledge. The nearer he gets to the source of light, the sharper is the shadow. Similarly, the more spiritual heights an aspirant gains, the more fame and acclaim gather around him. But all these things are 'dark' in nature like the shadow inasmuch as they act in a detrimental way in his spiritual progress. They do not harm him as long as he faces the source light and continues steadily on his spiritual path seeking the ultimate Truth and attaining emancipation and deliverance, but should he falter and turn to look back he will find this darkness pursuing him from close behind. Then a wise man does not become afraid of this dark, ghost-like elongated shadow chasing him, but looks ahead towards the source of light and keeps moving on.

In the context of the philosophy enunciated in this Doha, the reader is advised to refer to Doha nos. 62, 69 and 258 also.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 201 the same idea is propounded. It says in its stanza no. 2 that— “The pleasures and comforts that are comparable to the ones obtained in heaven, and the sufferings and grief that can be compared to the ones in hell—verily, they come to a creature uninvited in this world. Then say, oh Mana (mind and heart), why do you waste so much energy and time and effort in acquiring or avoiding them?” That is, no matter what one does, pain and pleasure come and go in an endless cycle in this mundane world. So, what is the great idea in wasting precious time and energy in either acquiring or overcoming them? They will come and go automatically.]

One should have no expectations or hopes from the world

258. तुलसी अब्हुत देवता आसा देवी नाम ।  
सेएँ सोक समर्पई बिमुख भएँ अभिराम ॥

258. tulasī adbhuta dēvatā āsā dēvī nāma.  
sē'ēṁ sōka samarpaī bimukha bha'ēṁ abhirāma..

Tulsidas says that there is a mysterious goddess known as ‘Aasha’. She is a personified form of the countless hopes, expectations and aspirations that a man has in this material world. The irony with this goddess is that if one serves her diligently and propitiates her she gives him pain and grief in return, whereas if one shuns her she blesses him with peace, bliss, tranquility and contentedness (unlike other goddesses who bless those who serve and propitiate them, and do not reward those who shun them). (258)

[Note—The meaning is clear. If one pursues this world and has any expectation from it then he is bound to feel frustrated as it is impossible that his desires and passions would be fulfilled. On the other hand, if he turns away from the world and remains satisfied with whatever he has, nothing can give him grief and a sense of frustration.

This Doha should be read in the context of the previous Doha no. 257.

Tulsidas has compared ‘Aasha’ with a demoness who always gives troubles—refer Vinai Patrika, verse no. 163, stanza no. 4, line no. 2.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 168, stanza no. 4 it is said—“Those greedy creatures who have become a servant of ‘Aasha’ become a serf of the whole world. But those who have faith in the Lord God and have conquered ‘Aasha’ are the ones who can be truly called devotees and loyal followers of the Lord.” This is because when one has reliance in the Lord God he is absolutely certain that the Lord will take care of all his needs in this world, and therefore there is no need to appease others, and there is no need to get worried and perturbed if something is not available. On the other hand, if the creature thinks that this world will provide him what he wishes to have, he will be constantly on the edge in his attempt to please the world and its people so that he can get access to the desired thing which is in the hands of his competitors who may or may not give it to him. Even if he does lay his hands upon the desired thing, he constantly worries about its safety from jealous eyes. He has to defend his possessions himself.

When he begins to have faith in the Lord God and his magnanimity, benevolence and grace, he lives in peace because now it becomes the responsibility of the Lord God to provide him the basic comforts and pleasures that he needs, and then take care of these provisions. Since they have been provided to him by the Supreme Lord of creation, no one will dare touch them.

The same idea is endorsed in the Skanda Puran, Vaishnav Khand, Bhu.Vai., 20/18, wherein it is said that “If one becomes a servant of Aasha then he will become a servant of the whole world, and if he is successful in vanquishing Aasha then he can subjugate the whole world.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36, Lord Ram tells Sabari (the devotee woman whom the Lord preached the nine-fold path of Bhakti or devotion) that “the eighth form of devotion is to remain contented and satisfied with whatever one has or whatever is gained, without yearning for more”.

Similarly, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that the Lord should live in the heart of those who rely upon him completely, and not on anybody else—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 131.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 32 that precedes Doha no. 121, the saintly crow Kaagbhusund tells Garud, the heavenly bird who had come to him to seek true knowledge and wisdom, that “Vishaya and Manorath (worldly desires and hopes) are like a pointed spears that give untold horrors about which no one even knows the name”. Refer Doha no. 260 in this context.]

#### Moha (delusions and attachments)

259. सोई सेवर तेइ सुवा सेवत सदा बसंत ।  
तुलसी महिमा मोह की सुनत सराहत संत ॥

259. sō'i sēnvara tē'i suvā sēvata sadā basanta.  
tulasī mahimā mōha kī sunata sarāhata santa..

It is the same cotton plant and the same set of parrots. These parrots have repeatedly found out by experience that the fruits of this plant have no sweet pulp in them, but at the onset of each spring, these parrots surround the tree from all sides (in the hope and expectation of getting some sweet fruit to eat). They nibble at the fruit in the hope that they will get something sweet and succulent to eat, but as soon as the fruit is pricked by the beaks of these birds, the fluffy balls of cotton fly away in the air, and the greedy and deluded parrots draw a blank.

But such is the allurements of the plant and the illusion of providing succulent ripe fruits that it creates, and such is the high intensity of the insatiable greed and desire of the parrots to eat sweet fruits that inspite of having a first-hand experience of there being nothing eatable in the fruit of the cotton plant, and even after observing other parrots nibbling frantically at the tree's produce but finding nothing to satisfy then and feeling utterly frustrated in their efforts, new groups of parrots still come and start their own attempts to extract some sweet substance from the fruits (of the cotton plant).

Tulsidas says that true saints (i.e. people who are wise) are amazed at the miraculous and fantastic power that 'Moha' wields in this world, of how it exerts an overwhelming influence on each and every Jiva (creature; living being) that all of them are virtually mesmerised by the powerful delusions that it creates. This Moha is so powerful that it prevents the Jiva from understanding the reality and learning the truth. Moha creates an overwhelming sense of desire and greed for the material things of this gross world. Moha generates a sense of infatuation and attachment with worldly things and material pleasures even in the mind of those Jivas who may be aware of the truth and

the reality, such as these parrots who see their friends pricking at so many fruits of the cotton plant and finding nothing to eat but they still continue to waste their energy and time to go from one fruit to another in the futile hope of getting some sweet fruit to eat. These parrots have learnt nothing inspite of seeing everything first-hand because their have been overwhelmed by Moha.

[Saints wonder at the powerful influence that the quality known as Moha has on all the creatures. These creatures know that this world is a treasure trove of problems and grief, they know that it is false and delusory, they know that no one has ever found true peace and happiness in it, they know that it is transient and perishable, and they have heard that all the scriptures unanimously warn all living beings to be wary of this trap known as the ‘world’, but inspite of all this they remain indulgent in the world, they hanker over it, and fight over even the most meaningless of things. Saints smile sarcastically at the paradox that the world offers, and at the stupidity of all living beings who remain trapped in its vice-like grip like the oxen turning round and round in an endless circle when they are yoked to the water-wheel of the farmer.] (259)

[Note—The cotton plant is covered by red-coloured flowers which look very attractive from a distance and give the impression that they are ripe fruits. Parrots come in hordes and alight on the tree in the hope that these flowers would produce ripe fruits which they will enjoy. But nothing of the sort happens, so these parrots start nibbling at the flowers and the fruits they produce in the vain hope of finding succulent pith. All they get is dry cotton which flies off as soon as the parrot pricks the fruit.

A similar idea is expressed in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 117, stanza no. 2 which says—  
“I know that it is futile to pursue the material objects of the world and to remain engrossed in gratifying the urges of the sense organs of the body. I know that this is like voluntarily falling in the dark pit of ignorance and delusions. But inspite of this awareness I keep on running behind the sense objects like a dog, a goat and a donkey.”  
A dog nibbles at a piece of dead bone and relishes the taste of blood that comes out of its own mouth by constant biting and tearing at the tissue of the bone, but it thinks in its ignorance that the blood is oozing from the bone itself and not from his own mouth.

Similarly, a goat who is about to be butchered goes on feeding and nibbling at leaves etc., unaware of the fact that it is about to be killed.

The donkey grazes constantly on green grass in a large meadow but still goes on getting thin because when it sees the large stretch of land full of green grass lying ahead it thinks that it has not eaten enough and its stomach is still empty. So inspite of over-feeding its self, the donkey remains hungry and famished.

The word *Moha* refers to the delusory attachments and attractions that a creature develops for things in this world which are artificial and transient in nature because of the simple fact that this world itself is temporary and perishable.

A man is engulfed in Moha, literally meaning ignorance induced delusions leading to worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments and passions, and the ensuing trap that ensnares the creature in its web, and prevents its liberation and deliverance. This happens only till the time he is veiled by ignorance and in his stupidity thinks to be wise, and therefore never attempts to find out the truth; he remains contented being ignorant in his fallacious belief that ignorance is bliss! There is no bigger stupidity than this. So a wise person endeavours to understand the real and truthful nature of the world behind the façade which is nevertheless false and misleading. He realises and sees the supreme Brahm everywhere, in all the creatures. Consequentially, all become equal in his eyes. He becomes humble and pious; he loses his haughtiness and arrogance; he becomes merciful, gracious and kind towards all.

Secondly, a wise person realises the falsehood of this perishable world, the futility of pursuing it blindly. He understands that he is merely a player in the hands of the cosmic Lord. He should concentrate his energy of serving the Lord's creation selflessly without expecting any return. So, when there is no involvement in the world and the deeds are done without any hopes, all the reasons for agitations and frustrations vanish. There is no fear of failure and there is no competitor to beat. This allays all sorrows, sufferings, grief and miseries that continuously torment a creature who has not overcome Moha.

The concept of Moha has been explained in *Ishavasya Upahishad*, verse no. 7 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in these words—“In that realised and erudite state of enlightenment, when an exalted person becomes acquainted with and convinced of the truth about that supreme, transcendental Lord (that he pervades the entire creation uniformly and universally), all the creatures then become an image of that Supreme Being for him. In that exalted and enlightened state of mind when that person witnesses the Lord everywhere in a non-dual form (i.e. when he sees no distinction between the supreme, almighty, macrocosmic Lord and the humble, meek and microcosmic individual because both are an image of one another), what delusions and doubts, what confusions and consternations remain for him? [That is, no attachments or infatuations would affect him, and therefore there will be no cause for sorrows, sufferings and grief on separation from his dear ones, or jealousy and hatred due to worldly mundane causes. He goes beyond such lowly, denigrating and pervert emotions. Consequentially, he attains beatitude and felicity; equanimity and magnanimity become his hallmark.]”

The term 'Moha' has a negative connotation as it refers to possessing a sense of attachment with anything, having longing for it, being infatuated with it. Usually, this term Moha is applied in relation to the material sense objects of the world, but it also relates to one's attachment with the body, with other people around him, as well as to acquire name, fame and wealth. Moha also means delusions and it's attending horrible spiritual consequences. Moha acts like a veil that obscures the truth from being viewed by the man. It leads him to commit errors and sins inadvertently because he is not even aware that he is acting wrongly. His mind is biased, deluded and corrupted. Moha is therefore like a formidable Granthi or knot because it is hard to crack or conquer like a nut.]

#### Futility of pursuing the pleasures of the sense organs

260. करत न समुझत झूठ गुन सुनत होत मति रंक ।  
पारद प्रगट प्रपंचमय सिद्धिउ नाउँ कलंक ॥

260. karata na samujhata jhūṭha guna sunata hōta mati rañka.  
pārada pragaṭa prapañcamaya sid'dhi'u nā'um' kalañka..

In spite of being repeatedly cheated by the deluding nature of the material world and its sense objects, and being warned of their horrifying consequences as far as the long term spiritual welfare is concerned, an indulgent person seems to find happiness in them as if he has been enslaved by these sense objects of the world and the desire for self-gratification by the relevant sense organs of the body. He appears to derive pleasure in those things that actually suck happiness out, and out of his ignorance he does not realise that it is hopeless, in vain and fruitless to do so.

When he hears about the false charms that the sense objects of this mundane world have to offer, he falls an easy prey to them, seeking them greedily and anxiously (like a fish biting a bait), only to get trapped in their vice-like grip. [That is, he thinks that he will get happiness and bliss by acquiring the material objects of the world that satisfy the need of self-gratification so much yearned for by his sense organs, but he actually lands in a quagmire of endless misery and trouble. Instead of finding happiness he gets suffering. Whatever semblance of pleasure and comfort that he gets are illusionary and transient because they vanish no sooner than he acquires them.]

These false and transient pleasures of the sense objects of the world are like the poisonous metal known as 'mercury' which can only be fatal if at all attained (i.e. received or obtained). [Mercury is a strong poison and kills immediately if ingested. What is the use of striving to get a thing that serves to kill one's own self?] (260)

[Note—Ram Charit Manas has strongly criticized the tendency of the creature to get tempted by the fascinating charms of the material sense objects of the world and falling prey to the urge to gratify the sense organs of the body. In its Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 122 it says that “All problems associated with delusions and related to this artificial world find a breeding ground to sprout even in the heart of saints, sages and hermits who are attracted towards the material sense objects of this world and have a desire for self-gratification. These attractions of the world and the sense organs act like bad food which makes even a healthy person fall sick.”

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 32 that precedes Doha no. 121 it is said that “worldly attachments and temptations of the sense objects of the world, along with the overwhelming tendency of the sense organs to seek gratification, are like the so many sharp spears that cannot be counted and named, nor their pain and suffering be enumerated”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-16 that precede Doha no. 118 it is emphasized that the sense organs of the body are naturally inclined to rush towards their respective objects of comfort and pleasure in this world, seeking gratification and happiness from them. This desire for the material objects of the world and seeking comfort and pleasure from them is like a strong gust of wind that blows out the lamp of wisdom and rational thought.

True saints do not get involved or entangled in the material sense objects of this world, and hence are freed from their troubles and associated problems—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38.]

### The overpowering nature of Greed

261. ग्यानी तापस सूर कबि कोबिद गुन आगार ।  
केहि कै लोभ बिडंबना कीन्हि न एहि संसार ॥

261. gyānī tāpasa sūra kabi kōbida guna āgāra.  
kēhi kai lōbha biḍambanā kīnhi na ēhiṁ sansāra..

Notwithstanding how Gyani (wise and enlightened) a man is, how much Tapa (austerity and penance) he has done, how Sur (brave, valiant and courageous) he is, how great a Kavi and Kobid (learned in the scriptures, good at teaching and oratory, and expert with the language) he may be, and how much Gunas (good virtues and auspicious qualities) he

may possess—there is none in this world who has not been reduced to shame and humiliation, who has not been made lowly and fallen by the negative quality of ‘Lobha’ (greed, rapacity, yearning) that is so overwhelmingly powerful and overbearing in nature that it can very easily negate everything else; it can neutralize all the goodness and virtues that a man possesses. Say, who in this world has not been brought to shame and ignominy by greed? (261)

[Note— This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 70 Ka.

The horrifying negative and humiliating effects of Lobha (greed, rapacity, yearning) has been stressed at a number of places, and it is also a common observance in our day to day life that it is one of those factors that becomes a man’s greatest enemy that brings to naught all other goodnesses that he possesses. All his good and noble intentions, all his learning and achievements in life are made null and void if he has this one demeaning factor of ‘greed’ in him. It degrades him morally and puts him in far greater troubles than he can ever imagine.

Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 21 asserts “if one is not ensnared by Lobha then he is as exalted as Lord Ram himself (because the Lord is free from this vice)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> line of Doha no. 99 Ka describes to what extent a man can fall if he allows himself to fall prey to greed. It says that an evil man “can kill his Guru (teacher and moral preceptor) even for a single penny if he is overcome by the vice of Lobha”.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38 it is declared that “even if a man is an ocean of good virtues and clever, but if he has Lobha in him then no one calls him good”.

Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 117, line no. 2 says “whom has Lobha not tied in a strong fetter and tormented?”

Refer also to Doha nos. 263-266 of this book Dohawali.]

#### The deluding and degrading nature of Material Wealth, Power and Passions

262. श्रीमद बक्र न कीन्ह केहि प्रभुता बधिर न काहि ।  
मृगलोचनि के नैन सर को अस लाग न जाहि ॥

262. śrīmada bakra na kīnha kēhi prabhutā badhira na kāhi.  
mṛgalōcāni kē naina sara kō asa lāga na jāhi..

Who has not been made arrogant and haughty due to the pride of money and wealth (usually that sort of pelf which is wrongly acquired and wrongly applied)? [Money makes a man extremely egoistic and puffed-up so much so that he regards everyone else with great disdain. He becomes a snob, a snooty and full of vanity.

Likewise, who has not been made deaf by power and authority? [When man becomes powerful, he does not want to hear criticism or even good advice. He treats everyone with utter contempt, and has no time or inclination to pay heed to what less powerful people tell him inspite of their being more senior and wiser than him.]

And who has not been smitten by the shaft-like numbing (arrow-like piercing) glances of a woman with eyes as beautiful as that of a fawn? [That it, it is extremely difficult for a man to overcome lust, passions and desire for sensual pleasures.] (262)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 70 Kha. Power, authority, money, fame and passions make a man deluded and blind in arrogance. This fact is brought out in Geetawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 2, line no. 1 of stanza no. 3, a similar idea is expressed. Here Angad is admonishing Ravana and says “You have abducted Sita out of your arrogance (that no harm can come to you and you can do whatever you like) that has its origin in either your overconfidence that comes with the immense fame that you have got in this world (as being the invincible warrior whom no one dare face), or the arrogance and haughtiness that come naturally with powers and strength accompanying the crown of Lanka (because you are its unquestioned ruler and are accustomed to having your rough-shod ways, overruling all norms of ethics and civility), or because you are under the powerful influence of Moha (delusions and passions) that has made you blind. You have committed a blunder, knowingly or unknowingly, by abducting Sita.”

Daksha Prajapati, one of the forerfathers of creation, too was not spared by the evil tendency of powers and authority that makes a man arrogant and haughty so much so that he begins to insult even the Gods. Daksha had organized a fire sacrifice, but he had become so proud and arrogant of his newly found stature of being appointed a ‘Prajapati’ (guardian of creation) that he haughtily insulted Lord Shiva by not inviting him to participate in the fire sacrifice held to mark his appointment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 60. Later on it so happened that his fire sacrifice was ruined and he was punished by Shiva.

The idea expressed in the current Doha is endorsed in Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 118. It says—“Those who have escaped the arrow symbolizing the lascivious glances shooting out from the bow-like curved eyebrows of a lustful woman, whose mind has not been burnt by the fierce fire symbolizing anger that is fanned by wind of arrogance, pride and haughtiness, and who do not dance like a pet monkey dancing to the orders of his master represented by Lobha (greed)—verily, Tulsidas asserts that such people are truly eligible to be called real servants and followers (devotees) of Lord Ram. Otherwise, all those who have good virtues and auspicious qualities in them are regarded as honourable and respectable (but they lack this special privilege of being called a true devotee of Lord Ram).”]

#### The powerful army of Maya (delusions)

263. ब्यापि रहेउ संसार महुँ माया कटक प्रचंड ।  
सेनापति कामादि भट दंभ कपट पाषंड ॥

263. byāpi rahē'u sansāra mahum̐ māyā kaṭaka pracaṇḍa.  
sēnāpati kāmādi bhaṭa dambha kapaṭa pāṣaṇḍa..

The vast and formidable army of delusions (Maya) is spread over the whole world. It has great and powerful commanders represented by Kaam and its subordinates.

[‘Kaam’ refers to the numerous worldly passions, lust, yearnings, desires etc. that a man has. Its subordinates are the negative qualities that come alongside Kaam like the junior commanders accompanying the chief commander. They are ‘Krodha’ or anger, ‘Mada’ or arrogance and haughtiness, ‘Lobha’ or greed and rapacity, ‘Moha’ or worldly attachments and attractions arising out of ignorance and delusions, ‘Matsarya’ or jealousy and envy that lead to ill-will, anger and wrathfulness.]

This army has numerous warriors represented by ‘Dambha’, ‘Kapat’ and ‘Paakhand’ (deceit, conceit, falsehood, pretensions, cunning, wickedness, crookedness, evil mentality and attitude, cheating etc.) (263)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 71 Ka.

‘Maya’ has three aspects that are determined by which of the three Gunas or fundamental virtues of Sata, Raja and Tama is dominant. If the Raja Guna is the dominant factor, then it produces Kaam. If the Tama Guna is dominant, then Krodh and Lobha make their appearance. The rest of the negative qualities such as Dambha, Kapat and Paakhand are so lowly that they are like the foot soldiers who just follow their commanders faithfully. That is, Kaam, Krodha and Lobha decide the basic nature of a creature, and once they are able to hold anyone by the hand then all the other negative qualities take over and complete the circle to hold the creature in a vice-like grip.

Elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, Tulsidas has independently cited these negative qualities. For instance, (i) ‘Krodha’ and ‘Dambha’ are cited in Uttar Kand, Doha no. 105 Kha, line no. 2 in which sage Kaagbhusund says that though his Guru had tried to teach him he would not listen to his words, but became angry instead because good advice is not tolerated by those who have falsehood and deceit in their hearts and are pretentious; (ii) ‘Kapat’, ‘Khal’ and ‘Kutil’, all meaning deceit, conceit, falsehood, wickedness and crookedness of varying degrees, are cited in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 106 in which Kaagbhusund says that he had all these negative qualities in his heart, and therefore he could not accept what his kind Guru told him for his own welfare; (iii) ‘Paakhand’ is cited in Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 14 to describe how good scriptures become extinct when deceit, falsehood, pretensions and crookedness become dominant, resulting in the emergence of false and misleading books and doctrines.

Refer also to Doha nos. 69, 200, 245, 264-265 etc. of this book Dohawali.]

#### The powerful forces of Kaam, Krodha and Lobha

264. तात तीति अति प्रबल खल काम क्रोध अरु लोभ ।  
मुनि बिग्यान धाम मन करहिं निमिष महँ छोभ ॥

264. tāta tīti ati prabala khala kāma krōdha aru lōbha.  
muni bigyāna dhāma mana karahirī nimīṣa mahum̐ chōbha..

Lord Ram had preached his younger brother Laxman while moving through the forest. In this Doha the Lord told him—‘Oh Son! The formidable triad of Kaam (desires, lust), Krodha (anger) and Lobha (greed) is extremely strong and virtually invincible. They are strong enough to first corrupt and taint, and then subsequently create regrets, uneasiness and unhappiness even in the mind and heart of learned sages and seers as well as hermits and monks who have otherwise practiced exemplary self control (by doing Tapa etc).

[That is, these negative qualities are very potent and powerful. They do not let even wise men free from their clutches. So an ordinary man has no chance to stand their onslaught when they are able to make such wise people as the learned sages, saints, seers, hermits and monks fall prey to their influence.] (264)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, as Doha no. 38 Ka.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 43 it is said that “Kaam, Krodha, Lobha and Mada are like the great army of Moha (ignorance).”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 70 ka and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 precede it says “Who has not been blinded by Moha; who has not been made to dance to the tunes of Kaam; who has not been deluded by Trishna (hunger and thirst for worldly things and self gratification leading to excessive greed and rapacity); whose heart has not been burnt by Krodha; and which wise man (a Gyani), or he who has done Tapa (austerity and penances), or he who is brave and courageous (Sur), or is learned and expert in the knowledge of the scriptures (Kavi), and is generally regarded as an ocean of goodness and good virtues not been subjected to regret and humiliation under the influence of Lobha.”

Kaam and Krodha are so powerful that they were able to overcome even sage Narad who is regarded as one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu. Under the influence of Kaam he had wanted to marry inspite of having taken a vow of life-long celibacy and a life devoted to singing the glories of Lord Vishnu. Then he was overcome with Krodha and cursed his own Lord Vishnu that he must become a human being when the Lord prevented Narad from marrying and breaking his vow of celibacy. These incidents are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 127 to 138.

Other Dohas that deal with the same idea are, inter alia, nos. 259, 261-263, 265-266.]

The powerful forces of Lobha, Dambha, Kaam and Krodha

265. लोभ के इच्छा दंभ बल काम के केवल नारि ।  
क्रोध के पुरुष बचन बल मुनिबर कहहिं बिचारि ॥

265. lōbha kēm icchā dambha bala kāma kēm kēvala nāri.  
krōdha kē puruṣa bacana bala munibara kahahim bicāri..

Wise sages declare (after due consideration and deep thought) that ‘greed’ (Lobha) gets its strength from and is fostered by desire (Ichha) and deceit (Dambha), ‘lust and passions’ (Kaam) are stoked by a beautiful woman (Naari), and ‘anger’ (Krodha) gets boosted by use of harsh words (Purush Bachan).

[If the things mentioned are eliminated then these three vices would go on their own account. That is, if one has no desires and falsehoods then greed cannot be sustained. Hence, the best way to get rid of greed is to overcome desires for worldly things, and stop using deceit, cunning, wickedness and pretensions to fulfill these desires.

Similarly, proximity to women, whether physical or mental, is the breeding ground for lust and passions, and if one stops thinking of her then these vices can be easily controlled.

Harsh words stoke anger further; they act as fuel in the fire or the air that fans this fire. A man uses vitriolic words to show the other person that he is so much angry at him, but this most certainly boomerangs upon the speaker as not only does he dirties his tongue but also vitiates the atmosphere of peace and friendliness. No problem is solved by using acidic comments; rather they complicate and entangle matters further as the other person retorts, and this sets-off a chain reaction. On the other hand if a person is wise, the things will be better if he keeps his mouth closed during the bout of anger, and speaks his mind in a cool manner later on. Not only will he be able to get across his thoughts more coherently and effectively but also prevent the bitterness from spreading and affecting others.] (265)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand as Doha no. 38 Kha. It supplements and compliments the ideas expressed in Doha no. 264 above.]

266. काम क्रोध लोभादि मद प्रबल मोह कै धारि ।  
तिन्ह महँ अति दारुन दुखद मायारूपी नारि ॥

266. kāma krōdha lōbhādi mada prabala mōha kai dhāri.  
tinha maham'ati dārūna dukhada māyārūpī nāri..

Kaam (lust, passions, yearnings, desires), Krodha (anger, wrathfulness), Lobha (greed, rapacity), Mada (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy) etc. are all like the ferocious army of Moha (delusions and its attendant hallucinations that are related to this mundane world and its entanglements, the desire for gratification, and the formidable attractions of material sense objects and their overwhelming charm).

Out of these, a woman<sup>1</sup>, who is desire, passion and lust personified, is the greatest tormentor. (266)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Tulsidas has no intention of insulting women or denigrating them in any manner whatsoever. With the word 'woman' he means those who are 'desire, passion and lust' in a personified form; women who think of nothing else except of sensual pleasures and self-gratification; women who have ceaseless desires for countless things of this material world, and if these desires are not satisfied they create a ruckus; women who are full of envy, jealousy and greed; women who would not let their husbands and other family members live in peace because they want this and that just because their neighbour has them.

The charm of a woman and the desire to possess her or have her attention has been the cause of so many difficulties in history, and of so much jealousy, misunderstanding and tension in the society. Even if we take the two well known instances of Lord Ram's story in the Ramayana and of Lord Krishna in the Mahabharat war, a woman is central to all the turmoil in both the cases.

In the case of the Ramayana it was Kaikeyi who has so much enamoured her husband Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram and the king of Ayodhya that he could not refuse her demand for sending Ram to the forest, not only throwing the entire kingdom in a vicious spiral of grief and agony but himself dying in the process. Then there was Sita herself who was the target of abduction by Ravana to settle squares with Lord Ram for his deforming Supernakha, the sister of Ravana, by cutting of her nose and ears when she had tried to play dirty lustful tricks with the Lord in the forest in full view of Sita and Laxman, the Lord's brother.

In the case of Lord Krishna's story, it was Draupadi who was being disrobed in full court by the Kurus that led to the ruinous war of Mahabharat.

During the churning of the ocean, a pitcher of Amrit was produced. Both the Gods and the Demons attempted to snatch it. Then Vishnu intervened in the form of a beautiful woman and managed to prevail upon both the contenders to sit in a queue so that she can pour the ambrosia to them. Vishnu emptied the pitcher serving the Gods, and this led to the eternal animosity between the two groups.

Great sages and seers had fallen prey to the lust of Apsaras (celestial nymphs or dancers) who had charmed them so much so that they were ready to sacrifice all the spiritual benefits accumulated over a long period of time just to fulfill their sexual desires.

Even the Gods weren't spared. It is well documented how Indra, the king of Gods, fell prey to lust and passion when he was aroused at the sight of the beautiful wife of sage Gautam, i.e. Ahilya. Indra assumed the form of Gautam in his bid to have sex with Ahilya, but was caught by the sage as he tried to escape. The sage cursed them both—Ahilya became a stone which was later on freed from the curse by the touch of Lord Ram's holy feet, while Indra's body became permanently punctured with thousands of holes like the ones one observes during a severe attack of chicken pox.

It must be noted here that this Doha must not be construed as being insulting to womanhood—because 'Shakti', the personified form of the miraculous dynamism, energy and strength of the Supreme Being, the power that the Lord uses to do anything he wants, is also depicted in the scriptures as a 'woman'. Mother Nature which harbours the whole creation in her womb, nourishes it and takes care of it is also envisioned as a feminine gender.

Similarly, our very own 'earth' which harbours all forms of life in this known creation, from the single-celled organism to the most complicated ones, and which endlessly provides everything needed by them, is also described as 'mother earth' and not as 'father earth'.

There are five basic Tattvas or elements in creation that act as the fundamental building blocks of creation. These five are sky, air, fire, water and earth. Out of them, only earth is treated as a feminine gender, while the rest are all masculine gender. Sky has the Viraat Purush as its patron God, the air has Vayu Deva or the Wind God, the fire has Agni Deva, the water has Varun God or Apaha. The earth is the only element to be regarded as 'Mother Earth' who takes the form of a 'holy cow' whenever the need arises. This is endorsed in the story of Ramayana itself when the earth accompanied the Gods in the form of a cow when they went to Lord Vishnu to pray to the Lord to save them from the horrors perpetrated by the demons. It was this prayer that made Vishnu become Lord Ram to kill the demon Ravana.

So in brief the idea is that this Doha must never be treated as demeaning for a woman or womanhood. Refer note of Doha no. 267 below also.

Simply put the meaning of this Doha is that passions for sexual gratification are aroused when one is near a woman, and this urge is so overwhelming that he will try all means to get her. Then the lustful person loses all sense of probity and propriety. The demon in him raises its hood should this happen, and then this demon becomes the cause of his fall and undoing as well as the cause of many other horrible consequences that could have been easily avoided had the man overcome the lust for the woman of his attraction.

Refer earlier Doha nos. 260-265 in this connection.]

267. काह न पावक जारि सक का न समुद्र समाइ ।  
का न करै अबला प्रबल केहि जग कालु न खाइ ॥

267. kāha na pāvaka jāri saka kā na samudra samā'i.  
kā na karaiṁ abalā prabala kēhi jaga kālu na khā'i..

What cannot a fire burn? What cannot sink in an ocean? What cannot a lady who appears docile, humble and harmless do when she becomes angry and turns violent and ferocious? And whom does Kaal (time, circumstance, death, ill-fortunes) not consume (i.e. destroy, ruin, kill) in this world?

[The context of this Doha in Ram Charit Manas is the lamentations of the citizens of Ayodhya when they learnt that Kaikeyi, the step-mother of Lord Ram, has been the cause of the Lord's forest exile. She has burnt everyone in the fire of agony resulting from separation from their beloved Lord Ram; she has drowned everyone in the ocean of grief and misery; she was instrumental in the death of her husband king Dasrath.

In this sense, we can read this Doha as follows—"A woman who looks so harmless and docile is actually very powerful inasmuch as she can be like a fire from which nothing escapes burning, she can be like the ocean which submerges everything, and she can be like death which kills all." (267)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand as Doha no. 47.

Tulsidas emphasizes the powerful nature of these elements in the world. There is nothing that survives in a blazing fire; there is nothing that cannot be gulped down by the vast ocean. A woman may seem humble and easy to control as compared to a man, but when she becomes really angry she can lead the entire household to ruin. And Kaal, which is a personified form of the factors of time, death and circumstances in Nature, spares none. No one can escape the bludgeoning road-roller of Kaal when it reaches one's door.

When we read this Doha in the context of what has been said about the powers of a woman, we make the following deductions. A woman is considered physically weak as compared to a man, but her determination is stronger than him. If she decided to do something, nothing can stop her like the hurricane when it makes its land fall, or a tornado as it makes its sweep across the land. She has been compared to a 'fire' as well as to the 'ocean'. This means that at times she can be raging like the fire, and at other times as grave and difficult to be understood like the ocean.

Then again this combination of the fire and the ocean means that though at times she appears to be calm on the surface but internally she harbours a fire of wrath and vengeance like the fire known as 'Badvaanal' that burns on the ocean bed and which keeps the water of the ocean warm enough to harbour rich marine life in the form of both flora and fauna.

We come across two adjectives that are used for a woman here—one is 'Prabal' as in the present Doha no. 267, and the other is 'Maya' in Doha no. 266. 'Prabal' means strong and formidable, while 'Maya' means something that creates delusions, and is difficult to understand and control. In other words, a woman is difficult to understand and control; she is very strong and resolute inspite of appearing to be 'Abalaa' or docile, humble and physically weak. Her physical limitations are more often than not misleading, because she can be often more powerful and effective than her male counterpart.]

One must be careful of a woman

268. जनमपत्रिका बरति कै देखहु मनहिं बिचारि ।  
दारुन बैरी मीचु के बीच बिराजति नारि ॥

268. janamapatrikā barati kai dēkhahu manahim bicāri.  
dārūna bairī mīcu kē bīca birājati nāri..

If one ponders over an astrological birth chart one finds that out of the total of 12 houses or squares marked in it, the sixth belongs to one's enemy, the eighth is that of death, and the seventh square—i.e. the middle one between the two—belongs to a woman.

This symbolism is stark and obvious. It means that a woman occupies a place midway between an enemy and death or ruin. She acts as an agent for both. She can become one's greatest enemy on the one hand, and the cause of his ruin and loss of peace on the other hand, or both because she occupies a middle place between the two. (268)

[Note—The allegory of the 'birth chart' is used to emphasise that it is how the creator has designed this world. No one can change this situation. Numerous quarrels and deaths have had their origin in a woman who is central to the whole drama. So inspite of her being depicted as the almighty 'Shakti' of the Supreme Being, one must be careful while dealing with her just like one must be careful while dealing with electric current. Electricity is a powerful tool and an essential aspect of the modern world, but at the same time it is life-threatening if not handled careful. While the magical power of the electricity lights our homes and drives our machinery, a live electric wire can snuff out the light of life in a man if touched with bare hands.

The same logic applies to a woman. She is indispensable for creation because without her the cycle of creation set in motion by the Supreme Creator himself would come to a grinding halt. But one must be careful of her like one is careful of the fire, the ocean, the fierce army of an enemy, and the jaws of death. This Doha must be read along with Doha nos. 265-267 in the context of a woman.]

Exhort the mind to worship & have devotion for Lord Ram,  
And to abandon the Trap of Passion.

269. दीपसिखा सम जुबति तन मन जनि होसि पतंग ।  
भजहि राम तजि काम मद करहि सदा सतसंग ॥

269. *dīpasikhā sama jubati tana mana jani hōsi pataṅga.*  
*bhajahi rāma taji kāma mada karahi sadā satasaṅga..*

The body of a beautiful woman is like the flame of a lamp. Oh my mind! Don't be infatuated with it like an insect (which is attracted by light of the flame and gets burnt to death).

Instead of that, you (mind) must focus your attention on worshipping Lord Ram by having devotion and affection for the Lord, remembering him and meditating upon his divine form after having abandoned such evil qualities as all sorts of 'Kaam' (lust, passions, desire) and 'Mada' (ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity).

It is better for you and your spiritual welfare to worship Lord Sri Ram with devotion and spend your time in community of saints (so that you inculcate good virtues and get rid of scum and bad virtues that would act as spiritual drags upon you). (269)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand as Doha no. 46.

The flame of a lighted lamp is compared here to a beautiful woman because she is attractive and charming for the mind as the light of the flame is for the insect that gets attracted by it. The comparison has significance because this insect gets burnt to death by this fatal attraction. Tulsidas warns that if one does not maintain strict vigil over his mind then his fate would also be the same—the charms and attractions of the woman would ruin him and his spiritual future.

In Manu Smriti, 2/213 it is said "It is a natural habit of women in general to corrupt the mind and the intellect of men, even the wise ones. Hence, those who are careful are wary of the woman and her abilities to create a magical spell of delusions."

In order to worship Lord Ram, one's mind must be clean. In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 124 Kha, line no. 2 it is said "One must worship Lord Ram and have devotion for the Lord who is able to break the fetters that tie down a creature to this world of delusions and the never ending cycle of birth and death accompanied by countless miseries and horrors. Tulsidas says that this can be done by discarding all sorts of 'Maan and Mada', or ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and vanity."

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38, Vibhishan tries to explain to Ravana the good virtues of abandoning vices and surrendering before the Supreme Lord manifested in the form of Lord Ram by saying—"Oh Lord, Kaam, Krodha, Mada and Lobha are paths leading to hell. You must leave all of them, and instead worship and have devotion for Lord Ram (Raghubir) who is adored and worshipped by all the saints, sages and seers."

The importance of communion with saints is highlighted in Vairagya Sandipani of Tulsidas. This small book will be published separately in this series. In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 33, the importance of having contact with saints is highlighted in contrast to one's contact with non-saints in the following words—"communion with saints is the cause of freedom from all shackles that tie a creature to this mundane delusory world, while contact of lustful men result in the shackle becoming stronger. This is endorsed unanimously by all the wise men, the learned ones, as well as by the holy scriptures such as the Purans and the Vedas."

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 14 further stresses the importance of contact with saints when Lord Shiva prays to Lord Ram and asks for this blessing that "Oh Lord, I repeatedly request you to grant me two things—one is to have deep devotion for your holy feet, and the other is constant communion with saints and holy men.]"

The negative forces of Kaam, Krodha, Mada, Lobha etc. makes a man blind and act as obstacles in having devotion for Lord Ram

270. काम क्रोध मद लोभ रत गृहासक्त दुखरूप ।  
ते किमि जानहिं रघुपतिहि मूढ़ परे भव कूप ॥

270. kāma krōdha mada lōbha rata gr̥hāsakta dukharūpa.  
tē kimi jānahiṁ raghupatihi mūṛha parē bhava kūpa..

Those who are engrossed in pursuing various desires and passions (Kaam), those who are slaves of anger (Krodha), those who have a false sense of ego, pride and vanity leading to arrogance and haughtiness (Mada), those who are overcome with greed and unfettered desires leading to excessive rapacity and depravity (Lobha), and those who are entangled by the countless prolems of the household that makes them miserable and perplexed—they are like the (blind) idiots who have fallen in a dark well, and therefore how can it be expected of them that they would know (i.e. understand and be able to realise) the true nature of Lord Sri Ram (as the Supreme Being himself personified)?

[Hence, they treat Lord Ram as some hero of a great story known as the Ramayana, someone who had taken in a royal family, married, was exiled to the forest, wandered here and there with his wife and brother in tow. His wife Sita was abducted in the wild forest by some demon (who else!), and then Lord Ram went searching for her, assembling an army of monkeys and bears to attack Lanka where she was held captive,

killed her abductor Ravana, the demon king, and finally came back to his capital city of Ayodhya to be crowned and rule happily thereafter.

This is how they view the whole story because their mind is accustomed to understand this world from this physical perspective only. They cannot grasp the spiritual, the devotional, the philosophical and the metaphysical angle of the divine story because their mind and intellect are not sufficiently fine-tuned for this purpose. Their involvement with the world and the affairs of the household leaves little time and energy to ponder and contemplate on such eclectic and esoteric matters. They are more comfortable with watching a theatrical adaptation of this story for entertainment purposes rather than deriving any spiritual benefit from it.

Woe to such people because they are like those who have fallen in a blind well and think that it represents the whole world that exists.] (270)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand as Doha no. 73.

All the entities listed in this Doha, i.e. Kaam, Krodha, Mada and Lobha are paths to hell—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 58, Lord Ram has told Laxman while preparing to punish the Ocean for its refusal to allow the Lord's army to cross over to Lanka that "It is futile to preach wisdom to someone who is ensnared by a web of affections, infatuations, attachments, obsessions and their attendant problems, it is futile to teach renunciation and dispassion to someone who is exceptionally greedy and lustful, and it is equally useless to tell the divine story of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being) to those who are overcome by anger and passions even as it is impossible that a seed can germinate in a barren land."]

The combined effect of all the negative qualities listed in previous Dohas

271. ग्रह ग्रहीत पुनि बात बस तेहि पुनि बीछी मार ।  
तेहि पिआइअ बारुनी कहहु काह उपचार ॥

271. graha grahīta puni bāta basa tēhi puni bīchī māra.  
tēhi pi'ā'i'a bārunī kahahu kāha upacāra..

Just imagine the immense suffering and the horrible condition of a person when he is already suffering from the great torments inflicted upon him by his bad (i.e. malevolent, unfavourable) stars ('Graha), and to this is added the sufferings arising out of the disturbed winds in the body, called the 'wind disease' such as rheumatism and arthritis ('Baat'), and then to his horror his sufferings are further compounded when he gets bitten by a scorpion ('Bichhi'). Not only this, he is then forced to drink wine or any other intoxicating drink (such as wine or any other liquor—'Vaaruni') in the erroneous belief that it will act as a remedy for his sufferings!

Say, Tulsidas wonders, is there any remote chance of him surviving? [Obviously not, as this combination is fatal for sure.] (271)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand as Doha no. 180.

Tulsidas compares the wretched and hopeless condition of such a man suffering from a multiple series of problems with a person who has a number of negative qualities listed in previous Dohas in him. These negative qualities are, inter alia, Lobha, Krodha, Kaam, Dambha, Prapancha, Mada, Maya etc. as described in Doha nos. 261-270 above. He

virtually roasts alive in this life; he can never expect and never gets peace and happiness under any circumstance.

The context of this Doha is Bharat's lamentation when he is told to accept the crown of Ayodhya in place of Lord Ram who had been exiled to the forest by Bharat's mother Kaikeyi. Bharat says that he is already suffering so much mental agony from a variety of sources—such as the ignominy of being accused, falsely though, of being a party to this evil conspiracy, the pain arising out his father's death, the intensity of grief of separation from Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, and to compound his problems further now the courtiers and the rest wish to make him the king! What more horrifying can anything else be? It's utter nonsense. Bharat regards the appointment as a king being equivalent to drinking wine or any other intoxicant—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 229 that says—“who has not been tainted and succumbed to pride, arrogance and haughtiness under the intoxicating effects of powers that come by being crowned a king”; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 231 that says the same thing.

But when we read this Doha in the context of previous Dohas, especially the one preceding it, i.e. Doha no. 270, the meaning becomes clear—the negative quality of 'Lobha' (greed) is like the bad star, the 'Kaam' (passions and lust) is like the wind disease, 'Krodha' (anger) is like the sting of the scorpion, and 'Mada' (ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy) is like the wine. The message is clear—when these four combine in a person then, what to speak of problems, they will lead to his utter ruin.]

#### Who cannot find peace

272. ताहि कि संपति सगुन सुभ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।  
भूत द्रोह रत मोहबस राम बिमुख रति काम ॥

272. tāhi ki sampati saguna subha sapanēhum̐ mana biśrāma.  
bhūta drōha rata mōhabasa rāma bimukha rati kāma..

Can a person ever hope to have, even in his dreams, any sort of asset or wealth in the form of auspicious and virtuous qualities that can bestow him any kind of happiness and peace of mind if he is always opposed to other creatures in the world and harbours ill-will and animosity towards all, or if he is overcome by delusions and out of ignorance becomes opposed to Lord Ram, or he is engrossed in pursuing worldly passions and fulfilling his urge for self gratification and appeasing his sense organs?

[That is, if any of these things are part of his character or nature, then such a man cannot ever expect happiness, peace and bliss under any circumstances in this life.] (272)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand as Doha no. 78.

The observations made in this Doha have many other endorsements. For instance we can site the following—

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, there is a Doha no. 39 which succinctly covers the idea expressed in the present Doha of ours. It says—“a person who is inimical to others, who is infatuated with the women folk of others, who eyes the wealth of others, who indulges in lies, arguments, deceit, falsehood and pretensions—such people are very vile and sinful, and they are a personified form of evil and vices amongst men”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38 it is said that “even if a man is the emperor of the fourteen worlds (i.e. the entire creation) but he cannot survive if he is opposed to the living beings who inhabit these worlds”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, the 1<sup>st</sup> part of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 40, it is said while describing the characters of non-saints that “they are opposed to everyone else because of delusions and ignorance”. In other words, one must not be jealous of other people and treat all alike. An enlightened man treats all living beings equally because he sees the same ‘Soul’ in all of them.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 96 it is said that “wise men do not approve of a person if he has a divine body like that of the creator Brahma (‘Bidhi’) but is unfortunately opposed to Lord Ram”.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 96 it is said that “one cannot sleep in peace if he is opposed to Lord Ram”.

As regards the ill effects of being inimical to all and being lustful and promiscuous, Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 112 is very explicit when it says “can anyone ever remain free from fear if he is opposed to others, and can anyone remain free from ignominy and taints if one is lustful and driven by passions?”

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 38, Vibhshana advises Ravana that “if you want your welfare then you must leave eyeing the wife of another person like one avoids looking at the fourth moon of lunar fortnight as it is considered very inauspicious to do so”.

A man’s spiritual welfare lies in worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 46 that says “a living being cannot have welfare, happiness and peace till the time he does not worship Lord Ram and have devotion for the Lord after having abandoned all his attachments to or involvement with the mundane affairs of the household and the world which are like abodes of sorrow and pain, as well as by discarding all lust and passions”.

Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 23 it is said that “wealth and powers that are acquired by being opposed to Lord Ram are as good as being non-existent; it does not matter if one has them or they are gone”.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 114 says “those who are devoured by the demon in the form of Moha (delusions; worldly attachments) and Paakhand (pretensions; deceit) are opposed to Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being) as they are unable to distinguish between what is the truth and what is falsehood.”

A person who is overcome with delusions and is ignorant of the reality that the same soul lives in all the creatures, that this world is transient and mortal and therefore there is no long-term benefit in becoming enemy of others because they do not serve one’s self interest—only such persons harbour ill-will and animosity towards other creatures in this world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 40.]

The spiritual path of Gyan (acquisition of esoteric knowledge of the Absolute Truth) is difficult to traverse

273. कहत कठिन समुझत कठिन साधत कठिन बिबेक ।  
होइ घुनाच्छर न्याय जौं पुनि प्रत्यूह अनेक ॥

273. kahata kaṭhina samujhata kaṭhina sādḥata kaṭhina bibēka.  
hō'i ghunācchara n'yāya jaum̐ puni pratyūha anēka..

Spiritual wisdom and enlightenment that is based of knowledge of the Absolute Truth and Reality are extremely esoteric and difficult in many ways. It is difficult to describe or explain it, it is difficult to understand it (and even if understood there are ripe chances that it is understood in the wrong way which is more dangerous than not understanding it at all), and then it is difficult to implement or practice it<sup>1</sup>.

If by flick of a chance one does manage to be successful in it by the law of chance known as the 'Ghunaakshar Nyaaya<sup>2</sup>', it becomes extremely difficult to retain it and protect this spiritual advantage or gain<sup>3</sup>. (273)

[Note—This Doha appears as no. 118 in Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45, an exactly same idea is expressed when it is said that—“Gyan is a difficult proposition, and it ripe with numerous problems. Its acquisition is difficult, its implementation is difficult, its retention is difficult. Besides this, it is difficult to keep the mind steady on Gyan and derive steady benefits from it.”

<sup>1</sup>Here, the spiritual path that gives importance to the formless or Nirguna aspect of Brahm, the Supreme Being, as a means of attaining emancipation and salvation is being referred to. This is a difficult path because an ordinary person finds it too abstract and esoteric a concept to practice in life. Not everyone has that high level of intellectual caliber to understand its secrets and decipher its language, the result being that he gets confused and perplexed if the path he has chosen is the correct one, or if he is just going round on a wild goose chase. Earlier, Doha nos. 19-20 also stress this idea that it is difficult to follow the path of Nirguna Bhakti, i.e. obtaining spiritual bliss and beatitude as well as emancipation and salvation for the soul by having devotion for the formless and invisible cosmic form of the Supreme Being as the cosmic Consciousness and Brahm rather than and as compared to the path of Saguna Bhakti, i.e. devotion for one of the many formed manifestations of the Lord, one being as Lord Ram. The latter is the easiest path because the divine play of the Lord is well documented in the scriptures, and his divine form is well known as compared to an abstract form that is based more on imagination and conceptualization than anything more tangible, real, verifiable and practical. The Nirguna and formless Absolute Truth known as cosmic Consciousness is difficult to teach, understand and access as compared to something that can be visible and felt as the formed variety of the same Consciousness just as the case of the same water being easily understood when one has it in the form of a liquid that one drinks to quench one's thirst than vapour or moisture present everywhere in the atmosphere but inaccessible for the common needs of the man.

<sup>2</sup>'Ghunaakchar Nyaaya—The woodworm gnaws and nibbles at the pulp of the tree, and this results in formation of various lines in the wood texture. By chance, if these lines resemble any numeral or letter of the alphabet, then it is just that – a mere coincidence, a chance factor, a sort of miracle, and nothing more. It does not mean anything, and neither does it show the life of the tree. The life of a tree is learnt by the number of rings in its stem when it cut across, but no meaning is attached by a sensible person to any letter or numeral formed by the woodworm's cutting and nibbling. Hence, any happening that depends upon the 'chance factor' is known by this term 'Ghunaakchar Nyaaya'.

<sup>3</sup>In the present context of this Doha it means that even if one is lucky enough to have spiritual insight and obtains wisdom and enlightenment by following the difficult path of abstract knowledge of something too difficult to relate with in this world, it is very tough

to stick to it and hold one's beliefs steadfastly onto it. He is more prone to slip and fall easily. The reason is that more often than not such a man is cut off from the mainstream of life in this world, and if his knowledge is not deep and firmly rooted than there are fair chances that he will be sucked in the vortex of confusions and delusions. This will be more detrimental for his spiritual welfare than following the easier path of worshipping and having devotion for the formed variant of the same Absolute Truth in the form of one of the various manifestations of the Supreme Being on earth, the 'knowledge' of whom is given in clear and certain terms in the various scriptures. One such form is that of Lord Ram, and his divine story is well known and documented in the scripture known as the Ramayana. So the chances of getting confused and encountering perplexities are nill in this case as opposed to the case of worshipping that form of the same Lord which has no form, such as the 'cosmic Consciousness' form known as the Viraat Purush (the invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing cosmic form of the Lord).

It is easy to see why the Nirguna form of Bhakti or spiritual path is so difficult. This path involves meditation and contemplation upon the esoteric, most enigmatic and mysterious entity known as the cosmic Consciousness that is all-pervading and omnipresent, which resides in one's inner self as one's Atma or soul which is not only his 'true self' but also the entity that resides in each living being in this creation. A creature need not worship anyone else except this Absolute Truth which is in the form of one's own 'self', as the Atma, that resides inside one's own body. This Atma is the pure cosmic Consciousness at the microcosmic level, and it is the same Atma that lives as the Supreme Being at the grand cosmic level of creation. Truthful liberation and deliverance is to detach this subtle and sublime Atma from the fetters of the individual's body which is gross and inane. The Atma is immortal while the body is mortal. Then again in this line of thought it is said that the external world is an illusion created by the mind, that it is not real, and getting involved in it is like running behind a desert mirage in search of water. But is it not beyond the understanding of an ordinary man how it is really true and possible for this to happen, and then how to actually break free from the world inspite of having to live in it, for he has to live in a physical world and not somewhere in the sky in zero gravity? This seems too difficult for him to understand, and this concept escapes easy grasp by the common man's mind and intellect, creating confusions and enhancing his disillusionment.

On the other hand, he finds the alternative path of Saguna Bhakti more practical and easy to implement in the real world. In this path he is expected to worship a form that has been clearly outlined and defined to him, a form that has clear divine attributes and noble qualities which he can implement in his own life if he tries. This path does not involve abstractions and imaginations like the path of Nirguna Bhakti. The story of the Saguna God is well documented in the scriptures in which the Lord has himself preached simple spiritual doctrines that one can actually implement in life without having to turn on his head just to decipher their meaning. It is, for example, much easy to worship the Lord and attain liberation and deliverance while going about one's daily routine in the world with certain statutory precautions in mind, such as doing deeds as they come along without worrying about their results, doing them selflessly and leaving everything in the hands of the Lord, helping others in need, showing love, compassion and mercy on others, treating all alike, keeping the Lord always in one's mind and heart even as one does all the things in the world. With some diligence and practice and determination, it is very easy to implement the laws of Saguna Bhakti.

But following the path of Nirguna Bhakti is a difficult proposition in the world where one finds it difficult to live in an exclusive cocoon of his inner-self which is totally detached from the harsh realities of mundane life. It seems difficult. This does not mean that it is not possible; sure it is for there are countless examples of great sages, seers,

hermits and monks who have actually done it and succeeded with flying colours even while they lived in the gross world like ordinary humans. But their numbers can be counted on the fingers; they are exceptions rather than the norm.]

It is useless to attempt to improve the world

274. खल प्रबोध जग सोध मन को निरोध कुल सोध ।  
करहिं ते फोटक पचि मरहिं सपनेहुँ सुख न सुबोध ॥

274. khala prabōdha jaga sōdha mana kō nirōdha kula sōdha.  
karahim̐ tē phōṭaka paci marahim̐ sapanēhum̐ sukha na subōdha..

It is useless and in vain to teach wisdom to miscreants and rascals; to try and improve the whole world; to stop the mind from its general habit of wandering everywhere; and to attempt to purify or cleanse the entire clan (past and present relatives) of all its evils and sins. One will die doing it but will never succeed in any of them; he will remain disgruntled and frustrated because in spite of his best effort and intention, none of these can be done fully. (274).

[Note—In this context, the reader should refer to other Dohas in this book, e.g. Doha nos. 483-484 which say almost the same thing.

This Doha is of the sort of general wisdom. All the observations made therein are true. Therefore, Tulsidas' advice is to not worry too much for anything in this world, to do one's might but not get obsessed with anything, and to devote one's energy and precious time in having devotion for Lord Ram.

In other words, instead of teaching wisdom and knowledge to those who do not deserve it, it is far better to give some wisdom to him who will willingly accept it and gain from it. Similarly, instead of attempting to improve the world one must strive to improve one's own self. Instead of attempting to box-in the mind and suppress it by preventing it from wandering here and there in the world it is far easy and better to divert the same tendency of the mind towards searching for the Lord, for the Atma, for the Truth, and so on. If the mind cannot be made to rest and completely tamed, then at least one must train it to turn its attention inwards in meditation and contemplation to seek peace and happiness instead of rushing out in the world seeking comforts and pleasures in the material sense objects.

It is not that it is impossible to improve the wicked and the evil, for good company sometimes does change them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 1<sup>st</sup> part of Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 3. Similarly, it is not impossible to tame the mind by hard practice, but that drains energy.

As far as improvement of the world is concerned, it is indeed an exercise in futility—because we have known a long list of saints and seers and wise men who had tried their best to bring a change and restore a semblance of law and order in this world, but the world retained its manner of behaving intransigently, recklessly and irresponsibly. Come to think of it, there have been so many prophets and incarnations of God, but has the world really changed; have evil and sin completely wiped off the face of earth? The obvious answer is 'no'. Likewise, a man has no control over his own progeny and neighbours, so it is madness to think of improving the world at large.

So the best path is to do one's bit and be at peace with himself. There is no use wasting life in attempting to do something that would be undone immediately after a

person is no more to enforce the changes he has brought about diligently even if he manages to keep the change implemented firmly, and rigidly enforced, during his lifetime.

This Doha must not be wrongly interpreted to mean that one should not try to improve the things. The idea is that one must not be unduly obsessed with anything. One must do his duties and try his best, but then be happy that he has not failed in his duty of trying and doing his might, instead of fretting and fuming at failure to see a hundred percent success.]

#### Importance of contentedness

275. कोड बिश्राम कि पाव तात सहज संतोष बिनु ।  
चलै कि जल बिनु नाव कोटि जतन पचि पचि मरिअ ॥
275. kō'u biśrāma ki pāva tāta sahaja santōṣa binu.  
calai ki jala binu nāva kōṭi jatana paci paci mari'a..

Can anyone ever get permanent peace without inherent natural tendency of being contented or satisfied? Even by applying thousands of ways and means, is it ever possible to row a boat on dry land (instead of water)? (275)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as no. 89.

It says that true and sustainable peace and happiness come from within, and not from without.

In Skanda Puran, Naagar Khand, 32/47-49, sage Gautam has said that—“The greatest asset a man can have is contentedness and satisfaction in whatever he has, in whatever circumstance he is. If a man wears a shoe then the whole earth is soft for him. A man who has drunk the nectar of contentedness and satisfaction is not available to those who wander in this world pursuing material wealth and gratification. Contentedness is the greatest of comfort and happiness, while lack of it is the source of greatest grief and sorrows.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90 it is explicitly stated that “without Santosh (contentedness; satisfaction) it is not possible to end Kaam (worldly passions, desires and yearnings), and as long as there is Kaam a person cannot expect to have Sukha (happiness, comfort and peace)”.]

#### How Maya (delusions) can be overcome

276. सुर नर मुनि कोड नाहिं जेहि न मोह माया प्रबल ।  
अस बिचारि मन माहिं भजिअ महामाया पतिहि ॥
276. sura nara muni kō'u nāhiṁ jēhi na mōha māyā prabala.  
asa bicāri mana māhiṁ bhaji'a mahāmāyā patihi..

There is no god, man or sage who cannot be affected (influenced) by the Lord's powerful deluding powers known as Maya. [No one has escaped it; no one is out of reach of it.]

Considering this irrefutable truth of life (existence), one should surrender to the Lord and worship him who is the Supreme Lord and Creator of illusions. [That is, instead of trying one's muscles against Maya, it is far better to humbly and politely request the Lord of Maya to protect the spiritual aspirant from its clutches. The Lord is very kind and gracious, so he will extend his protection. Besides this, when Maya sees that the concerned creature has sought the Lord's help, it would not disturb him any longer because the Maya is afraid of offending the Lord by offending his devotees.] (276)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand as Doha no. 140.

In this context refer to previous Doha nos. 69, 200, 245, 263 of this book Dohawali. The concept has been extensively explained there.]

The absolute love of the Chatak bird for the rain-bearing cloud  
(Doha nos. 277-312)

277. एक भरोसो एक बल एक आस बिस्वास ।  
एक राम घन स्याम हित चातक तुलसीदास ॥

277. ēka bharōsō ēka bala ēka āsa bisvāsa.  
ēka rāma ghana syāma hita cātaka tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas says that he has only one source of reliance, only one source of strength, only one source of hope, and only one belief or faith (and it is in Lord Ram).

Verily, Tulsidas has become like the bird 'Chatak' for the sake of the dark rain-bearing cloud in the form of Lord Ram.

[The bird 'Chatak', kind of Indian cuckoo, keeps its attention fixed on the dark rain bearing clouds during the rainy season because it is reputed to quench its thirst from the rain drops falling from it. The Chatak drinks only this rain drop falling directly from the cloud in its mouth to quench its thirst, preferring to die if the cloud does not oblige it, but does not depend upon any other source of water to survive.

Similarly, Tulsidas says that he seeks only from his beloved Lord Ram, and no one else. The analogy of the 'dark rain bearing cloud' is significant here because Lord Ram has a dark complexion that has been often compared to the colour of this cloud.

Besides this similarity, the other important factor is that like the rain-cloud magnanimously providing the earth with its nectar-like rain which supports life on this planet, Lord Ram also showers his mercy, compassion, grace, benevolence and magnanimity on all the creatures of the world to benefit from these virtues of the Lord. Like the cloud not differentiating between any two creatures when it pours its rain upon earth, for both the good and the bad people are equally provided the chance to enjoy the nectar of life in the form of rain that comes for free from heaven, the Lord's grace is abundantly available to all, irrespective of who they are or to which section of society they belong.] (277)

[Note—Refer to Doha nos. 38 and 85 of this book Dohawali in the context of the present Doha.

The *Holy Bible* says in the Old Testament, Jeremiah, Chapter 17, verse nos. 5-8 endorse the idea that one should seek only from the Lord God, and no one else. To quote—

“5: Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

6: For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

7: Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

8: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

Tulsidas has used the metaphor of the Chatak bird to stress that he relies upon the Lord for all his emotional and spiritual needs. His loyalty to his Lord Ram is similar to that of Chatak for the cloud. Just as the Chatak would prefer to die of thirst but not drink water from any other source except the cloud, Tulsidas too would prefer to die but take no one’s help except his beloved Lord Ram!

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 209, stanza no. 1, Tulsidas has expressed the same emotion when he says “Oh Lord, I do not have faith and reliance on anybody. I say truthfully on oath that I have only the strength of your footwear as my support. I honestly vow to honour it with my mind, my words and my deeds.” That is, I am completely committed to what I say.

Similarly, in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 75, stanza no. 3, Tulsidas has cited the same example of the Chatak and the dark cloud to say that he relies upon Lord Ram exclusively.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 128, this metaphor of the Chatak is cited by sage Valmiki to say that Lord Ram lives in the heart of those whose eyes are fixed on Lord Ram’s divine sight just like the eyes of the bird Chatak that constantly gaze at the dark cloud in hope of rain drops.

Chatak is cited as a metaphor for the depth of affection and faith in the Lord in Padma Puran, Paataal Khand, Canto 51, verse nos. 37-39 which say “a spiritual aspirant must adopt the attitude of the Chatak in his spiritual pursuit till the last breath in his body. Just like the Chatak prefers to die if it is not able to get rain drops directly falling from the clouds, but does not drink water from any other source even if they are easily available, such as a pond, the ocean or a river which are rich sources of water, the spiritual aspirant must keep his mind focused on his spiritual objective inspite of all sorts of temptations and allurements.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki says Lord Ram lives in the heart of those who “worship the Lord’s feet daily with their hands (i.e. personally, with devotion), and rely only on Lord Ram and nobody else”.

Once the Lord knows that the devotee has surrendered himself to him it is absolutely certain that the Lord will not abandon him under any circumstance. Refer—

(i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> line of Doha no. 183 where Bharat expresses his confidence that he is dead sure that the Lord will not abandon him once he realises that Bharat has surrendered himself to him and is one of the Lord’s own followers.

(ii) In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 48, Lord Ram has told Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, when he came to seek refuge with the Lord after having been kicked out by Ravana, that, inter alia, “even if the world is collectively opposed to a creature but when he comes to me seeking refuge, I give him my unstinted and unquestioned support and succour. If anyone eliminates all sorts of attachments with every imaginable thing or person, no matter how dear they are to him, and seeks my refuge, be sure that I love him like a greedy man loves material wealth and profits.”

(iii) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 43, Lord Ram has declared “I tell you sage (Narad) that anyone who worships me and has unflinching and full devotion for me, verily I always give them protection just like a caring mother provides protection to her child”.

Verse no. 225 of Vinai Patrika is also exclusively dedicated to stress that one should have complete and honest faith and reliance upon Lord Ram in an exclusive manner.

It ought to be noted here that the reference to Chatak is extensively employed continuously in 36 Dohas of this book Dohawali to emphasise the importance of having deep and true faith, reliance, devotion and love for Lord Ram. These Dohas are from no. 277 to Doha no. 312.]

278. जौं घन बरषै समय सिर जौं भरि जनम उदास ।  
तुलसी या चित चातकहि तऊ तिहारी आस ॥

278. jaum̄ ghana baraṣai samaya sira jaum̄ bhari janama udāsa.  
tulasī yā cita cātakahi ta'ū tihārī āsa..

Tulsidas says, ‘Oh rain bearing clouds (which represent Lord Sri Ram)! Whether it rains timely (i.e. you show compassion and mercy when needed) or you remain indifferent for my entire life (i.e. you become stern-hearted, remaining unconcerned and dispassionate towards my plight)—but remember, this Tulsidas' mind, like a ‘Chatak’ bird, will remain focused on you, and it expects only from you and no one else like a loyal Chatak (that you will shower your grace in the form of rain symbolizing Lord Ram’s mercy, grace, affection and benevolence upon me some day or the other).’

[Tulsidas means that he will remain loyal to his beloved Lord Ram for the rest of his life whether or not the Lord becomes favourable and benevolent upon him; whether he is fortunate to receive the Lord’s gracious glance or is neglected by the Lord. It is Tulsidas’ firm resolve that he would not seek any help, any relief and any support from anyone else except Sri Ram in his life. He will remain loyal to his Lord notwithstanding the adversities he may have to face due to this unflinching commitment of loyalty and faith in one Supreme Lord.] (278)

[Note—As even a cursory reading of these Dohas and many other would show, Tulsidas’ devotion and submission, his faith and conviction, his loyalty and love for Lord Ram is not only beyond any doubt and question, but also of the highest standard, exceptionally divine, and most exemplary. It is this eclectic and holy spiritual quality in this great saint that has made him immortal in the annals of history, and his writings have become equivalent to and equally revered as the great scriptures that espouse, expound and propagate the grand spiritual philosophy of love and devotion for the Supreme Being as the main tool for a creature’s spiritual welfare.

Ram Charit Manas has an exactly the same idea expressed in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 205. Here, Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has asked Triveni, the holy confluence of three sacred rivers, to bless him that he may have steady and eternal love, devotion and affection for Lord Ram. It is in this context that Bharat cites the example of Chatak and the cloud to say that “even if the cloud becomes so stern and heartless that it refuses to oblige the Chatak with rain drops, the Chatak continues to remain loyal and committed to its vows of not drinking water from any other source except the cloud, preferring to die than to live with the ignominy of breaking his eternal vow.” In other words, just like the Chatak remaining steadfast in

his love for the rain bearing cloud, Bharat prays that his love, devotion and affection for Lord Ram should also remain ever so steady, constant and unquestioned for life. Not only this, these virtues should increase day by day. This sentiment is endorsed in the next Doha no. 279.]

279. चातक तुलसी के मतेँ स्वातिहुँ पिऐे न पानि ।  
प्रेम तृषा बाढ़ति भली घटेँ घटैगी आनि ॥

279. cātaka tulasī kē matēm svātiḥuṁ pi'ai na pāni.  
prēma tr̥ṣā bāṛhati bhalī ghaṭēm ghaṭaigī āni..

'Oh Chatak (a bird)! In my (Tulsidas') opinion you should not drink the rain drops even during the 'Swati Nakshatra' (a special configuration of stars occurring during the rainy season) because deprivation will ignite your thirst.'

[If the 'Chatak' desists from drinking the drops of rain, its thirst will be stoked further, and as a result it would long more for the sight of the cloud which it loves so much. But if it satisfies its thirst by drinking the first drops of rain then its motivation for looking up at the cloud will be removed. So, if Chatak wants to sustain its reputation as the greatest lover of the rain-bearing cloud then it is better that it keeps its self thirsty.

Tulsidas cites this example to say that if a devotee wants to keep his fire of love and devotion for Lord God intense then it is better for him not to settle for any boon offered by the Lord God. But the devotee must instead insist that the Lord should provide him with the final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his soul if the Lord indeed wants to give a boon. That way the devotee will have the best of rewards in this life that one can ever hope to obtain.] (279)

[Note—The Chatak drinks only the rain drops that fall during this particular configuration of stars. If there is no rain, it would prefer to die rather than drink water on any other day and from any other source. Tulsidas' intention is to enhance his devotion and love for Lord Ram. So he says that it is better that the Lord does not reward him like the rain-bearing clouds that refuse to oblige the Chatak by giving the bird rain drops to him even on this auspicious day, because this will ensure that the Chatak continues to gaze at the cloud, and its mind constantly thinking of the rain drops and of the cloud. Likewise, it is better for him to be constantly thinking of the Lord and remain submerged in the desire of having the Lord's mercy and grace upon him as this would ensure that his entire time and life is focused on his beloved Lord Ram instead of going astray and wandering in this world which is ready to pounce upon him to grab him in its tentacles.

Here, Tulsidas compares the rain bearing clouds to his beloved Lord Ram, the Chatak to himself and his mind, and the rain drops to the bliss, the beatitude and the felicity that comes with fulfillment of one's spiritual pursuit. He says that he prays there is no end to this sense of spiritual bliss and the beatitude that is obtained by having devotion for Lord Ram; he wishes to remain remaining drenched and soaked in them. He does not wish that he reaches a state when his thirst for Lord Ram's love and devotion are quenched; this is one thirst that is better enhanced rather than being quenched.

The devotee's steadfastness and sincerity is tested when there is apparently no response from the deity he worships; it tests the tenacity and resilience of his faith, belief and conviction. Is he fed up after some time if his demands or expectations are not satisfactorily fulfilled? If it is so then obviously he has been worshipping the Lord with selfish goals in mind, and this sort of love and devotion has no spiritual value

whatsoever. But if he smiles and remains steady on his path inspite of setbacks, then of course he has passed the test with flying colours. Any Lord who has this kind of follower is bound to have a special corner in his heart for him.

This is what the great saint Tulsidas wants for himself, and by extension this is the message he has for us—that our faith, love, devotion, submission and commitment to the Lord God should be deep, steady and robust; it should be sustainable, truthful, honest and sincere. ‘True love’ is that which goes on increasing progressively even if not reciprocated and requited, fully or partially.

This prayer that one’s love for Lord Ram should go on increasing day by day is reiterated by sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131 which when he tells Lord Ram “Oh Lord, you must live in the heart of that person who wants nothing else except simple and selfless love and affection for you. Such a heart ought to be treated by you as your own home.”]

280. रटत रटत रसना लटी तृषा सूखि गे अंग ।  
तुलसी चातक प्रेम को नित नूतन रुचि रंग ॥

280. raṭata raṭata rasanā laṭī tr̥ṣā sūkhi gē aṅga.  
tulasī cātaka prēma kō nita nūтана ruci raṅga..

What a wonder that inspite of the Chatak’s tongue becoming limp and numbed by its constantly repeating the name of its beloved cloud (in the hope that the latter would oblige by dropping rain-drops on the protruded tongue dangling out of its mouth), and its body becoming withered and emaciated due to thirst (as it refuses to drink water from any other source), the Chatak still retains his glorious tradition of love and dependence upon the cloud for providing it with rain drops to drink and quench its thirst.

[That is, inspite of suffering so much and getting a virtual cold shoulder from the cloud, the Chatak refuses to relent. It remains steady in its love and commitment to the cloud that says that it would prefer death but not betray his love by seeking to quench its thirst from some other source of water.] (280)

[Note—This Doha compliments Doha no. 279 above. The best form of love is that which does not get reduced or suffers a setback inspite of not getting any response from the object of one’s adoration and affection. The Chatak bird exemplifies this great virtue.

Tulsidas cites Chatak to say in a symbolic manner that his love for Lord Ram should be of the same magnitude and quality. And this is the advice he gives to the rest of the world—that one’s love and devotion for the Lord God, his level of dedication and faith in the Lord should be like that of Chatak which it has for the rain bearing cloud.

Remaining steady in having love and affection for the object one adores inspite of being neglected or rebuked is a certain proof of his sincerity and the robust nature of these grand virtues in him.

The central idea expressed in a subtle form in this Doha is that one should constantly repeat the holy name of Lord Ram (i.e. do Japa using his holy name as the divine spiritual formula) inspite of not getting any tangible result in the short run. Its long term benefits are enormous and beyond definition. Spiritual ailments are a long-standing chronic problem, and they need long-term treatment. No miracles happen, and neither should they be expected.]

281. चढ़त न चातक चित कबहुँ प्रिय पयोद के दोष ।

तुलसी प्रेम पयोधि की ताते नाप न जोख ॥

281. caṛhata na cātaka cita kabahum̃ priya payōda kē dōṣa.  
tulasī prēma payōdhi kī tātē nāpa na jōkha..

The Chatak's mind and memory never remember and pay heed to any of the shortcomings and faults of its beloved cloud. Tulsidas says that this is an example to explain why no one can measure the fathomless (infinite) depths of the ocean (representing the virtue) of love.

[In spite of being aware of the many drawbacks of being so enamoured of one particular thing which does not even respond because it is so heartless, in this case it is the 'cloud' which itself is 'dark', a metaphor for negative qualities (as opposed to 'white' that stands for auspicious and good qualities), the Chatak still loves it and thirsts for its rain-drops. This term 'thirsts' is indicative of its intense attachment to and intense longing for the cloud. The Chatak thinks of nothing but the rain bearing cloud. Its whole being revolves around this one entity in spite of the sufferings it is subjected to as described in Doha no. 280—viz. its tongue getting parched and its body getting emaciated. But still it goes on loving the cloud.

Tulsidas cites this instance to explain the nature of true love that defies all logic and rationalities. In a sense he is defending himself and his decision of having devotion for Lord Ram and spending the rest of his life in the service of the Lord. In essence he says that there may be no justification in his doing what he does, but he is not bothered like the Chatak. This is the proof of his true love, dedication and submission for Lord Ram—that no matter what others say, he will never waver from his chosen spiritual path.] (281)

282. बरषि परुष पाहन पयद पंख करौ टुक टूक ।  
तुलसी परी न चाहिऐ चतुर चातकहि चूक ॥

282. baraṣi paruṣa pāhana payada paṅkha karau ṭuka ṭūka.  
tulasī parī na cāhi'ai catura cātakahi cūka..

Tulsidas advises that even if the cloud showers hail to hit and break the wings (or feathers) of Chatak into pieces, it should nevertheless still never allow its affection and love for the cloud to ever be diminished in its intensity or affected in anyway whatsoever due to this (punishment given by the cloud for the Chatak's love for it).

[Tulsidas stresses on this aspect of the suffering of Chatak to emphasise the nature of the virtue and purity of true love. No matter what happens, a person who loves another truly will never demur in his love even if his lover hurts him and rebukes him. The true lover will never seek retribution or revenge for any of the hurting actions taken against him by the object of his affection. Tulsidas says that one's love and devotion for Lord Ram should also be like the one Chatak has for the cloud. No suffering of life should detract the devotee from his spiritual path of love and devotion for the Lord. He must not blame the Lord for his misfortunes, because they are due to the cumulative bad affects of his past life. He must have a constructive approach instead—by thinking that his

condition could have been worse had he not taken the refuge of Lord Ram who has silently and subtly reduced his sufferings to within tolerable limits.] (282)

[Note—The Chatak thinks that the cloud has no intention of hurting it but is only testing the depth and sincerity of its love for the cloud. So it strives to neglect the pain and instead keeps smiling and repeating the name of the cloud. This idea is expressed in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 65, stanza no. 3. It says—“The loving cloud rumbles and thunders at its lover, the Chatak, angrily to admonish it and scold it. The cloud even showers hails on the Chatak, and shows its anger by the strike of the thunderbolt. It tries all it can to examine the nature, sincerity and intensity of Chatak’s love for it. When the cloud is finally satisfied, it provides the much sought drop of the rain water during the Swati Nakshatra.”

Refer Doha nos. 283 and 284 below in this connection.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 113 and its preceding Chaupai consisting of 16 lines, the saint-crow Kaagbhusund describes how Lord Ram had tested his love for the Lord. It had so happened earlier that Kaagbhusund’s Guru (teacher) had tried to persuade him to follow the path of Gyan (acquisition of metaphysical knowledge) as a means of spiritual enlightenment, whereas the saint had insisted on following the path of having devotion and love for Lord Ram to achieve the same goal of obtaining spiritual bliss. This enraged the Guru who cursed him. Kaagbhusund narrates this incident to Garud (the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu) and says—“The Lord had wished to test my love and devotion for him, so he influenced the mind of the Guru to act in a stern way with me to examine my sincerity and dedication. But when I stood steadfast on my faith and conviction, the Lord prevailed upon the Guru’s mind which immediately relented and changed track. In spite of having cursed me the Guru saw my love and devotion for Lord Ram, which are glorious spiritual virtues in a creature, and he relented by blessing me with the divine Mantra of Lord Ram. He even told me how to meditate upon Lord Ram’s form as a divine child. He kept me in his hermitage for some time and preached the holy story of the Ramayana to me. Then he blessed me with eternal devotion and love for my beloved Lord Ram.”]

283. उपल बरसि गजरत तरजि डारत कुलिस कठोर ।  
चितव कि चातक मेघ तजि कबहुँ दूसरी ओर ॥

283. upala barasi gajarata taraji ḍārata kulisa kaṭhōra.  
citava ki cātaka mēgha taji kabahum’ dūsarī ōra..

The clouds rumble and thunder menacingly, shower hail-stones (like brickbats) and often strike with the shaft of the lightning (thunderbolt) to scare off the poor Chatak bird. In spite of this, the love-stricken 'Chatak' never gazes anything else except its beloved cloud.

[The cloud tries its best to frighten the Chatak, but so deep-rooted is the bird’s love for the cloud is that it takes all the scolding and angry reaction of the cloud in its stride, regarding them as an attempt of the cloud to test the sincerity, tenacity, truthfulness and depth of the love that the bird professes it has for the cloud. The Chatak wins hand down—as no matter what the cloud does to put off the bird, it adheres to its vows and keeps on constantly gazing at the cloud in the hope that its love will be finally reciprocated by the cloud when the latter showers the life-giving rain drops which the

lover Chatak would reverentially accept in its mouth as a gift of love from its beloved cloud.] (283)

[Note—Refer also to Doha nos. 282 and 284 in this context.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45, king Dasrath laments “oh gods, give me all grief and torments you wish to give me, but do not make Ram go away from my sight (because I can cope with everything, but can’t live without my beloved Ram)”. The reader will observe the similarity of the intensity of love that the Chatak has for the cloud inasmuch as the Chatak never allowing its gaze to leave the cloud as it keeps its eyes exclusively riveted on it, and what Dasrath says here in connection with Lord Ram—that he cannot stand the situation where Ram goes out of his sight.

The analogy of the relationship between the Chatak and the cloud is employed by Tulsidas to say that he wishes to have the same sort of relationship with his beloved Lord Ram, where he is the ‘Chatak’ and Lord Ram is the ‘rain-bearing cloud’. The reader will also observe the fabulous beauty of the imagery of these Dohas that deal with the Chatak and the cloud. One must remember that the particular time of the year when this actually happens is during the rainy season in India when dark rain-bearing monsoon clouds cover the sky like a shroud after the hot and harsh days of the summer when the earth is parched dry for the want of water. Every creature, symbolized by the Chatak, looks up to the cloud to give rain because otherwise life on earth would dry up. But the difference between the rest of the creatures and the Chatak is that if the rains fail for some reason, other creatures will get water from other sources—such as the farmer who will get water for his harvest from bore-wells dug in his field or canals that bring water from rivers or dams to his village, and the ordinary man can go to the well or river to fetch water for his needs, but the poor Chatak will die of thirst if the clouds do not oblige.

By extension this means that a true devotee of the Lord Ram is one who surrenders himself completely to the Lord, unquestionably and without reservations, who absolutely depends upon the Lord and his holy name for all his spiritual needs instead of running from one god to another, from one holy book to another, from one pilgrim site to another, from one Mantra to another, from one spiritual practice to another, and so on to seek redemption for himself.

When one is faithful and loyal to a single Lord, then it becomes obligatory upon the latter to take proper care of the former. On the other hand, if one has many Lords and faces an emergency then all of them pass the buck, saying that they thought that the other Lord was looking into the matter and he thought best not to interfere.

Hence, the great spiritual advice of saint Tulsidas is to repose full and complete faith and devotion on *only one* Lord, and he is Lord Sri Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being.]

284. पबि पाहन दामिनि गरज झरि झकोर खरि खीझि ।  
रोष न प्रीतम दोष लखि तुलसी रागहि रीझि ॥

284. pabi pāhana dāmini garaja jhari jhakōra khari khījhi.  
rōṣa na prītama dōṣa lakhi tulasī rāgahi rījhi..

The cloud shows its anger and annoyance (to the loving overtures of Chatak) by striking with lightening, hitting with hailstones, stunning and stupefying with the dazzling stab of lightening, rumbling and thundering (in anger), pouring rain in a torrent (instead of a slow and soothing spray in the form of a drizzle), and virtually slapping, lashing out and

making the poor Chatak shake by hitting it with gusts of strong, gale-force winds in the form of a severe storm.

In spite of all this (i.e. the rebuke from the cloud), the loving Chatak never gets impatient or angry at this demeanour and angry outburst of its beloved cloud. The Chatak never minds anything, for it never sees the negative character of its object of adoration, i.e. the cloud, that it is being so heartless and inconsiderate towards the loving bird and punishing it for no fault of his. Instead, the Chatak remains so enamoured of the cloud that it regards the angry responses of the latter as its affectionate response to the Chatak's overtures of love and affection for the cloud. (284)

[Note—Refer to Doha nos. 282 and 283 in this context.]

The Chatak treats the angry responses of the cloud as a loving response for its expression of loyalty and love for it. This is how a true lover must treat his beloved, his object of love and adoration. When applied to a devotee's love for Lord Ram, these Dohas describing the love of Chatak for the rain-bearing cloud assume an immense spiritual and divine connotation. This sort of love does not have any gross, sensual, carnal or temporal and worldly meaning as the thing appears to look on the surface of it. This love is of the subtle and sublime kind; the love that is divine, holy and pure in the spiritual context. It is uplifting for the soul, a rejuvenator for the creature, and a provider of bliss, felicity and beatitude to him. It does not arouse passions, but douse them. It does not make a creature suffer, but makes him eternally happy. It does not lead to downfall, but elevates. It is not a vortex that sucks, but an energy that uplifts.]

285. मान रखिबो माँगिबो पिय सों नित नव नेहु ।  
तुलसी तीनिउ तब फबैं जौ चातक मत लेहु ॥

285. māna rākhībō māṁgībō piya sōṁ nita nava nēhu.  
tulasī tīni'u taba phabaiṁ jau cātaka mata lēhu..

Tulsidas says that protecting one's self respect and seeking, begging or asking for something from someone at the same time, and to enhance one's love for the beloved without its attendant negative spin-offs—these seemingly opposite things are possible and provide goodness to a person only when he follows the attitude and adopts the principles of the Chatak bird. (285)

[Note—Usually the situation is that if we continue to ask for something from someone in spite of his constantly rebuking us and not obliging us, we are subjecting our own self to extreme levels of humiliation, insult, ignominy and scorn. It's better to die than having to cope with such grave insult and ignominious humiliation.]

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, 1<sup>st</sup> half of Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 17 it is said that “a servant cannot expect to have comfort and pleasures ('Sukha'), and a beggar cannot expect to have respect and honour ('Maan')”. In other words, when someone asks for something from the other person, he must be prepared to lose his self-respect if he does not have the ability to reciprocate and repay the giver in terms of kind and form.

Similarly, showing expressions of love just for the sake of lust-gratification, fulfillment of worldly passions or sensual pleasures will invariably lead a person to a lot of problems and disgrace. He will attempt all deceit and falsehood to 'target his prey' and go for the kill for instant sensual gratification, instead of forging a long, a lifetime relationship based on equality, trust, love and respect for each other.

Tulsidas says that this situation does not arise when the seeker and the lover has a pure heart and good intentions. Though initially he may have to suffer, but eventually he is the winner because sooner or later his honesty, earnestness and truthfulness will come to the fore. Tulsidas wishes to apply the love of the Chatak for the cloud to his own love and devotion for Lord Ram. In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204, Bharat also expresses a same type of emotion when he says “I do not want anything else—I have no interest in obtaining wealth, I have no interest in obtaining acclaim as a righteous man who is steady in his path of ethical and moral way of life, I have no interest in obtaining fulfillment of desires and passions, I have no interest in obtaining emancipation and salvation for my self. What I ask for is this—that I must have eternal and steady love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram for all times to come, for all future generations and births to come.”]

286. तुलसी चातक ही फबै मान रखिबो प्रेम ।  
बक्र बुंद लखि स्वातिहू निदरि निबाहत नेम ॥

286. tulasī cātaka hī phabai māna rākhibō prēma.  
bakra bunda lakhi svātihū nidari nibāhata nēma..

Tulsidas lauds and is enthralled by the intensity of love and devotion that the Chatak has for the cloud. He says that the way Chatak behaves is a very appropriate approach inasmuch as it helps the bird to uphold the authenticity, the dignity and the sanctity of the emotion of love while at the same time protect his own self-respect and decorum.

If the rain drops falling from the cloud during the ‘Swati Nakshatra’ fall at an angle (instead of straight down into the beak of the bird), the Chatak refuses to accept it and prefers to reject it in order to maintain the dignity and honour of his love and self-esteem. (286)

[Note—The Chatak bird keeps its eyes riveted on the rain-bearing cloud with its beak open and the tongue protruded out of it in the hope that the drops of rain falling from the cloud would fall directly into its mouth. It is so adamant and dignified that it would not bend or turn or tilt its head even slightly if the drops cannot fall directly into its beak. It prefers to die than compromise on his determination of accepting rain-drops directly from the cloud. Outwardly the bird seems stubborn and eccentric by preferring to die of thirst but not bending or moving its head to drink rain-drops falling all around him in abundance. It makes no sense to the ordinary observer, but a true lover realises the message that it conveys. The bird does so because its love for the cloud is extremely intense and true so much so that it expects that the object of its adoration and love, i.e. the cloud, would at least be courteous and civil enough to put some drops of rain directly into its mouth when millions of rain-drops are falling wildly on the ground and being wasted away. And the bird thinks that if no drops fall in its mouth then it means that its lover, i.e. the cloud, is unhappy with it, and in such a situation true love demands that the lover would prefer to die than live a life in which his love is not requited, not accepted and not reciprocated by the partner.

Tulsidas uses this natural phenomenon to emphasise how a true lover behaves, and by extension how a true devotee must behave with dignity when it comes to having devotion for the Lord by total surrender while still maintaining his self-esteem.

Other possible explanations for this refusal of the Chatak to bend or turn its head sideways to accept rain-drops falling all around in case no drops fall directly into its

mouth are the following—(i) to accept the rain-drop falling at an angle or away from the bird's beak, it would have to naturally turn its head in that direction, thereby diverting its attention momentarily from its beloved cloud and also having to move his fixed gaze away from the cloud; and (ii) the bird is not a beggar or an alms seeker, but a true lover. It therefore cannot lower the dignity of the institution of love and devotion by accepting anything given by a magnanimous and benevolent giver to all and sundry in the form of donation, alms or charity as the rain-drops falling from the cloud all over the earth symbolize. A beggar would greedily lunge at and grab all the coins thrown all around by a rich merchant as he passes by in any direction, but a man of even basic dignity and honour will obviously not do so.

So the Chatak symbolically admonishes the cloud that it should not insult the lover by not giving the drops directly to it in its open mouth. The Chatak thinks that the cloud is teasing it by showering rain-drops everywhere except its open mouth. But the bird does not lose its patience, and instead of getting angry and turning away from the cloud in disgust and dismay it persists with its show of love, politely asking the lover cloud as to why is the latter so angry, rude, impolite, ungrateful and stubborn that it is throwing the rain-drops in all directions to go to waste and not bothering to put a few of them in its mouth? How would few drops of rain affect the cloud when millions of such drops are falling and getting absorbed in the earth all around the bird? Can't the cloud act decently at least to oblige someone who is so eager waiting for some signs of acceptance?

We will observe here that the poet and philosopher in Tulsidas has the ability to make keen observations of the many and varied phenomena and occurrences in Nature, then extracting some great divine message from such ordinary happenings, then giving this observation the skillful interpretation of a wise, sagacious and erudite Master, and finally weaving an excellent imagery around it in poetic language to convey some deep spiritual message for the benefit of the humankind is the hallmark of Tulsidas' writings.

This steadfastness of Chatak to uphold the dignity and laws of the philosophy of love and devotion is also endorsed in: (i) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 178, line no. 2 of stanza no. 2, and (ii) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 7, line no. 1 of stanza no. 4. These verses essentially say "Chatak must be honoured and lauded for his depth and intensity and quality of love (for the cloud)". In other words, one must learn from the Chatak bird what true love is, and how a true lover behaves.

When the philosophy of love and devotion that the Chatak exemplifies is applied to a devotee of Lord Ram and his relationship with the Lord, Vinai Patrika, verse no. 250, stanza no. 2 says in explicit terms—"I (Tulsidas) have not lovingly served any of the Digpaals (the great custodians of the world), the Sun God, Lord Ganesh (who is always worshipped first amongst the Gods) or Parvati (the divine consort of Lord Shiva and the Mother of creation), nor have I worshipped the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma (the creator), Shiva (the concluder) and Vishnu (the sustainer). All my sustenance and welfare lie in and rest with the holy name of Lord Ram. That is, I rely on the Lord's holy name for all my needs—both the worldly needs as well as the spiritual needs. I am only faithful to it, I have love for it and no one else, and I am submerged and constantly engrossed in it; I am coloured in its colour. Reliance on Lord Ram's holy name is equivalent to Amrit (nectar and ambrosia that fulfills everything), and all the rest are like poison for me. In other words, I avoid everything else in this world and rely only on one single thing—and it is the holy name of Lord Ram."]

287. तुलसी चातक माँगनो एक एक घन दानि ।  
देत जो भू भाजन भरत लेत जो घूँटक पानि ।।

287. tulasī cātaka māmṅanō ēka ēka ghana dāni.  
dēta jō bhū bhājana bharata lēta jō ghūmṭaka pāni..

Tulsidas says he is amazed at and awed by the unique character and nature of both the Chatak bird as well as the cloud. The Chatak is a peerless seeker, and the cloud is equally unparalleled as a giver. The clouds is extremely benevolent, magnanimous and large-hearted as it gives so much rain that it fills the ponds, the lakes and all other water-bodies on this earth, but Chatak accepts only one rain drop (which is all that it requires to sustain itself) from its lover, the cloud. (287)

[Note—The cloud represents the highest ideals of benevolence, charity and generosity, while the Chatak stands for the highest ideals of graciousness, dignity, love and contentedness. The cloud does not tire of giving rain water to this world, and the Chatak is so dignified that it is contented with a single drop of rain drop that its lover, the cloud, gives directly to it.

The Chatak is not greedy for more water as it is satisfied with only one drop of the rain. In this the Chatak exemplifies the eclectic virtues of contentedness and fulfillment. It is also not jealous of the cloud for giving so much rain to the earth but only one single drop to its own lover, the Chatak, which has been so eagerly looking up towards the cloud for this token reciprocation of its love for the cloud. The Chatak never expects more than one drop of rain from the cloud, but it does expect that this drop is provided directly to it. This is how any true lover would think and act; this is a symbolic way of depicting a true lover's mentality and attitude. The Chatak is not looking up to the cloud for rain water to quench its thirst, for had this been the case then the Chatak would have easily drunk water to its full from all the rain drops falling around it when the cloud showers rain upon the earth.

The Chatak would not have refused to turn its head and accept rain drops from the general body of rain that is falling upon the earth during the rainy season had it been only interested in obtaining rain drops from the cloud to quench its thirst. But it wants its love and affection and devotion and commitment to be reciprocated by the cloud when it stubbornly declares that it will only accept that single drop of rain that falls directly in its mouth, and would die due to thirst if the cloud does not oblige it with this single drop! The Chatak declares that it will not take a single drop of rain to survive if it is not dropped by the cloud directly into its mouth. And when it does happen, when the cloud does put one drop of its nectar-like rain in the Chatak's mouth, the latter is fully contented; it wants nothing more.

What a fantastic ideal of singularly selfless dedication, love, affection, commitment and devotion on the one hand, and dignity, self-respect and decorum on the other hand that the Chatak stands for and exemplifies!

The cloud in its own sphere is also an exemplary instance of the grand virtues of generosity, magnanimity, charity, graciousness and benevolence etc. The cloud is so extremely generous and magnanimous that it goes on filling all the bowls of earth with endless supply of rain water with no expectation of any return. The earth and its inhabitant creatures never give a single drop of rain back to the cloud. The world rarely thanks the cloud for its magnanimity of giving the life-sustaining rain as it thinks that it is the duty of the cloud to give the earth rain, and therefore it is not doing anything exceptional that requires praise or honour or even thanksgiving. On the contrary, if the cloud fails to give adequate rain the people only go to accuse it of making the earth parched. But the cloud is so large-hearted that it never complains and never stops giving

rain to the earth, and neither does it ever expect any thanks or reimbursement for its largesse.

The fact that the Chatak is fully contented with a drop of rain water is endorsed by the great sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 128 in which the sage tells Lord Ram that the Lord should live in the heart of “those whose eyes are eager to have a Darshan (divine vision or sight) of the Lord just as eagerly as the Chatak constantly gazes at the cloud, and are contented fully by having this divine sight of the Lord just as the Chatak is fully contented by a single drop of rain that falls in its mouth”.

Refer also especially to Doha no. 277 of this book Dohawali.]

288. तीनि लोक तिहुँ काल जस चातक ही कें माथ ।  
तुलसी जासु न दीनता सुनी दूसरे नाथ ॥

288. tīni lōka tihum' kāla jasa cātaka hī kēm mātha.  
tulasī jāsu na dīnatā sunī dūsarē nātha..

Tulsidas says that in all the three worlds (terrestrial, subterranean, heavens) as well as in all the three periods of time (past, present, future)—in other words, everywhere and in all the eras of history—it is the Chatak bird who has attained the glorious and unique fame as being the greatest lover who is most devoted and committed to his philosophy of love and dedication, whose humility and surrender to the object of its adoration and love has not ever been matched by anyone else in the whole creation before, and would never ever be in the future.

It has not been heard by any Lord or Master that there has ever been a servant (server, subordinate, dependant, follower, disciple etc.) who is more humble, dedicated, committed, devoted and truthful to his vows than the bird Chatak. (288)

[Note—All Lords and Masters in this world have their own group of subordinates, dependants, servants, disciples and followers etc., and all of them claim loyalty and allegiance to their chiefs, or their Lords and Masters. But the fact is that no matter how honest and faithful they may claim to be, it is absolutely certain that none can match the exemplary qualities that Chatak possesses in this sphere in his relationship with the cloud. Everyone is driven by some sort of self-interest agenda, and though all proclaim their allegiance to their respective Lords and Masters none can actually stand the rigorous test of total submission, commitment, dedication, devotion and truthfulness as well as of love and faithfulness as does the humble bird known as Chatak.

It ought to be noted here that Tulsidas is a saint who employs the metaphor of the Chatak to show the type, the intensity and the purity of love, devotion, dedication, commitment, submission and faith a true devotee must have for Lord Ram. A true devotee must be contented by whatever the Lord gives him; he must not look to anyone else for any of his needs, worldly or spiritual—for this act would be insulting for his Lord as it would be tantamount to Lord Ram not being able to fulfill all his wishes. A true devotee must be humble and submissive to Lord Ram, and he should have no ego and pride of any kind. All these grand virtues are depicted in Chatak.

In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 104, stanza no. 3 the same emotion of being totally dedicated to one's Lord is expressed in relation to Lord Ram in these terms—“I will hear no other thing with my ears (except the holy name of Lord Ram and narration of his glories), I will not talk about anyone else (except Lord Ram, his divine glories and holy

name), I will stop my eyes from even glancing at anyone else (except Lord Ram), and I will bow my head only before the Lord (and no one else)”.]

289. प्रीति पपीहा पयद की प्रगट नई पहिचानि ।  
जाचक जगत कनाउड़ो कियो कनौड़ा दानि ॥

289. *prīti papīhā payada kī pragata naī pahicāni.*  
*jācaka jagata kanā'urō kiyō kanaurā dāni..*

The relationship (of love, loyalty, devotion and dedication) between the Chatak and the cloud is one of its only kind. Usually an alms-seeker is indebted to this world for giving it alms, but this loving Chatak has made the donor cloud its debtor instead. The cloud feels humbled by the Chatak's unpretentious affection for the cloud, and the fact that inspite of the cloud making all efforts that the Chatak could drink more rain water the latter only accepts one drop that falls directly into its mouth.

The cloud feels indebted to the Chatak that it has atleast gladly accepted one drop of rain from the former inspite of the fact that the cloud had earlier behaved angrily at the Chatak's persistent request for a drop of rain by punishing the bird with a shower of hail, angrily rumbling and thundering, and hitting out with a stroke of lightening (as described in Doha nos. 283-284). (289)

[Note—Usually it is the recipient of donation or largesse that is indebted to the giver or donor, but it is not the other way round. In the case of the Chatak and the cloud, the recipient is the Chatak and the giver is the cloud, so normally the Chatak should be obliged or indebted to the cloud for giving it rain drops to quench its thirst. But the tables are turned in their case. The cloud feels indebted to its lover, the beloved Chatak, whose one-sided, selfless, unconditional and unpretentious love, dedication, devotion and total surrender to the cloud makes the latter obliged to the humble bird so much so that inspite of its initial reluctance and expression of anger, the cloud now pours streams of rain in the hope that the Chatak would accept more than one drop of rain water.

The cloud feels ashamed of its self and its earlier behaviour of being rude and angry at the Chatak. It feels guilty that it could not sufficiently reciprocate Chatak's love in equal measure because the Chatak would not accept more than one drop of the rain though the cloud is pouring it out in torrential streams in the hope that the Chatak would accept more of it. The patience and forgiveness of the Chatak for all the angry outburst of the cloud as described in Doha nos. 283-284 earlier leaves the cloud red-faced and indebted to the Chatak.

The cloud realises that no other creature has thanked it for the life-saving rain that it has poured on earth so abundantly, and instead they always complain that the rainfall was insufficient for the crop etc., but the poor Chatak is satisfied with only a single drop of rain and thanks the cloud for even this single drop. Naturally therefore the cloud feels indebted to the Chatak and its selfless love for the cloud.

When this relationship is applied to a devotee and Lord Ram it shows how much the Lord is obliged to his devotee and is indebted to him. A devotee wants nothing from the Lord except his mercy, love and grace, but the Lord feels guilty that he is unable to give the devotee anything more because the latter does not want it. So the Lord decides for himself that no matter how sinful and fallen the devotee is, he would take full responsibility for the devotee's welfare, happiness, liberation and deliverance though the devotee does not ask the Lord for them himself for any of these boons.

Refer Doha no. 291 below which resonates with the same idea as expressed in this present Doha.]

290. नहिं जाचत नहिं संग्रही सीस नाइ नहिं लेइ ।  
ऐसे मानी मागनेहि को बारिद बिन देइ ॥

290. nahim jācata nahim saṅgrahī sīsa nā'i nahim lē'i.  
aisē mānī māganēhi kō bārīda bina dē'i..

The bird Chatak neither verbally asks or demands for even a drop of rain, nor does he store it, or bends its head to accept the rain drops if they happen to fall at an angle other than the perpendicular straight into its mouth. [On the contrary, it keeps constantly gazing at the cloud, all the while chirping 'Piyu-Piyu'].

Tulsidas observes this phenomena and wonders as to who can satisfy the needs and desires of such a (self-respecting, dignified, devoted and renunciate) seeker as the Chatak other than the cloud? (290)

[Note—The Chatak behaves in a dignified manner; it is not an ordinary beggar who would turn to any random donor for any thing that comes for free. Chatak seeks from the cloud which it treats as a representative of the Supreme Giver, the Lord God. The Lord God knows what a devotee needs, what are his desires, and what goes on in his mind; so there is really no need to tell the Lord 'I want this and I want that'. To do so is lowering the dignity of the devotee himself as well as of the Lord God—because it would mean that the Lord is a miserly giver. The Lord is no ordinary giver; he is not a rich man obliging his followers so that they will be loyal to him in times of need and serve him faithfully. The Lord God is the Supreme Giver who gives liberally, benevolently, magnanimously, graciously, compassionately, and without any obligation or self-interest. The Lord only expects love, devotion, faith, sincerity, truthfulness and honesty in return, as well as piety, holiness, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety.

If the devotee is committed to the Lord and is true to his love and devotion for the Lord then the Lord diligently ensures that his welfare and good are well taken care of. If the devotee is focused in his love for the Lord, then the Lord goes a hundred steps ahead to take care of all his well-being.

Why should anyone seek anything from some inferior authority when the Emperor himself is his patron? When the devotee is standing right in the front of the Supreme Being, he need not say anything at all; the Lord knows what he wants and how best to give anything that will suit his needs. Asking some junior god for some favour will be tantamount to insulting the Supreme Lord who never demurs even for a second in fulfilling all the desires of his devotees. Of course the Lord subjects his devotee to some kind of 'test', and during the period of the test the devotee might get the impression that the Lord is neglecting him, has not heard his prayers, or is being stern towards him. There is definitely nothing of this sort. The 'test' is to determine if the devotee is really eligible to receive the Lord's special attention and love; it is not to neglect him but to separate the grain from the chaff. It is not also that the Lord will divert his resources away from the rest of the creatures and funnel them towards his loyal devotee—remember, the Lord has no dearth of resources to take care of this world which he has himself created. It does not matter to the ocean if millions of people take equal numbers of buckets of water from it for their needs. What the devotee benefits by passing the 'test' instituted by the Lord is in the form of an infinite source of mental peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity. He becomes

eligible for liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death; he finds emancipation and salvation for his soul.

In the present context of this Doha, the Chatak acts like a true devotee and lover. It does not ask for anything; it is left upon the cloud to understand what the Chatak wants and then fulfill its needs. The bird simply raises its head and chants 'Piyu, Piyu' which sound like 'dear, dear'. The word 'Piyu' also means 'I will drink'. In other words, the Chatak tells the cloud 'my dear, I am ready to drink, whatever you give me'. But it does not demand anything from the cloud; it simply tells it that it is ready to accept. The cloud then graciously drops a rain-drop into its mouth. The Chatak is completely satisfied with it; it does not want more. This is like a true and contented devotee who is happy at what the Lord himself gives him, instead of continuing to yearn for more.

Like a self-respecting and faithful devotee who does not seek from anyone else except his Lord, the Chatak too does not turn its head anywhere in its greed to drink more rain-drops other than the ones which the cloud has directly put into its mouth.

Again, like a wise and enlightened devotee who does not wish to hoard any material thing more than what is essential for survival because he is absolutely confident that the Lord will take care of all his needs as and when they arise, the Chatak too does not wish to fill its stomach with water unnecessarily, but remains satisfied with a few drops of the rain-water that fall directly into its mouth to quench its thirst.

Like the true devotee who feels that the Lord knows what his real needs are, and avoids giving him more than that so the devotee does not develop attachment with the extra things that he accumulates and gets bothered about their safe-keeping, the Chatak too remains fully contented with few drops of rain in the belief that when the need comes the cloud will once again provide it with fresh drops of rain water. So what purpose is served by drinking water more than it is needed, and then hoarding (storing) it in the stomach, when the cloud is there to quench its thirst?—this is how the Chatak thinks.

The self-respecting Chatak acts with great dignity by not bending its head sideways just for a few drops of rain. It would rather prefer to die than stoop low and accept anything not meant for it. The rain drops that do not directly fall into its mouth are meant for other creatures and for the earth. The conscientious Chatak thinks—'Why should I take anything that does not belong to me; why should I take that drop of rain which the cloud does not wish to give directly to me but has earmarked for other creatures as well as the earth?']

291. को को न ज्यायो जगत में जीवन दायक दानि ।  
भयो कनौड़ो जाचकहि पयद प्रेम पहिचानि ॥

291. kō kō na jyāyō jagata mēm jīvana dāyaka dāni.  
bhayō kanaurō jācakahi payada prēma pahicāni..

In this world who has not been benefitted by the life-giving nectar (rain) that is very liberally provided by the magnanimous donor, the cloud?

[The cloud pours so much rain upon the earth that all its bowls, such as the large and small rivers, lakes, ponds, pools and puddles get filled with their quota of water. Not only satisfied with this largesse, the amount of water that the cloud gives is so large that these bowls of the earth overflow with it, showing the magnanimity of the donor cloud that gives so much that the recipient has no place to keep it!]

But even this large-hearted and benevolent donor cloud feels itself indebted towards its lover Chatak when it recognizes the latter's deep love and devotion for the former, as well as the sense of dignity and self-respect of the Chatak.

[The Chatak acts like a renunciate hermit or a monk who meditates upon the Lord and seeks nothing from anyone, and accepts whatever the Lord God makes available to him. The Chatak accepts only a drop of rain water like the hermit or the monk who accepts alms only as much as is needed. The Chatak never accepts a drop of rain water that does not fall directly into its mouth like the hermit or the monk who does not greed for anything not meant for him, and has no complaint about anything whatsoever, remaining contented with whatever the Lord God gives him.

In this situation the cloud feels that if the Chatak has accepted a single drop of rain water from it then it is cloud's good luck even as it is deemed to be a great privilege for a rich donor if a truly renunciate hermit or monk agrees to accept something from him. To give alms to pious and holy people is regarded as a noble deed, but it is very difficult to make them accept it because such people are highly conscientious and they do not wish to accept anything that is not needed or which would undermine the dignity of their souls. So the donor feels highly elated and privileged if some great saint or sage agrees to accept his hospitality.

Similarly, the cloud feels very happy if the Chatak consents to accept rain-drops from it directly.] (291)

[Note—A lot of symbolism is employed in the use of this metaphor of the Chatak and the cloud in these Dohas. Refer to the various notes appended to all the verses dealing with this concept. Especial reference is to Doha no. 289 which speaks of the same idea as expressed in the present Doha.

The cloud is a most gracious and benevolent donor of the life-giving rain water. It gives so much that the earth gets deluged with water when it rains torrentially. The irony is that the world accuses the cloud both ways—if there is insufficient rain then the world accuses the cloud of not giving sufficient rain, ruining the harvest and starving the creatures of water over which they have a birth-right, and if the cloud gives liberally so that the earth overflows with rain water then the world again accuses the cloud of creating a deluge, ruining harvest and creating a general havoc all around.

Compared to this the Chatak remains contented with and grateful for whatever the cloud gives—if does not ask for or demand anything. If the cloud gives one drop of rain water then it is sufficient for the Chatak, and in case the cloud does not oblige at all then also the Chatak does not complain but continues to chant 'Piyu, Piyu' or 'dear, dear'. In other words, even if the cloud refuses to give a single drop of water to the Chatak, the latter still calls it its 'dear one'.

Obviously, this attitude of gratefulness of the Chatak makes the cloud highly obliged of him. On the one hand the cloud sees all the other ungrateful creatures of the world who never express their thanks to the cloud for its magnanimity, and on the other hand there is the Chatak which is so grateful even if even one drop of rain falls in its mouth, calling the cloud its 'dear one'. The Chatak is happy no matter what happens to it and no matter if the cloud even refuses to drop even a single drop of rain into its beak inspite of wasting all its rain by pouring it on the earth all around the Chatak!

A true devotee of the Lord must adopt an attitude like that of the Chatak vis-à-vis the cloud. The devotee must remain grateful, satisfied, happy and contented; he must not greed for anything; he must have completed dependence upon the Lord; he must have full faith and devotion for the Lord; he must be focused on the Lord and keep repeating the Lord's holy name; he must never worry or complain. ]

292. साधन साँसति सब सहत सबहि सुखद फल लाहु ।  
तुलसी चातक जलद की रीझि (रीति) बूझि बुध काहु ॥

292. sādhana sāṁsati saba sahata sabahi sukhada phala lāhu.  
tulasī cātaka jalada kī rījhi (rīti) būjhi budha kāhu..

Everyone has to suffer from hardships, to a lesser or greater degree, in order to achieve success in any endeavour and reaching one's cherished goal. And when the desired rewards or results are obtained, they give immense contentedness and happiness to all; everyone likes them. But Tulsidas says that the relationship between the Chatak and the rain-bearing cloud defies all logic, understanding and yardsticks as it is unique and cannot be compared with anything else.

[The Chatak bird is subjected to great sufferance because of its firm determination to seek the first drop of rain-water that falls from the cloud directly into its open mouth, instead of taking things easy and drinking to its heart's content when the rain actually starts falling in torrents and there is no shortage of rain-drops. After the Chatak passes this test of loyalty and allegiance, the cloud obliges the bird by putting rain-drops directly into its mouth to quench its thirst. The cloud is so overwhelmed by the humility and earnestness of the Chatak's request that it goes on pouring rain for hours together, and continues to do it for the entire rainy season.

The Chatak is contented by a single drop; it is not greedy, and it does not wish to exploit the cloud's magnanimity to declare itself as some great bird who was the first one to be honoured by the God of Rain with his first offering to the world at large of this nectar of life known as rain. After the first drops of rain-water, the bird then lets the rest of the world enjoy the rain. The Chatak is so humble that it does not even stand and declare to the greedy world that it is due to his sufferance, his earnest prayers and his stern austerities to please the God of Rain that the world is now enjoying the nectar of life in the form of rain. And neither does the cloud claim too that it so obliged to and overwhelmed by the love and loyalty of this single bird known as Chatak that it has opened its gates to the treasury of the ambrosia of life and fertility, the rain, to be enjoyed by all by pouring out this ambrosia in torrential currents to celebrate and honour the Chatak. Refer Doha no. 291 also.

The cloud is actually obliging the Chatak; the cloud had opened its floodgates for the rain to gush out and drench the world below because the Chatak had wanted the cloud to give it a drop of rain-water. But the selfish world never acknowledges it; the world never even thanks the cloud for its magnanimity, benevolence and graciousness, what to talk of acknowledging the role of the Chatak in the entire process. But neither of them complains, not the Chatak and not the cloud. On the contrary, if the cloud fails to meet the expectations of the people in the world, the latter accuse the cloud of being cruel and merciless by failing to give rain and causing droughts.

The Chatak is so enamoured of the cloud that inspite of all the rebukes and hardships that it has to endure, its love for the latter remains steadfast, unwavering and ever progressive. The cloud on its part feels itself indebted to Chatak because the latter had motivated the former to give rain to this world, and this rain acts as a vehicle that

sustains life on earth. The Chatak itself had accepted only one single drop of rain-water, but like a true renunciate it has allowed the largesse of the Rain-God to benefit the rest of the world without claiming any credit for it. Such a wonderful imagery!

The world treats the cloud as a benevolent giver of the ambrosia of life, the rain-water, but the actual credit should go to the loving relationship between the Chatak and the cloud. The world has no time or inclination to bother about the Chatak; the world's only concern is with the rain. If the cloud does not give rain, the world is not bothered about it either. ] (292)

[Note—In this context, please refer to Doha no. 293-294 below.

From the perspective of devotion for Lord God, this Doha has great significance and symbolism. A true devotee seeks from no one else but the God of his adoration, the Lord whom he worships. This devotee does not want any of the worldly things from his Lord, and only wishes that the Lord loves him and showers his blessings upon him. The devotee remains totally focused on the Lord God, and will prefer to undergo any hardship it ensures that the Lord is pleased with him. On the other hand, the Lord feels extremely obliged to give much more than what the devotee expects; in fact the Lord feels guilty that he has not done sufficiently enough for his loving devotee—the bigger largesse and the greater rewards that the Lord offers to the devotee seem to be too little to the Lord because he feels that he should have done much more for the devotee. The devotee on the other hand is unconcerned with the rewards and bounties, for he is completely contented when he finds that the Lord has heard his prayers, and that the Lord loves him too. The devotee wants nothing more, and the Lord never tires of giving more.]

293. चातक जीवन दायकहि जीवन समयँ सुरीति ।  
तुलसी अलख न लखि परै चातक प्रीति प्रतीति ॥

293. cātaka jīvana dāyakahi jīvana samayam̐ surīti.  
tulasī alakha na lakhi parai cātaka prīti pratīti..

The dimension and intensity of the cloud's love for the Chatak is visible even during the life time of the latter (because everyone can see this love fructify in the form of rains), but the depth and intensity of love of the Chatak for the cloud remains hidden from view, unacknowledged and unmeasured (because no one can know or understand how much the bird had to suffer to please the cloud to give rain, or the intensity of its love and devotion for the cloud that forced the latter to open its treasury of the life-rain for the benefit of the world). (293)

[Note—In this context, refer Doha nos. 292, 294, 302, 304 and 305.

The love, devotion, dedication and loyalty of the Chatak cannot be known and measured by the world; it is intangible, inexpressible, imperceptible and incomprehensible; it is a secret between the bird and the cloud. On the other hand, the expression of reciprocal love by the cloud is tangible and visible to the world in the form of the rains. The rain can be easily measured, and its benefits are there for all to see.

Tulsidas means that the world may not fully come to know the intensity of devotion that a devotee has for his Lord God, or the amount of sacrifices he had made for the Lord, for the former prefers not to advertise them. The world is only able to see the rewards that the Lord God showers upon his devotee—by fulfilling all his wishes, by giving him happiness and joys that he would have otherwise not at all have ever got relying upon his own strengths or resources, by giving him spiritual liberation and deliverance, by making

his contented and mystically empowered, by lending to him an aura of holiness and divinity that the rest of his brethren lack.]

294. जीव चराचर जहँ लगें है सब को हित मेह ।  
तुलसी चातक मन बस्यो घन सों सहज सनेह ॥

294. jīva carācara jaham̃ lagēm̃ hai saba kō hita mēha.  
tulasī cātaka mana basyō ghana sōm sahaja sanēha..

All the movable/mobile as well as the immovable/immobile creatures of this world (such as the animals and the plants respectively) are benefitted by the magnanimous, benevolent and compassionate nature of the cloud (because both of them are given this ambrosia of life equally, without distinction).

But it is only the bird Chatak which has a natural, selfless and inherent love for the cloud (because the rest of the world is selfish as it honours the cloud just because the latter provides the former with the life-sustaining rain-water, and if due to some reason the cloud fails to give rain to the world it would start criticizing the former and be scornful for it).

[Like a true lover, the Chatak will never complain if the cloud does not provide rain-drops, but the world will pour venom on the Rain-God if the cloud does not give adequate amount of rain because the world likes the presence of the cloud only because it serves its interests of providing rain. Not only that, if the rain is more than necessary, or if the cloud blocks the sun and does not give rain, the world will again start complaining—that it is very soggy and damp, that the weather is cloudy and the day is grey, and that its very depressing not to see the sun for such a long time. The world is never satisfied either way—if there is less rainfall the world will complain, and if the rainfall is more than normal the world will again complain.] (294)

295. डोलत बिपुल बिहंग बन पिअत पोखरिन बारि ।  
सुजस धवल चातक नवल तुही भुवन दस चारि ॥

295. dōlata bipula bihaṅga bana pi'ata pōkharina bāri.  
sujasa dhavala cātaka navala tuhī bhuvana dasa cāri..

[Tulsidas says—] ‘There are numerous birds wandering here and there in the forest, and all of them quench their thirst by drinking water from ponds, pools and other water bodies. But oh Chatak! It is only you who gets fame and honour in the entire creation consisting of fourteen sections or layers known as the ‘14 Bhuvans<sup>1</sup>’ (i.e. everywhere, all corners of the world). It is your fame that shines everywhere like the sun, while the world pays no attention to the other birds.’

[The Chatak is amply rewarded for its sacrifices by being shown the greatest respect and given a high honour in the world as a shining example of what true and sincere devotion, dedication, love, loyalty and integrity should be like, of the real meaning of overcoming temptations and being contented with whatever is available by the grace of God. The Chatak is remembered as the best lover and devotee of the cloud,

as the one whose love and loyalty to the cloud is so impeccable and inviolable that it would rather die of thirst if the cloud does not oblige by providing the drop of rain-water to it than accepting water from any other source in order to quench its thirst. The Chatak is the only fortunate bird who is cited and lauded by poets and bards, whereas none of the other birds are even mentioned by them.

Similarly, true devotees of Lord Ram are shown the greatest reverence by this world, and it cites them and uses them as benchmarks in the realm of devotion, dedication and love for the Lord God.

The cloud in the sky is likened to the Lord God in the heaven, while all the rest sources of water are likened to the world. A true devotee seeks only from his God, and he does not fall prey to worldly temptations like the Chatak which stubbornly refuses to accept water from any other source except the cloud.] (295).

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The 14 *Bhuvans*—There are fourteen Bhuvans or Lokas or worlds according to Padma Puran, and they are the following—(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu, (ii) Bhuvha, (iii) Swaha, (iv) Maha, (v) Janaha, (vi) Tapaha, and (vii) Satyam. (B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha Loka:— (i) Atal, (ii) Vital, (iii) Satal, (iv) Rasaatal, (v) Talaatal, (vi) Mahaatal, and (vii) Patal. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto)1, section 1, verse no. 1 says that these fourteen Bhuvans are protected by Brahma the creator who created this world.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse no. 35 says that Brahma-Loka is like the ceremonial umbrella on the head of Lord Vishnu, while the seven nether worlds known as the 'Paataal-Lokas' represent the Lord's feet.]

296. मुख मीठे मानस मलिन कोकिल मोर चकोर ।  
सुजस धवल चातक नवल रह्यो भुवन भरि तोर ॥

296. mukha mīṭhē mānasa malina kōkila mōra cakōra.  
sujasa dhavala cātaka navala rahyō bhuvana bhari tōra..

Tulsidas says that the Cuckoo, the Peacock and the Chakor (Indian red legged partridge) are very sweet in the mouth (i.e. their voices are very sweet and pleasant to hear) but their hearts are vicious and cruel (because they mercilessly eat insects and worms). But compared to them, oh pure Chatak, your immaculate glories are spread over the world (because you never accept even dirty water in your mouth to fill your stomach, leave alone eating insects and worms like these other sweet-talking birds).

[All these four birds—Cuckoo, Peacock, Chakor and Chatak—have a sweet, attractive and pleasant voice. But whereas the other birds are cunning and merciless inspite of such a pleasant demeanour because they pounce upon and eat unsuspecting and innocent worms and insects at the first opportunity, the Chatak alone remains like a true hermit, focused on the object of its adoration, the cloud, and not polluting its mouth by refusing to accept even a single drop of water from the earth but relying solely upon the absolutely clean and crystal clear water-drops falling down from the sky in the form of rain. What a striking contrast between the other three birds and the Chatak!] (296)

[Note—Tulsidas means that there are countless persons in this world who pretend to be pious and holy, who deceive the world by being pretentious and declaring themselves as

devotees of the Lord God and holy men. But they are actually vile, sinful, selfish and cunning people as they use this external behaviour of piety and holiness as a ploy to cheat the world to serve their vested interests and fulfill their nefarious agenda. A true devotee of Lord Ram is like the humble Chatak who remains focused on the rain-bearing cloud, and shuns all temptations from other sources of water on this earth in order to quench its thirst. The cloud is so grateful to this Chatak that after testing its integrity and honesty it pours rain in abundance. The cloud is showing its gratefulness and indebtedness to the Chatak, but these other birds as well as the rest of the world thinks that the cloud is giving rain for them.

When we extend this logic to the reasons why the Supreme Being took birth in this world as an incarnation of Lord Ram, we find a marvelous parallel. The Lord has himself said to this effect that “I will come down to this world to fulfill the desires of so many of my devotees”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 192, (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187, and (iii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48 which very specifically point out to this fact.]

297. बास बेस बोलनि चलनि मानस मंजु मराल ।  
तुलसी चातक प्रेम की कीरति बिसद बिसाल ॥

297. bāsa bēsa bōlani calani mānasa maṅju marāla.  
tulasī cātaka prēma kī kīrati bisada bisāla..

A Swan has all the noble qualities one desires to possess—it has a sweet, cheerful and pleasant voice and demeanour, its life and behaviour are royal and majestic. Its mind and heart are as pure as the Mansarovar Lake where it lives. In brief, the Swan and its lifestyle are irreproachable and immaculate<sup>1</sup>.

That said and done, when it comes to possessing the grand virtue of having love and devotion for the object of one’s adoration, worship and faith, the honour goes to the bird Chatak that is famous for this grand virtue in this world in an exclusive manner. The Chatak is foremost and unparalleled in this world as far as possessing the grand and most respected quality of unflinching love, unwavering devotion, sincere dedication, undiluted loyalty, sincerity and faithfulness is concerned.

The Swan may be a metaphor for all other good and noble qualities (such as having great wisdom and erudition because it picks up pearls and leaves behind everything else, and it drinks milk leaving other adulterants such as excess water behind, such as having a privileged lifestyle as it lives in the Mansarovar Lake, and so on and so forth), but the Chatak takes the prize that is reserved for possessing the grand and majestic virtues of love and devotion of the highest intensity and quality. (297)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The residence in the Mansarovar is a symbolic representation of the best of places one can ever find on earth to live in; the surroundings are absolutely unpolluted and the scenery is exceptionally beautiful as this lake lies in the upper reaches of the Himalayan mountain range on an elevated plateau in the region of modern-day Tibet. The Swan’s body is of pristine white colour symbolizing good and robust health, cleanliness, purity, cheerfulness and attractiveness. Its pleasant voice that is sweet and charming, its cheerful and carefree demeanours, its nature of accepting only the best in this world which is exemplified by its habit of picking up pearls and leaving aside the rest of the things, as well as its legendary ability to drink only pure milk and leave behind its pollutants such as excess water that is added to dilute the milk, are all instances of its

noble character and high pedigree. It lives a life upholding grand values that are majestic and royal as well as impeccable.

Inspite of possessing all these great qualities, when it comes to the grand virtues of love, loyalty, devotion and faith it is the Chatak that wins hands down.]

298. प्रेम न परखिअ परुषपन पयद सिखावन एह ।  
जग कह चातक पातकी ऊसर बरसै मेह ॥

298. prēma na parakhi'a paruṣapana payada sikhāvana ēha.  
jaga kaha cātaka pātakī ūsara barasai mēha..

The world calls a Chatak a sinner for the cloud rains even on infertile land but not a single drop falls in the beak of the Chatak. [The world thinks that if the Chatak was holy and pious then the Rain-God would willingly oblige it by putting rain-drops directly into its mouth. But since it does not often happen this way, the world is so foolish and ignorant of the reality that it makes a hasty judgement and decides that the Chatak is a sinner because the Rain-God is not listening to its pleas or prayers for providing it with drops of rain-water through the medium of the cloud.]

Tulsidas says that the fact is absolutely different. The cloud teaches an indirect lesson to the world that the test of purity, honesty and sincerity in love and its intensity should not be judged or tested by lack of positive response or an outright rebuke by the beloved to the overtures of the lover. [In fact, the more stubborn the beloved is towards the lover, the more the latter's love for the former comes in focus, the more it is highlighted. A true lover is one who is not put off by the rebuke or stubbornness of his beloved towards his expressions of love, and neither does he ever abandon his love and its expression for the beloved in spite of the latter's rebuke and apparent indifference to his gestures and overtures. A true lover emulates the Chatak by keeping his attention focused on the object of his adoration with full faith in the strength and integrity of his love and devotion because he knows that sooner or later the beloved is bound to realise his commitment and sincerity and then yield to his requests when the beloved is convinced that the lover is not being pretentious and deceitful.] (298)

[Note—It is often seen that true love shines and acquires more sheen, glitter and intensity when it is subjected to a rigorous test in the form of stubbornness and rebuke or rebuff from the object of one's adoration and love. It is like the case of a diamond that shines more when it is rubbed against a rough surface to make it polished and cut brilliantly, or like the case when the razor is sharpened by rubbing against a rough stone. The rebuke or rebuff makes a true lover more determined and steadfast in his pursuit. It proves that he is sincere and unpretentious in his love—because if the lover is selfish and had been making overtures of love to satisfy some of his carnal desires, if his love is not deep and real, then he would seek greener pastures and turn his attention to someone else who can fall an easy prey to his lust when he discovers that the first object of his attention is being stubborn and not yielding to his gestures.

So, after having tested the Chatak's sincerity and dedication, the cloud finally obliges the bird by pouring rain in torrential abundance.

When we extend this phenomenon to Lord Ram and his devotees, the parallel becomes obvious and striking. In the beginning it appears that the Lord is stubborn and not paying attention to the devotee's miseries when the latter starts praying to the Lord.

But it is not that; the Lord is mercy and compassion personified. The Lord is merely testing the devotee's sincerity and dedication, his love and devotion, his steadfastness, integrity and commitment. When the Lord is satisfied, he then opens the floodgates of his mercy, grace, benevolence and magnimity for the devotee.

But the Lord will think of the long-term spiritual good of the devotee, instead of fulfilling his short-term goals of enjoyment of the sense objects of this material world. The Lord would strive to free his devotee from the strong fetters that shackle him to this gross world of an endless cycle of birth and death, instead of tying him more strongly in this fetter by allowing him to wallow in the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of this mundane world just to please him and pretending to be a charitable giver of largesses to seekers. So the Lord pulls the devotee away from the world and motivates his mind to inculcate the virtues of self-control, renunciation, dispassion, detachment, austerity and penances. Such a person turns away from the temptations and material grandeur of the gross world, and instead begins to live a calm life of austerity, bliss and peace.

The world however does not understand this behaviour, for it thinks that such a person has no ambition, that he is a failure in life, that the Lord is not listening to his prayers, and that he lacks grit and aspirations to rise and achieve success in life. The true devotee of the Lord is like a sincere lover; he loves the Lord for the sake of love, and not to demand and expect worldly things. But the stupid world does not understand this; it thinks that like the rest he also prays to his Lord to give him this and that of the material world. And when the world finds that after so much time praying the devotee is still in the same place as far as worldly possessions are concerned, the world passes its judgement—saying that obviously the person is a sinner because in spite of his daily prayers to the Lord, the latter has not provided him any benefits.

'Rewards' in the eyes of the world are material gains, and not spiritual gains. So though the Lord God has showered the devotee with all his mercy and grace, which the devotee nevertheless realises and understands, the world continues to think that either the Lord is cruel and heartless, or the devotee is sinful as the Lord is not listening to his pleas.]

299. होइ न चातक पातकी जीवन दानि न मूढ़ ।  
तुलसी गति प्रहलाद की समुझि प्रेम पथ गूढ़ ॥

299. hō'i na cātaka pātakī jīvana dāni na mūr̥ha.  
tulasī gati prahalāda kī samujhi prēma patha gūr̥ha..

[This Doha is an extension of Doha no. 298.]

Neither is the Chatak a sinner, nor is the life sustainer (i.e. the rain giving) cloud a fool. Tulsidas says that one should look at the example of Prahalad<sup>1</sup> to understand that the path of love (i.e. devotion and total surrender towards the beloved) is very difficult and arduous to follow.

[Pralhad was a child devotee of Lord Vishnu, while his father was an enemy of the Lord. The father tormented his own son Prahalad to deter him from worshipping Lord Vishnu, subjecting the child to countless tortures. So Prahalad had to undergo numerous hardships and torments at the hands of his father just for the sake of his devotion for the Lord. In spite of that, the Lord took a long time to manifest himself to save the child from sufferings—just to test as well as reinforce the devotion of his devotee Prahalad. The delay on the part of the Lord was not because he neglected Prahalad, but it was to test his

sincerity and steadfastness. It is necessary to carry out such tests to weed out the pretentious, deceitful and false devotees from the real ones. Such rigorous tests ensure that only the honest ones get the benefit of Lord's grace and benevolence, for otherwise even the sinful and pervert creatures would escape punishment if they manage to pass themselves off easily as devotees after wallowing in sins for the entire length of their lives. No one can expect the Lord to treat the sinful and the holy persons alike with the same yardstick. It would be doing injustice to the true devotee and holy person if he is treated in the same way as the corrupt and the sinful. So in order to separate the grain from the chaff such tests are necessary for the supreme Lord.

The bird Chatak had been continuously chanting 'Piu-Piu' (literally translated into 'love, I want to drink') with its head lifted upwards towards the sky and the gaze fixed at the cloud. But the cloud does not immediately oblige; it takes its own time to give rain. So the world makes a quick judgement that the Chatak is sinful and that is why the Rain-God is not obliging. Refer Doha no. 298. Tulsidas now cites the instance of Prahalad to bring home the point that delay on the part of the cloud to oblige the Chatak is not due to any cruelty on the part of the cloud but it is to show the world what true love is and how a true lover should behave.

This metaphor is employed by the great poet-saint Tulsidas to tell all the devotees of Lord Ram not to become impatient and accuse the Lord of being hard-hearted if their prayers are not answered immediately. Once their petition is placed before the supreme Lord, he takes cognizance of it, but then he can't rush through it before completing a thorough investigation of the merit of the case. So one should have patience and be steadfast in one's devotion and love for the Lord God.] (299)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The story of *Prahalad* and his demonic father Hiranyakasipu is narrated in the note appended to Doha no. 26 of this book.]

300. गरज आपनी सबन को गरज करत उर आनि ।  
तुलसी चातक चतुर भो जाचक जानि सुदानि ।।

300. garaja āpanī sabana kō garaja karata ura āni.  
tulasī cātaka catura bhō jācaka jāni sudāni..

Everyone has a vested self-interest in all of one's dealings with others in this world. It is this self-interest that drives one's behaviour and interaction with others. It is due to one's expectations that such interactions would benefit him in some way that one is inclined or motivated to interact or deal with others; otherwise no one will bother about the next person if the latter serves no purpose of the former.

It is the desire to satisfy one's self-interest that he goes from one person to another to interact with them or pray to them (or request them for any thing). [If the first person cannot meet one's requirements, he goes to someone else. The seeker is interested in fulfilling his desires and aspirations, and whosoever meets his needs is praised by him, while anyone who can't is shunned altogether. He goes to anyone not because that person is good or bad, but because he expects that person to oblige him by meeting his requirements. If the other person fails to do so, the seeker immediately seeks another person. In other words, the seeker is not loyal to anyone in particular, but is only interested in fulfilling his needs and meeting his goals.]

Tulsidas says that compared to such seekers, the Chatak seeks only from the cloud. The Chatak does not go to some other source of water (such as the river, the stream, the pond, the lake etc.) to quench its thirst if the cloud does not oblige for some reason; it would prefer to die instead. This is because the Chatak knows that the cloud is a wise and gracious giver, and once it is convinced of the bird's loyalty and honesty it will give so much rain that the whole world would benefit from this largesse. Therefore, the Chatak does not lose patience and hope.

[Tulsidas uses this metaphor to stress the point that Lord Ram is the most gracious and benevolent giver, and the devotee should emulate the Chatak by seeking only from the Lord and no one else. Once the Lord is satisfied that the devotee is sincere and loyal, he is sure to shower his benevolence and grace upon him in abundance. The underlying message is to be loyal, faithful and steadfast in one's beliefs, convictions, faith, devotion, love and submission for the Lord God, and not become so selfish and impatient that if the Lord takes some time to reply due to some reason which the devotee cannot understand, then he abandons Lord Ram and jumps to another God seeking from the latter. This is not called faith and loyalty; it is being selfish and self-centered.] (300)

[Note—The word used in the text for 'desires and requirements' is 'Garaj', which is the first word of the Doha. It is an Arabic word. In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 314, Bharat expresses the same sentiments when he says that Lord Ram knows what Bharat and other want, and he is also aware of what is the best for them. Why then should he (Bharat) seek anything from others?

The benevolent and magnanimous nature of Lord Ram is highlighted in Doha nos. 162-163 of this book. Further, in Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 41-46, Tulsidas cites countless instances to say that all the glories, grandeur and achievements in this life are futile if one cannot have devotion and love for Lord Ram.]

301. चरग चंगु गत चातकहि नेम प्रेम की पीर ।  
तुलसी परबस हाड़ पर परिहैं पुहुमी नीर ॥

301. caraga caṅgu gata cātakahi nēma prēma kī pīra.  
tulasī parabasa hāra para parihair̥m puhumī nīra..

Tulsidas says that when a Chatak is caught in the claws of a Falcon (a type of hawk), and realising that its death is certain, it laments not at the fear of imminent death but at the misfortune of getting killed untimely and its remains (bones and feathers) falling in some ordinary water body on the earth instead of dying in the 'Swati-Nakshatra' and getting them (its remains) drenched in the rain water of its beloved cloud during this particular auspicious constellation. (301)

[Note—The Chatak laments that it could not die while being soaked in the rain-water of his beloved cloud, but that its remains would now fall in some dirty water body such as a river or pond on the earth. Tulsidas cites this instance to say that a true devotee knows well enough that one day he has to die and leave this world forever, but he prefers to die while remembering his beloved Lord Ram instead of thinking about and worrying for the world. This idea is also expressed by Tulsidas in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 231, stanza nos. 3-4; and by Baali in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, line no. 2 of Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10. ]

302. बध्यो बधिक पर्यो पुन्य जल उलटि उठाई चोंच ।  
तुलसी चातक प्रेमपट मरतहुँ लगी न खोंच ॥

302. badhyō badhika paryō pun'ya jala ulaṭi uṭhā'ī cōñca.  
tulasī cātaka prēmapaṭa maratahum'lagī na khōñca..

[Tulsidas uses another example to show the intensity of Chatak's love and devotion for the cloud. He uses this metaphor of the Chatak to draw a parallel and stress the sort of devotion one must have for Lord Ram.]

Some hunter shot down a Chatak, and it fell in the holy river Ganges which is renowned as a provider of salvation to the dying creature. But instead of treating its self fortunate that it fell in the Ganges and is now assured of salvation, the Chatak immediately turned its head upwards towards the sky to face the cloud.

[Tulsidas says—] 'Look! Even in his dying moments the Chatak did not allow his shroud of love and affection, the shroud of devotion and dedication for the cloud that he has been wearing for so long to be tainted in the slightest by anything.'

Tulsidas says that even at the time of death, not a single scar could appear on the shroud symbolized by the Chatak's love for the cloud; not a single scratch could be found on this shroud that would lead to the tearing apart of the symbolic cloth of love and dedication that the poor Chatak had been wearing in his life.

[The Chatak turned away from the Ganges and towards the cloud. It did not bother to even thank the holy river for accepting it for providing salvation, but instead turned towards the cloud in its dying moments to establish its unflinching love and dedication for the latter. This metaphor is used to emphasise that in true love, the lover is not at all concerned about anything else except his beloved. For the dying Chatak, the holy river is as good as the rest of the ordinary water bodies; the Chatak is unconcerned whether the Ganges is holy or not. Its attention is focused on its beloved cloud; it wants to spend its last moments seeing it and not the water of the river. The Chatak did not feel happy that at last he is so fortunate that he fell in the holy river Ganges and now his salvation is assured, but it turns a blind eye to the river, it shuns the river, it spurns the river, it rejects it and says 'no, I don't want to even see you; I will die looking at my beloved cloud instead'.

Even in the last moments of life, the Chatak does not wish to drink one single drop of water from the holy river though he knows that if he did so he is assured of salvation. If he did so it would undermine his vow of loyalty to the cloud—his declared love for the cloud that he would die of thirst if the cloud does not give it a drop of rain-water would be null and void if he accepts to drink water from any other source to survive, or in this particular case accept water from the holy river Ganges in order to attain salvation. This would be tantamount to betrayal of the love that he has declared for the cloud. The Chatak would be deemed to be selfish if he drinks the water of the Ganges because it would mean that he preferred salvation over and above his avowed love for the cloud; he would be breaking his own vows that he will die for want of water if the cloud does not put a drop of rain-water into its beak, but would not drink any water from any other source no matter what happens.] (302)

[Note—In the context of this Doha, refer to Doha no. 305 as well as no. 303 below .

Like the Chatak, a true devotee would like to remember his beloved Lord Ram till the last breath of his life. Even if he is promised heaven and the crown of the world, he will pay no heed to them but prefer to think of Lord Ram exclusively even if this means sufferance and missing a golden chance to attain heaven with all its comforts and pleasures. A true devotee remains steadfast in his vows of devotion and submission to the Lord, and no temptations or allurements of the material world is strong enough to deflect him from his chosen path.]

303. अंड फोरि कियो चेदुवा तुष पर्यो नीर निहारि ।  
गहि चंगुल चातक चतुर डार्यो बाहिर बारि ।।

303. aṇḍa phōri kiyō cēṭuvā tuṣa paryō nīra nihāri.  
gahi caṅgula cātaka catura ḍāryō bāhira bāri..

Some Chatak poked its egg to let the chick come out. The egg-shell fell down in some water body (such as a pond or puddle). The clever Chatak was dismayed at it (because it realised that this event would be used against it to declare that it has broken its vows of shunning all sources of water except the rain). So it immediately bent down and plucked the egg-shell with its claws from the water and flicked it on the dry ground nearby. [The Chatak used the ‘claw’ instead of its beak to remove the shell from the water because if it had used the beak then it would be breaking its vows of loyalty to the cloud that its beak will touch no other water except the one coming directly from the cloud. The Chatak also hoped that when it finally starts raining, this shell would be cleaned and washed by the fresh water provided by the cloud.] (303)

[Note—A true devotee ensures that his external gross body consisting of the organs of perception and action, as well as his internal subtle body consisting of the mind, intellect and sub-conscious are collectively dedicated to Lord Ram, that they work in coordination with each other. So while he focuses his mind and its sub-conscious on the Lord, and he uses his intelligence to understand and research the ‘truth’ of the Lord on the one hand at the subtle level, on the other hand he uses his gross body to serve the Lord and worship him in accordance with the principles established by the holy scriptures.]

304. तुलसी चातक देत सिख सुतहि बारहीं बार ।  
तात न तर्पन कीजिए बिना बारिधर धार ।।

304. tulasī cātaka dēta sikha sutahi bārahīm bāra.  
tāta na tarpana kīji'ai binā bāridhara dhāra..

Tulsidas says that the Chatak constantly teaches its chick, ‘Oh dear son! Remember—when I die, do not use any water other than the rain falling from my beloved cloud to perform my last purification rites.’ (304)

[Note—The Chatak passes on the heritage to its off-spring. Likewise, a true devotee teaches those around him to dedicate their lives to Lord Ram in an exclusive manner and shun all sorts of diversions and confusions from myriad paths.]

[A 'Sortha' is a type of Doha in which the last words of the two lines do not rhyme with each other as is the general rule with a Doha. Tulsidas has used a combination of Dohas and Sorthas in his epic book known as 'Ram Charit Manas'.]

305. जिअत न नाई नारि चातक घन तजि दूसरहि ।  
सुरसरिहू को बारि मरत न माँगेउ अरध जल ॥

305. ji'ata na nā'ī nāri cātaka ghana taji dūsarahi.  
surasarihū kō bāri marata na māṅgē'u aradha jala..

As long as it was alive, the Chatak did not bow its head in front of anyone else except its beloved cloud (i.e. it sought help or succour from no one else except the cloud). Its dedication and faithfulness towards the cloud was so true and intense that even at the time of death it did not seek salvation by asking to be given 'Ardha-Jali'<sup>1</sup> in the holy water of the river Ganges.

[Earlier in Doha no. 302 it has already been said that when the wounded Chatak fell in the Ganges, it immediately turned its head towards the sky so that it can look at the cloud in its final moments of dying if it can see the cloud in the sky, or at least turn his head away from the water of the Ganges in a token gesture of rejecting the river's offer of providing it salvation and saying to the effect that 'I have nothing to do with you; I will not sip your dirty water even in my last moments of life; I am not interested in salvation either; and my last wish is to see my beloved cloud before I die'.

The last moments of a creature's life are very tormenting; his throat is invariably parched and he wishes to gulp water. But even in this situation, the Chatak refuses to sip the water of the holy river; it spurns the offer of salvation that is made ready for it because only a fortunate few are able to die while remaining submerged in the water of the river Ganges.

Tulsidas uses this Doha to stress the characteristics of true devotees of Lord Ram. Such people will seek solace and succour from no one else except their Lord Ram, and even if all the great rewards of this world are made available to them on a platter they will not bargain their loyalty for their beloved Lord under any circumstance.] (305)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *Ardha-Jali*—It is believed that if a dead person is half immersed in the waters of the Ganges, then the soul attains liberation from the bondage of this body and the world. Therefore it is a practice amongst Hindus that before cremation of the dead body it is washed and half dipped in the water of the Ganges.]

306. सुनु रे तुलसीदास प्यास पपीहहि प्रेम की ।  
परिहरि चारिउ मास जो अँचवै जल स्वाति को ॥

306. sunu rē tulasīdāsa pyāsa papīhahi prēma kī.  
parihari cāri'u māsa jō aṁcavai jala svāti kō..

[Tulsidas addresses himself and says—] 'Oh Tulsidas, listen! The bird Papiha (the Chatak) is thirsty only for love (and not water). That is why, during the whole of the

rainy season consisting of four months, it avoids drinking ordinary water but is satisfied only by the few drops of rain falling during the 'Swati-Nakshatra'.' (306)

[Note—This Doha is in continuation to the previous Doha no. 305. It explains why this bird did not drink the water of the Ganges even in its last moments of life, and instead turned its beak upwards towards the sky in the hope that the cloud would finally acknowledge its love and loyalty to it by dropping a single drop of rain-water into its beak before it died. Had the Chatak been looking at the cloud merely seeking water to quench its thirst and moisten its parched throat then it has an abundance supply of water in the river itself where it has fallen and lying afloat. Further, even before falling into the river, it could have easily quenched its thirst by drinking as much water as it wanted from so many other sources of water available in the forest. But no, the Chatak is not yearning for water; it yearns for reciprocity of love and affection that it has for the cloud. Even a single drop of rain-water coming directly to it from the cloud is sufficient to make it contented than drinking water from anywhere else to fill its stomach, not even from the holy river Ganges.]

307. जाचै बारह मास पिए पपीहा स्वाति जल ।  
जान्यो तुलसीदास जोगवत नेही नेह मन ॥

307. jācai bāraha māsa pi'ē papihā svāti jala.  
jān'yō tulasīdāsa jōgavata nēhī nēha mana..

The bird Chatak asks for rain as soon as it sees the clouds for all the 12 months of the year (by chanting 'Piu-Piu' or literally 'Love, I want to drink'), but actually drinks only the drops of rain-water that fall during the 'Swati-Nakshatra'.

Tulsidas says that he thinks that by doing this, the Chatak tries to please its beloved cloud and keep it happy with the thought that it (the Chatak) is loyal to the latter (the cloud) and in spite of the cloud's stubbornness in not being polite and responding to the Chatak's eager requests for rain-drops the latter has not felt betrayed and still loves the cloud intensely.

[If the Chatak does not call out to the cloud everytime it sees it, the latter might accuse the former of selfishness by looking up to it and seeking water only when it is thirsty, and remaining indifferent to its appearance in the sky when its stomach is full of water. So the Chatak is wise enough not to take any risk, and every time it sights the cloud in the sky it starts chanting 'Piu-Piu' irrespective of whether it is thirsty or not.] (307)

[Note—In Doha no. 308 Tulsidas clearly explains why the Chatak calls out 'Piu-Piu' whenever it sees the cloud.

Besides the reason given by Tulsidas, some of the other reasons can be cited here as follows:--

The Chatak seems to convey the message to the cloud that it is not begging for water because of its desire to quench its thirst, for had this been the case there are plenty of sources of water available in the forest from which an abundant supply of water can be obtained, but it is begging to the cloud because it loves the latter. The Chatak requests the cloud to reciprocate its gesture of love and affection as well as loyalty and integrity towards it by giving it some drops of rain-water directly into its open beak.

The Chatak chants 'Piu-Piu' every time it sees the cloud instead of only during the Swati Nakshatra to show that it is always ready to accept the cloud's gift in the form of

rain drops throughout the year whenever the cloud is willing to oblige, and not only during any specific period of time such as the Swati Nakshatra.

Further, the Chatak wishes to tell the cloud that it always remembers the latter, throughout the year, and not only when it is thirsty, and that it will seek to quench its thirst only by the water that the cloud provides to it instead of from any other source.

Of course the cloud does not give rain every time the Chatak says 'Piu-Piu', but at least the bird reiterates its loyalty, faithfulness, affection and love for the cloud every time it sights its beloved one (the cloud). The Chatak beseeches its beloved cloud to be gracious and kind enough to reciprocate its gestures of love, affection, dedication, loyalty and faithfulness towards the latter by giving rain to the former. ]

308. तुलसी के मत चातकहि केवल प्रेम पिआस ।  
पिअत स्वाति जल जान जग जाँचत बारह मास ॥

308. tulasīm kē mata cātakahi kēvala prēma pi'āsa.  
pi'ata svāti jala jāna jaga jāṁcāta bāraha māsa..

According to Tulsidas (i.e. in his opinion), the Chatak is thirsty only for love of the cloud (and not for water), because the whole world knows that it drinks only the rain drops of the 'Swati-Nakshatra' but remains a seeker throughout the year.

[That is, the Chatak accepts the drops of rain only once during the constellation of stars known as the Swati Nakshatra though it raises its head and chants 'Piu-Piu' every time it sees the cloud in a symbolic gesture meaning 'oh my beloved, I want to drink'. Why it does so has been explained in this Doha no. 308 as well as earlier in Doha nos. 306-307.] (308)

309. आलबाल मुकुताहलनि हिय सनेह तरु मूल ।  
होइ हेतु चित चातकहि स्वाति सलिलु अनुकूल ॥

309. ālabāla mukutāhalani hiya sanēha taru mūla.  
hō'i hētu cita cātakahi svāti salilu anukūla..

The Chatak's heart is akin to a beautiful garden in which the seeds of love for the cloud have been sown in its flower beds. When they are watered by the rain of the Swati Nakshatra, they sprout into trees bearing flowers in the form of pearls symbolizing the best of qualities of love, affection, devotion, dedication, loyalty and integrity that the Chatak has for its beloved cloud.

These virtues bloom and flourish into evergreen trees (i.e. the Chatak's love and devotion for the cloud become firm, robust, vibrant and mature) during the Swati Nakshatra when the cloud obliges it by showering rain (to symbolically water this garden of love in the heart of the Chatak).

[The Chatak has sown the seeds of love for the cloud in his heart. When the cloud obliges it by giving rain, these seeds sprout into colourful plants, giving a magnificent view to this garden. Just like the case of a garden losing its beauty if there are no colourful flowering plants in it, the love of the Chatak for the cloud would wither and die

if the cloud does not show reciprocity and shower rain upon the Chatak. If the cloud does so, the Chatak's love is reinforced and made more vibrant; if the cloud does not oblige then the Chatak feels let down, making it depressed and crestfallen symbolizing a garden that has no flowering plants in it, a garden that is barren and life-less.] (309)

[Note—From the perspective of the devotee and his Lord God, this Doha means that when the Lord obliges the devotee by showering his mercy and benevolence upon him, the devotee feels ecstatic and blissful. His happiness and joy become so infectious that anyone who comes in contact with him also becomes happy and joyous. The glory of the Lord spreads in the world upon being reflected by him.

When the world observes the devotee's privileged state of existence with a mind that is ever cheerful, peaceful and contented, it is motivated to have devotion for the Lord so that it too can reap the same spiritual fruit. On the contrary, if the world finds that in spite of all his earnestness and devotion for the Lord God the devotee is still suffering, and his condition is worse now than what it was before, it will act as a big deterrent for the world to pursue the path to God.

So, Tulsidas indirectly requests as well as warn Lord Ram to be careful and take special interest in the welfare of his devotees because any delay on the Lord's part would be misinterpreted by the world, and it would undermine all attempts of holy men and the scriptures to turn the creatures of the world towards the path of spirituality and devotion for the Lord God. The world won't believe them.]

310. उष्ण काल अरु देह खिन मग पंथी तन ऊख ।  
चातक बतियाँ न रुचीं अन जल सींचे रूख ॥

310. uṣṇa kāla aru dēha khina maga panthī tana ūkha.  
cātaka batiyāṁ na rucīṁ ana jala sīncē rūkha..

It was a hot summer day, the Chatak was going somewhere, and his body was feeling weary and fatigued (due to heat). Another bird who was sitting under the shade of a tree called out and advised the Chatak to come and take some rest in the shade of the tree. But the Chatak was not pleased by this thought, for being an honest and peerless lover who was always loyal to his beloved he did not like the idea of taking rest under a tree which was not watered by the rain of his beloved cloud during the 'Swati-Nakshatra' but by some other source of water.

[The idea expressed in this Doha is similar to the one in Doha nos. 302-303. There it was the Chatak spurning the privilege of accepting the holy water of the Ganges, and here it is his refusal to take rest under the shade of the tree that is not watered by the rain of the Swati Nakshatra.] (310)

[Note—A true devotee is one who sticks to his chosen deity throughout life. If someone tempts him to worship another God because that God is more powerful or benevolent than the devotee's chosen one, the honest devotee refuses the offer. Actually the chosen deity is testing the devotee's sincerity and loyalty towards his own chosen God, and once the devotee passes this test the Lord God showers his blessings upon him in abundance. Those who change their preferred deity at the drop of a hat because the next one seems to serve their selfish interests better are like harlots.

Refer Doha no. 311 below.]

311. अन जल सींचे रूख की छाया तें बरु धाम ।  
तुलसी चातक बहुत हैं यह प्रबीन को काम ॥

311. ana jala sīncē rūkha kī chāyā tēm baru dhāma.  
tulasī cātaka bahuta hair̄m yaha prabīna kō kāma..

Tulsidas says that ordinarily there are countless birds that come under the general category of birds called 'Chatak'. But all of them are not alike. It is only the rarest of rare amongst them who remains firm and steadfast in its belief that 'it is better to die in the heat of the sun than taking refuge in the shade of a tree that has not been irrigated or watered by the rain falling during the auspicious Swati Nakshatra'.

[Only a faithful, loyal and honest Chatak would be firm in upholding the vows of allegiance and promise that it had made to its beloved cloud that it would prefer death to accepting anything that is not directly blessed by the cloud itself during the Swati Nakshatra; all the birds will not be so strict in this vow as the particular Chatak to whom Tulsidas refers.

While the rest of the birds would first think of immediate necessities of survival and physical comfort rather than being honoured for observing such niceties as being loyal to some distant cloud and its rain during the Swati Nakshatra, and thereby courting extreme physical discomfort and death, the faithful Chatak on the other hand will not bother about any discomfort or the prospects of death but will be more concerned in being faithful and loyal to its vows of having un-adulterated and pristine love and affection for the cloud. The rewards that the Chatak reaps in the process are great acclaim and honour in the world as being a shining example of loyalty to one's beloved, while the rest of the birds are relegated to oblivion.

The clever Chatak knows that one day all living beings have to die, so why not die in a noble manner, in a way that the world will remember for all times to come.] (311)

[Note—There are numerous people who behave like a false-Chataks—i.e. they only pretend that their love for the beloved is no less than that of the famous Chatak, but they lack sincerity and commitment. There are only rare people who are like a true Chatak who sticks to the vow of drinking no other water except the rain-drops of the 'Swati-Nakshatra'—i.e. people who are so steadfast in their loyalty and love for their beloved that they have nothing to do with the rest of the world except their chosen object of adoration and love.

From the spiritual perspective it implies that an aspirant must remain focused on his chosen path and adore only one Lord God. In the case of Tulsidas, Lord Ram is the chosen deity, and the path of Bhakti or devotion as the chosen spiritual path.]

312. एक अंग जो सनेहता निसि दिन चातक नेह ।  
तुलसी जासों हित लगै वहि अहार वहि देह ॥

312. ēka aṅga jō sanēhatā nisi dina cātaka nēha.  
tulasī jāśōm hita lagai vahi ahāra vahi dēha..

The love of the Chatak (for the cloud and rain during the 'Swati-Nakshatra') is real, pure and 'Ekaangi' (i.e. one-sided).

[The 'Ekaangi' love is that in which the lover is not bothered whether his love is reciprocated, accepted or acknowledged by the other person or not. In the present instance, the Chatak loves the cloud so intensely that it is not concerned whether or not its love is accepted or acknowledged by the cloud in the form of giving drops of rain-water into the bird's mouth. The cloud may turn a blind eye to all the gestures of love by the Chatak, but that does not deter him. The Chatak knows for sure that if the cloud does not oblige then it is the latter that will have to suffer ignominy in this world which would accuse it of being cruel and stern-hearted for not showing even rudimentary mercy on the thirsty bird by dropping a single drop of rain water into its beak while allowing its rain-water to flow down drains and waste-land during the rainy season. The world will however extol the virtues of the Chatak and honour it, showing him the greatest respects that one reserves for those who have fine qualities in them.]

Tulsidas says that for a person who has caught this disease of having one-sided love for his beloved, his sustenance (comfort, happiness, joy and peace) is derived from it, he remains completely lost in the thoughts of his beloved so much so that he loses awareness of even his own body and its natural requirements of food and drink. (312).

[Note—Doha nos. 312-320 are fine instances of 'Ekaangi' love.]

#### More instances of sincere love

313. बिबि रसना तनु स्याम है बंक चलनि बिष खानि ।  
तुलसी जस श्रवननि सुन्यो सीस समरप्यो आनि ॥

313. bibi rasanā tanu syāma hai baṅka calani biṣa khāni.  
tulasī jasa śravanani sun'yō sīsa samarapyō āni..

A serpent has two tongues (fangs), a dark body, a crooked way of moving (because a serpent moves in a zig-zag manner), and is a store-house of venom. Tulsidas says that in spite of possessing such crude and unconventional features, the serpent has one characteristic that is common to all living beings—and it is that when it hears someone paying attention to it, praising it, courting it and trying to please it, it comes willingly and submits its head to the person concerned.

[The reference is to the snake-charmer who uses the lute and various Mantras (charms) to lure the serpent out of its hiding place in its hole. The serpent is so thrilled and willing to oblige when it hears someone paying attention and expressing his love to it by way of music and Mantras (some sort of charm) that it mistakenly thinks that the snake-charmer is its dear friend and lover. So the innocent snake comes voluntarily to the snake-charmer and submits itself to him, who then catches hold of the unaware poor creature and cuts off its fangs, traps it, and takes it away.

Tulsidas uses this instance to stress how a true lover behaves, and how more often than not he suffers due to his love which is exploited by the world to serve its selfish interests. The serpent loves the music of the lute and the Mantras, so it is not bothered about the consequences that it will have to face if it reciprocates the gesture of the snake-

charmer who is pretending to please the snake and be its friend by playing the lute and chanting the Mantras which are so dear to the poor creature.] (313)

314. आपु ब्याध को रूप धरि कुहौ कुरंगहि राग ।  
तुलसी जो मृग मन मुरै परै प्रेम पट दाग ॥

314. āpu byādha kō rūpa dhari kuhau kuraṅgahi rāga.  
tulasī jō mrga mana murai parai prēma paṭa dāga..

The melody of the Vina (the Indian lute) may take the form of a hunter and kill the deer (but the attraction of the deer towards the melody shall still remain the same). [The hunter knows this weakness of the deer that it gets attracted to the music of the Indian lute. So he plays the Veena to lure the deer which comes to the place from where the sound emanates. The hunter meanwhile hides on a tree, and the deer falls in the trap that has been laid on the ground to catch the poor creature.]

Tulsidas says that inspite of knowing its fate the deer still prefers to rush towards the direction from where the sound of the Veena is heard lest it would make a scar on the symbolic fabric of its immaculate reputation of being a lover of the music of the Veena and being enamoured of it. [If the deer disregards the sound of the Veena as it knows that it is a lure to trap it, it (the deer) can be subjected to ignominy as being one who does not appreciate fine music. The deer is proud of its reputation amongst animals of the forest as being the only one who understands what fine music is, and that is why it prefers to get caught than to suffer the dishonour of being of a low pedigree.] (314)

315. तुलसी मनि निज दुति फनिहि ब्याधहि देउ दिखाइ ।  
बिछुरत होइ न आँधरो ताते प्रेम न जाइ ॥

315. tulasī mani nija duti phanihi byādhahi dē'u dikhā'i.  
bichurata hō'i na āṁdharō tātē prēma na jā'i..

Tulsidas says that though the 'Mani\*' betrays the snake by showing its location to the snake-charmer resulting in the snake's death or it being caught, does it mean that the snake will not love its Mani so much so that it becomes blind when it loses the Mani?

[\*Mani is the secretion from the luminescent sac that is said to be present on the hood of a special category of serpents. It is believed that in the night the serpent comes out of its hole and places the Mani on the ground somewhere. Then it goes out searching for its prey in its light. The hunter (the snake-charmer) comes and puts something on this Mani, thereby hiding it from view. In the absence of the light of the Mani the poor serpent is unable to see anything, and then either the hunter kills it by beating it mercilessly or else the serpent kills its self by thrashing its hood on the ground.

Here Tulsidas means that though the Mani, which is the very dear to the serpent and sustains its life by showing it light so that it can catch prey to feed itself, is also a source of such agony for the poor serpent that it leads to the poor creature's beating and death or being trapped and caught by the hunter, the snake still loves the Mani so

intensely that when it loses the latter it beats its head on the ground as a gesture of regret, grief and sorrow.] (315)

316. जरत तुहिन लखि बनज बन रबि दै पीठि पराउ ।  
उदय बिकस अथवत सकुच मिटै न सहज सुभाउ ॥

316. jarata tuhina lakhi banaja bana rabi dai pīṭhi parā'u.  
udaya bikasa athavata sakuca miṭai na sahaja subhā'u..

Even though the sun may move away unconcerned at the fate of the poor lotus flowers that get destroyed due to frost caused by intense cold and lack of sunlight, the lotus still loves the sun very much, cheerfully welcoming the sun by opening its petals and blooming fully in the sun's glorious sunlight, and closing its petals when the sun sets, unmindful of the sun's indifference to its sufferings due to frost and cold.

[On seeing the cluster of lotus flowers being frost bitten, the sun might neglect them—i.e. the sun might not emerge from behind the clouds or shine brightly to remove the frost and the chill so that the sufferance of the lotus ends. But the lotus is unconcerned by this sternness on the part of the sun as it does not abandon its natural habit to open its petals at the sight of the sun and close them when the sun sets.] (316)

317. देउ आपनें हाथ जल मीनहि माहुर घोरि ।  
तुलसी जिए जो बारि बिनु तौ तु देहि कबि खोरि ॥

317. dē'u āpanēm hātha jala mīnahi māhura ghōri.  
tulasī ji'ai jō bāri binu tau tu dēhi kabi khōri..

The water might itself give poison to the fish (i.e. the water in which the fish lives may become so polluted that it results in the fish's death), but still the fish is so attached to the water that it cannot survive without it.

Tulsidas says that if the fish survived without the water, then one can accuse the poets of heresy and falsehood—because the poets use the instance of the fish and the water to showcase what true love and devotion are.

[The fish cannot survive even for a moment without its company with the water, symbolizing the fish's love and attachment for the water irrespective of the fact that sometimes the same water is so polluted that it becomes the cause of the fish's death.] (317)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 318 and 320 below.]

318. मकर उरग दादुर कमठ जल जीवन जल गेह ।  
तुलसी एकै मीन को है साँचिलो सनेह ॥

318. makara uraga dādura kamaṭha jala jīvana jala gēha.  
tulasī ēkai mīna kō hai sāmčilō sanēha..

Tulsidas says that water is the habitat and life (i.e. the abode and dwelling place; the source of sustenance and basis of existence) of other aquatic creatures also—such as the crocodile, the water-serpent, the frog, the tortoise etc., but real and truthful love for the water is only shown by the fish (because all other creatures can survive without water, but not the fish). (318)

[Note—This Doha is an extension of Doha no. 317 and is concluded in Doha no. 320.]

319. तुलसी मिटे न मरि मिटेहुँ साँचो सहज सनेह ।  
मोरसिखा बिनु मूरिहूँ पलुहत गरजत गेह ॥

319. tulasī miṭē na mari miṭēhum̐ sām̐cō sahaja sanēha.  
mōrasikhā binu mūrihūm̐ paluhata garajata gēha..

Tulsidas avers that true, natural and sincere love does not diminish or end even with death. [That is, neither actual death nor the threat or fear of impending death that may be caused by pursuing love will deter a true and sincere lover from loving his beloved.]

The herb known as 'Mayur Shikha' (the plant known as Peacock's Tail; Latin name *Actinopteryx Dichotoma*) blooms even at the sight of a thundering cloud though this herb does not have any roots to sustain its life for any long term.

[Usually plants have roots which help them draw nourishment and live for a long time. This particular plant is unique in the sense that it survives for a short time only as long as there is cloud in the sky. Its blooming upon hearing the sound of the thunder is a metaphoric way of saying that it feels ecstatic and full of life as if it has long to live, unmindful of the reality that it has nothing to sustain its life for a long term because it has no roots. Though this plant knows that it is about to die it still jumps up with fresh life and vigour as soon as the clouds appear in the sky and begin rumbling. Tulsidas uses it to show how a true lover feels exhilarated at the sight and sound of his beloved though he knows that his joy and happiness is going to be short-lived.] (319)

320. सुलभ प्रीति प्रीतम सबै कहत करत सब कोइ ।  
तुलसी मीन पुनीत ते त्रिभुवन बड़ो न कोइ ॥

320. sulabha prīti prītama sabai kahata karata saba kō'i.  
tulasī mīna punīta tē tribhuvana baṛō na kō'i..

Everyone says that the virtue of having 'love', and 'the beloved' who is the object of this love, are two easily available (accessible) things in this world. Everyone can have it easily—i.e. everyone can, and has the right to love somebody of his choice.

But Tulsidas says that no one is superior to a fish in matters of love in the entire world consisting of three segments (the terrestrial world, the heavens and the nether world) because no matter what happens a fish will not survive without the water, but others can manage to live separated from their beloved ones. (320)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 317-318 also.

There is a stanza in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand (Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 111) that uses the metaphor of the fish and its love and devotion for the water so much

so that the former can't survive without the latter to highlight how a true devotee wishes that the subtle aspects of his inner self consisting of the mind, the sub-conscious and the heart become one like the fish, and devotion for Lord Ram like the water. In other words, the devotee prays that his inner-self is always submerged and engrossed in the thoughts of his beloved Lord Ram, and in nothing else. This remembrance of the beloved Lord should be complete and all-encompassing so much so that not a single moment passes in which the devotee does not remember his beloved Lord Ram.]

321. तुलसी जप तप नेम ब्रत सब सबहीं तें होइ ।  
कहै बड़ाई देवता इष्टदेव जब होइ ॥

321. tulasī japa tapa nēma brata saba sabahīṁ tēm hō'i.  
kahai barā'ī dēvatā iṣṭadēva jaba hō'i..

Tulsidas says that everyone observes, to a lesser or a greater degree, some form of religious practice in their lives, such as doing Japa (repeating some holy name of the God), Tapa (penances, austerities), Brat (abstinence from food and observing strict vows), and Nem (observing religious sacraments and doing routine religious duties). But only when a person makes his chosen deity the focus of these auspicious deeds that he gets acclaim and glory in this world—i.e. it is only then that all his efforts bear full fruits. The God who is worshipped by the devotee using the means mentioned in this Doha feels praised and honoured, and then this God reciprocates by showering his blessings and munificence upon the worshipper. This means that the religious practices of the devotee or the worshipper have been done properly and the Lord God is pleased with him. This in turn gives him glory and acclaim in this world because he has obtained the fruits of his labour. (321)

[Note—Tulsidas means that one must have some fixed spiritual objective in life before doing any religious practice, because otherwise it would be like putting the boat into the sea and merely setting it afloat without knowing where to go. When a devotee offers all his religious activities such as Japa, Tapa, Brat and Nem to the Lord God of his devotion and adoration, then the particular Lord is pleased, and this translates into rich spiritual rewards for the devotee. Otherwise it will be like attempting to serve umpteen numbers of unknown masters, and all of them would be confused as to who is answerable to the person serving them! It will be an exercise in futility, and virtually like a wild-goose chase in the spiritual realm.

If one has a fixed goal, he aims for it, and one day he reaches it successfully. When this happens, obviously the achiever is praised and honoured by the world. Otherwise, he may run around in circles throughout his life and still remain at the same spot like the ox used in ancient times by the farmer to pull water out of the well using the water-wheel to irrigate his fields, wherein the ox went round and round in an endless circle so that the water-wheel could turn uninterruptedly. The animal was not sitting idle; it was walking. But where did he reach after walking the whole day? Nowhere of course! Similarly, the worshipper may be doing so many religious duties and observing so many of the religious practices, but all to no avail.]

A true friend

322. कुदिन हितू सो हित सुदिन हित अनहित किन होई ।।  
ससि छबि हर रबि सदन तउ मित्र कहत सब कोइ ।।

322. kudina hitū sō hita sudina hita anahita kina hōī.  
sasi chabi hara rabi sadana ta'u mitra kahata saba kō'i..

When the times are good and favourable for a man, it does not matter to him if the other person is as an enemy or a friend. But a true friend is one who loves him and is faithful to him when his time is bad and unfavourable. [In other words, a true friend is tested during rough patches in one's life.]

During the night of the dark moon, the sun appears to have snatched the glow and magnificence of the moon by making its disc dark, but still the sun is honoured by the epithet of 'Mitra' (a friend) by the people.

[In other words, though the moon becomes dark because it cannot reflect the sun's light during the dark night indicating that the sun is virtually unfriendly to the moon by cutting off its source of light, the people still do not accuse the sun of being selfish or jealous of the moon or being unfriendly to it by not lending the moon its light and forcing the latter to remain in the dark. Instead, the world honours the sun with the title of a 'Mitra'—a friend of all.

Why is this so? It is because the wise ones in the world realise that the moon has no light of its own, and whatever light it shows is lent to it by the sun, its friend. The moon, in its stupidity and ignorance, had become so proud and haughty of its beauty in the full moon night that it was being punished by Mother Nature which forces it to become dark in a gradual manner till it loses its light altogether in the dark night. But the sun is its true friend because when the moon is completely sunk in the pit of darkness and dejection, the sun comes to its aid by lending the moon a piece of its brilliant light from the very next day, enabling the poor moon to recuperate from the trauma and regain its full glory on the bright moon night. That is why the world applauds the sun and honours it as a 'Mitra'—a 'friend'—of the moon.] (322)

[Note—During the dark moon night, the moon and the sun are in the same direction as viewed from earth, and that is why the moon cannot reflect the sun's light in the form of the moon-light. The moon is literally passing through a bad time in its 30-day monthly cycle because it has lost all its shine. So the gracious and friendly sun comes near it to hide it behind its self. From the next day onwards, the sun lends the moon some slice of its own shine, and that is why the first moon after the dark night appears to look like a carved filing sliced off the illuminated surface of the disc of the friendly sun.

'Mitra' is one of the many names assigned to the sun in ancient texts, and the word means a 'friend'. So, Tulsidas has deftly used this metaphor of the sun and the moon to stress how a true friend comes to the aid of his unfortunate companion by lending a helping hand and sharing his own resources with him till the time the latter gains his full glory and strength like the moon being progressively helped by the sun to increase its light from the first day till the full moon night when the moon regains its lost glory of an illuminated disc fully.]

323. कै लघुकै बड़ मीत भल सम सनेह दुख सोइ ।  
तुलसी ज्यों घृत मधु सरिस मिलें महाबिष होइ ।।

323. kai laghukai barā mīta bhala sama sanēha dukha sō'i.  
tulasī jyōm ghṛta madhu sarisa milēm mahābiṣa hō'i..

A friend should be one who is either superior or inferior (in status, knowledge, strength etc.) to the person concerned, but not of the same or equal standing because the relationship of the latter type is always troublesome and a cause of immense sorrows.

For instance, clarified butter (known as Ghee) and honey mixed in equal proportions (ratio or quantity) is always a dangerous combination, turning these two otherwise harmless ingredients into a potent poison. (323)

[Note—In practical life it is observed that people of equal social and financial standing are prone to falling prey to jealousy and envy with each other as compared to people belonging to different strata. So though the former meet each other and exchange pleasantries in a formal manner externally, internally they see each other as competitors and opponents. For instance, if a rich man gives another rich man a costly gift, the second person thinks that the first person is showing off himself, so he must show the first person that he is richer than him by giving him a costlier gift. This sets off a chain reaction, making both of them frustrated at some point of time, and avoiding meeting each other again.

Out of a false sense of self-pride and ego, neither of the two men seeks each other's help in time of emergencies because they think that it will be undermining their social and hierarchical standing; it will hurt their ego and self-respect. And even in the case that one of them is a thorough gentleman who sincerely wishes to help the other person during his rough times, the latter will still desist from accepting any help out of fear of ignominy and an imaginary sense of insult and humiliation.

But this will not happen when two people of different social and financial standing meet each other—neither of them sees the other as prying upon him or attempting to insult him by one-upmanship. Their meeting is friendly and courteous. The man of a lower standing feels happy that a man of a higher standing has been gracious to show respect to him, and the man of a higher standing has no fear from the man of lower standing that he is spying upon his financial prowess. So both are happy; they both help each other. The man of a higher standing gets loyal followers, and those of lower standing get patronage from those in the higher rung of society.]

324. मान्य मीत सों सुख चहैं सो न छुए छल छाहँ ।  
ससि त्रिसंकु कैकेइ गति लखि तुलसी मन माहँ ॥

324. mān'ya mīta sōm sukha cahairm sō na chu'ē chala chāham' .  
sasi trisaṅku kaikē'i gati lakhi tulasī mana māham' ..

Those who want happiness and an everlasting relationship with their dear and honourable friend should remember the igominous fate of the Moon<sup>1</sup>, Trishanku<sup>2</sup> and Kaikeyi<sup>3</sup>, and therefore must avoid even a shadow (trace) of deceit, conceit, fraud, cheating, treachery, crookedness and other malpractices while dealing with his friend.

[In other words, a strong bond of true friendship is built on trust and honesty. Negativities such as cunning, deceit, pretensions and selfishness etc. should not be allowed to corrupt this relationship, for then the consequences are very bad.] (324)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *Moon*—The Moon God was enamoured with the wife (named Taaraa) of his Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) and had sex with her. The planet Mercury is said to be born as a result of this liaison. This caused a horrible curse upon the Moon God as a result of which got a permanent scar of ignominy and shame on his character. This incident is referred to in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 228. It is believed that this is the reason the full moon also appears to be scarred by so many holes or spots that act as blots on its otherwise smooth shining surface, and its circular disc appears to be cut off from the edges on all the nights except the full moon night.

<sup>2</sup>*Trishanku*—He was one of the great kings of the Raghu dynasty. Once he asked his Guru sage Vashistha to perform a fire sacrifice so that he can go to heaven with his physical body instead of in a spirit form after death. Vashistha told him that it is impossible and violative of the laws of Nature. Trishanku then approached the sage's sons and asked them to do the fire sacrifice to fulfill his wishes by offering them the incentive of the post of royal priesthood to replace their father Vashistha. They also expressed their inability to do so, but sage took umbrage at this selfish and infidel mentality of Trishanku and cursed him to become a Chandal, a person of low birth. Trishanku sought the help of another sage, Vishwamitra, who had a running feud with Vashistha of one-upmanship, each claiming to be more exalted, senior, learned and powerful than the other; they were always at loggerheads with each other. Trishanku requested Viswamitra to send him bodily to heaven, which the sage agreed to do and actually managed to accomplish by the dint of his mystical prowess acquired by doing penances and austerities. But it violated the laws of Nature and creation, besides causing insult to Guru Vashistha.

So, Trishanku was pushed out of the heaven, and he came down tumbling upside down towards the mortal world. Peeved, sage Viswamitra attempted to resend him to heaven, while the curse of Vashistha acted as a heavy millstone around Trishanku's neck, pulling him downwards. The net effect was that two formidable forces started acting simultaneously upon Trishanku, one force represented by sage Viswamitra's penances and austerities pushed him up, and the other one representing sage Vashistha's curse pulled him down. Since he was pushed down from heaven because of the Guru's curse, Trishanku came down tumbling towards the earth head first, but was held in mid air by the upward thrust of his other patron sage Viswamitra who was determined not to let him come down. So he became dangled in the middle of the sky between the heaven and the earth, upside down!

This incident is also cited in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 229, as well as in Valmiki Ramayana, 1/57-60.

<sup>3</sup>*Kaikeyi*—She was a wife of king Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya and the father of Lord Ram, and the step-mother of the Lord, the legendary hero of the epic Ramayana. The king loved her very much. So she used his trust and love for her in an extremely deceitful manner, compelling the king to send Lord Ram to exile, which was followed by his own death and total chaos in the kingdom. Kaikeyi on her part suffered permanent curse of widowhood and ignominy for life.]

325. कहिअ कठिन कृत कोमलहुँ हित हठि होइ सहाइ ।  
पलक पानि पर ओड़िअत समुझि कुघाइ सुघाइ ॥

325. kahi'a kaṭhina kṛta kōmalahum' hita haṭhi hō'i sahā'i.  
palaka pāni para oḍiata samujhi kughā'i sughā'i..

A true benefactor and a faithful friend is one who voluntarily and willingly steps forward to help the other person irrespective of the type of help needed or task to be accomplished, whether it is easy or difficult. [That is, a real friend is one who cheerfully comes forward to lend his shoulders and extends his hand to help the other person even if he is not asked to do so. His help is selfless and voluntarily, extended cheerfully and without obligations. He does not wish to hog the limelight and pretend to be a friend by showing his face only when the going is good and returns plentiful, and hiding from view and avoiding contact when the goings are bad and the task to be undertaken difficult.]

For instance, any threat of even a mild injury occurring to the eye automatically causes the eye-lid to step forward to protect the eye by involuntarily closing its self. Similarly, any threat of a grave injury being inflicted to the body evokes a natural reaction from the hand to ward it off when it raises its self and comes between the attack and the body. [Neither the eye nor the body requests their protectors, the eye-lid and the hand respectively, to come to protect them from injury. But both the eye-lid as well as the hand takes it up as their sole responsibility to protect their respective wards, the eye and the body, inspite of the fact that this may, and usually does, cause harm to their own selves. While eye and the body remain unscathed in the case of an attack, the eye-lid and the hand bear the brunt of the attack.] (325)

[Note—The message is clear—a true friend does not wait to be asked to come to help his companion; he steps forward voluntarily when he finds that the other person needs a helping hand. He is unconcerned about his own safety and welfare while extending help or support to his friend and companion, but is more concerned about his happiness and good. He is ever willing to provide his services selflessly to his dear friend and companion who may be defenseless and ignorant of the impending danger or harm, or is unable to afford protection to himself.]

Love and hatred are blind

326. तुलसी बैर सनेह दोउ रहित बिलोचन चारि ।  
सुरा सेवरा आदरहिं निंदहिं सुरसरि बारि ॥

326. tulasī baira sanēha dō'u rahita bilōcana cāri.  
surā sēvarā ādarahim nindahim surasari bāri..

Tulsidas says that enmity and friendship are totally blind in all the four eyes (viz. the two external, physical eyes, and the two internal eyes of mind and intellect).

[A person having enmity or animosity towards someone does not see his good qualities or virtues, but is inclined always to find fault with him. Similarly, a friend overlooks the vices, faults and short-comings of his dear companion, and always takes his side and thinks that he is correct though he may be utterly wrong.]

For instance, the followers of Leftist Tantra Philosophy and those who practice leftist ideological system of metaphysics (known as 'Sewaraa') show respect (preference) to wine and use it in all their religious practices instead of the water of river Ganges that is universally regarded as holy and worthy to be accepted as a sanctified liquid for use during religious practices. (326)

[Note—Followers of occult form of leftist system of worship use wine instead of the holy water of river Ganges in all their rituals, regarding wine as sanctified drink worthy to be offered to the deity they worship, though wine is abhorred and banned by all other systems of religious practices. Such worshippers disregard all negative qualities of wine and positive virtues of water of Ganges because they are biased in favour of wine. Tulsidas uses this analogy to say that when a man is mentally inclined against someone he will always find loop-holes in his character and overlook his goodness and good virtues. Similarly, when one is mentally in favour of someone he will always overlook his shortcomings and negative qualities, and instead pay attention only to his goodness, though it may happen that the bad qualities in this favoured person may be much greater and domineering than his good qualities that are few and insignificant as compared to his bad qualities.]

The natural habit/inclination of a donor and a beggar

327. रुचै मागनेहि मागिबो तुलसी दानिहि दानु ।  
आलस अनख न आचरज प्रेम पिहानी जानु ॥

327. rucai māganēhi māgibō tulasī dānihi dānu.  
ālasa anakha na ācaraja prēma pihānī jānu..

Tulsidas says that an alms giver (i.e. donor) has a natural inclination to give, and he enjoys giving. On the other hand an alms seeker (i.e. a beggar) has the habit and natural tendency to beg inspite of the fact that he may not need the thing asked for or already has it in sufficient quantities.

Neither of them gets irritated, feels ashamed, lazy or indolent in doing what is dear to their heart or in their habit because they have developed a liking for doing it, and it has become a part of their character and their nature.

[The donor never shys away from giving, and he does not bother that this habit may result in himself facing shortages in some time in the future. Similarly, the beggar will never feel guilty of insulting himself when he stretches his arms to ask for something inspite of the fact that he already has enough of it to sustain himself, and does not actually need the thing asked for.

The donor loves to give, and the beggar loves to beg. None of them thinks of the consequences of their habit—the donor never worries about the chances of himself facing a dearth of the things that he cheerfully gives away, and the beggar never worries of the ignominy that begging brings to him and undermines his self-respect.] (327)

Love or animosity decides a person's reaction to any given situation

328. अमिअ गारि गारेउ गरल गारि कीन्ह करतार ।  
प्रेम बैर की जननि जुग जानहिं बुध न गवॉर ॥

328. ami'a gāri gārē'u garala gāri kīnha karatāra.  
prēma baira kī janani juga jānahim budha na gavāmra..

The God of creation (i.e. Brahma) created 'abuses and swear-words' out of the essence of Nectar and Poison. That is why such words are the mother (creator) of all enmity, ill-will and animosity on one hand, and friendship and laughter on the other hand.

This fact is known to the wise-men and not to fools.

[Swear-words look innocuous and harmless if used in jest while joking and making of fun during idle talk held in a pleasant environment of a friendly and joyful mood, evoking laughter and light-hearted banter, while the same word becomes a cuss word when used during angry arguments and heated discussion to admonish, rebuke, demean or denounce someone, when it creates a lot of bitterness, ill-will and animosity.] (328)

#### Signs of being un-welcomed at a place

329. सदा न जे सुमिरत रहहिं मिलि न कहहिं प्रिय बैन ।  
ते पै तिन्ह के जाहिं घर जिन्ह के हिउँ न नैन ॥

329. sadā na jē sumirata rahahim̐ mili na kahahim̐ priya baina.  
tē pai tinha kē jāhim̐ ghara jinha kē hi'ēm̐ na naina..

A person is deemed to be an utter fool and blinded in wisdom if he goes to the place of someone who does not even recognize him (or remember who he is) as he is not at all interested in the person concerned, and even if forced to meet the visitor he does not speak pleasantly and with basic courteousness with him. [In other words, one should not go to a place where he is not welcome because it results in insult and humiliation, which in turn undermines one's self-respect and dignity. The visitor may well be recognized by the host but he feigns that he does not know who he is in order to avoid him. To add salt to injury the host acts roughly with the visitor, not showing even basic principles of courtesy when one talks with a stranger.] (329)

#### The world is selfish, crooked and cunning

330. हित पुनीत सब स्वार्थहिं अरि असुद्ध बिनु चाड़ ।  
निज मुख मानिक सम दसन भूमि परे ते हाड़ ॥

330. hita punīta saba svārathahim̐ ari asud'dha binu cāṛa.  
nija mukha mānika sama dasana bhūmi parē tē hāṛa..

As long as one has vested or selfish interest in any thing and that thing serves one's interests or is useful to him, it is only till then that the thing appears to be nice, attractive and desirable to the person. But as soon as same thing fails to fulfill his desires, help him meet his objectives or measure up to his expectations, or in other words fails to serve his self-interest, it loses its importance and value for him. The man is no more interested in the same thing for which he was so concerned and interested in earlier.

The teeth are very dear to a man and look adorable like a row of pearls or a set of jewels when they are intact in the mouth, but the same teeth become useless dead bone when they fall off and lie on the ground.

[In other words, the world is very selfish. One is interested in anything or any person only as long as the thing or the person serves one's interests in some way or the other. Otherwise no one is interested in anything or any person. What was once felt indispensable, desirable and longed for as it served or was expected to serve one's self-interest becomes obsolete, dispensable and unworthy of paying attention to as soon as it becomes fails to do so. The world is self-centric; all relationships and interactions revolve around this basic premise. Hence, one must be wary of the selfish world.

From the spiritual perspective it implies that it is only Lord Ram, the Lord God, who is one's true friend and loyal companion as the Lord is a selfless friend and a compassionate companion under all circumstances, in thick and thin.

The row of white glistening teeth are loved by all while they are in the mouth as they serve one's self-interest—because they help the man to bite and chew, give his mouth a perfect shape, and glamour to his smile. But the same teeth become a burden when they are diseased, causing pain and making a man feel shy to smile. When these teeth fall off on the ground, then one does not want to give them even a second glance.] (330)

331. माखी काक उलूक बक दादुर से भए लोग ।  
भले ते सुक पिक मोरसे कोउ न प्रेम पथ जोग ॥

331. mākhī kāka ulūka baka dādura sē bha'ē lōga.  
bhalē tē suka pika mōrasē kō'u na prēma patha jōga..

In this world, there are two types of people. Most of the people are openly evil and bad like a house-fly, a crow, an owl, a crane (or stork) and a frog (or toad). [This is because they cause harm to others without any reason or provocation like the house-fly<sup>1</sup>; because they shout/crow about other's faults and use harsh words against them without rhyme or reason like the crow<sup>2</sup>; because they turn a blind eye to one's good qualities and live in a world of negativity like the owl that becomes active in the darkness of night<sup>3</sup>; because they are cunning, deceitful and pretentious like the crane/stork<sup>4</sup>; and because they talk uselessly and nonsense things of no value like the frog that croaks<sup>5</sup>.]

The remaining people who appear to be better than the first group are so only on the surface, for actually they are no better as they are like the parrot, the cuckoo and the peacock. [This is because like the parrot they talk sweetly and appear to be friendly, but turn away in a fraction of a second; because like the cuckoo they are sweet to talk to and hear, but utterly selfish and cruel because this bird feeds on insects inspite of having a sweet voice; and like the peacock they appear so friendly, charming and beautiful to look at externally, but internally they are crooked and full of rancour, their inner beings are crooked and full of poisonous thoughts like the peacock that looks so wonderful with its beautiful feathers but thrives by eating poisonous snakes<sup>6</sup>.]

Indeed the fact is that none of them can be said to be true and sincere followers of the path of love and friendship.

[In other words, most of the people in this world are openly bad, unfriendly and hostile, and others appear to be good and friendly but this is only superficial as actually they are no better. But honestly nice people and truly faithful friends are rare to find.] (331)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The *house-fly* has a bad habit of dwelling in dirty places, jumping from place to place, collecting dirt and pollutants on its body, and then coming uninvited inside the house to ruin food and polluting it besides causing general nuisance. No one invites the house-fly; it comes on its own to cause annoyance. Similarly, some people have the bad habit of keeping bad company, and visiting all sorts of dirty places, picking up all types of bad habits, and then imposing themselves uninvited upon a person and disturbing his peace of mind and happiness.

<sup>2</sup>The *crow* has a very harsh voice, it pricks and nibbles at dirty things such as dead animals and leftovers of food, and it also comes uninvited. It is fidgety and an unwelcome bird. Some people are like them—their speech and words are very uncouth, rough and harsh, they eat all the things which one must avoid, they are cruel and uncivilized, and they are most unwelcome but impose themselves on others when they come in uninvited when one least expects them.

<sup>3</sup>The *owl* becomes active in the dark of the night; it sees in the dark and avoids the light of the day. This is a metaphor that indicates the habit to engage in all activities that are unrighteous and unholy, and to always look at negative things and avoid positive things.

<sup>4</sup>The *crane* stands in the middle of water on one leg, appearing to be calm and serene with its eyes closed in meditation. But this exterior is misleading and pretentious for actually it is extremely cunning, for as soon as it sights a fish it strikes instantaneously to catch the unaware poor creature in its beak. Some people in this world are like this bird—they appear to be so nice and holy and harmless from their external demeanours so much so that innocent persons are misled by their pretentious behaviour, but they do not hesitate to exploit the first opportunity that comes to strike hard at the innocent person and betray his trust and faith in them to serve their own selfish interests.

Refer Doha no. 333 below.

<sup>5</sup>The *frog* or the toad croaks loudly during the rainy season, but it is all loud talk that has no meaning in it. It is like hollow talk and boasts made by vain people who talk much but do nothing.

<sup>6</sup>In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 39 this metaphor of the *peacock* is used to describe pervert people that come under the general category of non-saints. This verse says “such people talk sweetly and are like the peacock which is so poisonous from the inside that it is able to eat and digest the most horrible of snakes easily”.

Refer Doha no. 332 below.]

332. हृदयँ कपट बर बेष धरि बचन कहहिं गढ़ि छोलि ।  
अब के लोग मयूर ज्यों क्यो मिलिए मन खोलि ॥

332. hr̥dayam̃ kapaṭa bara bēṣa dhari bacana kahahim̃ gaḍhi chōli.  
aba kē lōga mayūra jyōm̃ kyōm̃ mili'ē mana khōli..

The people of the present world are like a peacock—outwardly they look charming, amiable, helpful and friendly, but internally, in their hearts, they are full of selfishness,

crookedness, wickedness, conceit and deceit. Say, how can one rely upon such people who are cunning and pretentious? (332)

[Note—External demeanours, talks and countenance are more often than not very misleading and present a picture that is the opposite of the reality. People who talk sweetly and amiably, who pretend to be one's dearest friend and companion is only pretending to be such because they have some or the other vested interest in the other person. They do not love him for the sake of loving, or because they are good and noble by nature. It is not to say that noble-hearted and genuine people are not present at all, the idea in this Doha is that they are a rarity rather than the norm.

The metaphor of the peacock is used here because this bird looks extremely charming from its external features; it has a majestic gait, a beautiful plume of feathers, and a crown on its head. But when one observes it closely one finds that it eats insects and it gobbles up poisonous snakes easily—showing that internally it is full of poison because only then is it possible for it to digest such toxic creatures as the snake and have insects as its food, a diet that is very abhorrible and repugnant to the senses.

Refer also to Doha no. 331 above.]

333. चरन चोंच लोचन रँगौ चलौ मराली चाल ।  
छीर नीर बिबरन समय बक उघरत तेहि काल ॥

333. carana cōṅca lōcana raṁḡau calau marāli cāla.  
chīra nīra bibarana samaya baka ugharata tēhi kāla..

A Crane might paint its claws, beak and eyes like a good Swan and even walk with a swan-like gait, but its deception and cunning comes to the fore when it is required to separate milk from water (which only a Swan can do).

[In other words, one's deception and cunning don't last for long. Pretensions only make a fool of the pretender. Sooner rather than later, the truth prevails, and the person who tries to act smart with others only subjects himself to scorn and ridicule. Therefore, wisdom lies in not being deceptive and pretentious. A person who is truthful always gets honour and respect in the world.] (333)

[Note—A Swan has a reputation of being able to separate pure milk from any external water that has been added to it to dilute it. This additional water that is not integral to the composition of natural milk is deemed to be an adulterant which the Swan, being wise and discriminating by nature, is able to find out and eliminate.

Both the Swan and the Crane live in water, and both have white exterior. From a distance they may be confused for one another. But one is easily able to distinguish between them on the ability of the Swan to separate milk from its adulterant water, an ability that the Crane lacks.

Refer also to Doha no. 331 above.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 314, the metaphor of the Swan has been used to describe the purity and honesty of the heart of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Bharat was pleading with Lord Ram to come back to Ayodhya and accept the crown of the kingdom, and to forgive him for being the cause of his forest exile because he was not at all a party to the conspiracy hatched by his crooked mother Kaikeyi. The assembly believed him and expressed their full faith and trust in him.]

334. मिलै जो सरलहि सरल ह्वै कुटिल न सहज बिहाइ ।  
सो सहेतु ज्यो बक्र गति ब्याल न बिलहिं समाइ ॥

334. milai jō saralahi sarala hvai kuṭila na sahaja bihā'i.  
sō sahētu jyōm bakra gati byāla na bilahiṁ samā'i..

A crook and wicked person cannot abandon his natural tendency for pretensions, crookedness, deceit, fraud, cunning, wickedness and other such negative habits. If he feigns integrity and friendship, pretending to be simple-hearted in his dealings with a straight-forward and upright man, the latter should be wary of him because there must be some catch somewhere. There must be some vested interest in the heart of a cunning man when he pretends to be amiable, courteous, helpful and friendly towards others who are sure to be caught unaware by his pretensions.

For instance, a snake, who cannot move straight but always goes in a zig-zag and winding manner, moves in a straight line only when it has to enter its hole in the ground. [That is, a snake will move in a straight line only when it suits its needs, for otherwise it has a natural habit of moving in a crooked manner in a zig-zag fashion. Since it cannot enter its dwelling in a curved manner, it straightens up, but otherwise it never moves in a straight line. Likewise, cunning and wicked people can never be honest and faithful; they cannot be trustworthy and reliable even though they may appear to be so by their pretentious friendly and cooperative behaviour. If they do appear to be so then surely there must be something fishy in them. So, one must be wary of such people.] (334)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7 a similar idea is expressed in the context of saints and non-saints. There it is emphasized that sometimes wicked people behave nicely and honestly as a result of their contact with good people and their company, but this is a rarity for their natural tendency is to be wicked and cunning.

Refer Doha nos. 337-343 also below.]

The dilemma of a self-respecting and noble person

335. कृसधन सखहि न देब दुख मुएहुँ न मागब नीच ।  
तुलसी सज्जन की रहनि पावक पानी बीच ॥

335. kṛsadhana sakhahi na dēba dukha mu'ēhum' na māgaba nīca.  
tulasī sajjana kī rahani pāvaka pānī bīca..

A gentleman would not seek financial help from a poor friend (as he is already in a miserable condition, suffering from poverty, resources and dearth of funds), and they would prefer death to asking for anything from a rich friend even if they are in great difficulties (because that would be insulting to self-respect, which is tantamount to death by drowning in the water of humiliation and loss of self-esteem for a noble man of respect).

Tulsidas says that their condition can be compared with one who lives between fire and water (because both these things can be equally dangerous—the fire can destroy by burning, and the water can destroy by drowning or flooding). (335)

336. संग सरल कुटिलहि भएँ हरि हर करहिं निबाहु ।  
ग्रह गनती गनि चतुर बिधि कियो उदर बिनु राहु ॥

336. saṅga sarala kuṭilahi bha'eṁ hari hara karahim nibāhu.  
graha ganatī gani catura bidhi kiyō udara binu rāhu..

Only Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva (i.e. God) can protect a gentleman if unfortunately he has the company of evil persons. [In other words, bad company or bad contacts are very dangerous for a man.]

When Rahu<sup>1</sup> was counted among the 'Grahas' (planetary stars that control one's destiny according to astrological principles), the clever Brahma (the God of creation) destined that his head would be severed from the trunk (to ensure that he would not deceitfully and treacherously kill and eat up all the other good Grahas because he was inherently very cruel, cunning and crooked).

[Rahu was a demon who cunningly disguised himself as a God and sat with them during the distribution of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, at the time of the legendary churning of the ocean. So he got a drop of the Amrit, but his cunning and deceit was discovered by Lord Vishnu who cut off his head. The head became known as Rahu, and the trunk as Ketu, a comet. But since Rahu had drunk the ambrosia of eternity he could not die, so was placed amongst the constellation of stars known as 'Grahas' that govern the destiny of all living beings in this world. But unlike other Grahas, Rahu is universally regarded as a malicious one.] (336)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 178, 337 and 505 in the context of keeping bad company.

<sup>1</sup>Rahu—The legend has it that Rahu was the eldest son of the demon Viprachitti and his wife Shinghikaa. His younger brothers were Ilvala, Vaataapi, Narak amongst others. When Lord Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful Mohini, was distributing the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit to the Gods during the episode of the churning of the ocean as told in the Purans, Rahu assumed the form of a God and surreptitiously entered the lines of the Gods to take this Amrit. When his cheating was discovered, Vishnu cut off his head with his weapon called the Chakra Sudarshan (a circular saw-like discus). But it so happened that before the head was severed Rahu had already drunk some Amrit, and so did not die. His head and torso became two independent entities. The former was called 'Rahu' and the latter 'Ketu'.

Since the Moon God and the Sun God had betrayed him, Rahu takes revenge by devouring them periodically to satisfy his hunger. He devours them when they are in their full glory—viz. he devours the Moon God during the full moon night, and the Sun God only during the day time, either when the sun rises or during its journey across the sky, but never at sunset when the sun is already losing its radiance and is on the decline.

Again, since the head of Rahu was severed from the neck, hence both the Moon God and the Sun God re-emerge from the lower end of the head after they have been devoured by the mouth of Rahu. This is why the moon and the sun appear to be getting gradually cut-off from view from one end of their discs, symbolizing their gradually entering the mouth of Rahu as the latter begins to devour them. Then for some time they remain dark

or obstructed from view symbolizing the period when they remain inside the mouth of Rahu. Finally, they gradually regain their original shape symbolizing their ejection from the lower end of Rahu's neck where it was severed from the trunk.

The story of Rahu appears in Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran, Chapter 8, Canto 9.

Actually however, the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse is due to the earth's shadow falling on the moon's surface when it comes in the path of this shadow during its revolution around the earth. This scientific fact was known to the great Rishis (sages and seers) who had preached the Upanishads, and it is clearly mentioned in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says "When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon's curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event, and the darkness on the moon's disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments."

Similarly, the solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the shiny surface of the sun and the view from earth, thereby blocking the former's view from the latter's surface.

The elongated torso of Rahu came to known as 'Ketu' and it is recognized as the comet in modern science. That is why sighting of the comet is regarded as a bad omen.

Both Rahu and Ketu are placed amongst the nine planets. They represent the two nodal points where the celestial equator cuts the ecliptic.

In iconography, Rahu is depicted as just a head or even as a snake's hood.

Rahu is also cited in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 281 which primarily says that the world is afraid of annoying a crooked person like the case of the Rahu not devouring a crescent moon as it is afraid that its curved sickle like edges may harm it and cut it further into pieces.

[In this context, refer to Doha no. 397 below.]

#### Difficulty in overcoming one's habits/nature

337. नीच निचाईं नहिं तजइ सज्जनहू के संग ।  
तुलसी चंदन बिटप बसि बिनु बिष भए न भुअंग ॥

337. nīca nicā'ī nahim̐ taja'i sajjanahū kēm̐ saṅga.  
tulasī candana biṭapa basi binu biṣa bha'e na bhu'aṅga..

A wicked man does not abandon his wickedness even on having company of a gentleman. Tulsidas gives an example and says that inspite of living on a Chandan (sandalwood) Tree, a poisonous serpent never gets rid of its poison (venom).

[In other words, inherently wicked persons who have become stubborn in their habits would never abandon their wickedness though they may live in the company of good people.

The sandalwood tree is said to be cool and soothing. Though the poisonous serpent lives in this tree, it never acquires the habits of the tree to be cool and soothing towards those with whom it comes in contact. When the sandalwood tree gives its sap when rubbed, it is invariably cool and rejuvenating, but when the serpent is touched and provoked, it will bite, and its bite is always poisonous and fatal.

In other words, a gentleman will always remain a gentleman, while a crook will always be a crook. It is almost impossible to overcome inborn habits and natural inclinations or tendencies that are firmly ingrained in one's inner-being and mould a person's personality and character.] (337)

[Note—Refer: Doha no. 334 above, and 338-343 below.]

338. भलो भलाइहि पै लहइ लहइ निचाइहि नीचु ।  
सुधा सराहिअ अमरताँ गरल सराहिअ मीचु ॥

338. bhalō bhalā'ihī pai laha'i laha'i nicā'ihī nīcu.  
sudhā sarāhi'a amaratām' garala sarāhi'a mīcu..

A good man is known by his goodness, while a wicked one by his wickedness. 'Sudha' (or 'Amrit'), the elixir that provides eternity, is praised by all and its value lies in its healing qualities and its ability to provide eternity and rejuvenation, while at the same time 'Garal' (a severe poison) is worth its name only if it kills, if it can cause death, and it is this quality in it for which it is remembered and recognised by all.

[Everything has certain special qualities in it for which it is renowned and remembered. For instance, Amrit is remembered when one needs a liquid for the purpose of rejuvenation, while when one needs to kill, the poison comes to mind. What use is the Sudha if it can't heal, and what is the value of poison if it can't kill? Hence, everything has certain basic qualities in it which make it stand out in the crowd, and gives the particular thing its recognition and place in the world. This quality may be good or bad.

Tulsidas means that it is natural for a gentleman to show noble characters and he will always be a nice person with praiseworthy qualities irrespective of the circumstances in which he lives or provocations he has to fend off. The same logic applies to a wicked man—he will never abstain from his wickedness no matter how good he is treated and how good is the environment in which he lives.] (338)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, as Doha no. 5.]

339. मिथ्या माहुर सज्जनहि खलहि गरल सम साँच ।  
तुलसी छुअत पराइ ज्योँ पारद पावक आँच ॥

339. mithyā māhura sajjanahi khalahi garala sama sām'ca.  
tulasī chu'ata parā'i jyōm pārada pāvaka ām'ca..

For a true gentleman, falsehood is like poison, and for a miscreant and rascal, truth is like a poison. At the touch of falsehood a gentleman would run away (i.e. he will abhor deceit, conceit, pretensions, lies and falsehood), and a crooked rascal on the other hand would run away from truth just like mercury evaporates on coming in touch with fire.

[On being heated, mercury expands and appears to run away from the source of heat. This principal is used to measure body temperature in a clinical-thermometer. This analogy is employed here by Tulsidas to show how a good man would run away from evil, and a wicked man from good.] (339)

340. संत संग अपबर्ग कर कामी भव कर पंथ ।  
कहहिं संत कबि कोबिद श्रुति पुरान सदग्रंथ ॥

340. santa saṅga apabarga kara kāmī bhava kara pantha.  
kahahīṁ santa kabi kōbida śruti purāna sadagrantha..

Communion with saints is the way for liberation (emancipation) of soul, while company of indulgent people leads the way to entrapment in this illusionary world. This fact is pronounced by all the saints, poets and the wise-ones, and it endorsed in all the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (340)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 33. In this particular instance, Lord Ram emphasizes to the celestial sages known as Sankadi-Rishis who had come to pay their obeisance to the Lord after his coronation at Ayodhya, that one is very fortunate to have contact with saints because such contact invariably leads to auspiciousness and attainment of spiritual liberation and deliverance.]

341. सुकृत न सुकृती परिहरइ कपट न कपटी नीच ।  
मरत सिखावन देइ चले गीधराज मारीच ॥

341. sukr̥ta na sukr̥tī parihara'i kapaṭa na kapaṭī nīca.  
marata sikhāvana dē'i calē gīdharāja māricā..

Persons who have a noble soul do not shirk from their nobility and piousness, whereas crooked rascals do not shy from wickedness and being evil in their entire lifetime. In the epic story of the Ramayana, the vulture Jatau and the demon Marich have shown the truth of this statement by the way they died.

[The vulture king Jatau died in an attempt to rescue Sita from the clutches of the evil demon Ravana as the latter was forcibly taking her away to his city of Lanka after stealing her from the hermitage of Lord Ram—thereby showing that he (Jatau) had sacrificed his life for a noble cause. On the other hand, the demon Marich had courted death willingly so that Ravana could abduct Sita. The story goes that he had disguised himself as a golden deer to provoke Sita to ask Lord Ram to go and bring it to her so that she could tame it, and when the Lord went to capture the illusionary deer, the demon Ravana stealthily approached Sita and abducted her. Not contented with his evil deeds, Marich had shouted the name of Laxman at the time of dying when Lord Ram shot it down with an arrow, to give the impression that he was being called upon to help the Lord. And as soon as Laxman left the hermitage Ravana went ahead with his evil game-plan to abduct Sita.

The idea is that a person who is good and noble in his heart will always remain so, and he who is wicked, pervert and evil will always be such.] (341)

[Note—One the one hand there was Jatau who had laid down his life trying to help the distraught Sita in her time of misfortune, proving that a soul who is noble at heart will be ever willing to sacrifice his own self for the good and welfare of others. And on the other hand there was Marich who died just for the opposite reasons—to help Sita be abducted by another equally pervert demon, Ravana. Both died—but for opposite causes. Jatau died an honourable and pious death, and Marich died a most disgraceful and dishonourable death. Even in his death Jatau proved the nobility and holiness of his soul, while Marich proved that he was inherently wicked and evil in his inner-self.

According to the story of the Ramayana, Marich was spared his life by Lord Ram when this demon had gone to defile the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, but the wicked demon felt no sense of obligation or gratitude for the Lord and chose to be instrumental in getting his honourable wife Sita abducted. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 210 (sparing the life of Marich); and Aranya Kand, Doha nos. 24-27 (death of Marich).

On the other hand, Jatau had met Lord Ram while the Lord was meandering his way through the dense forest during his exile, and the vulture had promised to afford them protection because of some old ties he had with Ram's father, king Dasrath. Jatau lived up to his words and preferred death to living when he saw the wailing Sita begging him for protection as the pervert Ravana was flying through the sky with her in his chariot. Jatau intervened, and there ensued a fierce battle between the two—Ravana and Jatau. But ultimately the poor vulture's wings were chopped off by Ravana, resulting in Jatau being mortally wounded and falling to the ground where Lord Ram later found him, washed his wounds and then did his last rites himself as if Jatau was his own father. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13 (Lord Ram meeting and befriending Jatau), and Aranya Kand, from Chaupi line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29, to Doha no. 32 (Jatau's death to save Sita, and the former's liberation and deliverance).

Refer also to Ramagya Prashna-wali of Tulsidas, 3/2/6.]

342. सुजन सुतरु बन ऊख सम खल टंकिका रुखान ।  
परहित अनहित लागि सब साँसति सहत समान ॥

342. sujana sutaru bana ūkha sama khala ṭāṅkikā rukhāna.  
parahita anahita lāgi saba sāṁśati sahata samāna..

Gentlemen are helpful like the beneficial cotton and sugarcane plants, while rascals and evil persons are akin to a heavy axe or a hammer or chisel that are used to cut through stones and wood. Both of them, i.e. the gentleman and the rascal, suffer, but one (the gentleman) does so for the benefit of others while the other (the rascal) suffers so as to harm others and cause them pain.

[The beneficial plants are cut and thrashed, but inspite of this suffering they produce benefits for their tormentors. The cotton plant ultimately produces yarn, and the sugarcane is ground and pulped to produce sugar. On the other hand, a heavy hammer hits the axe or the chisel which in turn bites into the stone or the wood to cut them to pieces or at least to chip away their surfaces and deform their original shape if they are not able to completely break the stone or the wood altogether.

Similarly, good people will gladly suffer if their sufferings can help others, while evil people derive sadistic pleasure if their sufferings can cause pain to others and make them suffer too.] (342)

343. पिअहिं सुमन रस अलि बिटप काटि कोल फल खात ।  
तुलसी तरुजीवी जुगल सुमति कुमति की बात ॥

343. pi'ahim sumana rasa ali biṭapa kāṭi kōla phala khāta.  
tulasī tarujīvī jugala sumati kumati kī bāta..

[Giving another example of the difference between the attitude of a gentleman and an evil person, Tulsidas says—]

The black-bee only takes nectar from the flowers but do not harm them or their habitats, the trees (i.e. they don't cause any damage to the flower or the tree), while the forest dwelling tribals known as the Kols and the Bhils (who are hunters and cruel people) cut down the same trees, which provide them with fruits and flowers as well as the natural environ of the forest where these tribals live, to use them as firewood (i.e. they don't show any compunction at mercilessly cutting down the trees that provide them with their basic requirements of food and habitat).

[Both the black-bee and the Kols and Bhils survive on trees or their products, but by their actions the former shows its nobility and gracious nature, while the other its wickedness, cruelty and shortsightedness. The black-bee is wise as it knows that if the flower survives it will produce more nectar, and the bee will have an endless supply of nourishment. The Kol and the Bhil are stupid; they cut down the tree and do not realise that they are axing the very source of their sustenance by way of fruits, flowers and firewood, and a day will come when the entire forest would be afforested and they will be robbed of their natural habitat.] (343)

#### Importance of timely action

344. अवसर कौड़ी जो चुकै बहुरि दिँ का लाख ।  
दुइज न चंदा देखिए उदौ कहा भरि पाख ॥

344. avasara kaurī jō cukai bahuri di'ēṁ kā lākha.  
du'ija na candā dēkhi'ai udau kahā bhari pākha..

If one misses or demurs to give a penny when it is dearly needed, then what is the use of giving lakhs (hundreds and thousands) of rupees/dollars when they are no longer needed, or when the emergency passes away?

For instance, if one does not glance at the moon on the 2nd night of the bright lunar fortnight (which is considered auspicious), then watching the moon for the rest of the month is useless.

[Seeing the second moon of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the lunar month is regarded as an auspicious thing. If one misses this chance then there is no special merit in seeing the

moon for the rest of the month. Similarly, one must not let a good opportunity slip by, for instance while making charities one must help the needy when they need help the most. Otherwise it is a waste of money.] (344)

[Note—This is a general principle applicable to all spheres of life. The basic idea is that one must not let good opportunities waste away in procrastination and dithering, for in all probabilities this opportunity may not come again. This Doha emphasizes the importance of timely action and prudence.]

Few people know how to use their resources to help others

345. ग्यान अनभले को सबहि भले भलेहू काउ ।  
सींग सूँड़ रद लूम नख करत जीव जड़ घाउ ॥

345. *gyāna anabhalē kō sabahi bhalē bhalēhū kā'u.*  
*sīnga sūṁṛa rada lūma nakha karata jīva jaṛa ghā'u..*

It is easy to harm (or hurt) somebody in one way or the other, but it is difficult or rare to come across someone who knows how to heal or help others (or do good to them, give them succour, solace, relief etc.).

For instance, animals (who lack intelligence, wisdom, moral values and ethics, e.g. elephants, lions, pigs, cows, monkeys etc.) know only how to harm others with their horns, trunk, claws, tails, nails, teeth, etc. (but rarely they use them to help or protect others creatures).

[The animals have a natural instinct or tendency to cause harm to others. So, a man who has a natural habit of harming others and using his resources to exploit others who are less fortunate or privileged is no better than an animal. If we read this Doha in conjunction with Doha no. 344, the meaning becomes all the more clear. One must use his resources to serve the society and the less privileged brethrens as much as possible. If he does so then he is to be regarded as noble soul. Otherwise he is like a self-serving and stupid animal that is least bothered about those around it.] (345)

346. तुलसी जग जीवन अहित कतहुँ कोउ हित जानि ।  
सोषक भानु कृसानु महि पवन एक घन दानि ॥

346. *tulasī jaga jīvana ahita katahum' kō'u hita jāni.*  
*sōṣaka bhānu kṛsānu mahi pavana ēka ghana dāni..*

Tulsidas says that in this world, those who harm other creatures (in any way whatsoever) are numerous, but those who do good to others are rare to find.

For instance, the sun, fire, earth and wind—all of them have a natural inclination to dry up the water (i.e. they try to eliminate water's very existence), but it is only the 'cloud' that nourishes it, replenishes its supply, and helps to sustain it in this otherwise cruel world (hell-bent to eliminate water without realizing that it is the 'water' which is at the very foundation of life in this world, and if the water is actually done away with then

neither of the other elements, viz. the sun, the fire, the earth or the wind, would be able to sustain life in any form in this world).

[The sun attempts to get rid of water by its intense heat. The fire is a natural enemy of the water. The earth soaks up water like sponge; this is no where more evident than in a desert. The wind dries up water as is observed when we leave clothes out in the open to dry; the stronger the wind the faster the clothes dry up. But it is only the cloud that not only carries water in its bowls but magnanimously pours it down upon the world below to help the 'water element' perennially replenish its supply that is constantly being depleted by its enemies such as the sun, the fire, the earth and the wind.] (346)

[Note—In this context, refer Doha no. 52 and 56 above. They also reflect the same idea.]

347. सुनिअ सुधा देखअहिं गरल सब करतूति कराल ।  
जहँ तहँ काक उलूक बक मानस सकृत मराल ॥

347. suni'a sudhā dēkha'ahir̃ garala saba karatūti karāla.  
jaham̃ taham̃ kāka ulūka baka mānasa sakṛta marāla..

One only hears about 'Amrit' (the elixir of eternity and immortality that is difficult to find), but 'Garal' (poison) can be easily seen at random at so many places and forms.

It is an irony of fate that whatever the Creator has created is terrifying and full of illusions. [It is a great paradox of creation that, while the Creator himself is merciful and compassionate, being the greatest benefactor of his creation, the creation that he created is self-destructing, being inimical and vicious against its own self.]

Crows, owls and deceitful cranes/storks are visible everywhere (i.e. they are a common sight in this world), but the 'swan' (considered to be a regal bird with auspicious habits) is found only in the Mansarovar lake (that is located in the upper reaches of the Himalayas, near Mt. Kailash, the legendary abode of Lord Shiva that is difficult to access by ordinary people).

[In other words, people who harm others and are of a lowly mentality like the crow, the owl and the crane are found easily and everywhere in this world, but real benefactors of humanity and true saints are a rarity, and though they exist but their numbers are limited and they are usually out of reach of the common man.] (347)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, as Doha no. 281.

The great paradox of creation is highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48. It says—'The Creator tells about something but shows something different; he says that he will show something but actually shows something else.']

348. जलचर थलचर गगनचर देव दनुज नर नाग ।  
उत्तम मध्यम अधम खल दस गुन बढत बिभाग ॥

348. jalacara thalacara gaganacara dēva danuja nara nāga.  
uttama madhyama adhama khala dasa guna baṛhata bibhāga..

[This Doha stresses that the number of good creatures, i.e. those who are noble-hearted, righteous, truthful, diligent, ethical, pious, wise, courteous and helpful, are miniscule as compared to those who have the opposite nature and character.]

Amongst all the creatures in this world—aquatic, terrestrial and air-borne, as well as the Gods, the Demons, Men and Serpents (i.e. all those who are born in this world in different hierarchical states of existence)—those who can be classified as the ‘best ones’ are the least in number, the ‘medium ones’ are ten times more, the ‘bad ones’ are ten times more in number than the ‘medium ones’, and the ‘worst’ types are still ten times more than the ‘bad ones’!

[In other words, the ‘best types’ of creatures are the least in number, with the ‘worst types’ being the most. The good characters and auspicious values rapidly decline, and one finds only a handful of good and noble creatures in this world. The world is populated with evil and sinful creatures in whom negative traits are dominant factors. These negative traits are determined by the predominance of the ‘Tama Guna’ in these creatures. Since the majority of the population consists of such creatures that have the Tama Guna as the overriding characteristic feature, the world itself appears to be tainted by Tama Guna.

The majority of the creatures are ‘not noble’ in the sense that selfishness, jealousy, envy, malice, animosity, anger, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy, worldly desires and passions, as well as lack of contentedness, compassion, mercy and grace etc., and such other negative qualities are the overriding features in this world. It is not that good characters are not present, but they are rare and far in between.] (348)

[Note—The Tama Guna is the third of the three basic quality in creation, the other two being Sata Guna and Raja Guna. The best types of creatures are those in whom the ‘Sata Guna’ plays a dominant role in defining their character. The worst types and the bad types of creatures have the ‘Tama Guna’ as the dominant player. Those that fall in the category of the ‘medium types of creatures’ have the ‘Raja Guna’ as a major player.

It ought to be expressly noted that there is no water-tight compartmentalization of these Gunas and characters, because all living beings have the three Gunas in them in some proportion. It is the ratio in which these Gunas are present in any given individual that determines whether he can be classified as the ‘best type’ or the ‘worst type’ or something in between.

The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the *Satwic* qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The *Vasanas* that have the *Rajsic Guna* or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with *Satwic* quality.

The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three *Gunas*. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of *Tama Guna* has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The *Tamsic Guna* or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The *Vasanas* that have the *Tama Guna* in dominance are regarded as the 'bad *Vasanas*' or better still the 'worst type of *Vasana*' that any individual can have.

These *Gunas*, in varying ratios and mixtures, decide the character and personality of any given unit of creation. In modern world we recognize them as the 'gene' special to that individual, the 'gene' which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These *Gunas* can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.]

349. बलि मिस देखे देवता कर मिस मानव देव ।  
मुए मार सुबिचार हत स्वारथ साधन एव ॥

349. bali misa dēkhē dēvatā kara misa mānava dēva.

mu'ē māra subicāra hata svāratha sādhana ēva..

Tulsidas says that he has seen (observed and determined) the selfish nature of the Gods as well as the Kings of this world. The Gods are offered sacrifices to please them so that they can take care of the world and its inhabitants, and similarly the Kings of the world are paid taxes so that they use this revenue for the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms.

But it is futile to expect anything from either of them—both of them are selfish and are more interested in self-gratification and extracting the maximum from their dependants rather than worrying about the latter's welfare and care. The Gods and the Kings equally get easily annoyed, are inclined to punish those who do not perform sacrifices or default in paying taxes respectively, and they have no compunction or mercy in extracting their share even from those who are facing misfortunes and are in dire straits.

[The Gods need offerings in sacrifices, and those who cannot do so are not protected by the Gods. If this is the attitude of Gods, what better can be expected from human Kings—they are worse off. The King wants his taxes, and he is not bothered about the inability of the subject to pay them. Then majority of Kings deem this tax as their person fortune, building huge palaces and armies to plunder neighbouring kingdoms rather than using this tax revenue for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom.

This is the general rule. This does not mean that all the Gods and Kings are selfish—for there are instance in the scriptures as well as the history of the world of Gods and Kings who are exemplarily gracious, merciful, compassionate and kind. But they are exceptions rather than the rule.] (349)

[Note—These two facts—that the Gods are selfish, and that the kings are selfish—has been endorsed in Ram Charit Manas.

(i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294, and line no. 1 of Doha no. 295 clearly say that the 'Gods are selfish'.

(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 101 that says in essence that the kings become indulgent in sins and do not observe the principles of Dharma (righteousness); they regularly punish the subjects of the kingdom inspite of the latter already suffering.]

350. सुजन कहत भल पोच पथ पापि न परखइ भेद ।  
करमनास सुरसरित मिस बिधि निषेध बद बेद ॥

350. sujana kahata bhala pōca patha pāpi na parakha'i bhēda.  
karamanāsa surasarita misa bidhi niṣēdha bada bēda..

Those who are wise, learned and experienced tell us about two paths—the one that is good and the other that is bad. Those who are intelligent and discriminating pick up the good path in their lives and abandon the bad path, but those who are sinful and pervert see no difference between them.

[Like a true teacher, such wise, learned and experienced people tell us everything, they lay bare all the facts for us to know what is correct and what is incorrect. They do not conceal anything at all. Their intention in telling about the spiritually bad path is to

warn the society against it and its pitfalls. They tell us about the spiritually good path so that we can follow the guideline set by them for our own welfare and good. Those who are wise and intelligent pick up the clue and lead a holy life characterized by noble virtues and righteous deeds and actions. On the other hand those who are dumb-witted and pervert see no use in observing such regulations and practices, and believe in making merry as if there is no tomorrow, least bothered or concerned or worried about their spiritual welfare and well-being.]

Citing an example Tulsidas says that the Vedas (scriptures) mention two rivers—one is the holy river Ganges and the other is the river known as Karma-nasa. Then the Vedas prescribe methods by which one can get spiritual merit by bathing and serving the holy river Ganges, while at the same time the spiritual demerit that accumulates by coming in contact with the unholy river Karma-nasa. Those who are intelligent and discriminating take the clue and worship and bathe in Ganges to attain purity and get rid of the dirt that has clung to them due to their sins, but those who are stupid and pervert do not see any difference between the water of the two rivers, and instead ridicule the holy Vedas.

[People of the material world say this is nonsense—after all, what is the difference between the water of the two rivers. They give two hoots for their spiritual welfare, for they do not believe in the ‘Holy Spirit’ in the first place. But a wise man must not allow himself to be distracted by such mischievous people for they sink themselves and drag others down with them. The word ‘Karma-nasa’ means the river which nullifies the effects of good deeds if one takes a dip in it. On the other hand there is the river Ganges that washes the filth of sins that clings to the creature. The Vedas prohibit bathing in the Karma-nasa river, while prescribing a bath in the river Ganges.] (350)

[Note—This idea that the same fact is interpreted differently by different people is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5 that says—“Everyone knows what is worthy and has good value, and what is evil and sinful and without worth, but one prefers anything and calls it good if he develops a liking for it, and calls all other things bad and evil if he does not like it. In other words, everyone chooses and picks up the path or the thing or the character according to his liking and inner-inclinations, and then finds a hoard of excuses to justify his choice.”

(ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 6 that say—“The good and the bad, all have been created by the same Creator, but the Vedas have segregated them according to their goodness and evil nature for ease of understanding by the world. The scriptures such as the Vedas, the Itihaas and the Purans unanimously declare that the creation of the Creator is fully soaked by the good and the bad.”

(iii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44 in which Lord Ram declares that—“It is natural for sinners not to like my devotion and worship.”]

The essence of anything is the most important aspect of it

351. मनि भाजन मधु पारई पूरन अमी निहारि ।  
का छौंड़िअ का संग्रहिअ कहहु बिबेक बिचारि ॥

351. mani bhājana madhu pāra'i pūrana amī nihāri.  
kā chāṁḍia kā saṅgrahi'a kahahu bibēka bicāri..

There is a gem-studded vessel containing harmful liquor and there is a clay-pot containing an elixir—ponder over the merits of the two and then decide that out of these two, which is to be accepted, collected and stored, and which is to be neglected and rejected.

[The liquor is harmful to the body, while the elixir is beneficial. What use will be the gem-studded vessel when the body is ruined if one accepts the first option? On the other hand, if one drinks an elixir, his body is rejuvenated and energized, and then he can work his way to riches and acquire many golden vessels, what to talk of a clay-pot.

The idea expressed in this Doha is that the meaning or the essence of anything—for instance, be it an ordinary daily message or the reading of the text of the scriptures—is most important and should be paid attention to, rather than the words used to convey this meaning or the medium used for this purpose.

Any thing that is good and worthwhile, irrespective of where it is found or from whom it comes, should be accepted, while anything that is bad should be rejected, neglected or abhorred no matter how attractive or alluring it might seem on the surface.] (351)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 10. They say—“Even a great poetry composed by an expert poet does not look beautiful without the holy name of Lord Ram in it—just like a most beautiful woman with a moon-like face does not look civil and cultured (i.e. looks like a whore) without proper clothes on her body. On the other hand, if there is a composition written by an incompetent person that incorporates the holy name of Lord Ram in its text, such composition is whole-heartedly accepted with respect and praised by wise and intelligent men (because it contains the divine name of the Lord God which helps to inject spiritual beauty in the otherwise lack-lustre collection of words). This is because wise and intelligent men are like the bee that accepts only the nectar from the flower and is not bothered about its superficial beauty.”]

#### Friendship and Animosity have three categories

352. उत्तम मध्यम नीच गति पाहन सिकता पानि ।  
प्रीति परिच्छा तिहुन की बैर बितिक्रम जानि ॥

352. *uttama madhyama nīnca gati pāhana sikatā pāni.*  
*prīti paricchā tihuna kī baira bitikrama jāni..*

‘Friendship’ and ‘Animosity’ have three categories—the best, the medium, and the worst.

The best form of friendship can be compared to a ‘stone’, the medium to ‘sand’, and the worst type to ‘water’.

[The best type of friendship is lasting and firm like ‘stone’. If one chisels out a line on a piece of stone, it cannot be erased. The medium type of friendship is like ‘sand’ because it can easily be changed and is fragile and transient. If one makes a line on the sand on the beach then this line may last for sometime but eventually gets erased. The worst type of friendship is like ‘water’ because the latter’s existence is very temporary; it evaporates on its own if left for sometime. Water can be very easily wiped and dried even

by ordinary breeze. A friendship that does not have any substance and gravity in it is like this water—it is here now, and it vanishes automatically after some time on its own. It is shifting and flickering like the moving water of a river or ocean. While it lasts, this third type of friendship may be soothing like water, but when it vanishes there is no way to retrieve it like water that has evaporated or gone away with the swiftly flowing current in the river. So, the best friendship is enduring and acts as a foundation for mutual trust and bonds, the worst friendship is very fickle, unreliable and untenable and is best avoided, while the medium type of friendship is useful for serving one's short-term goals.]

The reverse applies to animosity—viz. the worse sort of animosity is like 'stone', the medium is like 'sand', and the best type is like 'water'.

[The worst sort of animosity, ill-will, jealousy and hatred are like 'stone' because they are permanent. If a person is permanently opposed to someone and resolutely hates him forever, it is as permanent and hard as a stone. The best type of animosity or ill-will is like 'water' because it is very temporary—it is extremely short-lived, here now and gone then. Such phases are common even between the fastest and the best of friends—they may quarrel for sometime but forget about it the next day. The medium type of animosity is somewhere between the two extremes—it is not as hard and robust as a stone, and not as temporary and transient as water; it sustains for some reasonable period of time but does not affect long-term relationships.] (352)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 520 in this context.]

#### Difference between good and evil persons

353. पुन्य प्रीति पति प्रापतिउ परमारथ पथ पाँच ।  
लहहिं सुजन परिहरहिं खल सुनहु सिखावन साँच ॥

353. pun'ya prīti pati prāpati'u paramāratha patha pām̃ca.  
lahahim̃ sujana pariharahim̃ khala sunahu sikhāvana sām̃ca..

Those who are gentleman, wise, intelligent and discriminating strive to have merit and good virtues in them—they prefer doing good deeds, having enduring and pure form of love and affection, having a good name, honour and respect, and while acquiring worldly successes they also strive to attain spiritual gains by way of enlightenment, liberation and deliverance.

The reverse is true for those who are evil and sinful by nature. They do just the opposite and abhor the things accepted or pursued by gentlemen and good people. [In other words, such persons will never do good deeds and would prefer sinful acts. They will be selfish in all their relationships; if they pretend to have love then it is with the aim of some selfish needs. They are least concerned by what sort of fame they get, as long as they are famous; if the world remembers as cruel rascals, or as scoundrels and scamsters, so far so good for them! And similarly, they aren't bothered about spiritual welfare—because for them making merry is the only reward of taking birth.]

Tulsidas warns us to pay heed to what he says—and distinguish between the good and the evil men. [In other words, Tulsidas advises us to be careful in our dealings with these two types of people.] (353)

354. नीच निरादरहीं सुखद आदर सुखद बिसाल ।  
कदरी बदरी बिटप गति पेखहु पनस रसाल ॥

354. nīca nirādarahīṁ sukhada ādara sukhada bisāla.  
kadarī badarī biṭapa gati pēkhahu panasa rasāla..

The perverts, rascals and evil men feel glad on being scolded, reprimanded or insulted (i.e. they do not mind it, and are accustomed to it), while people of noble and upright nature who occupy a high status in society feel comfortable and happy on being respected, on being shown honour and courtesy.

To understand this difference, one must look at a banana and a plum tree on the one hand, and a jackfruit and a mango tree on the other hand.

[The former two trees—viz. the banana and the plum—bear more fruits when they are pruned. The banana tree is cut at its lower end, and the plum tree at its tip. In other words, only when they are bodily harmed will they produce fruits or rewards. Pampering them and leaving them unharmed will ruin them completely. So they resemble evil men who need stern control.

On the other hand, the latter two trees—viz. the jackfruit and the mango trees—give more fruits when they are tended properly, taken care of, left uncut and regularly watered. These two trees are like gentlemen.

In other words, gentlemen feel happy and reward the world by their selfless services if the world shows them their due respect, while rascals need restraining, admonishing and the fear of punishment if one expects to get anything done by them.] (354)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 58 it is said—“No matter how hard and countless numbers of times one tries, but the banana tree will not bear fruits by watering it. The only way to make it bear fruits is to cut its stem. Similarly, those who are wicked and lowly need constant warnings and reprimands, that is the only way to keep them in line; they will never listen to courteous words, and it not possible to sway them by prayers (requests or begging).”]

Everyone likes his own behaviour

355. तुलसी अपनो आचरन भलो न लागत कासु ।  
तेहि न बसात जो खात नित लहसुनहू को बासु ॥

355. tulasī apanō ācarana bhalō na lāgata kāsū.  
tēhi na basāta jō khāta nita lahasunahū kō bāsū..

Tulsidas says that there is no one who does not like his own behavior and way of thinking.

For instance, those who eat garlic daily are not affected (or offended) by its odour. [Garlic has a bad odour, and those who are not accustomed to eating it would feel repulsed by any food that has garlic in it; it produces nausea in them. But those who eat garlic regularly have no such repugnance towards it, and rather relish food that contains

garlic. Likewise, those who are accustomed to sinful behaviour and evil thoughts are not offended with what they are doing or thinking; it's a routine matter for them. But others abhor such behaviour and thoughts.] (355)

[Note—This is the reason why sinful creatures need help and guidance. Left to themselves they have become immune to the misdeeds they do; it is only when some wise men points out to them that they can realise their mistakes. Herein lies the importance of a Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher)—to show the sinful and lowly that the path they are following is wrong, and then point out to them the path that is correct and good for them.]

#### Characters of a gentleman

356. बुध सो बिबेकी बिमलमति जिन्ह कें रोष न राग ।  
सुहृद सराहत साधु जेहि तुलसी ताको भाग ॥

356. budha sō bibēkī bimalamati jinha kēm rōṣa na rāga.  
suhṛda sarāhata sādhu jēhi tulasī tākō bhāga..

Only those people who have a pure mind and harbour auspicious thoughts, those who do not have either any sort of attachment or infatuation with anyone or anything, or a sense of enmity, jealousy, ill-will, repugnance, repulsion or hatred towards them—are praised by wise ones and saints as being noble persons and gentlemen.

Tulsidas praises them too, and says that such people are indeed very lucky (because they are lauded by saints and honoured by the rest of the world). (356)

357. आपु आपु कहँ सब भलो अपने कहँ कोइ कोइ ।  
तुलसी सब कहँ जो भलो सुजन सराहिअ सोइ ॥

357. āpu āpu kaham̃ saba bhalō apanē kaham̃ kō'i kō'i.  
tulasī saba kaham̃ jō bhalō sujana sarāhi'a sō'i..

Everyone is selfish enough to serve one's own interest; a few think of doing good to others (such as their friends and relatives). Tulsidas says saints praise only those who think of the good and welfare of all the creatures of this world in general.

[In other words, a true noble-hearted and thorough gentleman is one who serves and helps others selflessly and without any ulterior motives. To serve one's own self or those from whom one has certain expectations does not come under the correct definition of 'service'.] (357)

#### The affect of company one keeps

358. तुलसी भलो सुसंग तें पोच कुसंगति सोइ ।  
नाउ किंनरी तीर असि लोह बिलोकहु लोइ ॥

358. tulasī bhalō susaṅga tēm pōca kusaṅgati sō'i.  
nā'u kinnarī tīra asi lōha bilōkahu lō'i..

Tulsidas says a man becomes either wise and good or wicked and bad depending upon good or bad company which he keeps respectively.

Oh people, watch how the same iron undergoes transformation. When iron is used to make a boat, it takes people across water; when it is used as a string to make a stringed musical instrument such as a guitar, it produces melodious music.

But when the same iron is used to make a sword or an arrow, it kills; it is transformed into an instant killer! (358)

[Note—When iron comes in contact with an engineer who makes boats and ships, it is used to ferry people across water in the river or the ocean. When iron comes in contact with a musician it is used to create heart-warming music. That is, the iron meets a good destiny.

But the same metal known as iron kills and slays when it comes in contact with armies and smiths who make weapon.

Similarly, if a man keeps good company he is bound to become good, and if he keeps bad company he will become bad.

The effect of the company one keeps—refer Doha nos. 140, 178, 336-337, 340, 359-363, 366, 438, 505.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45 it is asserted that good company helps a person to end all sorts of delusions and miseries associated with being trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this world.]

359. गुरु संगति गुरु होइ सो लघु संगति लघु नाम ।  
चार पदारथ में गनै नरक द्वारहू काम ॥

359. guru saṅgati guru hō'i sō laghu saṅgati laghu nāma.  
cāra padāratha mēm ganaim naraka dvārahū kāma..

The company of good people makes one respected and revered in the society, while that of evil people degrades one to ignominy and disrepute.

The detestable quality of 'Kaam' (lust, passions and desires) is counted as one of the four great fruits or rewards that one gets for doing auspicious deeds of merit. The other three fruits or rewards are 'Artha' (prosperity and material welfare), 'Dharma' (righteousness and nobility) and 'Moksha' (emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance).

[When a person does good deeds and acts righteously, leading a life of auspiciousness and noble thoughts and conduct, he is rewarded by welfare and honour in this material world while he is alive, and upon death he gets liberation and deliverance. Besides this, he gets a bonus in the form of fulfillment of his desires related to the world in spite of his acquiring the ability to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance.

This quality known as 'Kaam' is usually regarded as a negative quality, and is looked down by the wise ones. It is grouped with other negative traits in a man, such as anger (Krodh), greed (Lobha), arrogance and haughtiness (Mada), delusions (Maya) etc.

But when the same 'Kaam' is enjoyed by a person who leads life according to the laws of Dharma (righteous conduct), then it becomes a reward much sought after.] (359)

360. तुलसी गुरु लघुता लहत लघु संगीत परिनाम ।  
देवी देव पुकारिअत नीच नारि नर नाम ॥

360. tulasī guru laghutā lahata laghu saṅgīta parināma.  
dēvī dēva pukāri'ata nīca nāri nara nāma..

Tulsidas says that the result or effect of keeping company of lowly, evil and wicked people is that even exalted persons become degraded to ignominy, disrespect and disrepute.

For instance, even when wicked people keep first or second names after some gods or goddesses, their names are still pronounced with contempt though the word is the name of some holy god or goddess.

[Normally, when the name of a god or a goddess is pronounced by someone, people hear it with reverence and tend to bow their heads as a mark of respect. But this does not happen when some evil person keeps his own name after some god or goddess. As soon as his name is called out and people realise that a sinful person is being referred to and not some divine god or goddess, their natural and immediate reaction is of revulsion and annoyance.

The idea here is this—when exalted gods or goddesses allow their names to be associated with evil people, their names lose their sanctity and holiness, and this name is treated with contempt because of its association with a wicked person though it also happens to be the name of a holy god. In other words, if an otherwise nice and saintly man keeps company with vile and wicked people, he is bound to be adversely affected by this association. He cannot claim that he is not affected by bad company; the world will link a good man with the company he keeps, and this results in an otherwise good man getting a bad reputation inspite of him being holy and pious internally. So, the best recourse is to avoid evil company.] (360)

[Note—Read Doha no. 361 for clarification.]

361. तुलसी किँ कुसंग थिति होहिं दाहिने बाम ।  
कहि सुनि सकुचिअ सूम खल गत हरि संकर नाम ॥

361. tulasī ki'ēm̃ kusaṅga thiti hōhim dāhinē bāma.  
kahi suni sakuci'a sūma khala gata hari saṅkara nāma..

[Following up on Doha no. 360—] Tulsidas says that by staying in bad company even good becomes bad. For instance, it is well known that the names of great and exalted gods such as Hari (Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity Gods and the sustainer of creation) and Shankar (Lord Shiva, the third of the Trinity Gods and the concluder of creation) are auspicious and holy, but if the same names are assumed by people who are misers and miscreants then these holy names lose their sanctity, and they forfeit the right

to respect and reverence that are normally due to them, so much so that people hesitate to even pronounce them. (361)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7 it is said that—“if someone says such names in the morning, then he does not get food to eat that day, so unholy the name becomes.”]

362. बसि कुसंग चह सुजनता ताकी आस निरास ।  
तीरथहू को नाम भो गया मगह के पास ॥

362. basi kusaṅga caha sujanatā tākī āsa nirāsa.  
tīrathahū kō nāma bhō gayā magaha kē pāsa..

If one lives in or keeps the company of the evil, the sinful, pervert and the wicked, and hopes or expects to find or get respect and honour, or to acquire good virtues that bestows him with good name and fortunes, then such a hope or expectation is in vain, and such a man lives in a fool's paradise.

For instance, one of the great and holy pilgrim cities situated near Magadh province (in the eastern state of Bihar in India) has acquired the nickname of 'Gaya'—i.e. 'one that has been irretrievably lost', in spite of it being so holy that it provides salvation to the soul and prevents it from going to hell.

[According to tradition, people offer sacrifices to the spirit of dead ancestors at this place to ensure that they do not go to hell but find a permanent place in heaven. But the irony is that the name of the place implies something opposite—its name 'Gaya' means 'gone, lost forever', though its function is to retrieve the soul from hell and place it in the heaven. The reason for this misnomer is its closeness to an inauspicious place known as the 'Magadh' province. This unholy association has its negative effect in as much as a holy place that provides emancipation and salvation is given a name 'Gaya' that is very misleading regarding the function it performs.

Therefore, if a man keeps bad company and feigns innocence, then he cannot free or absolve or exonerate himself from the negative consequences of such bad company.] (362)

363. राम कृपाँ तुलसी सुलभ गंग सुसंग समान ।  
जो जल परै जो जन मिलै कीजै आपु समान ॥

363. rāma kṛpām̐ tulasī sulabha gaṅga susaṅga samāna.  
jō jala parai jō jana milai kijai āpu samāna..

Tulsidas says that the holy river Ganges and communion with good people are equally good for a person in the sense that both of them have a positive effect on the person who comes in contact with them.

This is because any type of water, whether polluted or unsanctified, that falls in the Ganges is deemed to have become pure and sanctified. Similarly, any wicked or evil person who meets saints and keeps their company is bound to inculcate good virtues so

characteristic of saints. Community of saints will have a positive effect on the sinful and pervert man, and result in his transformation.

But this contact is possible only by the grace of Lord Sri Ram. (363)

[Note—This fact that saints are met by the grace of Lord Ram is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7.

There are long verses in Ram Charit Manas as to how the community of saints changes a man and what the good effects of such contacts are. Some references—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, the whole Chaupai that precedes Doha no. 3, especially no. 2 and 6-7 that say essentially that “the glory and greatness of the community of saints is difficult to measure and difine, and such contacts are not possible without the grace of Lord Ram”. (ii) In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 2 that says “even the wicked and the rascal is improved when he comes in contact of saints”.

There are references regarding the ability of river Ganges to purify all water that falls in it—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194 that says “when the water of the Karmanas river (which is considered unholy) falls in the river Ganges (which is considered holy)—say who will not put the water of the Ganges on his head (i.e. show respect to the water of the Ganges) inspite of the unholy water of Karmanas falling into it?”. (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 70 that says “when wine falls into river Ganges and gets mixed with its water, the mixture is no more regarded as unholy and unsanctified”. (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 69 that says “all sorts of water fall in the holy river Ganges, but no one calls the latter pollouted or unholy”.]

364. यह भेषज जल पवन पट पाइ कुजोग सुजोग ।  
होहिं कुबस्तु सुबस्तु जग लखहिं सुलच्छन लोग ॥

364. yaha bhēṣaja jala pavana paṭa pā'i kujōga sujōga.  
hōhim kubastu subastu jaga lakhahim sulacchana lōga..

Stars and planets, medicines, water and air (environment) and clothes—all of them become good and benign, or bad and malignant depending upon good (favourable) or bad (unfavourable) situation or circumstance. This secret is understood only by wise people having a refined intellect.

[The same set of stars in the zodiac sign and alignment of planets in the sky heralds good for a certain man, and bad times for another. Only an expert astrologer is able to distinguish between these contradictory effects on two individuals based on other parameters that surround them. According to astrology, the same planet or star may be good when it is aligned with some other given planet or star, and it might become harmful when associated with some other planet or star<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, the same medicine is not good for all the patients, and it is a doctor who is the one who knows which medicine will best suit a disease in a man depending again on many other variables.

Cold water is liked by some, but to others it can cause a sore throat. When water comes in contact with a flower such as rose, it becomes scented, while the same water gives out a foul smell when rotten things are put into it.

A healthy man likes fresh wind, but when one suffers from fever or severe cold the same wind is unacceptable as it aggravates his condition. Further, when the wind touches flowers and blows, it spreads a sweet aroma, but the same wind spreads stink when it passes over scum and decaying matter.

Royal robes suit a king, and if a layman wears the same clothes in the marketplace he becomes a subject of ridicule and laughter. A beggar does not draw attention in his tattered rags, but if a king wears them it raises hackles and eyebrows.

Tulsidas means that the same thing may be good for one person and not for another. So it is always wise to consult learned people and see what will suit one's own needs and situations. No generalization can be made in this world full of contradictions, ironies and paradoxes.] (364)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer Doha no. 459 which also clearly hints at this situation.]

#### Diversity in creation

365. जनम जोग में जानिअत जग बिचित्र गति देखि ।  
तुलसी आखर अंक रस रंग बिभेद बिसेषि ॥

365. janama jōga mēm jāni'ata jaga bicitra gati dēkhi.  
tulasī ākhara aṅka rasa raṅga bibhēda bisēṣi..

At the time of birth, there are different combinations of stars and planets for different individuals, and since they have an effect on a person's destiny, the way he will shape up and behave when he grows up and becomes a part of this world, it follows that there is bound to be immense variations and diversity in the ways of the world.

Tulsidas compares this situation with the immense possibilities that can arise by the permutation and combination of various digits or numbers (such as 1, 2, 3 etc.), letters of the alphabets (such as A, B, C, etc.), tastes (such as sweet, sour, etc.), as well as the various colours (such as red, blue, yellow, etc.). The possibilities are mind-boggling and huge. (365)

[Note—This Doha explains why there is so much diversity in this world and characters of people. Even siblings have different destinies and behavioural patterns though they are brought up in the same environment.]

#### The affect of company one keeps

366. आखर जोरि बिचार करु सुमति अंक लिखि लेखु ।  
जोग कुजोग सुजोग मय जग मति समुझि बिसेषु ॥

366. ākhara jōri bicāra karu sumati aṅka likhi lēkhu.  
jōga kujōga sujōga maya jaga mati samujhi bisēṣu..

Oh wise ones! Think. By adding (as a prefix or suffix) letters or words, and adding or subtracting digits and numerals, one would easily realise the immense possibilities of

new words and figures, with different and often diametrically opposite meanings, being actually possible.

[For instance, 'un' prefixed to the word 'holy' becomes 'unholy'—obviously these two words have diametrically opposite meaning. Similarly, the numeral 0 (zero) when added after 1 (one) becomes the number 10, but when the same 0 is added before 1 it would mean either decimal 1 (i.e. 0.1) or only the earlier 1 because 01 has no special meaning.]

Likewise, a man becomes good or bad depending upon good or bad company he keeps. Similarly, the same thing becomes good or bad depending how one uses it.

[If a wise man keeps constant company of stupid people who surround him on all sides, then sooner or later the former is bound to be affected by his negative environment and his wisdom is eroded in due course of time. Just the opposite would happen if a foolish man keeps constant company of wise men; sooner or later the foolish man will show signs of wisdom and intelligent thinking.

If a wise and noble man allows himself to be followed by wicked people then they act as a drag upon him, giving him a bad name and decimating all his achievements by stabbing him in his back. And if he allows wicked people to advise him on any matter, i.e. he follows wicked people who decide the way he thinks and sees the world then too he is sure to fall from his exalted position. This simple example is applicable to all situations in this world.] (366)

#### Importance of following correct or right path

367. करु बिचार चलु सुपथ भल आदि मध्य परिनाम ।  
उलटि जपें 'जारा मरा' सूधें 'राजा राम' ॥

367. karu bicāra calu supatha bhala ādi madhya parināma.  
ulaṭi japēm 'jārā marā' sūdhēm'rājā rāma'..

One should tread a good path of truthfulness, righteousness, probity and propriety because by doing so one is assured of welfare and well-being at the beginning, during and even at the end of all endeavours.

For instance, the (Hindi) words 'RAJA' (King) and 'RAM' (the Supreme Lord) when pronounced in the reverse order means 'JARA' (burnt or old age) and 'MARA' (death)—both of which have negative connotations.

[When we the two words 'Raja' and 'Ram' are said repeatedly in quick succession they sound 'Jara' and 'Mara' respectively. While the original words Raja (king) and Ram (Lord) have a positive meaning and invoke respect, generating positive energy, but when they are said in the reverse order, i.e. Jara (burnt or old age) and Mara (death), they generate a negative energy and have a negative connotation.

So, it is very important to choose the correct path in all spheres of life, whether temporal matters or spiritual matters. The same set of medicines if taken in an incorrect manner may prove more harmful than good. The same set of religious practices may lead a man to his liberation and deliverance if done and followed properly, but lead to his ruin and entanglement in meaningless rituals if done improperly.] (367)

[Note—A very interesting deduction can be made in this context. In the spiritual sphere there are two paths—one is the path of Bhakti (devotion and faith), and the other is of Gyan (knowledge). Some advocate Bhakti, and others Gyan; some advocate a judicial mixture of both. Which is the correct path then? Well, the answer stares in the face if we read and understand what the present Doha means and says.

We must first know our destination or objective correctly and precisely—and this is possible by Gyan. The word Gyan itself means 'knowledge'. Hence, we must first have knowledge about our goals and how to reach them. Then comes the role of Bhakti—the role of devotion and faith. Once one has determined the correct goal and destination he must then pursue it with dedication, commitment and faith. This is Bhakti. Bhakti will prevent one falling on the wayside or getting distracted by temptations that come in the way of reaching one's goal. But prior to pursuing the goal with dedication it is of paramount importance to properly select the correct goal and destination—and also the way that leads to this goal and destination. This is done with Gyan, and mind you, not with Bhakti!

If one selects a wrong path and destination due to lack of Gyan, and pursues it with full devotion (Bhakti)—say, what will happen to him? Won't he be ruined and disillusioned later? Then he will start blaming the scriptures and the teacher, saying that everything they say is hogwash and untrue. But the fault lies with the man and not the scriptures or the guru.]

#### Irony & Paradoxes in this world

368. होइ भले कें अनभलो होइ दानि कें सूम ।  
होइ कपूत सपूत कें ज्यो पावक में धूम ॥

368. hō'i bhalē kēm anabhalō hō'i dāni kēm sūma.  
hō'i kapūta sapūta kēm jyōm pāvaka mēm dhūma..

The world is full of ironies and paradoxes—(i) like the case of black soot or smoke that emerges from the fire which is brilliant and illuminated itself, (ii) like the case of a noble and righteous man having an evil son, (iii) like the case of a benevolent and generous donor having a miserly son (who does not believe in charity), (iv) and like the case of a worthy father having an un-worthy and shameful son. (368)

[Note—In short, there is no certainty in this world that goodness begets goodness; all depends on providence and destiny. No matter what a man does, sometimes the results are the opposite of what one expects. But one should not shirk from one's chosen path of righteousness and propriety, and accept all misfortunes and un-wanted developments as the will of the Lord, and the attendant sufferings as a form of penance and atonement for his past life and its misdeeds.]

369. जड़ चेतन गुन दोष मय बिस्व कीन्ह करतार ।  
संत हंस गुन गहहिं पय परिहरि बारि बिकार ॥

369. jaṛa cētana guna dōṣa maya bisva kīnha karatāra.  
santa hansa guna gahahim paya parihari bāri bikāra..

The creator has created this animate as well as inanimate world full of virtues and goodness on the one hand, and vices and faults on the other hand. Saints and wise ones are like the Swan which is renowned for its ability to segregate milk (representing good virtues) from water (symbolizing not-so-good virtues), and then drink (accept) the milk while leaving behind (discarding) water as an adulterant.

[The Swan is cited in all the scriptures as a wise and discerning bird. It never drinks adulterated milk. It will drink only pure milk and leave the additional water that may have been added to dilute it. This ability sets it apart from all the members of the animal kingdom. Wise and intelligent men are compared to this wise bird for their ability to pick up good and auspicious qualities in this world and accept them, but reject those that are bad, mean and evil. Wisdom lies not in fretting and fuming over the paradoxes and ironies of this world, but in making the best of what is available.] (369)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, as Doha no. 6.

The world is neither an entirely good place nor an entirely bad place to live in. It consists of all the good virtues as well as evil qualities. The best instance to understand it is the bar magnet—on one of its end there is the north pole, and on its other end is the south pole. These two opposite poles or ends exist in the same piece of the magnet. It is important to note here that if any given thing is to be recognized as a ‘magnet’ then it is obligatory for it to have this characteristic feature—the north and the south poles. The Creator was wise while he was involved in the process of creation. This situation helps to maintain a balance of power between the good and the bad.

Just like it is equally important to have a night time and a day time—for otherwise the world would scorch to death if we had continuous sunlight, or freeze to death if there was constant darkness without the benefit of heat of the sun—it is also important to have good qualities and bad qualities. This helps the Creator to judge the creature and determine who is eligible for upliftment reward, and who for demotion and punishment.]

One should nurture anything that serves his welfare

370. पाट कीट तें होइ तेहि तें पाटंबर रुचिर ।  
कृमि पालइ सबु कोइ परम अपावन प्रान सम ॥

370. pāṭa kīṭa tēm hō'i tēhi tēm pāṭambara rucira.  
kr̥mi pāla'i sabu kō'i parama apāvana prāna sama..

Silk, the finest and the most beautiful fabric, is produced by the silk-worm. That is why even the most lowly, unholy, contemptible and detestable creature such as a ‘worm’ is nursed and reared by people as being very dear to their hearts, because it produces silk which is a fine material and is very much in demand by people of high society.

[The word ‘worm’ is usually used in a derogatory way; it is an offensive word when applied to men. The silk-worm produces silk through a secretion from its mouth. Anything coming out of the mouth is virtual vomit. But since this ‘vomit’ has a great market value because we make silk from it, the silk-worm is tended and taken proper care of. Tulsidas means that if something helps us to serve our long-term goals or is conducive to our welfare, then wise men gladly accept such things. They look at the fruits and not at the tree.

In other words, if the human body is used to serve others and the Lord God, then in spite of it being gross and full of faults it is still accepted with respect by saints and wise ones. Remember—it is only through the medium of the body that one can serve other creatures, as well as do righteous deeds and take noble actions that will make the world a better place for all others. If the body is used in this holy way, then it is worthy of praise. Otherwise it is contemptible and not worthy to keep.] (370)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 95.]

Only wise people can distinguish between the good and the bad

371. जो जो जेहिं जेहिं रस मगन तहँ सो मुदित मन मानि ।  
रसगुन दोष बिचारिबो रसिक रीति पहिचानि ॥

371. jō jō jēhiṁ jēhiṁ rasa magana taham̐ sō mudita mana māni.  
rasaguna dōṣa bicāribō rasika rīti pahicāni..

Everyone remains happy and contented in things that are liked by him, but only the wise ones know the difference between the good and bad, between the virtuous qualities that are acceptable in any given thing or situation and those qualities that are to be discarded and neglected in the same thing or situation.

[When a man is driven by his heart and its emotions, paying no heed to the instructions of his mind and intellect, giving more weight to his impulses than to the advise of the intellect and its discriminating abilities, then he is prone to fall in a trap whereby he is unable to distinguish what is good for him and what is not.] (371)

[Note—A person perceives the world through his five organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin that see, hear, smell, taste and touch respectively), and he interacts with it using his five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals). If a man is not wise enough spiritually, he will spend his entire lifetime enjoying or suffering in this world under the driving power of these organs, and their master, the mind. Only a few amongst men would use their intellect to peep behind the external façade to research the truth that lies behind the veil. So, while an ordinary man may rejoice under a given situation and wail in another, an enlightened man remains unmoved and stable under both the situations, because he knows that such emotions as happiness and sorrows are only relative and superficial, and none of them will last for ever. They realise that success and defeat are part of the game of life, and so they take it in a true sportsman spirit.

On a more mundane plane we can take another example to understand the principle that the Doha espouses. If a man has a sweet tooth he will never realise what harm sweet is doing to his health. A wise man on the other hand will surely eat sweet, but with caution. He understands that body needs carbohydrates and quick means of energy by way of sugar and glucose, but everything is best done in moderation.]

372. सम प्रकास तम पाख दुहुँ नाम भेद बिधि कीन्ह ।  
ससि सोषक पोषक समुझि जग जस अपजस दीन्ह ॥

372. sama prakāsa tama pākha duhum̐ nāma bhēda bidhi kīnha.  
sasi sōṣaka pōṣaka samujhi jaga jasa apajasa dīnha..

The illumination of the disc of the moon on any given night of the bright fortnight of the lunar month is similar to the corresponding disc of the moon of the dark fortnight. But the creator ('Vidhi') decided to give them two different names—the bright fortnight is called 'Shukla Paksha' (white half) and the dark fortnight is called 'Krishna Paksha' (dark half) of the moon. The reason is that during the first half (i.e. the bright fortnight), the moon gradually increases in brightness, and hence this half is regarded as a sustainer of the moon and an enhancer of its glory. The word 'Shukla' indicates this phenomenon.

The reverse is true for the other half of the moon (i.e. the dark fortnight) when the moon gets progressively reduced in size and brightness. This symbolizes gradual reduction of the glory of the moon, and hence this half is called 'Krishna Paksha'—the phase in the life of the moon that denotes its demotion, fall from grace and loss of glory. (372)

[Note—This Doha will assume a clear meaning when read in the context of the previous Doha no. 371. The creator could have refrained from giving two names to the same moon, but he decided to give them two identities to indicate to the world that a wise man should judge the world properly, and not be misled by its external appearances. The same thing may be for his good, and it may be harmful for him. If it helps in enhancing his glory and fame, in securing his future and well-being, both the temporal as well as the spiritual, then the wise man accepts it with open arms. And if the thing may look very good on the face but is detrimental for his well-being, the wise man shuns it.]

Names and external façades are often misleading  
(so one must have deep insight before making judgment)

373. लोक बेदहू लौं दगो नाम भले को पोच ।  
धर्मराज जम गाज पबि कहत सकोच न सोच ॥

373. lōka bēdahū laurñ dagō nāma bhalē kō pōca.  
dharmarāja jama gāja pabi kahata sakōca na sōca..

It is an irony that in this world it is often observed that even the good and auspicious are given a bad and an inauspicious name, which makes it difficult for one to judge the truth about the given entity.

For instance, it is well-known in the 'Lokas' (the worlds) as well as the 'Vedas' (scriptures) that 'Dharmaraj' (the God of Dharma or justice, prudence and righteousness) is known by the name of 'Yam' (the God of death), and a source of light known as 'lightening' ('Pabi') is given the name of 'Vajra' (the thunderbolt—which is a destructive shaft of energy from the heavens which devastates the objects on which it falls, something very opposite to 'light' that illuminates the world and indicates heavy rainfall).

People have no hesitation or qualms in calling both the God of Dharma, known as the 'Dharmaj', and the source of heavenly light, the 'lightening', with names which are misnomers and quite the opposite of the actual virtues of these two exalted entities, and insulting to their high stature.

[The 'God of Dharma' is a noble and honourable God to whom the whole world pays its respect, but the irony is that he is called 'Yam' which means the God of death.

The two names are of the same God but mean diametrically different things—whereas ‘Dharmaraj’ is an auspicious name invoking respect and honour, ‘Yam’ is a name that is loathed by the world and invokes a negative connotation.

Similarly, the word ‘lightening’ means something that illuminates and shows light to the otherwise dark world, while ‘thunderbolt’ automatically invokes negativism and a picture of havoc and destruction.

The idea is that one must not judge anything by its external appearances and names. A wise man peers deep inside with his eyes of wisdom and insight to find out what lies behind the external façade, extract the goodness from all that is observed, and then treat the given entity or situation with respect and acceptance, or with rejection and neglect, depending upon the nature of its inherent virtues and strengths. For instance, if poison is covered with a thick coat of sugar it will still remain poison, and if one mistakenly eats it thinking it to be a delicious sweet-meat then the consequences are obvious—he will die.] (373)

#### Distinction between saints and non-saints

374. बिरुचि परिखे सुजन जन राखि परखिे मंद ।  
बड़वानल सोषत उदधि हरष बढ़ावत चंद ॥

374. biruci parikha'ai sujana jana rākhi parakhi'ai manda.  
baravānala sōṣata udadhi haraṣa barhāvata canda..

Saints are known even without making any special effort or test (because they have an aura of holiness around them that comes with truthfulness, pure nature, honest demeanours and righteous behaviour).

On the other hand, wicked people are known only after staying in their company for some time (because they are very pretentious, and it is difficult to know their cunning and deceitful nature instantly).

For instance, a 'Barvaanal' (the fire burning in the bed of the ocean which often erupts as an underwater volcano that is visible from the surface of the ocean as huge water-spouts) burns the ocean slowly, and over time it may dry up its water. [This refers to catastrophic geological changes in the earth which result in large water bodies being reduced to swamps, salt-water lakes like the ‘dead sea’, or even dried up sea-beds. The idea is that the water of the ocean is unable to overcome the fierce nature of the underwater volcano which erupts periodically to heat and evaporate the water of the ocean. It is like a dangerous friend staying in one’s own house.]

On the other hand, the moon is out in the open, and as soon as the ocean sees it it begins to heave in happiness. [It is common for the ocean to have high tides during full moon nights. The moon is soothing as compared to the Barvaanal, and it is therefore likened to the ‘saintly man’ as compared to the ‘non-saintly’ nature of the Barvaanal. The ocean realises that the moon is its true friend as soon as it sees the latter, but it does not realise that the Barvaanal that it hides in its bosom is its enemy. This realisation comes after a long time when the Barvaanal begins to show its true colour—when it begins to burn the ocean from within.

In other words, saints are always a provider of happiness and cheer, while non-saints may remain dormant for sometime, but whenever they rear their heads they are always a cause of unhappiness and grief for a man.] (374).

[Note—A saint will always give happiness to the world even if he keeps a distance from it and remains dispassionate towards the world and its affairs. This is exemplified by the moon which makes the ocean heave in joy though the moon is far away from the ocean. On the other hand, the non-saint will always give grief and sorrows to the world even if he pretends to be the latter's friend and lives with its inhabitants as one of them—this is exemplified by the Barvaanal that lives inside the ocean but does not have any compunctions or regrets in burning its own habitat and shelter.

Tulsidas has described the characters of both the saints as well as the non-saints in his epic 'Ram Charit Manas' in its Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 41; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5, 15-21 that precede Doha no. 121.]

#### Nature of a wicked & mean person

375. प्रभु सनमुख भएँ नीच नर होत निपट बिकराल ।  
रबिरुख लखि दरपन फटिक उगिलत ज्वालाजाल ॥

375. prabhu sanamukha bha'eṃ' nīca nara hōta nipaṭa bikarāla.  
rabirukha lakhi darapana phaṭika ugilata jvālājāla..

A wicked person of a low mentality becomes exceedingly haughty and arrogant when he finds that his master or patron is favourable towards him.

[When a man who is intrinsically pervert and wicked finds that his senior is favourably inclined towards him due to some reason, then instead of feeling humble and obliged he becomes arrogant and haughty, throwing his weight around on his other colleagues, showing off his privileged status, and thinking that no one can harm him anymore and he can bully others at will, because the chief likes him more than others, and any complaint against him would not be entertained by him. A person of an inherent good nature, on the other hand, would become more cooperative with his colleagues, and would always go out of his way to help them.

Similarly, a wicked minister of a king may become arrogant, cruel and exploitative if he finds that the king favours him over other courtiers, and instead of looking for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom with greater zeal and using his privileged position in the hierarchy of the kingdom, he will begin tormenting the people.]

For instance, when a mirror or a lens-glass (or a quartz) find that the sun is facing them (a metaphor for the sun taking interest in them and paying its attention to them over all the other things on earth), they become extremely hot (a metaphor for being arrogant, haughty, pervert, hypocrite and stubborn), and begin to imitate the sun by radiating heat as much as the sun itself by reflecting its heat.

[When the mirror faces the sun, it reflects the sun so intensely that looking at the image of the sun in the mirror would be same as looking at it directly in the sky with naked eyes. If the mirror is left facing the sun for some time, it becomes very hot.

Similarly, a convex lens focuses the sun's rays so intensely that if dry leaves are put at its focal point then the heat generated would burn them. The same leaves do not get burnt when lying in the open under the sun, but the lens burns them as if it itself was the sun. No other ordinary piece of glass would be able to do this; only the lens is able to imitate the sun and spew heat and energy sufficiently strong to burn dry leaves or paper.

These two examples are used by way of metaphors by Tulsidas to emphasise the point how lowly people do not realise that they have no powers or abilities themselves but it comes from the senior authority over them, and therefore they have no reason to become proud of something they are able to do or successes they achieve. Their successes and achievements are not due to their own abilities or skills, but due to the blessing or patronage of their senior. So they should be obliged towards him and serve him with greater sincerity instead of waiting for an opportunity to stab their patron and mentor in the back.] (375)

[Note—Compare the nature of a noble person as narrated in the following Doha no. 376 with that of a wicked one. This is complimented by Doha nos. 377, 379, 380, 382.

Tulsidas has described the characters of wicked persons in 'Ram Charit Manas' in its Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 40.]

#### Nature of a noble person

376. प्रभु समीप गत सुजन जन होत सुखद सुबिचार ।  
लवन जलधि जीवन जलद बरषत सुधा सुबारि ॥

376. prabhu samīpa gata sujana jana hōta sukhada subicāra.  
lavana jaladhi jīvana jalada baraṣata sudhā subāri..

[Now, the nature of a noble person is outlined so that the comparison between him and a wicked person becomes evident.]

A noble and good-hearted man becomes a provider of welfare and happiness to all others when he stays close to the master and is favourably looked upon by him. Tulsidas says that he makes this assertion after thinking properly, and we must also understand this difference (between a wicked man and a noble-hearted man).

[When a wise and noble-hearted man finds that he has the privilege of being in the good books of his lord, master, chief or senior, the 'Authority', he will never become haughty and arrogant like his wicked counterpart. Instead, he will use his privileged position to help his colleagues and other persons who may not have the privilege of direct contact with the chief or the senior Authority like him but nevertheless need his help so that their pleas are heard by that Authority. Such men are respected in society.]

[Tulsidas gives the following example—] For instance, the source of the cloud is the salty ocean, but while the ocean is of no use to the world, the cloud sustains life on earth by pouring its nectar-like water in the form of rain over the entire stretch of the land for the benefit of all.

[The ocean is a rich and endless source of water, but what good is it to us? Its water cannot be drunk, and though it covers almost two-thirds of the earth the rest of the land would remain parched and dried had it not been for the rain falling from the cloud.

The greenery of the earth is due to the rain and its source, the cloud, and not due to the ocean.

The cloud is formed by water evaporating from the ocean; the ocean seeds the cloud. But the irony is that while the ocean is worthless, the cloud is worth its weight in gold. In this instance, the 'ocean' is like the main Authority from where all powers and resources come, and the 'cloud' is like the benevolent and magnanimous person who acts as a benefactor for the world at large, and that too in a selfless manner.

The cloud owes its existence and its ability to give water to the earth from the ocean; but it never shows off. The cloud gives liberally, not keeping any water miserly for its own use, knowing fully well that it can draw more of it from its main patron, the ocean. The cloud generously gives its resource to others for their welfare. People look up to the cloud for their supply of fresh water, and they never go to the ocean, though technically the ocean can be used to meet all the fresh water needs of the human race after filtering and desalinating its vast resources of water.

But the roar of the ocean is fierce, and it can scare the wits out of the faint-hearted when it begins to rise with huge wall-like waves. On the other hand, no one fears the rain; it is most welcome after a scorching summer. The water of the ocean can never irrigate the fields of the farmer, but the rain from the cloud actually waters his fields; the crops directly depend upon a good monsoon rain.

Similarly, a kind and generous man uses all his additional abilities that he gets by being in the proximity of some senior Authority for the welfare of others, and does not exploit this privilege or proximity to fill his own coffers. For, if he does so then there would be no difference between him and a wicked man.] (376)

[Note—The following Dohas also elaborate upon this theme. Refer: 377, 378, 381.]

#### Comparison of a selfless and a selfish man

377. नीच निरावहिं निरस तरु तुलसी सींचहि ऊख ।  
पोषत पयद समान सब बिष पियूष के रुख ॥

377. nīca nirāvahim̐ nirasa taru tulasī sīñcahi ūkha.  
pōṣata payada samāna saba biṣa piyūṣa kē rukha..

Comparing a selfish man with a selfless man, Tulsidas says that an evil man (i.e. one who is selfish and self-centered) has no qualms in uprooting dried-up (dead) trees from the fields and throwing them away (because they are useless for him), while he waters and tends to the sugarcane plant (because he benefits from it).

[In other words, a selfish man will have no second thoughts in breaking relationships with and even betraying the other person even though he had been a long-term companion if the latter does not serve the former's vested interest. As long as the companion is in good times and the selfish man derives some benefits from him, he will be the former's friend, but if the companion faces rough time and is no longer of help to the selfish man then the latter would have prick of the conscience in turning his face away. The selfish man will not even think of helping his companion during his rough patch though the latter had been helping the former throughout his life.]

Citing the instance of the cloud, Tulsidas says that the cloud showers its rain uniformly on the whole earth, and both the poisonous as well as the sweet (i.e. beneficial) trees are benefitted by its rain; the cloud nourishes them without distinction, and is equally benevolent upon them.

[The noble-hearted man will not shy away from helping the downtrodden and the less privileged. He will as easily and comfortably befriend a poor man and talk cheerfully with him as he will with the mighty and the powerful. He blends equally with all members of the society. On the other hand, evil persons with a haughty nature will show off their stature by hobnobbing and rubbing shoulders with the mighty and the powerful while sniffing snobbishly and contemptibly at the poor and the downtrodden, treating them with disdain as if they were scums of the society.] (377)

#### Nature of a noble person

378. बरषि बिस्व हरषित करत हरत ताप अघ प्यास ।  
तुलसी दोष न जलद को जो जल जरै जवास ॥

378. baraṣi bisva haraṣita karata harata tāpa agha pyāsa.  
tulasī dōṣa na jalada kō jō jala jarai javāsa..

The cloud pleases the whole world by pouring its rain upon it in a uniform manner, without prejudice and distinction. It strives to eliminate the heat and troubles caused by it; it quenches the thirst of the world.

In spite of this benevolence of the cloud some people accuse it of being cruel to the 'Jawas' (a prickly plant used in herbal medicines; the plant *Alhagi comelorum*) because this plant gets burnt (scalded) on being sprinkled by cold drops of the rain. Tulsidas wonders what fault is there of the cloud if one plant suffers because of it while the rest of the world is immensely benefitted by its rain.

[Tulsidas means that it is impossible to please each single entity in this world. Even the Gods are not spared by humans who accuse them of not being sufficiently merciful if the things do not turn out the way a man wants. The man will not realise that there was some fault in his own efforts; or that the Gods have to be neutral, and if his actions or deeds harm others or exploit them then the Gods cannot oblige him. Will the God like to punish his neighbour just because he wants them to suffer for no fault of theirs, except that he is jealous of them?

A wise man is one who keeps the broader good of the world in sight in all his decisions and actions. If this means that a few insignificant numbers have to suffer while the rest of the people are made happy, then it is okay with him. He must weigh the pros and the cons; he must ponder if any of his actions serve the larger interest of the society, and if the answer is 'yes' then he must go ahead irrespective of opposition from some vested quarters.] (378)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 379, 382 also.]

A noble-hearted man remains unfazed by criticism by lowly people

379. अमर दानि जाचक मरहिं मरि मरि फिरि फिरि लेहिं ।  
तुलसी जाचक पातकी दातहि दूषन देहिं ॥

379. amara dāni jācaka marahim̐ mari mari phiri phiri lēhim̐.  
tulasī jācaka pātakī dātahi dūṣana dēhim̐..

Donors who are kind-hearted, noble, generous and benevolent become immortal (in the sense that their name and fame last for a very long time, and they are remembered with respect for many generations).

On the other hand, alms seekers and beggars continue to take birth and die endlessly. [That is, new beggars and alms seekers collect at the door of the kind donor daily. They are not recognized and remain anonymous; they are treated with contempt by the society; they are forgotten once they go away. They come in faceless droves, collect greedily whatever they can grab, go away clamouring and criticizing each others of getting more than them, and come back again the next day without invitation. Their needs are never fulfilled; they are never contented. They push, shove and shout at each others without showing any sense of dignity and respect to their fellow human beings.]

These alms seekers and beggars are of so low mentality that if the magnanimous donor of alms and charities falls short of meeting their ever-increasing demands and expectations, they do not hesitate in cursing him and accusing him of being miserly and stingy.

[These alms seekers and beggars are like the sinful creatures of the world, while the kind donor is like the saints and holy men. The former spend their entire life in indulgences and squirming like sardines in this world, never feeling contented, and always willingly to take countless births so that they can grab more of the world and enjoy more of its material sense objects. No matter how privileged their upbringing may be, no matter if they are made the king of the world, they will remain unsatisfied. Even if they have more of something than what is necessary for their entire lifetime, they will still hoard it and let it decay in their coffers instead of allowing the less-fortunate brethren benefit from their mounting treasures and accumulations which are useless for them and which far exceeds their needs.

On the other hand of the spectrum are saints and noble-hearted men. They willingly and cheerfully share their wealth, both the temporal and the spiritual. They share their knowledge with the rest of the world so that the society as a whole can benefit from it. They give away not only material things for the use of the rest of the society but shares their love and care with it.

So, while the former type of people are looked down with contempt and treated as scum of the world, the latter type are honoured and respected. The world will like to forget about the former, but it garlands the latter for generations to come.] (379)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 378, 382—384 also.]

380. लखि गयंद लै चलत भजि स्वान सुखानो हाड़ ।  
गज गुन मोल अहार बल महिमा जान कि राड़ ॥

380. lakhi gayanda lai calata bhaji svāna sukhānō hāṛa.

gaja guna mōla ahāra bala mahimā jāna ki rāra..

On sighting the mighty elephant, a low-witted dog runs away with its dry piece of bone (thinking that the elephant shall take it away). That fool (the dog) does not know about an elephant's qualities, values, eating habits, sense of self-respect and strength.

[The dog does not have the might and stature of an elephant. It thinks that the elephant will misuse his big body and strength to bully it into giving the bone. The stupid dog does not know that the elephant does not eat bones; that it need not run away from the elephant because the latter is not at all interested in this lowly creature lying on the wayside nibbling hungrily at the piece of dry bone. The elephant feeds on green leaves and the banana fruit; it is well looked after and fed by its tamer unlike the stray dog who has nothing else to satisfy its pangs of hunger than to bleed in its mouth biting at the dry bone.

Tulsidas means that stupid people tend to hide their sins and faults when they see wise men. They are so stupid in doing so. These wise men have nothing to do with their shortcomings and vices; they will not touch them even if offered to them. And neither are they jealous of the little goodness that the lowly man has. So it is wiser to welcome them and keep their company instead of running away and concealing their faults. By being forthcoming and frank, the sinful man has only to gain and nothing to lose—because the wise man will show him the correct path.] (380)

A noble-hearted man remains unfazed by criticism by lowly people

381. कै निदरहुँ कै आदरहुँ सिंघहि स्वान सिआर ।  
हरष बिषाद न केसरिहि कुंजर गंजनिहार ॥

381. kai nidarahum' kai ādarahum' siṅghahi svāna si'āra.  
haraṣa biṣāda na kēsarihi kuṅjara gaṅjanihāra..

A lion, who is so majestic, strong and powerful king of the jungle that he can easily kill the mighty elephant (by jumping on the latter's back with great agility), is unbothered or unruffled if a dog or a jackal insults it or praises it. Their insinuations or honours make no difference to the mighty lion. The lion feels neither angry nor happy by their behaviour; he simply neglects them and pays no heed to them. (381)

[Note—This Doha should be read in the context of Doha nos. 377—379, 382—384 also.

A noble-hearted great man is unconcerned by lowly people criticizing him. He goes on his chosen path because he is sure that he has chosen the path after due diligence, that he is unbiased and unprejudiced, and that he has no self-interest in whatever he does. He also knows that it is impossible to please each and everyone in this world, and it is wise to neglect lowly people who can't do any good themselves and would not tolerate others doing good either.]

382. ठाढ़ो द्वार न दै सकैं तुलसी जे नर नीच ।  
निदहिं बलि हरिचंद को का कियो करन दधीच ॥

382. ṭhārhō dvāra na dai sakair̥m tulasī jē nara nīca.  
nindahim bali haricanda kō kā kiyō karana dadhīca..

Tulsidas says that people of evil and wicked temperament do not give anything themselves to a beggar standing at their doorway, but they enjoy finding fault with or criticizing other great donors such as king Bali<sup>1</sup> and Harishchandra<sup>2</sup> (who are recognised as legendary generous givers or donors), and say that Karna<sup>3</sup> and Dadhichi<sup>4</sup> had not done any great deed for which they are praised and remembered.

[All the persons mentioned in this Doha are renowned for their charitable and magnanimous nature. They were great donors who never allowed any seeker to return empty-handed from their doors. They are cited as exemplary examples of charitable nature and as one of those rare persons who never bothered about their own comfort and future when it came to making charity and giving away anything asked once they gave their word for it. In spite of this fact, rascals who are extremely miserly and selfish, who do not want to make charity and help others in need, men of jealous nature who cannot cope with praise of others, criticize these noble-hearted heroes who never thought twice while giving charity, alms or donations. Wicked people accuse these great legendary donors as being stingy and miserly.] (382)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 373, 377—379, 381, 383—384 also.

<sup>1</sup>King Bali—The story of king Bali appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 8/15-23. It relates to the Vaaman (dwarf mendicant) incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. Bali was a grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrsingh (half man and half lion) earlier.

King Bali was very righteous and powerful; he chased away Indra, the promiscuous and lustful king of Gods, from the throne of heaven, and conquered it. He performed a thousand Ashwamedha Yagya (horse sacrifice) during the course of which he had conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, of his heavenly powers. Aditi, the mother of Gods, was peeved, and she requested her husband, sage Kashyap, to find a way out. Kashyap advised her to pray to Lord Vishnu. Aditi did severe penance for twelve days at the end of which Vishnu appeared before her and asked how he could help her. When Aditi told him the problem, Vishnu promised that he will take birth as her son in the form of a ‘Vaaman’ (a dwarf Brahmin) and retrieve the earth and the kingdom of heaven from Bali’s dominion.

Once he heard that king Bali was performing a great fire sacrifice, something Bali used to do routinely, and during which he had declared that he will give anything asked for, again something for which he was renowned. This religious sacrifice was being conducted on the banks of river Narmada. Seizing this opportunity, Vishnu in the form of a Vaaman approached Bali who welcomed him and paid his due respects. Then Bali asked Vaaman to ask for some gift or donation as this was the traditional practice during such great religious sacrifices. Vaaman was waiting for this chance. First he made Bali repeat his vows in public, and then asked for land measuring his three steps.

Bali was dumbfounded—he wondered at the inconsequential dimension of the land covered by three tiny steps of this dwarf! Bali requested Vishnu to ask for something more, but Vishnu was adamant. Bali’s priest, sage Shukracharya, knew that this dwarf was no one else but Vishnu, and so he tried to persuade Bali to abstain from making such commitment off-hand, because he will lose his entire kingdom. But Bali refused, saying

that being the grandson of Prahalad, he cannot rescind on his words that he will give this Brahmin dwarf whatever he asks, even if it means sufferance.

Shukracharya was annoyed at this disobedience, but Vishnu was extremely pleased, and the Lord decided that after fulfilling the promise made to the Gods he will instantly reward Bali in ample terms, and will himself serve him! What a wonderful grace Vishnu shows.

So it happened that Vishnu, in the form of Vaaman, assumed a colossal form of cosmic proportions. The Lord measured the entire earth that Bali ruled in his first step. In the second step Vishnu measured the whole heaven. Nothing was left for the third step—so Bali offered his head! Vishnu was extremely pleased, and being the Lord of the world, he decided that since Bali has offered his own self to him like a faithful devotee, he will fully reward him. Hence, Vishnu blessed Bali that he will go down in history as the greatest donor and righteous of all times, that he will become Indra, the king of Gods, and rule over the heavens during the celestial era known as Saawarni Manvantar, that till that time he shall become the king of the nether world where demons would live, and to add icing to the cake the Lord declared that he himself will become his gatekeeper, and anybody who dared oppose him would be punished by the Lord himself!

The incarnation of Vishnu as Vaaman and the story of Bali is cited in Doha no. 394 to highlight the fact that adopting deceitful means to fulfill one's desires and needs is not a good thing at all—for even Lord Vishnu had to suffer ignominy and was demoted to be a gatekeeper of Bali because the Lord had used unfair means to help protect the interests of Gods.

A reference to Lord Vaaman is made in Doha no. 532 below.

<sup>2</sup>King Harishchandra—He was a great king of the Ikswaku dynasty in which Lord Ram, one of the major incarnations of Lord Vishnu, was born. Harishchandra was the son of king Trishanku. Once, his royal priest, sage Vashistha, had praised him in the heavenly court of Indra, the king of Gods, for his truthfulness and adherence to words of honour. Another great sage known by the name Vishwamitra wanted to test the varacity of Vashistha's statement and find flaws with it because he was a traditional rival of Vashistha.

So, Vishwamitra approached Harishchandra and asked for his entire kingdom as donation. Harishchandra gladly gave it, but Vishwamitra was not satisfied. He asked for 'Dakshina'—the traditional token money that is given to a visiting Brahmin after his demands are met. Having already given his entire kingdom to Vishwamitra, the poor Harishchandra had nothing left to give, so he went out of the kingdom to search for sufficient funds to pay Vishwamitra. He sold off his son and wife, and himself took up service with a Chandal, the low-caste men who perform last rites of dead on the banks of a river, at the pilgrim town of Varanasi.

To test his resolution, Vishwamitra assumed the form of a serpent and bit the infant child of Harishchandra, whereby he died. The mother brought the dead child for cremation at Varanasi, but Harishchandra demanded the traditional fees from her. When the poor lady could not pay it, and even disclosed her identity, Harishchandra explained to her that he needed the tax to accumulate sufficient money so that he can fulfill his promise to Vishwamitra before he dies, for otherwise he will die in ignominy and sin, the king told her to tear the Sari (the one-piece body wrapping cloth worn by Indian women) in lieu of the tax.

It was enough. The Lord caught hold of his hands, and told Vishwamitra that he will be severely punished if he exceeded limits. Vishwamitra was himself pleased by the king's truthfulness and adherence to his words, so he blessed the couple and the son was revived back to life. The king was given his kingdom back with due honour.

This event is remembered in all the ancient texts and cited as examples of how one should suffer to uphold principles of Dharma (truthfulness, righteousness, honesty and propriety).

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 95 it is stated that “king Dadhichi and Harischandra endured great suffering for the cause of upholding the principles of Dharma”.

<sup>3</sup>Karna—The story of Karna appears in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Canto nos. 300 to 310. On the orders of her father, Kunti served a Brahmin when she was a child. The Brahmin was pleased by her dedication and service, and gave her a Mantra (spiritual formula) by which she would be able to call any God she wants, and that God will obey her wills. Once she was worshipping the rising sun when she wished to test the power of the Mantra, and applied it on the Sun God. The Sun God appeared before her in all his splendourous glory. He asked her to accept him, but Kunti showed fear because she was still a virgin and would be subject to ridicule and ostracism from the society. When the Sun God assured her that he blesses her that her virginity would be retained, she gave her consent. This liaison gave Kunti a wonderful son in the image of the Sun God. His name was Karna.

A maid-servant was privy to this secret, and with her help Kunti put the infant Karna in a vessel protected by wax, and floated it on the river Ashwa. As providence will have it, the helpless infant kept floating on the river and finally arrived in the city of Champapuri, the capital of Anga kingdom. Just at that time, a royal bard named Adhirath came to the banks of the river along with his wife Radha. They did not have a child, so when they saw the beautiful child crying in the floating vessel they picked it up and adopted it as their own son. They named this child Vasushen.

When Vasushen alias Karna grew old, his adopted father Adhirath sent him to Hastinapur for education, where the boy began his education under the able guidance of sage Dronacharya. Karna acquired martial skills and excelled in archery and weaponry under the guidance of other great teachers such as Kripacharay and Parashuram. Meanwhile, Duryodhan, the prince of the Kuru clan, who had also come to study and was Karna’s compatriot in the Duryodhan’s hermitage, was befriended by him. Because of this association with Duryodhan, Karna developed animosity and jealousy with the Pandavas.

The only person who matched him in his weapon and war skills was Arjun of the Pandava clan, and the two became natural competitors and opponents.

Since Karna was the son of the Sun God, so when he worshipped the Sun at noon he developed exceptional powers and glory, and when anyone asked for alms at that time, Karna would give with a liberal hand, and things never became short thanks to the blessing of the Sun God who personally took charge and replenished his stock. This made Karna famous as a magical donor who never shied from giving and was never short of things asked for.

His prowess instilled fear in Indra, the crooked and selfish king of Gods. Arjun was a son of Indra, so the latter feared that in a battle Arjun would be defeated and killed at the hands of Karna. So the trickster Indra adopted the form of a Brahmin and approached Karna one day during the time he donated liberally, and asked that he be given Karna’s shield and ear-rings that made him invincible and look majestically glorious. It so happened that on some earlier occasion, the Sun God has warned Karna of this possibility because he knew Indra’s jealous and selfish nature much better. So, as soon as the Brahmin asked for these two things, Karna realised who he was.

Karna tried his best to persuade Indra to ask for something else, but the latter did not budge. Karna thought that one must die with dignity and good name instead of with a scar and ignominy of not honouring one’s word, because all living beings must die one

day as no creature who has taken a birth with a gross body in this perishable world is immortal. Hence, he took off his shield and ear-ring and gave them to Indra. Since these two were part of his body since birth, he had to use a sword to slice them off. Since he had to cut his ears in order to remove the large and shining ear-rings, he was called 'Karna' henceforth.

Though full of bad habits of being jealous and selfish, Indra was nevertheless a king of Gods, and so he felt ashamed of himself, and asked Karna to ask for a blessing or a boon. Karna requested that since now onwards he has become defenseless because he has given his invincible shield, Indra must give him a Shakti (power) by which no one would be able to defeat him. Indra granted him this boon with a caveat, and it was that if he used this Shakti while still having some weapon with him, then the Shakti will turn against him. The other boon was that in spite of Karna parting with the shining and majestic ear-ring that dazzled like the sun, his splendour and radiance will not be reduced a bit.

This is why history remembers Karna as one of the greatest donors of all times—a person who did not shy away from parting with his only defence, the shield given to him by his exalted father, the Sun God, to a deceitful Brahmin, and cutting off his ears to oblige the latter.

<sup>4</sup>Dadhichi—Sage Dadhichi was an ancient sage who willingly sacrificed his life to help the Gods win over the Demons. He was the son of sage Atharvan, the progenitor of the Atharva Veda and the first sage who initiated the tradition of Fire worship, and his wife Shanti. According to another version, he is said to be the son of Prajapati Bhrigu who had used the essence of the whole world to mould his son Dadhichi from them so that this son had all the best in the world. He was of a colossal form like that of a mountain.

The well known sage Pippalaad was his son. Dadhichi is a synonym for the highest ideals of self-sacrifice for the general good.

Indra was always afraid and jealous of him. So once he sent an Apsara (celestial nymph) of exceptional beauty to defile his Tapa (penance and austerity) and Brahmacharya vows of celibacy). At that time, Dadhichi was taking a bath in the river Saraswati, and in spite of being a celebrated sage he could not exercise self-control and ejaculated in the water when he saw the Apsara bathing naked in the river. His sperms fell in the water, and the river Saraswati accepted them as a blessing. From his sperms was born sage Saraswat, so named because he was born in river Saraswati. This later sage is known to have taught the Vedas to the Brahmins during the great famine lasting twelve years.

It so happened that during the Sata-yug, the first of the 4-era Hindu celestial cycle of creation and destruction, a race of demons was born by the name of Kaalkeya. They made Vrittaasur their king. These demons conquered the heaven and exiled the Gods. The Gods prayed to Brahma, the old patriarch of creation and the senior-most God, seeking help. Brahma advised them that they should approach Dadhichi who had formidably strong bones, and request him to give them his bones from which they should mould an invincible weapon that would kill Vrittaasur.

It so happened that sometime in the past, the Gods had deposited all their weapons with him for safe keeping, promising to return at some fixed time. When they failed to show up, and upon observing that the weapons had begun to rust, Dadhichi dissolved them in water and drank the solution. The ingredients of the weapons got deposited in his bones, especially the back bone. Thus, his bones became extremely strong.

So, when the Gods came asking for their weapons, the sage told them what he had done, whereupon the Gods requested him to give them his backbone from which an invincible weapon can be crafted by which their formidable enemy, the demon king Vrittaasur could be slayed. Dadhichi conceded and gave them his backbone from which

the weapon-smith of the Gods, named Vishwakarma, crafted Indra's invincible weapon called the Vajra (thunder-bolt). This Vajra was used to kill Vrittaasur.

It is said that many other weapon of the Gods were made out of Dadhichi's bones, such as the Gada (mace), Chakra (a sharp, serrated circular weapon; the discus) and Danda (baton). The Gada and Chakra were taken by Vishnu, and the Danda by Yam, the God of death. This is narrated in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Canto nos. 100-101, and Shalyaparva, Canto 51.

He did not die, but used the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice to remain alive in his hermitage. This fact is established in the *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 6, verse no. 4.

In *Ram Charit Manas*, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 95 it is stated that "king Dadhichi and Harischandra endured great suffering for the cause of upholding the principles of Dharma".]

383. ईस सीस बिलसत बिमल तुलसी तरल तरंग ।  
स्वान सरावग के कहें लघुता लहै न गंग ॥

383. īsa sīsa bilasata bimala tulasī tarala taraṅga.  
svāna sarāvaga kē kahēm laghutā lahai na gaṅga..

Citing the example of the holy river Ganges, Tulsidas says that the purity and the holiness of river Ganges is not affected or reduced or compromised by adverse comments made by non-believers such as the Saravagi clan (the Jains) or people of low mentality who are no better than dogs.

One must not forget that this river is so holy and pure that the most exalted of the Gods, Lord Shiva who has been honoured by the title of a 'Mahadeva' the Great God, keeps it on his head. Had this river been as unholy and impure as the unbelievers and rascals make it out to be, then obviously Lord Shiva would not have given it this respect of keeping it permanently on his head. [To keep something on one's head is the highest mark of respect that one can show it.] (383)

[Note—Tulsidas' meaning is clear—a noble-hearted and righteous man remains unmoved and unfazed by criticism by lowly people of this world. Wagging tongues and jealous sneers in no way undermine his greatness and exalted stature. In fact, these adverse remarks only create heart-burn in the persons who make them.

The sun, for instance, is not affected by the dark cloud which tries to obstruct its light, for the cloud is not able to create night in the presence of the sun no matter how hard it tries.

Refer: Doha nos. 373, 377—379, 381—382, 384—384.]

384. तुलसी देवल देव को लागे लाख करोरि ।  
काक अभागें हगि भर्यो महिमा भई कि थोरि ॥

384. tulasī dēvala dēva kō lāgē lākha karōri.  
kāka abhāgēm hagi bharyō mahimā bha'ī ki thōri..

Tulsidas says that an enormous amount of money and energy are spent in constructing a temple of God. If a crow casts its droppings (dung) on it, does it at all affect the sanctity of the temple?

[That is, the holiness, purity and sanctity of the shrine are not at all affected if a crow, the lowliest amongst the birds, drops its dung somewhere in it. Similarly, the greatness of a noble person is not compromised by jealous remarks made by pervert people.] (384)

[Note—Refer: Doha nos. 373, 377—379, 381—383.]

Everything is respected for its basic quality

385. निज गुन घटत न नाग नग परखि परिहरत कोल ।  
तुलसी प्रभु भूषन किए गुंजा बढे न मोल ॥

385. nija guna ghaṭata na nāga naga parakhi pariharata kōla.  
tulasī prabhu bhūṣana ki'ē guṅjā barhē na mōla..

Tulsidas says that the forest dwelling tribals called 'Kol' pick up, examine and then throw away 'Gajmukta' (a special type of secretion from the head of elephants that condense to form rare pearl-sized globules said to be very valuable) because they do not know its intrinsic value, but does this reduce the importance and value of the 'Gajmukta' as a rare item of beauty that rivals real pearl that is obtained from the oyster living in the ocean?

On the other hand, Lord Krishna had worn ornaments made of 'Gunja' (a creeper called Ghungchi)—but that does not increase its insignificant value. [Just because this plant was worn by Krishna did not add any special value to it because it has no intrinsic value of its own.]

[The idea expressed in this Doha is simple—everything in this world derives its value and importance by the qualities that are basic and inherent to it. It means that the value or honour of anything lies in its intrinsic or inherent qualities and virtues and not on false honours or praises heaped on it by someone who begins to fancy them.] (385)

[Note—From the perspective of what has been said about a noble-hearted and righteous man vis-à-vis an evil and pervert man in the forgoing Doha nos. 373—384 above, the meaning of this Doha is straightforward—even if a good person and his good deeds are criticized by those who are jealous of him and opposed to him, noting actually effects the former. Similarly, if false praises are heaped on someone or something not actually worthy of such praise, then it is useless and waste of time and energy.

A person's or a thing's inherent qualities and nature decide what value and importance they have in this world. Pretensions and conceit can create a false smoke-screen of greatness and grandeur or of lowliness and mean nature, but the truth cannot be hidden in the long run.]

386. राकापति षोडस उअहिं तारा गन समुदाइ ।  
सकल गिरिन्ह दव लाइअ बिनु रबि राति न जाइ ॥

386. rākāpati ṣoṛasa u'ahim tārā gana samudā'i.  
sakala girinha dava lā'i'a binu rabi rāti na jā'i..

Even if the Moon rises in its full splendour (i.e. a full Moon with all its sixteen Kalaas<sup>1</sup>) and it is accompanied by all the glittering stars shining in their full brightness, and even if to this is added the light of all the mountains put to fire, still the the darkness of the night can't be eliminated without the (light of) the Sun.

[It is the sun's inherent quality to light up the world with its rays that makes it so important and sought-after in this world. It is the sun's basic function and duty. No life in this world will be possible for a long time if the sun does not rise. This function and duty assigned to the sun by the creator cannot be performed by the full moon, the entire galaxy of stars, or even by the illumination provided by the brilliantly burning fire of the mountain forests. To illuminate the entire world is the basic quality and privilege of the sun which no other entity has.

In other words, one must not be jealous of other people because they have certain virtues that they lack. They must think that there are certain good qualities in themselves which the other person lacks. For instance, though the moon, the stars and the fire fail to remove the darkness of the night by their light, but they have certain good qualities which the sun lacks. The moon has a soothing and cooling effect on the world; the moon-light soothes the nerves and acts as a balm for the world heated by the rays of the burning sun. The stars control a person's destiny according to astrology, something the sun cannot do. The stars make the otherwise bland sky so beautiful to look at as if it was studded by small twinkling gems. The fire is needed to keep the world warm, to produce and cook food, and sustain life in a general way. The sun cannot replace the functions that the fire carries out though it is a cauldron of celestial fire that is thousands of times hotter than then the terrestrial fire.] (386)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The moon's sixteen Kalaas or its sixteen aspects are the following—Amritaā, Maanadaā, Pushāā, Tushti, Pushti, Rati, Dhriti, Shashani, Chandrika, Kanti, Jyotsnaā, Sri, Priti, Angadaā, Purnaā and Swarajāā or Purna-mritaā.

In practice it means the light of all the phases of the moon, from the first night after the dark moon till the full moon night, taken together in a cumulative way.]

One must make proper judgment before passing remarks

387. भलो कहहिं बिनु जानेहूँ बिनु जाने अपबाद ।  
ते नर गादुर जानि जियँ करिय न हरष बिषाद ॥

387. bhalō kahahim̐ binu jānēhūṁṁ binu jānēm̐ apabāda.  
tē nara gādura jāni jiyam̐ kariya na haraṣa biṣāda..

Those people who praise or criticise others without ascertaining the truth or facts about them are like Bats.

[The Bat eats and excretes through the same aperture in its body. This is very reprehensible and revulsive. To liken a man to a bat is the worst form of epithet one can think of; it is a metaphor for a very vile, mean, perverse, selfish and lowly person who praises a man if the latter meets his demands, and with the same mouth will criticize him without any sense of guilt if he fails to do so. It's like using the same mouth to eat food and then pass excreta through it.

Deriving benefits from a noble-hearted man is like eating food because the magnanimity of the charitable person helps the needy person meet his requirements just like the mouth that eats food to sustain the whole body. But then using the same mouth to heap abuses upon him or criticizing him if he cannot oblige the seeker for some unavoidable reason is like passing excreta through the mouth which was used to sustain one's existence. The term 'bat' is a derogatory term meant for such selfish and ungrateful people who do not feel obliged to a person, who have no regrets in criticizing someone who had helped him in his need, and who had not even expected as much as a 'thank you' in return.]

Therefore, one should not pay attention to such lowly and vile persons and the remarks made by them. They are worthy of loathing, and not paying attention to. One should not be dismayed or feel sorrowful by their insinuations; one should not lose one's calm and peace by the vile words of such evil persons (387)

Jealousy/envy never pays

388. पर सुख संपत्ति देखि सुनि जरहिं जे जड़ बिनु आगि ।  
तुलसी तिन के भागते चलै भलाई भागि ॥

388. para sukha sampati dēkhi suni jarahim jē jaṛa binu āgi.  
tulasī tina kē bhāgatē calai bhalāī bhāgi..

Those people who burn in the fire of jealousy and envy on seeing the wealth, prosperity, well-being and happiness of others—Tulsidas says that happiness and joys, prosperity and welfare, and all such positive virtues run away from them. In other words, such people never have any good and welfare for themselves in this world.

[The positive virtues of happiness, joy, cheer, peace, goodwill, well-being, prosperity etc. always elude such persons whose hearts are jealous and full of envy. No one likes them, and they are shunned by the society.] (388)

389. तुलसी जे कीरति चहहिं पर की कीरति खोइ ।  
तिनके मुँह मसि लागिहैं मिटिहि न मरिहै धोइ ॥

389. tulasī jē kīrati cahahim para kī kīrati khō'i.  
tinakē mumḥa masi lāgihaim miṭihi na marihai dhō'i..

Tulsidas says that those who try to establish their own falsified fame and name at the cost of tarnishing the genuine good name and fame of others (i.e. have ulterior motives in criticizing and denouncing others so that they themselves can be praised)—such people shall have their faces blackened with the soot of ignominy and disrepute (when the fact, the reality and the truth comes out) to an extent that it cannot be washed off.

In other words, if one tries to undermine the goodness in others by underplaying their good qualities and noble deeds out of frustration, jealousy and envy, and instead try to portray themselves as the holy cow, a time will certainly come when their ill-intentions

and deceit would be laid bare for the world to see, and then they will be subjected to ridicule and scorn from which they will not be able to extricate themselves.

Jealousy and envy never pay dividends in the long run. If one spits on the sun or the moon, then the spit will rebound upon him and fall flat on his own face! The sun or the moon will not be affected by someone spitting upon them.] (389)

The bad/negative result/affect of false pride and ego

390. तनु गुन धन महिमा धरम तेहि बिनु जेहि अभिमान ।  
तुलसी जिअत बिडंबना परिनामहु गत जान ॥

390. tanu guna dhana mahimā dharama tēhi binu jēhi abhimāna.  
tulasī ji'ata biḍambanā parināmahu gata jāna..

Those who are proud even without having an able body, good qualities, sufficient wealth, honour and the natural goodness that arises by following the path of Dharma (the auspicious path of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct, ethics)—Tulsidas asserts that their life is dishonourable and they get disrepute while they are alive, and when they die they fail to get liberation and deliverance from this ignominy and scar on their name.

[Pretentious and hypocrite people are not welcomed in the society; they are looked down with contempt by all people. Snobbery and false sense of virtuousness never pays. False claims make a man spend a lot of time and energy attempting to camouflage the reality which will nevertheless come out in the open sooner or later like the veil created by smoke is bound to vanish with the slightest gust of wind.

A wise man must never show off his qualities because even if he does not exaggerates about his achievements and abilities, this attitude itself is a negative sign, and there will be countless others who have far better qualities and achievements to their credit but prefer to remain humble and anonymous. The world will recognise the latter and forget the former types of persons.] (390)

[Note—Refer: Doha no. 243.]

It is better to be humble

391. सासु ससुर गुरु मातु पितु प्रभु भयो चहै सब कोइ ।  
होनी दूजी ओर को सुजन सराहिअ सोइ ॥

391. sāsu sasura guru mātu pitu prabhu bhayō cahai saba kō'i.  
hōnī dūjī ōra kō sujana sarāhi'a sō'i..

Everyone wants to occupy a senior position in the hierarchy of society (so that others obey them, serve them and respect them) by becoming a mother-in-law, a father-in-law, a Guru (moral preceptor and teacher), a mother, a father or a lord and master, but only a few wish to serve the rest of the society and remain humble, obedient and submissive like a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law, a disciple, a daughter, a son or a servant.

[Tulsidas says that greatness lies in serving others with sincerity and dedication, and in being humble and unpretentious rather than lording over others and being haughty and arrogant.] (391)

Gentlemen are naturally respected and honoured

392. सठ सहि साँसति पति लहत सुजन कलेस न कायँ ।  
गढ़ि गुढ़ि पाहन पूजिए गंडकि सिला सुभायँ ॥

392. saṭha sahi sāṁsati pati lahata sujana kalēsa na kāyam̐ .  
gaḍhi guḍhi pāhana pūji'ei gaṇḍaki silā subhāyam̐ ..

Miscreants and those with evil hearts acquire honour and respect (i.e. get established) in the society after a lot of efforts and immense sufferings on their parts, but gentlemen and noble-hearted people have no difficulty in getting the same honour and respect with least or no effort. [In other words, gentlemen and righteous person get natural respect and recognition in this world. For the same respect and recognition, those who are known for their mischievous heart have to take a lot of trouble to convince the world that they have changed, and they are no longer the evil-hearted men the world had known them till now.]

For instance, an ordinary stone has to suffer a lot of hammering and cutting by way of chiselling and sculpting before being shaped into an idol of God and thus becoming worthy of respect and worship, whereas an ordinary pebble found in the river 'Gandak (Narmada)' is naturally worshipped as an image of Lord Vishnu that is known as 'Shaligram'. [The stone found in the Narmada river is smooth and oval-shaped. It is regarded as a symbol of Lord Vishnu. This Shaligram is also a stone, but it is worshipped in its natural form vis-à-vis other stones which must first be hammered and beaten into shape as an idol of some God before being shown the same respect as done to Shaligram.] (392)

[Note—Tulsidas uses this analogy to show how good people get instant respect as compared to bad people who will first have to prove their goodness before they can expect any respect in the society.]

One should rely on God and not beg from anyone in the world

393. बड़े बिबुध दरबार तें भूमि भूप दरबार ।  
जापक पूजत पेखिअत सहत निरादर भार ॥

393. baṛē bibudha darabāra tēm bhūmi bhūpa darabāra.  
jāpaka pūjata pēkhi'ata sahata nirādara bhāra..

The courts (i.e. the 'courtyards') of worldly Kings are bigger, more regal and pompous than those of Gods (i.e. shrines, places of worship where idols of Gods are established as the presiding deity) because even those who do Japa (repetition) of the holy name of God and worship the Lord (God) still prefer to flock the former places (i.e. the king's

courtyard) as compared to the latter (temples and other places of worship of God) to seek something and expect worldly rewards inspite of being treated with utter contempt, being most unwelcome and subjected to utter neglect, humiliation, disdain, general nonchalance and an insulting behaviour like the one meted out to lowly beggars and scum of the society.

[Tulsidas means that people worship their Gods merely as a ritual in temples but they don't have actual faith in these Gods—because instead of relying on the benevolence of the Lord God, his overriding authority and his ability to take care of them, these people prefer to go and seek cheap material rewards from worldly kings and other rich people by queueing up in front of their palaces and mansions inspite of being subjected to all sorts of insults and rebukes. Say then, what is the use of offering worship in the temples at all when one does not have faith in God?

Tulsidas implies that these people are very sinful. The Japa (repetition of God's holy name) and offering of Puja (worship) by these people are of no consequence, and they are gravely sinful because they become instrumental in erasing other people's faith in God. The world had been treating such people with great respect as they use to regularly visit temples and offer worship to God, then when the same world sees them queueing before kings and rich people with arms stretched out and begging for material gains the conclusion that the world draws is obvious and logical—that the God whom these needy people worshipped and paid obeisance to is not able to meet their needs, and that is why they have come seeking from the king.

Well, nothing can be more despicable and demeaning than this; it is tantamount to desecrating or defiling a holy place and a holy institution as a temple of God, besides insulting the Supreme Lord himself. Nothing can be more regrettable and contemptible than this.] (393)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46 in which Lord Ram says “say, how can anyone claim to be my devotee and follower when he seeks anything from others”.

In Vinai Patrika, stanza no. 3 of verse no. 168 it is said that “if someone worshipped Lord Sripati (Vishnu) after having fully realised and having faith in the Lord's supreme nature as the greatest of givers and benevolent Lord who is almighty and the superceding Authority of creation, then say why would he go from door to door in the world begging for morsels of food to fill his stomach?”]

Wickedness, deceit, conceit, pretension etc. are not good things

394. बिनु प्रपंच छल भीख भलि लहिअ न दिँ कलेस ।  
बावन बलि सों छल कियो दियो उचित उपदेस ॥

394. binu prapañca chala bhīkha bhali lahi'a na di'ēṁ kalēsa.  
bāvana bali sōm chala kiyō diyō ucita upadēsa..

Alms / contribution / donation / grant etc. which are received without fraud, falsehood, deceit, conceit and pretensions are best. One should not cause inconvenience or discomfort or any kind of uneasiness to others in order to derive any sort of benefit from them. In other words, one should be truthful and honest when one tells others about his

needs. He must not force himself upon others or use falsehood to seek help from others in a way that they would feel embarrassed or have guilty conscience if they did not help him.

[For instance, there are people who have an inveterate habit of pretending to be miserable at all times, needing this and that always. Their friends feel that they should help them because they are in need and facing difficult times. But the fact is that they are not; they don't actually need the thing which they say they need, or they can well do without it. But such people have a bad habit of begging from others and giving the impression that they are the victim of circumstances, thereby invoking sympathy amongst their peers and compatriots. They then cut on their own resources to help their friend in distress not realizing that this man is cunning and deceitful, and is not in the dire straits in which he pretends to be.]

To prove his point, Tulsidas cites the instance of Lord Vishnu who, in the form of a dwarf mendicant known as 'Vaaman', had cheated the great king Bali of his kingdom by treachery and deceitful means. But the consequence of this ignoble action of Vishnu was that the Lord had to become Bali's door-keeper when the latter was made the king of the nether world by the Lord himself.<sup>1</sup>

This incident gives us a moral lesson—that fraud, deceit, conceit, pretensions, treachery and such other unethical means are bad even if adopted for some otherwise noble objective, for Lord Vishnu himself had not only to bear with an eternal bad name and ignominy for adopting such lowly means in order to protect the interests of the Gods, which taken independently was a noble cause and came under the obligatory duty of Lord Vishnu, but also was demoted to serve Bali as his door-keeper which is a lowly job for the Supreme Lord of creation. [See Doha no. 396 below.] (394)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This story is narrated as a note of Doha no. 312.

Refer also to Doha no. 395-396 below. Lord Vaaman is also referred to in Doha no. 532.]

395. भलो भले सों छल किँ जनम कनौड़ो होइ ।  
श्रीपति सिर तुलसी लसति बलि बावन गति सोइ ॥

395. bhalō bhalē sōm chala ki'ēm' janama kanaurō hō'i.  
śrīpati sira tulasī lasati bali bāvana gati sō'i..

If a gentleman commits treachery with another gentleman for some vested interest (i.e. if a man pretends to be honest and truthful but cheats another man who trusts him, who has faith in him and his integrity), then the former has to remain subordinated to the latter, ever obliged of him, and full of a guilty conscious for the rest of his life.

Tulsidas cites two instances in this context. One is when Lord Vishnu deceitfully committed adultery with Brinda as result of which she found a place on his head in the form of Tulsi (Basil) leaves<sup>1</sup>. And the second instance is of Lord Vaaman who had treacherously cheated king Bali and suffered the same fate of making Bali his lord in the nether world where the Lord served him as his gate-keeper<sup>2</sup>. (395)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The story of Brinda is narrated as a note of Doha no. 188. See also Doha no. 542.

<sup>2</sup>The story of Vaaman and Bali is narrated as a note of Doha no.312. See also Doha no. 394 above, and 396, 532 below.]

396. बिबुध काज बावन बलिहि छलो भलो जिय जानि ।  
प्रभुता तजि बस भे तदपि मन की गइ न गलानि ॥

396. bibudha kāja bāvana balihi chalō bhalō jiya jāni.  
prabhutā taji basa bhē tadapi mana kī ga'i na galāni..

Lord Vaaman (the dwarf mendicant incarnation of Vishnu) did treachery and trickery with king Bali to meet the requirements of the Gods, but then he felt guilty and ashamed at his own conduct (because he felt he should not have acted in the manner he did and exploit the truthful nature of king Bali that he stood by the words he gave to anyone, and that he must undergo severe punishment for this misdeed of his own doing inspite of his being the Lord of the world and undertaking this ignoble action not for his own interest but for the greater good of the Gods).

So, Vaaman kept aside his honour, dignity, pride and exalted stature as the supreme Authority and the Lord of the world by voluntarily submitting himself before king Bali to become his subordinate and serve him as his virtual servant by becoming the latter's gatekeeper in the nether world (where the Lord elevated Bali as its undisputed king for a very long time before he would be further elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods at a later date).

Inspite of his repentance and expiation by volunteering to accept punishment on the one hand (by becoming a lowly door-keeper at the palace of Bali), and rewarding Bali immediately with kingship of another great world (i.e. the nether world, and the lordship of the heaven at a later date when Bali would become Indra, the king of Gods themselves), Lord Vaaman was never able to overcome the ignominy and absolve himself from the sense of guilt of having used deceit and trickery with a truthful king.

[In other words, if someone commits treachery and uses deceit and conceit with someone who trusts him so as to meet some short-term objectives, the resultant moral scar and ignominy would weigh down heavily upon the perpetrator of such a sinful act or deed for the rest of his life while he is alive, and even after his death this despicable deed of his will continue to dog him eternally down the annals of history.] (396)

[Note—Refer: Doha nos. 312, 394-395.]

The world has a habit of tormenting those who are simple-hearted

397. सरल बक्र गति पंच ग्रह चपरि न चितवत काहु ।  
तुलसी सूधे सूर ससि समय बिडंबित राहु ॥

397. sarala bakra gati pañca graha capari na citavata kāhu.  
tulasī sūdhē sūra sasi samaya biḍambita rāhu..

Tulsidas observes that the five planets (such as Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus) which are stern, crooked and worldly-wise as they are unpredictable and selfish, adopting

both sorts of postures, stances or attitudes, such as being benevolent and helpful in one instance and turning vehement and vengeful in another instance according to their whims and fancies, are left alone untouched and untroubled by 'Rahu'<sup>1</sup> (i.e. Rahu doesn't have the guts to raise his eyes against them and disturb them).

But the same Rahu has no reservations in frequently tormenting the Sun and the Moon which are considered as straight-forward and deceitless Gods who walk an even path free from crookedness. [This refers to the Rahu frequently gobbling up the Sun and the Moon to feed his hunger as well as to show his anger at them for being instrumental in getting his head cut off by the discus of Lord Vishnu at the time of distribution of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss, between the Gods and the Demons at the time of the ancient churning of the celestial ocean. According to mythology, the solar and lunar eclipses are caused when the Rahu gobbles up the Sun and the Moon respectively at regular intervals in one year.]

[Tulsidas means that crooks inspire awe and fear, and the mightier the crook the greater is his awe and fear. Small-time criminals will never dare to touch or harm the interests of great Mafia Dons; rather they seek their protection and thrive on their patronage. It is the ordinary, law-abiding and simple-hearted people who are constantly subjected to sufferings and torments in the world.]

In this Doha, the selfish and crooked planets such as Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus etc. are likened to the great Mafia Dons, the Sun and the Moon to the ordinary, honourable and simple-hearted citizens of the world, and Rahu to the small-time criminals lurking in the dark to pounce upon the upright and law-abiding persons.] (397)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The story of Rahu—This has been narrated as a note of Doha no. 336 in this book.]

A similar idea has been expressed in the epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 281 that says "everyone salutes those who are crooked and no one dares to touch or harm their interests; Rahu does not devour a crooked or the crescent moon, but will only lunge for the full moon". That is why the lunar eclipse occurs only during the full moon night.]

It is unwise to be nice to wicked people

398. खल उपकार बिकार फल तुलसी जान जहान ।  
मेढुक मर्कट बनिक बक कथा सत्य उपखान ॥

398. khala upakāra bikāra phala tulasī jāna jahāna.  
mēḍhuka markaṭa banika baka kathā satya upakhāna..

Tulsidas says that the world knows that it is not only futile but even harmful and counter-productive to be good, helpful, kind and sympathetic towards crooks, rascals and evil-hearted miscreants.

The parables narrated in the book 'Satyopakhan (true moral stories) relating to a frog, a monkey, a trader and a stork/crane are proofs of this fact. (398)

[Note—(i) The story of a frog : – In order to get rid of his rivals and relatives, a frog invited a snake to stay with him, thinking that being well-fed, the snake would feel

obliged of him. The snake ate all his (frog's) relatives, friends, compatriots and kins one by one, and then prepared to eat the host, the selfish frog himself. The frog saved himself somehow in the nick of time.

(ii) The story of the monkey : – A monkey had a crocodile as a friend. On the other side of the river there was a rich forest of sweet fruit trees. The monkey used to go there on the back of the crocodile, and as a return favour shared with him the fruits that he brought back from the forest. One day the crocodile's wife told him that she wished to eat the heart of the monkey as it is said to be very delicious. At the instigation of his wife, the crooked and ungrateful crocodile hatched a plan. He told the unsuspecting monkey that he is very obliged to him as he had been bringing fruits for him regularly, and therefore he wished to take him for a joy ride on the water of the river where he lived, just like he saw people enjoying a boat-ride. The monkey rode on the crocodile's back and the two reached the middle of the river. The crocodile then told the monkey that he wants to take out his heart as it is wanted by his wife. The monkey was witty, so he told the crocodile that he has left his heart back home on the tree on the banks of the river. So would he please take him there so that he can fetch the heart for his friend's wife? The foolish crocodile believed the monkey and brought him to the bank, whereupon the monkey jumped off and saved his life.

(iii) The story of trader :– A trader was befriended to a king. The latter one day called the former and told him that he wanted to do some sort of occult worship where a virgin girl was needed. So will the trader please send his young daughter to the king's palace so that the rituals can be done? The unsuspecting trader wished to oblige his friend, the evil king, so he sent his daughter. The vile king then raped her. The trader was horribly mortified, but he did not have the wherewithals to get even with the king. So he had to suffer from this ignominious event as long as he lived.

(iv) The story of the stork/crane : – This story is narrated in detail in Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto nos. 168-173. This story in brief is as follows—A lowly Brahmin by the name of Gautam, who never did any religious duties or worshipped God, used to live in Madhya Desh (central provinces). He once migrated to the northern territories known as Mlecha Desh (the land of the heathen). He went to the household of a big dacoit there, and asked for alms. The dacoit welcomed him as he was a Brahmin by birth, and besides giving him routine alms also gave him a widow to serve him.

Gautam lived there for a long time and adopted the life-style and practices of the people with whom he lived. So he became a hunter and flesh eater; he got accustomed to kill birds and animals mercilessly for food, and rob travelers for money.

One day an old friend of his from his previous village came to meet him during his wanderings, and when he saw Gautam as a fallen man he felt very sad and sorry. He reminded Gautam of his birth as a Brahmin, and the horrific consequences of what he was doing to feed his stomach. Gautam explained that he was very poor and he had to leave his village in search of money. But he now feels very ashamed of himself, and requested the guest-friend to stay for the night, for the next day he will also quietly sneak out with him.

The next day, the guest Brahmin went away anonymously without warning as he feared that there was some trick laid out for him. After that, Gautam too left the place silently and went south in the direction of the ocean. During the journey he met a group of merchants and joined them. After some time, this group was killed by wild elephants. So Gautam was alone once again, but he continued on his journey. He reached a pleasant forest, and saw a huge banyan tree. It was evening and so he decided to rest there for the night. As darkness fell, a stork/crane named 'Bak', who was the king of birds and a son of sage Kashyap, came to take rest on the tree for the night.

Gautam was hungry, so he contemplated to kill the bird and eat it. But Bak was a holy soul. That tree was its permanent abode, so when it saw that a hungry Brahmin has come to take shelter for the night, it arranged food for him and fanned him with its huge wings. During talk, Gautam told Bak that he was a Brahmin by birth and was very poor. The kind-hearted Bak took him on his back to the king of Demons and asked the latter to help the Brahmin. The king was making charities at that time to Brahmins, so he willingly gave Gautam a lot of material wealth, such as gold and other things. Gautam carried this heavy load on his back and came to the place where Bak was waiting for him. Meanwhile, the kind Bak had already arranged food for two—for Gautam and himself. After meals, the two retired for the night.

Gautam was inherently crooked, sinful, cruel and ungrateful. His mind was obsessed with the thought of eating the flesh of the bird. He kept wondering and waited for an opportunity. So when the unsuspecting bird was fast asleep, Gautam flung it in the fire. He cooked the bird's meat, and the next day started on his journey with this meat and the bag of gold that was given to him by the king.

As it happened, when the Bak did not go to meet his obliging friend the king of demons, the latter got anxious, wondering why his friend Bak has not come to say good-bye as he used to do before going away. So he sent his son to find out what had happened. The son came to the banyan tree and saw the heap of bones in the fire. The son went after the sinful and ungrateful Brahmin, Gautam, caught hold of him and brought him in chains to his father's court. The king was peeved beyond measure and got the nasty Brahmin tortured and killed. The demons refused to eat his (Gautam's) flesh, and so called the flesh-eating dacoits who also refused to eat it as it was extremely poisonous because it was the meat of a man who was treacherous and had committed a horrendous sin of betraying his own benefactor, the Bak.

The king performed the last rites of his dear friend Bak. He propitiated a Goddess named Surbhi Devi. Saliva from her mouth fell upon the bones of Bak the crane/stork, and the bird came back to life. Bak was so nice a soul that instead of cursing Gautam to go to hell, it requested Indra, the king of heaven, to spare the Brahmin and revive him back to life. So Gautam too came back to life. But in due course of time, he died a most miserable death and went straight to hell where he was subjected to immense horrors.]

It is unwise to rely on what wicked people say

399. तुलसी खल बानी मधुर सुनि समुझिअ हियँ हेरि ।  
राम राज बाधक भई मूढ मंथरा चेरि ॥

399. tulasī khala bānī madhura suni samujhi'a hiyam̐ hēri.  
rāma rāja bādhaka bhaī mūṛha mantharā cēri..

Tulsidas says (advises) that one should be very careful and alert when they hear wicked people speaking apparently sweet and pleasant words because they are more often than not very misleading.

[The wicked people use sweet words to camouflage wickedness, cunning, deceit, conceit and treachery. They pretend to be one's true friend and speaking for one's good, but internally they may be attempting to pull the rug from under one's feet. So it is always wise to properly judge what they say and not take their words on face value.

To cite an example, Tulsidas gives the instance from the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the Ramayana as follows—]

The low-witted, short-sighted and utterly stupid hunchbacked maid Manthara had prevented Sri Ram's anointment as Prince Regent of Ayodhya by using sweet words which hid cunning and deceit to impress upon Kaikeyi, the step-mother of Ram and Manthara's queen-mistress, that she (Manthara) was her well-wisher and it was in her (Kaikeyi's) interest if Ram did not ascend the throne. In other words, Manthara, who was inherently wicked and crooked, became an obstacle in Sri Ram becoming the king of Ayodhya with the aid of sweet and pleasant sounding words.

[Had Kaikeyi been wise, prudent and sensible, she would have thought the things over and not jumped to ridiculous conclusions relying upon the words of a crooked woman who hid a dagger while appearing to be friendly. Manthara used sweet words to prevail upon Kaikeyi that she (Manthara) was speaking for her good, and if Ram became a future king then she (Kaikeyi) and her son Bharat would have to live a second class life for the rest of her days. Bharat would have to serve Ram as a servant or a distant minister, and will not get the respect that he deserves. So Kaikeyi must do something and prevent her husband, king Dasrath, from going ahead with his plans of anointing Ram as the heir to the throne.

Kaikeyi got swayed by Manthara's pretentious friendliness, and she could not fathom the horrific consequences that would unfold if she believed this wicked woman. The result of believing and reposing faith in the wicked maidservant was that Ram was sent to forest exile for 14 years, Sita, Ram's wife, and Laxman, Ram's brother, too accompanied the Lord, king Dasrath died out of grief and shock, Bharat refused to accept the crown and decided to lead a life of a hermit, and the whole kingdom was engulfed in grief and sorrows of an unprecedented scale, going into a tailspin of turmoil and misery.

All this turmoil, grief, misery and ignominy had its root in Kaikeyi believing the pleasant and sweet words of a crooked woman without thinking for herself if what Manthara said is credible and possible or not. So Tulsidas uses this incident to warn us to be careful and alert while paying attention to the words of wicked and crooked people.] (399)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated in fine detail in the epic Ram Charit Manas in its Ayodhya Kand.

The idea expressed in this Doha that sweet words that appear to be friendly on the face and spoken for one's welfare by inveterately wicked people are as dangerous as daggers or poison laced with sugar has also been reiterated elsewhere by Tulsidas.

Examples: (i) In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 24 that say—"When an evil person pretends to be humble and bows before someone, then the latter should be immediately alarmed and become alert—as this is a very dangerous sign, just like the case of a goad, a bow, a serpent and a cat bending low. {They bend when they have to strike their victims. Otherwise they will be straight.} The sweet and friendly words of a wicked person are as fearful and dangerous as flowers that bloom without their season. {Every plant has a time when its flowers bloom. Untimely blooming of flowers indicate that there is something seriously wrong with the annual cycle of seasons, and it is not the flower's blooming untimely that is dangerous in its self but the disturbance of the regular cycle of seasons, rainfall, summer and winter as they would very adversely effect the crops.}"

(ii) In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 22 that says—"Her (Manthara's) words were sweet to hear but had horrific consequences

as if she was making her (Kaikeyi) drink poison mixed with honey to hide the former's horrible effect.”]

400. जोंक सूधि मन कुटिल गति खल बिपरीत बिचारु ।  
अनहित सोनित सोष सो सो हित सोषनहारु ॥

400. jōnka sūdhi mana kuṭila gati khala biparīta bicāru.  
anahita sōnita sōṣa sō sō hita sōṣanāru..

The way (path) of a leech is crooked (it can't move in a straight line but only in a zig-zag fashion, and its fang is also curved like a hook), but it has a straight-forward mind because it is interested in drinking only bad blood of the host.

[The leech has a bad name because it is parasite thriving on the blood of the host animal. In spite of this ignominy, there is one good aspect of the leech—it does not pretend to be a holy saint who abstains from drinking blood. It makes its intentions clear—that if someone allows the leech to remain on the body then the latter would suck his blood. At least a person is warned of the effects that a leech would have on his body. This is far better than pretending to be friendly and stabbing on the back.

Another good aspect of the leech is this—that in spite of getting a bad name as a blood-sucking parasite, the leech is actually beneficial for the animal as it drinks only bad blood, i.e. blood that is harmful to the animal due to floating microscopic cellular debris in it.]

On the contrary, one should treat or regard a wicked person with great scorn and suspicion because on their surface they appear to be benign, friendly, simple-hearted, sweet-talking and generally concerned about one's welfare, but internally they are extremely vicious, cruel, selfish and malicious. They are the real parasites of the society.

[In other words, wicked people who use all imaginable vile and cunning means to satisfy their vested interests, who would stoop to extreme low levels, feign friendship and benevolence by using pleasant words and affectionate demeanours to trap others and then suck on them like a blood-sucking parasite, are more loathsome and far worse than a leech who does not deceive but makes its intention clear at the outset that it will drink the blood of the host.

The leech, being straightforward and honest in its intentions and habit, does not deceive the host; rather it is good for the host animal as it cleans the latter's blood of its impurities. On the other hand, wicked and pretentious people who feign holiness and friendliness on the surface but have daggers hidden behind their cloaks are far more dangerous and injurious. A man must be wary of such cunning and crooked persons whose exterior appearances are the opposite of what is in their mind and heart.] (400)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 405 in this context.]

It is wise to treat wicked people with caution

401. नीच गुड़ी ज्यों जानिबो सुनि लखि तुलसीदास ।  
ढीलि दिँ गिरि परत महि खँचत चढ़त अकास ॥

401. nīca gurī jyōm jāni vō suni lakhī tulasīdāsa.  
dhilī di'ē giri parata mahi khaincata caṛhata akāsa..

Tulsidas says that based on his experience, and after due consideration and thought, he gives the following advice—that a wicked person should be compared to a kite which falls down to the ground if the string is slackened, but rises to the sky if it is pulled and made taut.

[When the string is pulled and made taut by the kite flier, the kite rises in the air, but when he loosens the string the kite falls to the ground. Similarly, a wicked person becomes arrogant and overbearing if he is given even the slightest of encouragement or shown laxity and tolerance, but the same person would behave properly if he is kept under discipline and tight leash. In other words, it is not advisable to show unnecessary kindness or courtesy towards those people who are inherently crooked and wicked for they are bound to misinterpret one's good natured behaviour as his weakness, and would prey upon him like a hawk. Therefore, one must treat them sternly, without showing any friendly emotions or courteous behaviour.] (401)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 106 that emphasizes “a man must avoid a wicked person from a distant like one shuns a rabid dog”.]

402. भरदर बरसत कोस सत बचै जे बूँद बराइ ।  
तुलसी तेउ खल बचन सर हए गए न पराइ ॥

402. bharadara barasata kōsa sata bacaim jē būm̐da barā'i.  
tulasī tē'u khala bacana sara ha'ē ga'ē na parā'i..

Tulsidas says that it might be possible for one to travel 100 Kosa (miles) in torrential rain without being getting wet, but it is impossible to escape the vicious arrow-like (i.e. offensive) talk and comments of the wicked and rascals.

[This is a sort of oxymoron. It is impossible to travel such a long distance in heavy rain without getting wet. But Tulsidas asserts that if by some remote chance or magic this may become possible or true, but to escape from scathing attacks by selfish people who are wicked, rascals, crooks and backstabbers is impossible.

In other words, it is certain that rascals will invariably criticize even those people who have helped them, who have been their benefactors and well-wishers. One must not expect such people to ever feel obliged for any good done to them. They will stab in one's back at the first opportunity.] (402)

403. पेरत कोल्हू मेलि तिल तिली सनेही जानि ।  
देखि प्रीति की रीति यह अब देखिबी रिसानि ॥

403. pērata kōl'hū mēli tila tilī sanēhī jāni.  
dēkhi prīti kī rīti yaha aba dēkhibī risāni..

[Giving another example, Tulsidas says—] An oil-merchant, knowing fully well that the sesame seed has oil content, puts it into an oil extrusion mill to extract its oil (without showing any qualms, regrets or mercy towards the oil-bearing seed).

So, if this is what happens to the seed when the merchant loves the oil-bearing seed and is calm by his temperament, just imagine the fate when he is angry. (When the merchant is in good temper, he shows no mercy towards the seed. How much worse can happen when he is in a bad temper?).

[The oil-merchant loves the oil-bearing seed as it is his livelihood. In spite of this, he has no regrets or does not feel guilty in throwing the helpless seed in the crusher to extract oil from it, and once this is done he has no value for the seed. He goes about his job calmly and cheerfully without giving a second thought to the suffering that the seed is subjected to. This is his behaviour when he is calm and friendly. Say, what will happen if he is angry and finds that the seed is not yielding oil according to his expectations? Obviously he will use more bitter force on the poor seed, may be he will throw it in a fire to roast it and eat it!

Tulsidas cites this example to emphasise how wicked rascals treat even their helpers and benefactors. No good can be expected from them under any circumstances—for they will have no second thoughts to routinely exploit those from whom they have regularly benefitted, but matters become worse if they get angry or annoyed in any way for then they tend to become vicious and cause greater harm and injury.] (403)

The weak and humble are always tormented by the mighty and strong

404. सहबासी काचो गिलहिं पुरजन पाक प्रबीन ।  
कालछेप केहि मिलि करहिं तुलसी खग मृग मीन ।

404. sahabāsi kācō gilahirṁ purajana pāka prabīna.  
kālachēpa kēhi mili karahirṁ tulasī khaga mrga mīna..

Tulsidas wonders how can, and in which company, the poor, the weak and the humble creatures, such as the birds, the deer and the fish, spend their lives in peace (i.e. survive easily) when those with whom they are destined to live, their compatriots and peers who share the same habitat as them, swallow them alive?

[That is, if a person is harmed by his own kith and kin, if those on whom he has faith and trust betray him, if one's close associates and peers whom one expects to help him and support him in times of need and lend their arms to help him tide over bad luck decide to stab him in the back—then say who can protect such an unfortunate person? In other words, a person's worst enemy is one who stays close to him and upon whom he relies and has total faith, but who is so wicked, evil, unscrupulous and without morals that he would betray that person without any second thought. One ought to be wary of such elements.]

For instance (Tulsidas says), the poor and helpless smaller bird is killed and eaten by the falcon which is also a bird and shares the same sky with its prey as a common dwelling place. Similarly, the harmless poor deer is killed by the lion that also happens to share the forest as a common dwelling with other animals, and being their king is

supposed to protect his subjects rather than kill and eat them. Likewise, the smaller fish is eaten by larger fish though both share the water as their common habitat.

Their misery and misfortune does not end there—for if they manage to escape the members of their race, they are caught and killed for food by other inhabitants of the land such as villagers or city-dwellers. [That is, if by good luck the fish somehow escapes being eaten by a larger fish, it lands in the fisherman's net and is finally eaten by humans.] (404)

[Note—Tulsidas has cited these instances to make an observation about this world in which those who are weak and humble have no succour or refuge anywhere. They are always tormented and made to suffer by those who are strong, powerful and mighty. By inference Tulsidas means that for all such creatures the only hope is Lord God. The Lord is the protector and sustainer of the humble and the meek, and if a creature understands this fact then it must submit itself to the Lord God and pray to the Lord for its protection and help. The Lord God is so merciful that he will handle things in such a way that this poor creature escapes all harm and lives its life peacefully. For instance, the fish would neither be eaten by a larger fish nor would it be caught by the fisherman's net. The falcon will miss the bird, and the deer too would also manage to escape from the clutches of the lion. Something or the other will happen miraculously on the spot and the creature escapes being hurt.

In the Old Testament, Book of Psalms, Psalm no. 11 is a prayer to this effect which says—

“1: In the LORD put I my trust: How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

2: For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

3: If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

4: The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

5: The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

6: Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

7: For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.”

Then in Psalm no. 124 it is said—

“7: Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

8: Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”

As to the question ‘why would one be betrayed by those on whom one has trust and faith?’ there is a clear answer—“Greed”. Refer: Holy Bible, Old Testament, Book of Proverbs, Chapter 1, verse nos. 17-19 that say—

“17: Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

18: And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.

19: So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.”]

Only God can save against the wicked

405. जासु भरोसें सोइऐ राखि गोद में सीस ।

तुलसी तासु कुचाल तें रखवारो जगदीस ॥

405. jāsu bharōsēm sō'i'ai rākhi gōda mēm sīsa.  
tulasī tāsu kucāla tēm rakhavārō jagadīsa..

Tulsidas says that if the person on whose lap one puts his head while going to sleep, commits treachery or felony (viz. kills the sleeping person, betraying his trust), then only God can help!

[In other words, if a person upon whom one has full trust betrays, then no one can save him except God. The implication is clear—one can guard oneself against declared enemies, but it is impossible to safeguard against treacherous and unfaithful friends. So let the merciful God forbid one from keeping such companions even inadvertently.] (405)

[Note—Doha no. 400 which cites the example of a leech is relevant in the context of the present Doha. The meaning of both the Dohas is the same—it is very dangerous to have companions who are sweet talking and feign friendship externally, but are cruel, selfish and treacherous internally.

Doha no. 406 also warns against wicked persons who betray one's trust.

In Kavitawali of Tulsidas, there is a verse with the same idea. In this book's Uttar Kand, verse no. 80, line nos. 5-8 it is said—"Oh Lord! Observing the ever increasing demeanours and crookedness of Kali-yuga, and finding that the gate-keeper is also a thief, my heart is trembling with fear for my safety. Oh merciful Lord. Though you are always alert in protecting the interests of your servant Tulsidas, but still out of fear I repeatedly beseech you to exert extra precautions please!"]

406. मार खोज लै सौंह करि करि मत लाज न त्रास ।  
मुए नीच ते मीच बिनु जे इन के बिस्वास ॥

406. māra khōja lai saunha kari kari mata lāja na trāsa.  
mu'ē nīca tē mīca binu jē ina kēm bisvāsa..

Such wicked and treacherous rascals who find access to one's house (find out the personal secrets; gain entry in one's inner-circle; gain his confidence and trust) by first becoming friends with him, vowing allegiance to him, pretending loyalty and feigning friendship, then once they are inside and learn about all the private affairs of their host who has reposed full faith in them, they conspire against him and ultimately kill him, and to make matters worse they neither show any remorse or regret at their vile deed nor have any qualms while planning and executing their most heinous and reprehensible act, nor fear God or Dharma (i.e. have any fear of God for disobeying the laws established by him)—well, if anyone trusts such wicked felons then he is surely courting death voluntarily!

[In other words, it is absolutely stupid to rely upon wicked and treacherous people.] (406)

[Note—In this context, refer Doha nos. 398-405, 407-412, and 420.]

Wicked people are like demons

407. परद्रोही परदार पर परधन पर अपबाद ।  
ते नर पावँर पापमय देह धरें मनुजाद ॥

407. paradrōhī paradāra para paradhana para apabāda.  
tē nara pāvam̐ra pāpamaya dēha dharēm̐ manujāda..

Those who keep unnecessary animosity towards others, poach on or desire others' wives and wealth, and are engrossed in finding fault with all—such evil and sinful persons are demons in the guise of human-beings. (407)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 39.

The characters of evil people have been outlined in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 40.]

It is difficult to recognize the wicked

408. बचन बेष क्योँ जानिए मन मलीन नर नारि ।  
सूपनखा मृग पूतना दसमुख प्रमुख बिचारि ॥

408. bacana bēṣa kyōm̐ jāni'ē mana malīna nara nāri.  
sūpanakhā mrga pūtanā dasamukha pramukha bicāri..

How can one know that any person, a male or a female, is wicked and rogue with a dark, pervert, deceitful, vicious and sinful mind and heart by his or her external attires, features, manners or talk? [That is, it is next to impossible to determine immediately if the other person is good or wicked. It takes time and experience to learn about his true nature and intentions.]

In this context there are several examples from the epics. For instance there are the examples of Supernakha, Marich, Putna and Ravana (etc.) [All of them had evil intentions and cruel hearts, but were so soft-spoken and pleasant externally that their intentions and evil nature could not be understood immediately. In other words, one must be always vigilant when dealing with strangers, especially those who show unnatural pleasantness and friendliness.]<sup>1</sup> (408)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>All of them had assumed pleasant demeanours and external forms when they wanted to cheat their targets.

Supernakha—She was a sister of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Once she had assumed a very attractive form of an enchantress when she wanted to lure Lord Ram into marrying her. Her deceit however has no effect on the Lord, and he got her nose and ears chopped off by his younger brother Laxman. This single event led to the great war of Lanka because Sita was abducted by Ravana as a revenge for the deforming of his sister Supernakha by Ram, and Lord Ram was forced to launch a campaign to recover her from his clutches, culminating in the destructive war. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chauapai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 23.

Marich—He was a great demon warrior and a commander of Ravana's army. In order to steal Sita from the hermitage of Lord Ram at Panchavati, Ravana approached him to become a golden deer so that he can implement the plan that he had hatched to

abduct Sita. The idea is that Marich had assumed a very attractive form of a golden deer when he and his master Ravana had crooked intentions. Though it is not mentioned in this Doha, but the story goes that even Ravana had assumed the form of a mendicant when he actually went to Sita to physically take her away. It was Marich's and Ravana's harmless and pleasant form that camouflaged their evil intentions. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 28.

Putna—She was a merciless demoness sent by Kansa, the cruel demon-like king of Mathura, to kill Lord Krishna by feeding the child milk from her breast. Lord Krishna had killed her by sucking the life out of her in the guise of suckling her. This story is narrated in detail in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 10, Canto 6.

Kansa—He was a cruel king of Mathura who intended to kill Lord Krishna when he politely invited the Lord to his court. This entire story is narrated in detail in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 10, from Canto 36 to 44.]

409. हँसति मिलनि बोलनि मधुर कटु करतब मन माँह ।  
छुवत जो सकुचइ सुमति सो तुलसी तिन्ह की छाँह ॥

409. hamṣati milani bōlani madhura kaṭu karataba mana mām̃ha.  
chuvata jō sakuca'i sumati sō tulasī tinha kī chām̃ha..

Tulsidas says that it is always wise and better to shun even the shadow of (i.e. it is invariably prudent to avoid and keep a safe distance from) those who are deceptively sweet and pleasant in their speech (talk), behaviour and demeanours, smiling and laughing in a very cordial, friendly, affable and courteous manner in their formal meetings and external dealings, but who are exceedingly and unrelentingly cunning, vicious, wicked, deceitful and cruel in their hearts and minds. (409)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 39 it is said that evil persons have a character that “they are like the peacock which has a voice that is sweet and pleasant to hear, but which eats poisonous snakes and is able to digest the reptile because their innards harbour more powerful poison than that of the serpent”.]

410. कपट सार सूची सहस बाँधि बचन परबास ।  
कियो दुराउ चहौ चातुरीं सो सठ तुलसीदास ॥

410. kapaṭa sāra sūcī sahasa bām̃dhi bacana parabāsa.  
kiyō durā'u cahau cāturīm̃ sō saṭha tulasīdāsa..

Tulsidas says that those who try to conceal thousands of pointed needles or daggers symbolized by their treachery, deceit, wickedness as well as their evil mind, heart, nature and intentions, in a thick cloth symbolized by words that are pleasant and sweet to hear—well, are indeed rascals and scoundrels! (410)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 394-403, 405-409.]

Wickedness never gives peace

411. बचन बिचार अचार तन मन करतब छल छूति ।  
तुलसी क्योँ सुख पाइए अंतरजामिहि धूति ॥

411. bacana bicāra acāra tana mana karataba chala chūti.  
tulasī kyōm sukha pā'i'ai antarajāmihi dhūti..

Tulsidas wonders how can anyone—whose speech, thoughts, behaviour, body, mind and heart as well as actions all are corrupt and polluted by the evils of deceit, conceit, wickedness, crookedness, cunning, trickery, treachery etc.—ever be happy by trying to deceive even the Lord residing inside all of us. [Tulsidas means that cunning and wicked people may be able to fool the outside world, but they forget they can't fool the Supreme Being who lives inside each living being as his Atma, his soul. The result is that these people would have to suffer from a 'guilty conscious'—which means that their disguise has been ripped apart. They can never live in peace with themselves.] (411)

[Note—In Vinai Patrika, verse no. 263, stanza no. 3, Tulsidas says—“Oh Lord! It is not possible to cheat you by pretensions and false talk because you are the Lord of the mind/knowledge and the speech (and therefore know the truth, and can't be deceived). You are omniscient—knowing everything that is outside as well as inside (i.e. everything that is obvious and clearly seen as well as that which is secret and hidden). How is it possible therefore to hide the reality of the word and the heart from you? Hence, if I try to play smart with you and speak lies, i.e. have something else in my heart than what I speak, then let me be a fly in butter (which dies as soon as it falls in the butter, and everyone picks it up and throws away). In other words, if I dare use cunning and deceit with my Lord Ram, then let me perish.”

Again, in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 171, stanza no. 3, Tulsidas says—“I commit deceit and falsehood with my Lord Ram who lives inside me (as my true self, the Atma), and is omniscient. I try to hide my sins and evils from the Lord who lives inside all creatures. But oh Lord, how great are you and how thankful I am to you that inspite of this demeanour and crookedness of mine you have never turned your heart and mind against this humble servant of yours.”

Lord Ram has himself declared in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44 that “Those who have a pure and uncorrupt heart are able to have access to me; for I do not like deceit, conceit, crookedness, pretensions, falsehood and other vices that are like holes in the moral fabric of a creature”.]

Wickedness, deceit, conceit, pretension etc. are not good things

412. सारदूल को स्वाँग करि कूकर की करतूति ।  
तुलसी तापर चाहिए कीरति बिजय बिभूति ॥

412. sārādūla kō svāmṅa kari kūkara kī karatūti.  
tulasī tāpara cāhi'ai kīrati bijaya bibhūti..

Tulsidas expresses astonishment at how people disguise themselves or behave with dignity or majesty like a lion but do deeds that are like that of a dog, and then expect honour, fame and victory!

[That is, it is impossible to acquire any good name and reputation if one pretends to be upright and righteous but does things that are most unrighteous and shameful. It is not possible to cheat the world for a long time, and one's falsehood is bound to come out in the open sooner or later, giving him an immense amount of bad name.] (412)

[Note—The lion is the king of jungle. It hunts for its meals, and never eats any animal killed by others. The dog on the other hand eats all sorts of leftovers and even rotting flesh of dying animals killed by others. The dog eats all the time, is never satisfied, and goes wagging its tail from household to household for morsels of food.

Citing this example, Tulsidas says that some people pretend that they are noble and righteous, but when one observes them from close quarters they are actually found to be just the opposite. Even if a dog wears the skin of a lion it cannot abandon its nasty habits, nor can the lion behave like a dog even it is forced to paint itself like one. The idea is that one must be wary of people who pretend to be honourable and righteous but are most lowly and wicked.

Tulsidas has cited another example to stress the same point. In Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 32, line no. 4 it is said—“One must stop behaving and acting like a crane and a crow while claiming to be a royal bird known as the Swan”. The crane and the crow both eat meat and drink blood, but the Swan is known to eat pearls and drink only pure milk. The crane and the crow are regarded as very wicked and vile birds, because they prey upon their victims and pounce upon them unawares, but the Swan is regarded as a wise bird that never cheats.]

413. बड़े पाप बाढ़े किए छोटे किए लजात ।  
तुलसी ता पर सुख चहत बिधि सों बहुत रिसात ॥

413. baṛē pāpa bāṛhē ki'ē chōṭē ki'ē lajāta.  
tulasī tā para sukha cahata bidhi sōm bahuta risāta..

People do not feel hesitant or have a sense of guilt in committing big crimes (sins; misdeeds) but they feel ashamed at minor crimes. [For instance, people will try to project themselves as being honest and upright by not wanting to steal a pin belonging to others, but they have no second thoughts, regrets or compunctions in usurping the wealth and property of others. One says that he feels unclean if he has not taken a bath in the morning, but the same person has no guilt in being internally dirty and polluted by harbouring all sorts of negative thoughts and bad intentions. A person may preach truthfulness, morality and ethics to others, but when examined it is found that the same preacher is full of lies and deceit, is morally corrupt, pervert and fallen in his private life.]

Tulsidas observes that inspite of this irony people still expect happiness and peace, thinking they are righteous and noble. They accuse the Creator of being malevolent and prejudiced against them if any of their desires are not fulfilled or if they suffer for their misdeeds. [Such people do not realize that they are merely reaping the harvest of the seed they have sown.] (413)

[Note—It is difficult for a person to see faults with himself; he will very easily prick holes in the moral fibre of others but neglects the ones in his own self. Since moral

success and good destiny depend upon one's righteous deeds and noble thoughts, those persons who pretend to follow the laws of Dharma (righteous, probity, propriety and ethics) but actually do not cannot achieve their desired objectives. Then they accuse the Creator of being biased against them or not rewarding them for being good. They forget that they are under delusions of being good, for the fact is that they are quite the contrary. For instance, they think that they have done a good thing of not stealing a pin from the other person, but during the course of life they have been adopting all means and strategy to acquire wealth and property which rightfully belongs to the society at large.

Another instance is this—making a public show of charity by giving some donations but having no reluctance, regrets, sense of guilt or compunctions in extracting maximum interest from a person who has come to pawn his jewellery to meet some personal emergency, and even pilfering with his gold.

Let us take another example. Everyone would agree that making offerings of food to deities in temples is a religious act. But if someone is dying from hunger and a person does not feed him but offers food to stone idols in temples in the hope of pleasing God in the belief that he is doing a very holy thing, common sense says that he isn't. And if such a person is not able to please God and accuses the latter of being malevolent towards him inspite of his offering regular worship in a shrine, then say who is at fault, the God he worships or the man himself? The answer is—'the man'. This is because he had overlooked the fact that the Lord lives in all living beings, and if the man could see the Lord in a stone idol then could he not see the same Lord in a living being who was dying for food? Could he not judge for himself that the Lord has come to test him in the form of a hungry man?

This deluded man thought that by offering of food to the deity in a temple he was doing a religious act, but he forgot that by refusing food to a hungry man he is doing a sinful act that would off-set the good effects of his religious act of offering food in the temple.]

Lack of proper wisdom is at the root of suffering, misery and grief

414. देस काल करता करम बचन बिचार बिहीन ।  
ते सुरतरु तर दारिदी सुरसरि तीर मलीन ॥

414. dēsa kāla karatā karama bacana bicāra bihīna.  
tē surataru tara dāridī surasari tīra malīna..

Those who lack proper wisdom and intellect so much so that they do not know and pay attention to what, when and how to speak, and to decide what to do and what not to depending upon the place, circumstance and time before taking any action—such people constantly suffer from misery and grief. They are never able to satisfactorily meet their requirements, be contented and successful in life even though they may be living under the Kalpa Tree (which is the all wish-fulfilling tree), and they always remain sinful even while staying on the banks of the holy river Ganges (which normally provides spiritual purity and freedom from the negative effects of sins).

What Tulsidas means is this—merely availability of resources such as the Kalpa Tree which grants anything wanted, or the holy river Ganges that can grant holiness and purity to the soul, will not help anyone if he does not know or does not have the wisdom to use these resources properly and judiciously for his good and welfare.

For instance, to ask the Kalpa Tree to provide some delicious food is a waste of opportunity, but to ask the same tree for some sustainable fruit, such as a livelihood, is far more intelligent demand.

Similarly, merely living on the banks of the river Ganges is of no spiritual value, for it is like another flowing river. Using the water of this holy river to wash clothes and cook food will not provide any spiritual benefits. It is only when one rescinds all evil deeds and makes a firm resolution that as long as he lives near the Ganges and bathes in its water that he will never allow wrong to enter his mind and instead will always strive to be righteous and noble that this living on the banks of Ganges becomes an instrument for his spiritual and moral good and welfare.] (414)

[Note—Everything and every action have to be done in a proper fashion, at the correct time, and with a correct knowledge to produce the correct and desired results. Otherwise the results are not upto the mark and often times opposite to what is expected.

For instance, if one drinks something chillingly cold immediately after coming indoors from a hot afternoon summer sun then he is bound to fall severely sick.

Sowing of seeds of plants that normally grow during the winter season in the hot summer season is a stupid thing to do. If the seed thus sown does not germinate then it is stupid to accuse God of not being helpful. Say, how can one expect the plants that bloom during winter to grow in summer just by sowing their seeds?

Night is made for sleep, and the day for work. If a man sleeps the whole day and keeps awake the whole night, what can anyone expect from him? And then if this man accuses his fate or destiny of being cruel towards him for making him a failure in life, say who is to blame for it except the man himself?

Everyone knows that speaking the truth is one of the greatest virtues one can have. But if one can protect a creature's life and livelihood by some deflection from this rigid principle, then instead of being a sin it becomes a good deed.

Another example—making offerings of food to deities in temples is a good thing alright, but if the same food is given to a hungry man instead of the deity then surely it is a very good deed.

Going on regular pilgrimage is a religious act alright, but forgoing such travel and instead serving one's ailing parents is a far more religious act.

In other words, one has to judge for himself how best and judiciously employ his available resources to meet his objectives. For instance, in the last example of gaining some religious merit by going on a pilgrimage, one has to judge which of the two options give him more merit—going on pilgrimage or serving one's ailing parents. Obviously the answer is the second option—viz. to serve one ailing parents.]

One must think before doing anything

415. साहस हीं कै कोप बस किँ कठिन परिपाक ।  
सठ संकट भाजन भए हठि कुजाति कपि काक ॥

415. sāhasa hīm kai kōpa basa ki'ēm̐ kaṭhina paripāka.  
saṭha saṅkaṭa bhājana bha'e haṭhi kujāti kapi kāka..

The result of any rash and impulsive action taken and a thing done while one is angry, or done with a sense of false pride and strength, or done out of dare-devilry without thinking of the consequences and weighing the pros and the cons, is always dangerous.

For instance, the stupid and haughty monkey king named Bali (brother of Sugriv and the ruler of Kishkindha), as well as the pervert and mischievous crow named Jayant (son of Indra, the king of Gods) acted similarly and landed themselves in great trouble. [Bali lost his life<sup>1</sup>, while Jayant lost one of his eyes<sup>2</sup>.]

[In other words, one must act prudently and with a cool head before taking any action. Hasty, impulsive, reckless and rash actions taken in anger or under the influence of a pervert mind are bound to cause misery and grief to the person. One must properly weigh all options and then decide the course of action to be taken.] (415)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The story of Bali, the monkey king of Kishkindha, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, in Doha no. 6 from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.

The story in brief is this—Bali and Sugriv were brothers, with Bali being the king of the monkey race as he was the elder sibling. One day a demon named Mayavi came and challenged Bali for a fight. Bali asked Sugriv to take care of the kingdom and be on guard while he goes and finishes off the challenger. Bali and Mayavi fought for a long time; Mayavi got scared and tried to escape by hiding inside a dark and deep cave. Bali pursued him in, and asked Sugriv to keep vigil on the mouth of the cave. A month passed, and then blood oozed out of the cave. Bali thought that Mayavi had killed his brother, and that now he will come out and kill him and the rest of the monkeys. So he closed the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder and went sadly back to the capital of Kishkindha. The courtiers anointed him as the king in the belief that Bali was dead. But as it turned out, the blood was of Mayavi who was killed by Bali. When Bali returned and found Sugriv on the throne, he lost his temper, and full of vengeance and anger he beat Sugriv mercilessly and kicked him out of the kingdom. After that, Sugriv and his close companions lived in exile in the mountains of Rishyamook where they happened to meet Lord Ram who was going in search of his wife Sita who was kidnapped by Ravana.

When Ram and Sugriv became friends, and the Lord came to know about the injustice done to Sugriv for no fault of his, the Lord told him to challenge Bali for a dual in which Ram killed Bali. Bali's wife Tara had tried to convince her husband to avoid confrontation with Sugriv with the argument that the latter must have got protection from some very powerful force to garner courage to challenge Bali so stubbornly. But Bali was proud of his strength and powers, and he also lost his cool when he found Sugriv challenging him once again—for he had expected Sugriv to come and beg for forgiveness, and instead he has come to fight with him.

This incident is cited here by Tulsidas to show how anger and reckless action taken impulsively without thinking produces horrifying consequences. Bali should have investigated and found out the truth instead of jumping to the conclusion that Sugriv had tried to usurp the kingdom by closing the mouth of the cave and letting him die there so that he can tell a cock-and-bull story to the citizens that Bali was dead and then get himself appointed as the king. It was Bali's anger and reckless actions that led to his death.

<sup>2</sup>The story of the crow named Jayant, the pervert and mischievous son of Indra, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

The story in brief is this—Once Jayant wished to test the might of Lord Ram. So he assumed the form of a crow and came to the hermitage of the Lord at Chitrakoot. He pricked Sita's feet and blood began to flow from the wound. Lord Ram picked up a reed and shot it like an arrow to punish the crow. Jayant went to all the places in heaven and pleaded for protection from all the Gods, but none helped him against Lord Ram. Finally

he met Narad, the celestial saint, who advised him to go and beg for life and forgiveness from the Lord himself.

When Jayant surrendered himself before the Lord, the latter spared his life, but since the arrow shot by him could not go in vain and since Jayant needed some sort of punishment, Lord Ram punctured one of his eyes with the arrow. It is believed that crows are regarded as vile, meat-eating, pervert, cunning and one-eyed crooks from the time of this incident.]

#### Warning for kings and rulers

416. राज करत बिनु काजहीं करहिं कुचालि कुसाजि ।  
तुलसी ते दसकंध ज्यों जइहैं सहित समाज ॥

416. rāja karata binu kājahīm karahīm kucāli kusāji.  
tulasī tē dasakandha jyōm ja'ihaim sahita samāja..

Tulsidas warns kings and rulers to follow the correct path of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility etc.) by citing the example of the demon king Ravana. He says—‘Those kings or rulers who adopt an un-righteous path, become unscrupulous, tyrants, cruel and vicious while ruling over the land and their subjects shall be ruined along with their kith and kin in the same way as Ravana.’

[In other words, a king must follow the path of Dharma and never allow himself to become arrogant, haughty, sinful, proud, reckless, cruel and merciless, for then they are bound to fall and be punished by Lord God.] (416)

[Note—Ravana was a great king. He was born a Brahmin, considered as a holy class, was highly learned in the scriptures, and was very powerful and mighty. But he had become extremely pervert and sinful—conquering the Gods and raping their consorts, killing sages and seers, eating them up and drinking their blood, destroying religious ceremonies and defiling fire sacrifices, and unleashing a reign of terror and horrors all around in general. This forced Mother Earth to request Lord Vishnu to come down and kill him—as his presence was a great burden for her, and all other creatures were suffering horribly just because of one person. So Lord Vishnu came down to earth as Lord Ram and killed Ravana in the epic war of Lanka.

This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 187; and (ii) the whole of Lanka Kand.]

417. राज करत बिनु काजहीं ठटहिं जे क्रूर कुठाट ।  
तुलसी ते कुरुराज ज्यों जइहैं बारह बाट ॥

417. rāja karata binu kājahīm ṭaṭahīm jē krūra kuṭhāṭa.  
tulasī tē kururāja jyōm ja'ihaim bāraha bāṭa..

Those kings and rulers who follow an un-righteous and evil path while ruling, shall be completely ruined like the fate that befell upon Duryodhan, the king of the Kuru clan (during the time of Lord Krishna). (417)

[Note—Duryodhan was a king of the Kuru clan during the Dwapar Yuga when Lord Krishna was born. He had become exceedingly arrogant and pervert. He used all sorts of unrighteous means such as cheating, deceit, falsehood etc. to deny his cousins, the Pandavas, their right to the share of the kingdom, and even devised means to get them killed during exile. He did not spare their wife Draupadi and attempted to violate her modesty in full view of the royal court by trying to disrobe her. All these developments finally culminated in the epic war of Mahabharat in which the entire Kuru clan was wiped out.

The phrase ‘Baaraha Baat’ at the end of the Doha means complete ruin and destruction. It also means being subjected to twelve types of ‘Dukha’ or grief, misfortunes and sufferings. These are the following—Moha (attachment that ultimately results in grief from separation), Dainya (being forced to become humble, submissive, wretched and weak), Bhaya (fear), Yhaas (decline, demotion and degradation), Haani (loss), Glaani (regrets and depression of mind), Kshudhaa (hunger), Trishaa (thirst), Kshobha (regrets, sense of guilt, grief, anguish), Vyathaa (pain, misery, torment), Mritu (death) and Apkirti (ignominy and infamy).

The misdeeds of Duryodhan have been enumerated in Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 61. (a) One day he tried to poison Bhimsen by giving him food laced with poison. (b) One day he tied a sleeping Bhimsen and dumped him in the river Ganges to drown him, but Bhimsen broke his ropes and swam ashore. (c) One day he got a poisonous snake bite Bhimsen repeatedly all over his body while the latter was asleep, but he survived. (d) Then he tried to burn the Pandavas alive in a forest dwelling which he got set on fire, but they managed to escape.

It is narrated in Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 68 how Duryodhan had cheated the Pandavas in a game of dice and attempted to violate Draupadi’s chastity and modesty by disrobing her. Lord Krishna had then protected Draupadi’s dignity by transforming himself into an endless length of cloth that wrapped around Draupadi’s body.

In this context, refer Doha nos. 168-169 herein above, and 418 herein below of our present book ‘Dohawali’.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto nos. 262-263 it is narrated how Duryodhan had tried to kill the Pandavas indirectly by first serving sage Durvasa, who was known for his short temper and habit of cursing easily, and then instigating him to curse the Pandavas.]

418. सभा सुयोधन की सकुनि सुमति सराहन जोग ।  
द्रोन बिदुर भीषम हरिहि कहहिं प्रपंची लोग ॥

418. sabhā suyōdhana kī sakuni sumati sarāhana jōga.  
drōna bidura bhīṣama harihi kahahim̄ prapar̄cī lōga..

In the court of Duryodhan, the wicked and most evil Shakuni (maternal uncle of Duryodhan) was considered as the best, the most intelligent and a praise-worthy courtier. The courtiers of that court called Guru Dronacharya, Mahatma Bidur, great-grandfather Bhishma and Lord Krishna as deceitful, evil and cunning.

[If the king is wicked, sinful and pervert, he allows himself to be surrounded by like-minded ministers. Wicked persons get honour and preference in the court of such kings, while those who are righteous and noble are disrespected and neglected. A king or ruler who allows this to happen is sure to come to ruin.

In other words, a wise king should be very careful in selecting his advisors and ministers. A coterie of wicked advisors leads to destruction of the king and misery in the kingdom.] (418)

[Note—Duryodhan was in the habit of gambling and playing dice as a royal pastime. Guru Dronacharya, Mahatma Bidur, the old patriarch of the family named Bhishma Pitaamaha, and Lord Krishna tried to make him see reason and said that he has cultivated a very bad habit. But Duryodhan wouldn't listen. He was under influence of Shakuni who was a very vile and wicked man. It was Shakuni who kept on instigating Duryodhan and was the root cause of ruin, but the latter would not realise this.

Refer to Doha nos. 417, 419 also.]

419. पांडु सुअन की सदसि ते नीको रिपु हित जानि ।  
हरि हर सम सब मानिअत मोह ग्यान की बानि ॥

419. pāṇḍu su'ana kī sadasi tē nīkō ripu hita jāni.  
hari hara sama saba māni'ata mōha gyāna kī bāni..

Compared to this (verse no. 418), in the court of Pandavas, the same Guru Dronacharya and Bhishma were regarded with great esteem and received the same respect as due to Lord Vishnu or Shiva, though it was well known that they were friends of (their rivals and enemy) Kauravs.

This is the difference between Agyan (ignorance and lack of proper wisdom) and Gyan (wisdom and proper knowledge) that helps one to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is proper and what is improper.

[Dronacharya and Bhishma were commanders of the Kaurav army, but the Pandavas, who were steeped in wisdom and knowledge, respected them for their seniority, expertise, knowledge and good qualities. This was an approach that was very different from the Kauravs who were spiteful, ignorant, jealous, unwise and short-sighted in their wisdom and outlook.] (419)

[Note—There is a lesson to be learnt from these examples cited by Tulsidas. One gets success and good fortunes if he does things wisely, obeys the laws of Dharma, and accepts good qualities in others—like the case of the Pandavas cited in Doha no. 419. On the other hand, if one becomes pervert, keeps bad company and develops negative qualities in him he will suffer and come to ruin like Duryodhan as cited in Doha nos. 417-418.]

#### Result of lack of wisdom and judgment

420. हित पर बढ़इ बिरोध जब अनहित पर अनुराग ।  
राम बिमुख बिधि बाम गति सगुन अघाइ अभाग ॥

420. hita para baṛha'i birōdha jaba anahita para anurāga.  
rāma bimukha bidhi bāma gati saguna aghā'i abhāga..

When one becomes malevolent towards one's benefactors, and benevolent towards one's malefactors (i.e. when one begins to treat good and noble people who are helpful and

faithful with disdain and suspicion as if they were one's arch enemies, and those who are evil, pervert and wicked as if they were one's friends and well-wishers), then it should be understood that Lord Sri Ram has become opposed (i.e. unfavourable) to him, and the creator is against him (i.e. the creator has tricked his mind to act in a way that is inimical to his self-interest).

Such a foolish mentality (as outlined above) is a sure sign that luck has abandoned this person, and therefore he has not even a remote chance of ever having peace and good fortune in his life.

[In other words, if a man becomes so stupid that on the one hand he begins to treat his sincere well-wishers as his enemies, and on the other hand begins to treat those who are jealous of him and conspire against him as his dear friends and faithful advisors—then such a man is sure to come to ruin. Such a person finds himself virtually in a soup because the wicked will surely betray him, while those who are good and were his sincere well-wishers have already been antagonized by him by his suspicion of them and rude behaviour towards them. Then say, who will come to his rescue in times of emergencies? How can such a person ever hope to get help from others? Since the world lives in a symbiosis relationship where every single individual depends upon others for one reason or another, a person who has willingly surrounded himself with unhelpful people, people who are either jealous of him and want his downfall, or who were his real friends but have been angered by his mistreatment and suspicion of them, cannot ever hope for his good and welfare. There is no doubt about it.] (420)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ramagyha Prashnawali of Tulsidas as verse no. 7/4/2.

In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, while trying to dissuade him from waging a ruinous war with Lord Ram, makes this observation—“Kaal (the personified form of death and destruction) does not come to beat and kill anyone with a baton in hand. Kaal corrupts and takes away the wisdom and the intellect of his victim, and makes him go against the principles of Dharma, thereby robbing him of the inherent strength that comes with following the path of Dharma. Anyone whose death and destruction is near becomes deluded, and behaves in the arrogant, reckless, thoughtless, pervert, wicked and sinful way you (Ravana) are now inclined to behave.”

In this context, refer to Doha no. 406.]

One must heed good advice given by one's well-wishers

421. सहज सुहृद गुर स्वामि सिख जो न करइ सिर मानि ।  
सो पछिताइ अघाइ उर अवसि होइ हित हानि ॥

421. sahaja suhr̥ḍa gura svāmi sikha jō na kara'i sira māni.  
sō pachitā'i aghā'i ura avasi hō'i hita hāni..

Those who do not readily and willingly pay attention to and accept the good-intentioned advice given by a true well-wishing friend, a learned Guru (teacher, preceptor) and one's Lord (master, senior person, chief)—such persons later repent in their hearts and suffer from harm to their interests. (421)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, as Doha no. 63. Here, Lord Ram has given this advice to Sita before their departure for the forest exile.

The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 77 in which Lord Shiva tells Lord Ram that he (Shiva) will obey whatever the Lord (Ram) tells him to do. Thus, “I will obey your commands by putting them on my head as a symbolic gesture of giving them respect and vowing not to disobey. Oh Lord, this is my duty and a righteous thing for me to do. One must carry out the orders and keep the words of one’s mother, father, teacher and lord with full faith that it is in his best of interests. And above them all, oh Lord (Ram), you are always my best well-wisher, so I will surely put your words on my head and obey them.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, 1<sup>st</sup> line of Doha no. 61 asserts that “if one follows the advice given by the Guru and the Vedas then he is sure to get auspicious fruits (rewards) without the least hassles and troubles”.]

#### Result of lack of wisdom and judgment

422. भरुहाए नट भाँट के चपरि चढ़े संग्राम ।  
कै वै भाजे आइहैं कै बाँधे परिनाम ॥

422. bharuhā'ē naṭa bhāmṭa kē capari caṛhē saṅgrāma.  
kai vai bhājē ā'ihaiṁ kai bāmḍhē parināma..

If someone (e.g. a king) develops a false sense of importance, strength, valour, invincibility, grandeur and majesty upon being flattered by sycophant professional singers and dancers, known as Bhats and Nats respectively, and rushes to war by being instigated by them (without weighing the pros and cons of such a reckless action, and without realizing his actual strength, potentials and powers), then obviously and certainly such a person will either be defeated, or he will run away from the battle-field, or else be captured by his opponent and taken as a slave or a prisoner of war.

[The idea is that Tulsidas warns us against being overtaken by flattery, delusions and pretensions. One must keep sycophants and flatterers at bay. ] (422)

[Note—The Nats and Bhats were professional dancers and singers employed in royal courts by kings and emperors. Their duties included singing glories of their master, the king or the emperor. In order to please the king these singers and dancers weaved a fascinating web of illusions around the king, raising them to extraordinary heights of exaltedness and majesty, and making them look like demi-gods.

Therefore, if a king began to have delusions of grandeur and invincibility based on pure flattery of these bards and eulogy singers, and was thus swept off his feet so much so that he declared war on other kings under the false notion that he is destined to conquer the whole earth, the consequences are easy to imagine. Such stupid kings got caught in a whirlpool of ruin and destruction. They not only become a cause of destruction of their own kingdoms but also caused havoc on other peaceful kingdoms that were unnecessarily drawn into battle for no rhyme or reason.]

#### It is good to take timely action

423. लोक रीति फूटी सहहिं आँजी सहइ न कोइ ।  
तुलसी जो आँजी सहइ सो आँधरो न होइ ॥

423. lōka rīti phūṭī sahaḥim āmṛjī saha'i na kō'i.  
tulasī jō āmṛjī saha'i sō āmḍharō na hō'i..

The general tendency of people is that they are careless about taking proper care of their eyes (such as not straining it too much, or exposing it to dust and excessive light). This negligence on their part ultimately results in their eyes getting weak and even making them blind. Had they taken proper preventive care or curative measures they wouldn't have had to suffer from blindness which is a curse for life and makes living a bit hell for them.

When the first signs of revolt by the eye showed up, i.e. when they first noticed that their eyes need medicine, care and rest, stupid people overlook it and are lazy enough not to apply 'Surma' (a home-made herbal remedy for eye troubles, which is applied on the eyes in the form of an ointment) to their eyes regularly as a preventive or as a curative medicine before becoming completely blind.

Tulsidas says that those who take this trouble are spared from the crippling effects of blindness.

[In other words, by being careful one can avoid great inconveniences and misfortunes in life. One will blame his bad luck or the gods for his troubles, but will not realise that his problems are of his own making. For instance, as said in the present Doha, had he applied the medicinal ointment in time, his blindness could have been easily avoided. Therefore, it is always advisable to take timely action so as to avoid great troubles in future.] (423)

The Lord God is the supreme Protector

424. भागें भल ओड़ेहुँ भलो भलो न घालें घाउ ।  
तुलसी सब के सीस पर रखवारो रघुराउ ।।

424. bhāgēm bhala oṛēhumṁ bhalō bhalō na ghālēm ghā'u.  
tulasī saba kē sīsa para rakhavārō raghurā'u..

If anyone attacks you, it is in your interest to run away from the attacker and save yourself (if you are not strong enough to counter your attacker). Or else it is also alright to face your attacker and try to protect yourself by warding off the assault in a self-defensive way (if you are strong enough to do so and feel that running away is a sign of cowardice and would encourage the attacker more).

But Tulsidas is of the view that it is not good to counter-attack or adopt an offensive attitude towards your tormentor or seek revenge upon him (i.e. it is not advisable for a devotee of Lord Ram to pay his tormentor in the same coin by attacking the latter, to do tit-for-tat, or follow the adage 'eye for an eye')—because you need not do it as Lord Sri Ram, the Supreme Being, is Almighty and the supreme Protector of all (and he will not only protect you if you put yourself in the Lord's care but also punish the attacker or the offender more severely than you can ever hope to do so personally). (424)

[Note—Tulsidas means that one is a true devotee of the Lord God if he puts complete faith in the Lord as his all-round well-wisher and protector. The Lord is almighty and an

all-powerful Emperor of this creation. No harm can ever come to anyone who is protected by the land's Emperor. So, if one is unable to defend himself against the attacker then the wisest course of action is to leave the place. On the other hand, if one is able enough then one can stand and face his attacker in a defensive way. But even while facing the offender, a devotee puts his safety in the hands of the Lord and never thinks that it is he who has forced the enemy back. Of course this requires immense faith and trust in the Lord. And if the devotee does have it, then it is for sure that the almighty Lord God will protect him in some or the other way while severely punishing his tormentor.

The aggressive attitude of 'eye for an eye' is not befitting of a Lord's devotee. If anyone adopts this attitude it means he does not have faith in the powers of the Lord God and does not believe that the Lord will punish his devotee's offender. After all, which Emperor would want that those who are protected by him are treated in a roughshod manner by others?

We must remember that Tulsidas was a great devotee of the Lord first, and a poet-philosopher next. A true believer in God leaves himself in the care of the almighty Lord, and does not harbour revenge, vengeance or wrath. The result is that his tormentors are punished very severely, much more intensely than he could have punished them himself.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 126 it is asserted that "say, can anyone ever transgress or violate the boundary of dignity and self-respect of a person (i.e. can cause harm to a person) whose great protector is the Lord of Rama, i.e. Lord Vishnu (the Supreme Being)".]

Fighting and quarrel is not good under any circumstance

425. सुमति बिचारहिं परिहरहिं दल सुमनहुँ संग्राम ।  
सकुल गए तनु बिनु भए साखी जादौ काम ॥

425. sumati bicārahim̐ pariharahim̐ dala sumanahum̐ saṅgrāma.  
sakula ga'ē tanu binu bha'ē sākhī jādau kāma..

To use even such harmless things as leaves and flowers as instruments to fight and quarrel with others (even in jest or fun) is a bad proposition and must be avoided (i.e. they are not advisable under any situation).

Wise people abandon them or desist from them altogether (even as a milder form of enjoyment because no one can predict when things will turn nasty, and what was started as a friendly dual would become a fight unto death).

There is proof of this observation. The Yadav-clan (of Lord Krishna) and Kamdev (the patron God of love and passion) perished due to not observing this rule.

The Yadav - clan was completely eliminated because they fought each other using grass-blades and leaves<sup>1</sup>, while Kamdev was burnt to death and had to leave his charming physical body when he teased Lord Shiva and attacked him with arrows made of flowers at which the Lord became exceedingly angry and burnt him to death by spewing fire from the third eye located on the Lord's forehead<sup>2</sup>. (425)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The Yadav clan getting destroyed by infighting using reeds and leaves is narrated in Mahabharat, Mausala Parva.

The story in brief is this—After about 36 years of Yudhishthira ascending the throne at the end of the Mahabharat war, the Yadav race of Lord Krishna became very arrogant, morally corrupt and sinful. Once when sages Vishwamitra, Kanva and Narada had gone to

Dwarka for a visit, the stupid Yadavs dressed a man named Samba as a woman and teased the sages by asking them if she will give birth to a son. The sages cursed them that indeed she will give birth, but not to a son. She will deliver a 'Musal' (a dumb-bell) which will become the cause of their ruin. The king named Ugrasen got very worried as he feared the curse of the sages. In order to take precautionary measures he got this Musal crushed into fine powder and thrown into the ocean. He even declared that no one would drink alcohol in his kingdom.

Once Lord Krishna collected all the Yadavs and went on a pilgrimage at places located on the shores of the ocean. They arrived at Prabhas Kshetra. There, two of the Yadavas, Kritvarma and Satyaki, began drinking alcohol in the presence of Krishna. They started quarreling with each other, and this developed into a fight. They used reeds growing on the ocean's shore to attack each others. These reeds had turned stiff like spears and iron rods because they had grown from the crushed particles of the Musal that was earlier thrown in the ocean by the same Yadav clan. Eventually the whole Yadav clan died fighting each others with these iron reeds, giving effect to the curse of the sages.

Finally it so happened that Lord Krishna was sitting on a boulder with one of his legs resting on the knee of the other. A hunter thought that the Lord's foot was the face of a deer, and he plucked one of the reeds and shot it at the foot. It is said that this proved fatal and Lord Krishna wound up his sojourn on this earth and went back to heaven to revert to his eternal form as Lord Vishnu.

The idea is a simple argument and fight started between drunkards resulted in the complete elimination of the Yadav clan.

<sup>2</sup>The story of Kamdeo appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Briefly the story goes that the Gods had sent Kamdeo to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva. The reason was, one, Parvati, the daughter of the Mountains, had done severe Tapa (penance) to make Shiva her husband, and second, a fierce demon named Taarak was destined to be killed by a son of Shiva. So Kamdeo went on his mission to disturb Shiva's meditation so that the Gods could get an opportunity to plead with him to get married to Parvati and beget a son who would kill the demon Taarak.

Kamdeo tried all the tricks he knew but failed to move Shiva from his meditative trance. Finally, he used an arrow made of flowers. Though successful in disturbing Shiva, this proved to be fatal for Kamdeo because the Lord found out who had disturbed him, and he spewed a tongue of flame from his third eye located on his forehead. This flame burnt Kamdeo to ashes. His wife Rati came to pray to Shiva to restore her husband because he did not commit this crime willingly out of his intention to play fools with the Lord but was under duress from the Gods. So, Lord Shiva blessed her and said that henceforth Kamdeo will live in a disembodied form as the virtue of 'Kaam' (lust and passions) that lie hidden in every creature's heart. Later on when Lord Vishnu would incarnate as Lord Krishna, Kamdeo will become Krishna's son, and would be married to her.]

426. कलह न जानब छोट करि कलह कठिन परिनाम ।  
लगति अग्नि लघु नीच गृह जरत धनिक धन धाम ॥

426. kalaha na jānaba chōṭa kari kalaha kaṭhina parināma.  
lagati agini laghu nīca gr̥ha jarata dhanika dhana dhāma..

Quarrel, strife, dispute, brawl and conflict (known collectively as 'Kalaha') should never be under-estimated; the result is very fearsome.

A small fire in a poor man's hut can rapidly spread to destroy the rich man's wealth and homestead. [For instance, a small fire started in the thatched hut of a landlord's labourer living near the barn or granary can easily go out of hand and reduce to ashes the whole place in a short while.

In other words, any evil that may appear as inconsequential in the beginning can assume horrifying form and go out of control. So it is best to avoid it even in its minutest form.] (426)

[Note—How do we relate this example with the tenet that a small quarrel can lead to a great and destructive war? Suppose two people are arguing amongst themselves over certain matter. A third person who happens to be friend with one of them intervenes on the behalf of his friend. The brawl goes on increasing and a crowd gathers. The emotions run high and someone strikes another during heated arguments. This leads to a no-holds-barred free for all. The two parties are somehow separated by onlookers, but the quarreling people go home and vow vengeance. They collect their gangs and attack each other. This is how mafia battles are fought, and blood is spilled. There are instances where a small spark leads to brothers fighting brothers, and countries going to ruinous wars over imaginary threats.]

#### Comparison of the virtue of forgiveness with the evil of anger

427. छमा रोष के दोष गुन सुनि मनु मानहि सीख ।  
अबिचल श्रीपति हरि भए भुसूर लहै न भीख ॥

427. chamā rōṣa kē dōṣa guna suni manu mānahi sīkha.  
abicala śrīpati hari bha'e bhusūra lahai na bhīkha..

'Oh Mind! Learn from history about the virtuous effect and benefits of forgiveness, and the negative consequences and the evil of anger.

The first—i.e. the goodness of the virtue of 'forgiveness'—is show-cased by the incident of Lord Vishnu smilingly forgiving a Brahmin, named Bhrigu, when he kicked the Lord on his chest. The result of this 'forgiveness' was that while Lord Vishnu remained the eternal Lord of creation and the Lord of Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity), the entire Brahmin race was cursed by Laxmi that they would always remain as poor and uncontented as beggars because of 'anger' shown by one Brahmin (named Bhrigu). (427)

[Note—This story is as follows in brief—Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself. Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he

kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhrigu great respect and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhrigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhrigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.]

428. कौरव पांडव जानिए क्रोध छमा के सीम ।  
पाँचहि मारि न सौ सके सयौ सँघारे भीम ॥

428. kaurava pāṇḍava jāni'ai krōdha chamā kē sīma.  
pāñcahi māri na sau sakē sayau samḡhārē bhīma..

The Kauravs and Pandavas (of the 'Mahabharat epic') are sterling examples respectively of the consequences of the vice of anger, and the virtue and the glory associated with forgiveness.

The Kauravs were a hundred in number, but to this negative quality of anger and vengeance in them they could not defeat and kill a mere handful of five Pandavas. On the other hand, only of the Pandavas named Bhim (who was the commander of the Pandava's army) slayed all the hundred Kauravs (such is the strength that one gets by cultivating the positive virtue of forgiveness). (428)

[Note—The Kauravs were extremely haughty arrogant, cunning, jealous and pervert. These negative qualities are the breeding ground of anger, wrathfulness and vengeance. On the other hand, the Pandavs believed in the principles of Dharma, i.e. the laws of probity, propriety, righteousness and noble conduct. They went on and on tolerating all the injustice and inequities done upon them by their cousins, the Kauravs. This resulted in Lord Krishna taking their side during the great war of Mahabharat. His support to the Pandavs ensured their moral and physical victory in the war, and Bhim was able to kill all the hundred Kauravs one by one in the epic battle. Earlier, Bhim had made a vow that he will slay all these rascals himself—refer: Mahabharat, Drona Parva, Canto 123, verse no. 36.]

It is wise to be calm and treat others with respect

429. बोल न मोटे मारिऐ मोटी रोटी मारु ।  
जीति सहस सम हारिबो जीतें हारि निहारु ॥

429. bōla na mōṭē māri'ai mōṭī rōṭī māru.  
jīti sahasa sama hāribō jītēm hāri nihāru..

Do not hit anyone (for instance, your enemy or opponent) with sharp and offensive words, but instead hit him with thick bread. In other words, do not use angry, vengeful, abusive, insulting or harsh words that fuel animosity, hatred and ill-will against anybody, but try to control the adversary by feeding him well and helping him in his need.

In this way, an apparent defeat of yours should be considered equivalent to one thousand real victories that you have won over your adversary, and any instant success using reprehensive words to subdue one's opponent is as good as actual defeat. (429)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 434 in this context.

When the opponent is met with courtesy and friendly response for his evil deeds and intentions, he will feel guilty-conscious. Again, since he is not met with more hostility, he loses his opportunity to shout more and louder to pour more venom to the already bitter situation. The world and the people would also condemn him for his demeanours, disgraceful behaviour and evil nature. He is bound to face shame, disgrace, embarrassment, humiliation and ignominy.

Besides this, a man who harbours ill-will and animosity towards one and all never lives in peace. He is suspicious of all, and his life and time are spent in fretting and fuming, thereby robbing him of his peace of mind.

On the other hand, the person who reacts calmly and shows love towards his enemies and adversaries is praised by the world. Such a man has no enemy, and he can live at peace with the world. He may lose the current argument momentarily, he may suffer loss of material wealth to some extent, but that is more than compensated with long-term gains by way of peace and goodwill. People will come forward to help him as opposed to the man who has been shouting and abusing him.

Such a man who treats everyone with love and humility is highly regarded by the world as a wise and enlightened man because it is deemed that he sees the same Lord God in every creature of this creation, and therefore there is no reason why he should have an enemy or harbour animosity with others.

This idea is expressed by Lord Shiva to Parvati, his divine consort, in the epic Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 112. Shiva says—“Uma (Parvati), those who are devoted to Lord Ram and have affection for the Lord and his holy feet after having overcome all vices such as Kaam (lust and passions), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, vanity and hypocrisy) and Moha (delusions and attachments)—verily, they see the entire world as an image of their Lord (Ram), or conversely they see their Lord everywhere in this world. Hence, how can they be friendly towards one and inimical towards the other? In other words, such wise and realised persons treat all the creatures alike; they see uniformity in this world, and remain eternally calm and tranquil.”]

430. जो परि पायँ मनाइए तासों रूठि बिचारि ।  
तुलसी तहाँ न जीतिऐ जहँ जीतेहूँ हारि ॥

430. jō pari pāyam' manā'i'ē tāsōm rūṭhi bicāri.  
tulasī tahām' na jīti'ai jaham' jītēhūm' hāri..

One should be extremely cautious in becoming crossed with or insulting someone who ought to be revered and shown due respect by falling at their feet (such as one's parents, teachers and other seniors).

Tulsidas advises that in a situation where apparent victory is tantamount to real defeat, it is invariably wise and prudent not to be stubborn and hanker for artificial victory because such victory is short-lived but the long-term consequences are always painful and harmful. (430)

[Note—Elders such as one's parents and teachers are always respectable. One should never insult or harm them. Such behaviour is never regarded as right and noble, and anyone who uses harsh words against his parents or teachers is looked down with contempt and disdain by civil society.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 273, Lord Ram has told sage Parashuram that he has no desire to confront the sage under any circumstance. The Lord says—“Our (warrior) race does not have lordship and supremacy over Gods, Brahmins, devotees of the Lord, and cows which are regarded as sacred. In other words, we have no desire to confront you (sage Parashuram who was a Brahmin and a sage). It is held that if one kills anyone of them then it is a very sinful act, and if one loses in their hands then also it is a shame for a warrior race like ours. Therefore, it is wise and prudent to fall at your feet (to surrender without confrontation) even if you beat (scold, insult, humiliate) us.”

In this context, refer Doha nos. 432-433.]

#### One must avoid unnecessary confrontation

431. जूझे ते भल बूझिबो भली जीति तें हार ।  
डहकें तें डहकाइबो भलो जो करिअ बिचार ।।

431. jūjhē tē bhala būjhibō bhalī jīti tēm hāra.  
ḍahakēm tēm ḍahakā'ibō bhalō jō kari'a bicāra..

If one ponders deeply and thinks long-term, one comes to the conclusion that it appears to be better, wiser, more prudent and sensible to make a mutual compromise instead of quarrelling and fighting with one's adversary, because even slight defeat (or loss, harm of interest or face) by compromising is better than apparent victory after a fight. [Ego, false sense of pride and injury to self respect lead to confrontations, strife, tit-for-tat and wars that result in nothing but all-round destruction and havoc. They rob one's peace of mind and happiness. What he has built over many decades after hard toil is ruined just by a fire sparked by the use of wrong words or short-temper. So it is always better to act calmly and be tolerant. One loses nothing this way.]

Likewise, being tolerant when one is cheated or deceived himself is far better than cheating others and deceiving one's opponent. [This is because this is sure to ignite a vicious reaction from the other person, and if one is weak in any way then it means he will be ruined. Further, it creates a situation that results in loss of goodwill, creation of animosity and heart-burn, may result in damage, destruction and ruin, and a permanent loss of peace which is of paramount importance compared to instant gain, material or otherwise, by resorting to cheating and deception.] (431)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 432 below.]

432. जा रिपु सों हारेहुँ हँसी जिते पाप परितापु ।  
तासों रारि निवारिऐ समयँ सँभारिअ आपु ॥

432. jā ripu sōm hārēhum̃ hamśī jitē pāpa paritāpu.  
tāsōm rāri nivāri'ai samayam̃ sam̃bhāri'a āpu..

In a situation where losing against an opponent results in loss of face, and victory over him is sinful and regarded as un-righteous, causing sorrow and regret, then it is most prudent and wise to seek out the first opportune moment to initiate steps to carefully end the quarrel with him, make a compromise and avoid all sorts of confrontation. (432)

[Note—In this context, refer to Doha no. 430 and its note.]

433. जो मधु मरै न मारिऐ माहुर देइ सो काउ ।  
जग जिति हारे परसुधर हारि जिते रघुराउ ॥

433. jō madhu marai na māri'ai māhura dē'i sō kā'u.  
jaga jiti hārē parasudhara hāri jitē raghurā'u..

If one can be killed (i.e. subdued, overcome, conquered, defeated) by honey (politely, with sweet words, without confrontation or use of harsh treatment and words), then poison (i.e. a very powerful weapon or strong form of punishment) should never be used for the purpose. [That is, it is far better and practical to subdue one's adversary diplomatically using courteous words and logic than using strong-arm tactics. Because by using civil and courteous methods to settle disputes and contentious matters one is able to maintain goodwill and a cheerful environment. This leads to peace of mind and general welfare all around. The other option of using harsh methods and strong punishments would invariably lead to loss of peace and goodwill as well as a vicious environment in which both the parties start baying for each other's blood. Great ruinous wars have been fought because of stubbornness, haughtiness and a false sense of pride being hurt by both the contending parties.]

For instance, sage Parashuram, who had conquered all the Kshatriya kings on earth as he was strong and invincible, had to suffer a humiliating defeat and surrender humbly before Lord Ram, instead of being able to punish the Lord (for breaking Lord Shiva's bow during the marriage ceremony of Sita at Janakpur), because Lord Ram showed the greatest of respect to the angry sage, talked with him sweetly, most affably and courteously so much so that the sage could not muster courage to harm the Lord but instead surrendered himself before him. (433)

[Note—This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—till Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

Sage Parashuram came fuming with anger when he learnt that Lord Ram had broken the bow of Shiva as a precondition for marrying Sita at Janakpur. He was determined to punish Lord Ram, and he had a formidable reputation of killing members of the Kshatriya race at the drop of a hat. He burst into the venue, flexing his battle-axe and swinging it viciously at the assembly. All the assembled kings and princes scampered to

safety, but Lord Ram met the angry sage most politely and showed him respect by bowing at his feet. The sage fretted and fumed, pouring venom, scorn and brimstone. A long verbal debate followed in which Lord Ram never showed any arrogance or stubbornness, and instead always tried to allay the sage's fear that he had done anything to insult Lord Shiva or that he had any intention to confront the sage himself.

At certain points of time, Laxman, Lord Ram's younger brother, lost his patience on more than one occasion and spoke angrily with the sage, often rebuking him and sternly warning him to be careful, but Lord Ram admonished Laxman and told him to keep quiet. Eventually the sage lost his steam and gradually calmed down. Instead of being able to force Lord Ram to surrender before him, the reverse happened—i.e. the sage himself surrendered before the Lord, asked for forgiveness for his anger, and then went ashamed and crestfallen to the mountains to do Tapa (penance for repentance).

Lord Ram's politeness and humility can be judged when he told the angry sage: "Oh Lord! The person who has broken the bow of Shiva is one of your humble servants. Tell me, what orders do you have for me? A true servant is one who obeys his lord without questions asked."—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 1/271/1-3.

Once again the Lord told him: "Oh sage, I am your humble servant. Abandon your anger and be gracious upon me. This broken bow cannot be joined together again by becoming angry. You must be tired, so please sit down at least. If it so dear to you, tell me, I shall call some expert who will repair it according to your wish."—refer Ram Charit Manas, 1/278/1-3.

In verse no. 20 of Tulsidas' book on Hanuman named 'Hanuman Baahuk' the same idea is expressed when it is said that if one can be killed or punished by giving him honey than harsh methods should not be used against him.]

Affable and friendly nature gives all round happiness

434. बैर मूल हर हित बचन प्रेम मूल उपकार ।  
दो हा सुभ संदोह सो तुलसी किँ बिचार ॥

434. baira mūla hara hita bacana prēma mūla upakāra.  
dō hā subha sandōha sō tulasī ki'ēm' bicāra..

After giving due thought (and drawing upon his life-long experience), Tulsidas makes the following observations—one, that the words of good advice said earnestly are able to destroy the root of animosity and ill-will, two, that doing good to others and helping them when they are in need is the very root (i.e. the essence) of creating an environment of goodwill, love, friendship and brotherhood, and three, if unfortunately one has to face an adverse situation and confronted by someone intent on harming his interests then it is better to say 'Oh no, Oh no' twice (i.e. make an earnest plea to offender not to act in an evil manner as he has nothing to fear from)—because this will hold offender in his tracks and prevent the situation from getting worse and out of hand.

[Tulsidas is of the view that as far as possible one should avoid confrontation and bitterness. For this purpose, he advises three steps—one is to give sincere and honest advice to others, advice that is free from deceit and selfishness, the other is to extend a helping hand when his opponent is in need, and the third is not to retaliate in case the other person becomes aggressive. This is because sooner or later the other person, no matter how inimical he may be to the first person, will realise that the person whom he is

opposing and intent to harm is indeed pure in heart and harbours no ill-will towards him. The offender's conscience will prick him, and the intensity of his opposition and hostility would decrease gradually to complete extinction over a period of time.

On the other hand, if a person retaliates, then arguments and bitterness will go on increasing exponentially till the time some permanent damage is done. There is a saying that 'it needs to hands to clap', so if one of the persons remains calm and self-controlled, the other person will lose steam sooner than later. This is how Lord Ram was able to subdue the angry sage Parashuram as narrated in note appended to Doha no. 433.] (434)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 429 in the context of the present Doha.]

One must be careful with what one speaks

435. रोष न रसना खोलिऐ बरु खोलिअ तरवारि ।  
सुनत मधुर परिनाम हित बालिअ बचन बिचारि ॥

435. rōṣa na rasanā khōli'ai baru khōli'a taravāri.  
sunata madhura parināma hita bāli'a bacana bicāri..

One should be very careful with what one says to others. One should not say anything in anger to anyone without thinking of the consequences. It is better to draw a sword instead than to use harsh and insulting words.

[There is an adage that the wound of a sword can be healed with time, but that of an offensive word never does].

Every word should be well thought of before speaking, and it should be such that it is sweet and pleasant to hear, foster goodwill and positivity, and produces happy results.

[Harsh words have just the opposite effect. The most bitter of things should be said in a polite and diplomatic manner so that the damage caused is minimum. Often times, good old relations are soured by offending words spoken at the wrong time, while the bitterest of situations can be made to turn around by use of judicious and thoughtful words.] (435)

436. मधुर बचन कटु बोलिबो बिनु श्रम भाग अभाग ।  
कुहू कुहू कलकंठ रव का का कररत काग ॥

436. madhura bacana kaṭu bōlibō binu śrama bhāga abhāga.  
kuhū kuhū kalakaṅṭha rava kā kā kararata kāga..

Talking sweetly and pleasantly invites auspiciousness and goodwill without any special effort, while any rude and offensive words invite bitterness, unpleasantness and ill-will all around.

For example, a cuckoo's voice is sweet as it calls out 'Kuhu-kuhu' which is welcomed by all, whereas the crow's voice is harsh and rough as it calls out 'crow-crow' which no one wants to hear. [Both of them are birds and almost alike to look at from their

physical appearances. It is their voice that makes the difference. People feel happy when they hear the cuckoo sing, but chase away the crow if it keeps on crawling.] (436)

437. पेट न फूलत बिनु कहें कहत न लागइ ढेर ।  
सुमति बिचारें बोलिऐ समुझि कुफेर सुफेर ॥

437. pēṭa na phūlata binu kahēm kahata na lāga'i ḍhēra.  
sumati bicārēm bōli'ai samujhi kuphēra suphēra..

The abdomen (or stomach) does not feel bloated if one does not speak unnecessarily (like the case of one feeling bloated if abdominal gas is not passed and gets accumulated inside the stomach), and neither do the words pile up in front if one does speak (i.e. the words do not condense into visible precious things that pile up before the speaker, no matter how wise he and his words are).

Therefore, one must speak wisely only when required, using appropriate words with due caution according to circumstances, place and time.

[The idea is that one must not just speak for the sake of speaking, because more often than not he proves himself to be a stupid fellow once he opens his mouth without realising the consequences of the words he speaks. It is always better to keep quiet than to speak things not worthy of being spoken or about which one has no certain knowledge, because this only goes to make the speaker a fool of himself. One must speak with prudence and after due thought, and not shoot from the mouth impulsively.] (437)

#### Keeping good company of wise men

438. छिद्यो न तरुनि कटाच्छ सर करेउ न कठिन सनेहु ।  
तुलसी तिन की देह को जगत कवच करि लेहु ॥

438. chidyō na taruni kaṭāccha sara karē'u na kaṭhina sanēhu.  
tulasī tina kī dēha kō jagata kavaca kari lēhu..

Those (noble people) whose hearts are not affected (swayed) by passionate and lustful glances of young women, and who are not enamoured of or have anykind of attachment with any material objects of this world—Tulsidas advises that one must make such noble people as his moral and spiritual shield (i.e. a protector, teacher and guide).

[Tulsidas means that these two qualities are essential as a moral and spiritual shield if one wants to protect oneself from the attack of the various vices and negativities that accompany worldly temptations. These invariably trap the person in their vice-like grip and lead to his downfall. When one keeps company of wise and enlightened spiritual people who practice exemplary self-control over their sense organs and their natural tendencies, he is bound to be emotionally, psychologically and spiritually affected by their lives and examples keeping in tune with the adage that one becomes like the company one keeps.

If on the other hand he keeps company of those people who indulge in self gratification, who have become serf of their natural instincts and desires, who have no bother about their spiritual well-being but rather find comfort and pleasure in wallowing in the muck of the gross world, then it is but natural and obvious that sooner or later one would develop in himself their habits and tastes. This will lead to their ruin and degradation.

So Tulsidas warns us to be careful while choosing the company we would like to keep. If one wants to free one's self from the snare of the deluding world then it is always advisable to keep company of wise and enlightened people who lead an austere life of renunciation and detachment, keeping a safe distance from all temptations arising from this material world because they know that these are like the mirage seen in a hot desert. To run before them is done at one's own peril.] (438)

[Note—A normal person's life in the world is like a continuous battle between the good and the bad, between falling an easy prey to temptations and getting trapped, and shunning all tempting overtures of the material world and treating them with disdain to remain spiritually free. Keeping company of those people who practice renunciation, detachment and self-control, those who are wise, enlightened and self-realised, helps even a novice to learn the tricks so as to easily avoid spiritual pitfalls during the course of his journey through life. He leads a normal life but without getting deluded and hooked to any of the negative things associated with this material. He not only achieves freedom from all spiritual bondages but manages to lead a contented, happy and fulfilled life.

How difficult it is to overcome the temptations of yearning, lust and passion is highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 21 that says "a person who is not affected by lust-full glances of a woman that are no less than poison-tipped arrows is indeed as exalted as Lord Ram himself!"

Then again, in Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, line no. 1 of verse no. 118 reiterates the same idea when it says "a person who has escaped being hit by the arrow (symbolizing desire, lust and passion) shot from the bow represented by the eyebrows above a lustful woman's eyes, is deemed to be a true devotee and follower of Lord Ram".

The effect of the company one keeps—Refer Doha nos. 140, 178, 336-337, 340, 358-363, 366, 505.]

#### True Brave-hearts don't boast

439. सूर समर करनी करहिं कहि न जनावहिं आपु ।  
बिद्यमान रन पाइ रिपु कायर कथहिं प्रतापु ॥

439. sūra samara karanī karahim kahi na janāvahim āpu.  
bidyamāna rana pā'i ripu kāyara kathahim pratāpu..

Truly brave warriors do not brag or go around boasting about their deeds of valour, bravery and courage done in the battle-field.

Only cowards blow their own trumpets (i.e. proudly brag about themselves and their real or imaginary achievements, strengths, powers and exploits). When faced with a real-time enemy in the battle-field, these boastful cowards turn on their heels and make haste their escape at the first opportunity. (439)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand as Doha no. 274. Here, when sage Parashuram is boasting about his martial arts and prowess, Laxman scorns at him by saying that true warriors don't boast, but act.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 90 that say—“In this world there are three kinds of people—one who is like the rose plant, the second who is like a mango tree, and the third who is like the jackfruit. One plant only produces flowers (the rose), the other that gives flowers as well as fruits (the mango), and the third which gives only fruits and no flowers (like the jackfruit). Likewise, the first type of men only speak, boast and make promises (but do not act upon their words—like the rose plant), the second sort are those who speak and act (like the mango plant), and the third who act but do not speak boastfully (like the jackfruit).”]

Pride, haughtiness, hypocrisy and arrogance are not good traits

440. बचन कहे अभिमान के पारथ पेखत सेतु ।  
प्रभु तिय लूटत नीच भर जय न मीचु तेहिं हेतु ॥

440. bacana kahē abhimāna kē pāraṭha pēkhata sētu.  
prabhu tiya lūṭata nīca bhara jaya na mīcu tēhiṃ hētu..

Once, while looking at the stone-bridge (built by Lord Sri Ram across the ocean to go to Lanka to free Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana), Arjun had uttered some words of pride that smacked of vanity and haughtiness (that if he would have been in place of Sri Ram, he would have very soon tamed the ocean with his arrows, shooting so many that a floating bridge would have come up soon without having to take the trouble of bringing individual stones, rocks and boulders to make a floating bridge like Lord Ram had done).

[Arjun boasted that if he was in place of Lord Ram, he would have used his strength of arms, archery skills and valour to construct the bridge instead of relying upon the monkey army to bring rocks and mountains to construct the bridge as Lord Ram had done. This remark of his was not only insulting for the Lord but also showed that Arjun was proud of his abilities, and was overcome with a false sense of strength and valour.

Arjun forgot that Lord Krishna, his companion, was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram in the previous era. So indirectly, it was an insult of Lord Krishna. The Lord does not tolerate vanity, arrogance, pride and haughtiness in his devotee, so he decided to teach Arjun a bitter lesson of his life. This is what happened—]

The result of this false pride that Arjun had developed was that once when the women in the household of Lord Krishna were being taken to Hastinapur by him (Arjun), they were attacked and looted by ferocious tribals known as 'Bhars'. Arjun could not protect the women. As a result of this defeat, he virtually died in shame.

[Tulsidas says that false pride, haughtiness, vanity etc. are not good traits in anyone, and the Lord does not tolerate them. These negative qualities invariably lead to one being humiliated in life some day.] (440)

[Note—The story of Arjun being defeated by the tribals is narrated in Mahabharat, Mausala Parva, Canto 7. When Arjun was escorting the women folk of the Yadav clan of

Lord Krishna from Dwarka to Hastinapur, he was attacked by a gang of robbers somewhere in the journey. They wanted to loot wealth and the women. Ironically, they were armed only with sticks. Arjun first had great difficulty in stringing his bow, then he forgot how to use those arrows which worked upon being empowered by Mantras. The result was that the robbers took away a lot many women. Arjun collected the remaining ones and went to his capital city, crestfallen and dejected beyond measure. This defeat was a virtual death for Arjun who prided himself as being the veteran conqueror of the great Mahabharat war, and was haughty about his invincibility, martial abilities, valour, prowess and strength.]

Friendly and righteous nature endears a person to all

441. राम लखन बिजई भए बनहुँ गरीब निवाज ।  
मुखर बालि रावन गए घरहीं सहित समाज ॥

441. rāma lakhana bijaī bha'ē banahum̃ garība nivāja.  
mukhara bāli rāvana ga'ē gharahīm sahita samāja..

Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman who provided shelter and succour to the humble, the lowly, the distressed and the downtrodden, and who were merciful, gracious and benevolent towards them, became victorious inspite of them staying alone in a forest and lacking any other material support and wherewithal (to wage a fierce war against a formidable enemy like the demons and overcome them), whereas Ravana (the demon king of Lanka) and Baali (the king of the monkey race of Kishkindha), who indulged in worthless talk full of pride, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy perished along with their entire kith and kin even though they had the privilege of living in the comfort of palaces and cities (and being more physically strong and powerful than the two brothers Ram and Laxman, besides enjoying all the privileges of a ruling monarch—such as a well-trained army backed by arms, armaments and other war paraphernalia).

[In other words, the virtues that Lord Ram and Laxman practiced gave them inner strength that enabled them to conquer even the most formidable enemy that lived during that time. Ram and Laxman never boasted of their royal lineage (that they are future king and prince of the great kingdom of Ayodhya), or of their being divine Beings (Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being himself, and Laxman was a manifestation of Sesh Nath, the legendary celestial serpent who is believed to support the entire world from below and prevents it from sinking into the nether-world). They acted with great humility and simplicity which endeared them to all those whom they met in the forest. Their attitude of friendship and helping others in need in turn helped them to collect a huge army of monkeys and bears which ultimately defeated the fierce army of cruel, blood-thirst demons.] (441)

[Note—Both Ravana and Baali were given to boasting, and were deluded about their invincibility and physical strength. This fact has been made amply clear in Ram Charit Manas. In its Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 8 it is said about Baali that “when challenged by Sugriv for a duel, Baali, who was very haughty and proud, rushed forward, treating Sugriv with utter contempt as if he was like an inconsequential twig”.

The arrogance and haughtiness of Ravana are shown at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas—for instance, he boasts about his strength and powers when informed by Supernakha about the death of the demons Khar and Dushan at the hands of Lord Ram (3/23/1-2); he boasts before Hanuman (5/24/2), and before Angad who had gone as an emissary to probe any chance to avoid a bloody war (6/21/1; 6/23/1; 6/25, 6/25/1-8; 6/28, 6/28/3-8 etc.); his sitting arrogantly in the royal demon court (6/38/2) inspite of his wife Mandodari trying to make him see reason and avoid confrontation (6/35-6/37); and even in front of Lord Ram (6/90, and 6/90/2-10).

Lord Ram, on the other hand, was an epitome of the best of virtues and noble conduct. The Lord had no trace of ego, haughtiness or pride; he did not believe in a false sense of prestige and snobbery. He embraced even the lowly and downcast with the same ease with which he embraced his own bothers. These observations have countless examples in the story of the Ramayana.

For instance, Lord Ram had treated Nishad of the boatman community as one of his dear friends, and allowed Nishad to accompany him for quite a distance on his way to the forest exile (Ram Charit Manas, 2/104/3—2/111). When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya and was anointed a king, he had showered gifts on Nishad and called him is brother like Bharat— Ram Charit Manas, 7/20/1-6.

Nishad was a man, but the Lord had no second thoughts in treating the monkeys, the bears and the demons even as his ‘friend’. He went to the extent of publicly acknowledging their help by telling Guru Vasishtha and others upon his arrival at Ayodhya that he owes his victory in the war of Lanka and his return to Ayodhya to his dear friends, the monkeys led by Sugriv, Nal, Neel, Angad etc., the bears led by their king Jamvant, and the righteous demons led by Vibhishan—Ram Charit Manas, 7/8/1-9 and 7/8/Ka and Kha. The Lord has repeated his assertion that he treats all of them as his dear friends when it was time to send them back to their respective kingdoms—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/16.

If we go back a bit to the period when Lord Ram was searching for Sita in the wilderness, we come across Sabari who was of a low caste. Lord Ram had accepted fruits offered by her and treated her like his own mother so much so that the Lord performed her last rites—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 3/34/5—3/36.

Further ahead, the Lord had showered love on the vulture Jatau, and once again showed the same reverence to him as he would have shown to his own father by performing his last rites— refer: Ram Charit Manas, 3/30/18—3/33/3.

Besides his declaration in Ayodhya that he treats the monkeys and demons as his friend, the Lord had made this clear earlier also while interacting with Sugriv and Vibhishan—refer: (i) Sugriv—Ram Charit Manas, 4/4, 4/5, 4/7/1, 5/43/5, and 4/21/7 where Lord Ram has clearly told Sugriv that he is his dear friend and brother like Bharat. (ii) Vibhishan was warmly embraced by Lord Ram—Ram Charit Manas, 5/46/2. Lord Ram also addressed him as his friend—Ram Charit Manas, 5/48/1, 5/49/9 (when Vibhishan came to seek refuge with the Lord), and 6/80/4 (in the battle-field of Lanka).]

442. खग मृग मीत पुनीत किय बनहुँ राम नयपाल ।  
कुमति बालि दसकंठ घर सुहृद बंधु कियो काल ॥

442. khaga mrga mīta punīta kiya banahum̐ rāma nayapāla.  
kumati bāli dasakaṅṭha ghara suhr̥da bandhu kiyō kāla..

By following a virtuous and auspicious path of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and fairness, Lord Sri Ram had truly befriended even forest dwelling birds (e.g. the vulture Jatau) and animals (the monkeys and bears), whereas Ravana (the king of the demons) and Baali (the king of the monkeys) had converted their own kin (eg. Vibhishan and Sugriv respectively) as their arch enemies by their behaviour (which was arrogant, haughty, rude and insulting, and just the opposite of what Lord Ram practiced).

[In other words, a person's good nature and friendly demeanours endears him to all those with whom he comes in contact. Even his adversaries feel guilty in opposing him, and it becomes difficult for them to get support from others against him. A virtuous, noble and courteous person will have people volunteering to help him in his bad times.

On the other hand, a haughty and arrogant person who treats others with disrespect is reciprocated by the world in the same way—i.e. no one likes to deal with them, and such persons make the whole world their virtual enemies. When an emergency arrives, no one will step forward to lend him a helping hand.] (442)

#### Who is worthy of praise

443. लखड़ अघानो भूख ज्यो लखड़ जीतिमें हारि ।  
तुलसी सुमति सराहिए मग पग धरड़ बिचारि ॥

443. lakha'i aghānō bhūkha jyōm lakha'i jītimēm hāri.  
tulasī sumati sarāhi'ai maga paga dhara'i bicāri..

Tulsidas says that those who feel contented even during wants and scarcity, and consider physical defeat as their moral victory (instead of vowing vengeance, harbouring permanent animosity, and even attaining physical victory over their rivals after a lot of bloodshed or destruction)—such people who tread a cautious path after giving due thought to each development in life and the long-term consequences of each action, are deemed to be truly wise, intelligent and praise worthy. (443)

[Note—To be contented in what one has or gets lead to peace of mind and calmness of the heart. If a man is unsatisfied or uncontented with whatever he has, his desires go on increasing, and no matter how much of anything he gets he is never satisfied. This leads to constant restlessness and anxiety to get or achieve more, and still more. It's a vicious cycle that never comes to an end.

Similarly, if a man realises that bad times as well as good times are both not permanent, for if one faces bad time now then a day will come when things will become good for him, then he will develop tolerance and patience. It will help him tide over misfortunes with ease and fortitude, instead of making life hell for him.

If a man is not contented with what he has and keeps on desiring for more, it fuels yearning and greed in him. To fulfill his desires he will go to any extent, using scrupulous or unscrupulous methods to attain his goal. This obviously causes moral degradation and sets in motion a cycle of sins and misdeeds.

Victory makes a man haughty and arrogant; he becomes proud of his strength, abilities, prowess and valour. So though he may have won a physical victory over his adversary, he has lost the battle of moral virtues and auspicious qualities—for it is rarest of the rare to find a man who has immense strength, abilities and powers but remains

humble and friendly as well as free from the negative qualities of arrogance, haughtiness, pride and ego.

Therefore, a person who realises that such things as fulfillment of worldly desires and obtaining physical victories are limited only to this gross body and the equally gross world, and they have nothing to do with the Atma, the true 'self' which is a subtle entity known as the Consciousness, then he will develop a sincere sense of non-interest and detachment from such notions as desires and victories. For a truly self-realised individual, there is actually no difference between having any thing of this material world and not having it, or between victory and defeat.

'Victory' and 'defeat', he knows, are limited to the gross body and the gross world, but the Atma is unconcerned with or unaffected by either of them. When a king obtains physical victory in a war, does he ever realise 'at what cost' this was achieved? There was ruin and destruction everywhere; thousands of people died just because of his whims and fancies; thousands of households were uprooted and misery and pain spread like wild-fire. Say, what use is this victory of? Tulsidas says that if a man is wise and accepts physical defeat in the face of mad enemies bent on creating havoc, then it is a moral victory for him—because at least he has saved so many lives from annihilation and prevented ruin and havoc on a large scale.

Similarly, 'having something' and 'not having it' are also limited to the sense perceptions of the body, because the Atma is eternally contented and blissful; the Atma never feels ill at ease if some material thing is not available. If a man has not conquered his desires and wants, then he may be made the king of the whole world but he will not be satisfied as then he would greed to conquer the heaven. And when the heaven has been conquered, he will want to conquer the nether world, and then the entire universe!]

#### The importance of using a good opportunity

444. लाभ समय को पालिबो हानि समय की चूक ।  
सदा बिचारहिं चारुमति सुदिन कुदिन दिन दूक ॥

444. lābha samaya kō pālibō hāni samaya kī cūka.  
sadā bicārahim cārumati sudina kudina dina dūka..

It is prudent, wise and beneficial to get things done when the times and circumstances are favourable, for to miss a good and opportune moment is to turn away good fortunes literally from one's doorstep.

Therefore people of wisdom and high intellect are always on the look-out for such favourable moments, because such moments last for a few days only.

[From the spiritual and metaphysical perspective, this Doha has great importance and a subtle meaning. Here Tulsidas advises that a soul gets into a human body but only once—it's a golden opportunity which must not be frittered away. One must strive for emancipation and salvation as well as attainment of eternal spiritual peace when one gets an opportunity to become a human being. This chance will not come twice.

So those who strive to lead a noble, auspicious and virtuous life based on the principles laid down in the scriptures are wise and intelligent because they have used this golden opportunity of being born as a human being for their long-term spiritual good. On the other hand, those who waste this opportunity in indulging in the world of material sense objects, as well as striving to gratify themselves and appease their gross bodies are

indeed stupid persons who have frittered away this golden opportunity by bargaining gold for a worthless piece of brass.] (444)

[Note—This idea is endorsed at other places also by Tulsidas.

(i) In Geetawali, Sundar Kand, line no. 4 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza of verse no. 7 that says “It’s true that there is no bigger loss than to miss a good opportunity”.

(ii) In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 261 Lord Ram has the same idea in mind when he was contemplating about breaking the bow at Janakpur. He thought “What is the use of regretting later on if one has missed the right opportunity”.]

445. सिंधु तरन कपि गिरि हरन काज साइँ हित दोउ ।  
तुलसी समयहिँ सब बड़ो बूझत कहँ कोउ कोउ ॥

445. sindhu tarana kapi giri harana kāja sā'im̃ hita dō'u.  
tulasī samayahim̃ saba baṛō būjhata kahum̃ kō'u kō'u..

Hanuman (‘Kapi’) had done two great deeds—the first formidable deed (for which he is eternally remembered) was to cross the ocean (‘Sindhu Taran’) twice in the service of his Lord (Sri Ram) when he went Lanka in search of Sita and then came back to convey her news to Lord Ram<sup>1</sup>, and the second great deed was to uproot and bring great mountains (‘Giri Haran’) in the service of his Lord Ram twice, once when he brought the great mountain known as Dronachal so that the proper herb could be selected and administered to Laxman when he was wounded in the battle-field of Lanka, and the second time was when he brought great mountains and hills to be used against the demon army during the epic war of Lanka<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore Tulsidas says that one gets credit for any great work done or ability or quality only when they are utilised at the proper time. Only a few people understand this principle or realise this secret of success.

[In other words, though Hanuman had the natural ability to leap across the mighty ocean and uplift mountains as if they were mere pebbles, and he must have crossed the ocean as well as played around with huge hills like small children jumping across puddles on the ground or throwing marbles or stones at each other a number of times in his lifetime, but this ability would have gone unrecognized had he not done it at the right time to serve the purpose of his Lord, Sri Ram—which was to search for Sita in the first instance, and then to bring the mountain that bore the herb so that Laxman could be revived back to life, as well as to be used as missiles and weapons during the legendary war.

That is, proper timing as well as proper use of abilities and qualities is what makes a person famous and recognized. So, Tulsidas advises that one must not only use his good qualities and capabilities at the correct opportunity, but also ensure that they are put to good use. When Hanuman used his abilities judiciously he not only got Lord Ram’s affection and gratitude but also fame in the world.] (445)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The leaping of Hauman across the ocean has been vividly described by Tulsidas in the following great books of his—

(i) Ram Charit Manas—(a) Going forward to Lanka = Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3; (b) Return from Lanka = Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 28.

(ii) Kavitali—(a) Going forward to Lanka = Kishkindha Kand; (b) Return from Lanka = Sundar Kand, line nos. 7-8 of verse no. 27—to verse no. 28.

(iii) Geetawali— (a) Going forward to Lanka = Sundar Kand, stanza no. 3 of verse no. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Hanuman's easily lifting great mountains and hills to serve Lord Ram's mission has many instances.

(i) For example, he had brought the great Mountain so that Laxman could be administered the correct herb—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 55; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 58.

Mountains and big hills that had rich forests were used to construct the bridge across the ocean—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

Uprooting mountains to be used as missile and weapons of war by Hanuman is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 which precede Doha no. 51.

Other instances of mountains and hills being used as weapons of war at Lanka are the following—Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 41; the Chanda that precedes Doha no. 49; Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 82; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 87.

(ii) Kavitali—(a) Hanuman uproots the great Mountain for the herb and brings it to Lanka's battle-field: Lanka Kand, verse no. 54-55. (b) Uprooting great mountains and dumping them in the ocean—refer: Lanka Kand, verse no. 1. (c) Using huge mountains as missiles etc. during the course of the battle—refer: Lanka Kand, line no. 3 of verse no. 31; line no. 1 of verse nos. 34, 35.

Hanuman's exceptional valour and valiant deeds were praised by Lord Ram himself when he told Laxman to watch the wonderful things that Hanuman was doing on the battle-field single-handedly—refer: Kavitali, Lanka Kand, line no. 5-8 of verse no. 40.

(iii) In Geetawali, Hanuman has encouraged Lord Ram not to lose courage and hope as long as he (Hanuman) is by his side. If the need arose, Hanuman assured the Lord, that he would bring the lake of ambrosia to the battle-field to revive Laxman back to life, and he would prevent the sun from rising before Laxman is brought back to life—Lanka Kand, verse no. 8.

In this book (Geetawali) it is written that Hanuman had lifted the great mountain containing the medicinal herb as if it was a mere ball, brought it through the path of the sky to the battle-field of Lanka, and when its use was over he took it back and kept it at its original place—meaning that he had lifted the same mountain and flew with it through the sky twice, once while bringing it from the northern Himalayan ranges to Lanka, and then going back to replace it. Refer: Geetawali, Lanka Kand, stanza nos. 4-7 of verse no. 9.]

446. तुलसी मीठी अमी तें मागी मिलै जो मीच ।  
सुधा सुधाकर समय बिनु कालकूट तें नीच ॥

446. tulasī mīṭhī amī tēm māgī milai jō mīca.  
sudhā sudhākara samaya binu kālakūṭa tēm nīca..

Stressing the importance of correct time and situation to determine whether a thing is liked by a person or not, whether a thing or a situation is conducive to a person's happiness or fuels his misery and unhappiness, Tulsidas cites the following two examples: He says that if one gets death at the correct moment (for instance when one is suffering gravely and acutely from a mortal wound, or when to die is a better alternative than to live), then it appears sweeter than nectar. But if one gets access to the pitcher of celestial nectar stored in the moon at a wrong or inappropriate time, one gets very irritated, and they appear to be worse than the strongest of poisons.

[If someone, for example, is suffering from an incurable and crippling disease which makes him a burden not only on others but also on his own self, then a time comes when he begs to be put to 'rest'. He prefers death to the daily grind of sufferings and pain that do not seem to end anytime.

Similarly, when one is mentally occupied by some extremely urgent work, then he does not like any kind of distraction or diversion, no matter how pleasant that diversion may be. Likewise, when one is going through extreme mental or physical stress, he likes to rest and be left alone in solitude; he does not want to meet or talk to anyone. If at that moment someone offers him a refreshing cold or warm drink, he will not accept it; he would rather like to be left alone than be shown sympathy and compassion by being offered some refreshment.

So this is what Tulsidas means. All times and situations are not the same. What makes a man happy during one given set of situations may have the opposite effect in a different set of situations.] (446)

[Note—(i) Sati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, had wished death when she discovered that her husband, Lord Shiva, had literally turned himself away from her because she had attempted to test the divinity of Lord Ram by assuming the form of Sita, Ram's wife—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 59.

She preferred death to living a life of sufferance and neglect—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60.

(ii) Sita, the consort of Lord Ram, had also preferred death than living a life of extreme sufferance and agony—refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 27. (b) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, stanza no. 3 of verse no. 49.

The intensity of Sita's sufferings have been described in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-11 that precede Doha no. 99. (b) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 7, 9-10, 17-20, 48-50.]

#### True friends during bad times

447. तुलसी असमय के सखा धीरज धरम बिबेक ।  
साहित साहस सत्यब्रत राम भरोसो एक ॥

447. tulasī asamaya kē sakhā dhīrajā dharama bibēka.  
sāhita sāhasa satyabrata rāma bharōsō ēka..

Tulsidas lists the following six great virtues or good qualities that a person possesses as being his true friends in times of crises, adversities and misfortunes:—'Dhiraj' (patience,

fortitude, tolerance and endurance), 'Dharma' (righteousness, probity, propriety, noble thought and conduct), 'Vivek' (wisdom, the power to discriminate between the right and the wrong, the good and the bad), 'Saahit' (good literature and scriptures that provide correct guidance in case of dilemma), 'Saahas' (courage, valour, confidence), 'Satya-Brat' (adherence to truth and being steadfast in following the principles of Dharma no matter what comes), and 'Ram Bharoso Ek' (singular dependence upon the almighty Lord God, Lord Ram; to take the Lord's refuge and seek no one's help except the Lord's).

[Tulsidas emphasizes that all worldly relationships and apparent friends are good and helpful only till the time the going is good for a person. But when bad times come, when he is faced with misfortunes and adversities, all turn their backs upon him, and he is left to fend for himself. At such testing moments the good qualities listed above come in handy for the man, and if he possesses them then he is sure to overcome all obstacles and emerge victorious.

Therefore, Tulsidas says, if this is the case, then why not cultivate these good and auspicious qualities with single minded devotion for they are the ones who will stand a person in good stead during the difficult times when the rest of the world has turned its back upon him. These auspicious qualities are likened to the 'best friend' because they come to man's aid during the rough patch of his life, and they never abandon or betray him. A man who has these qualities in him is able to ride over the surging waves of misfortune and adversities comfortably, maintaining his calm, mental balance and poise.] (447)

[Note—The same idea is expressed by Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places. Let us select a few instances:

(i) In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 154, Kaushalya, the senior queen of Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, tries to console him when he was woefully lamenting after Lord Ram left Ayodhya on his way to the forest exile. She told her husband—"If you maintain courage and show patience then you will be able to cross over this great misfortune that has befallen you. Otherwise the whole family would be drowned in surging waves of insurmountable miseries and grief (if you die)."

(ii) In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 5, sage Atri's learned wife Anusuiya advises Sita that "it is during adverse times that the four, 'Dhiraj', 'Dharma', 'Mitra' (true friend), and 'Naari' (wife; woman), are tested and judged". It is during difficult times that a man's patience and courage (Dhiraj), and his faith and steadfastness in upholding the principles righteousness, noble thought and conduct, ethics and propriety (Dharma) are tested. It is also during such bad times that he is able to judge who his true friend is, and who is only a selfish one who turns his back during his time of need. Similarly, he is also able to judge whether or not his wife or any other women whom he had thought loved him actually do so; is she ready to share his misfortunes shoulder to shoulder.

(iii) In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 220 it is said in relation to Bharat crossing the river Yamuna which had dark-coloured water—"the people who were accompanying Bharat (to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya from Chitrakoot) became overwhelmed with grief when they saw the dark waters of the river as it reminded them of Lord Ram who was of a dark complexion. They would have drowned in the sea of grief and misery had it not been for the wisdom and far-sightedness of Bharat who maintained his calm and poise that acted like a virtual ship to take them across this sea of misery, grief and lamentations. For Bharat encouraged the citizens to make haste and

cross the river as soon as possible instead of grieving and procrastinating on its banks, because the sooner they reached the other side and went to meet Lord Ram, the earlier it would be possible to bring the Lord back. So there is no point and wisdom in wasting time unnecessarily.”

(iv) In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 156, sage Vashistha used his knowledge and wisdom to console the people after the cremation of king Dasrath by telling them many stories of spiritual wisdom from the scriptures to help them overcome grief and sorrows. In other words, good literature and reading of the scriptures in times of misfortunes helps a man to overcome dejection and grief.

(v) In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52, Lord Shiva decided that “what Lord Ram has determined is bound to happen; so there is no sense and need to debate and argue about any development, and it is better to leave things in the hands of the Lord”.

(vi) In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki expressly declares while describing the places where Lord Ram, the personified form of the Supreme Being, must live—“those who worship Lord Ram whole-heartedly, those who worship the Lord with their own hands, and have no faith and reliance on anybody except Lord Ram himself—well, oh Lord, you must live in their hearts”. Refer—Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129

A similar idea is expressed in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130 that says—“Oh Lord Ram, live in the heart of those for whom there is no other destination and succour or refuge except you”.

Again, in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 131, Valmiki asserts “Oh Ram, live in the heart of those who have abandoned or discarded everything else and all other sources of solace, succour and refuge except you, and who rely solely upon you and have taken sole refuge with you”.

(vii) The importance of following the principles of Dharma has been emphasized by Valmiki during his narration of the places where Lord Ram should live In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. In its Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 131, Valmiki says—“those who are reputed in this world as being an expert followers of the principles of ethics and lawful conduct, their Mana (mind and heart) is your (Lord Ram’s) good and auspicious residence”.]

#### The importance of acting at the proper time

448. समरथ कोउ न राम सोँ तीय हरन अपराधु ।  
समयहिं साधे काज सब समय सराहहिं साधु ॥

448. samaratha kō'u na rāma sōm tīya harana aparādhu.  
samayahim sādhe kāja saba samaya sarāhahim sādhu..

No one is more able, strong and powerful than Lord Sri Ram (for whom nothing is impossible), and there is no greater sin than the abduction of Sita (i.e. stealing another person's wife; adultery). [This refers to the abduction of Sita by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka.]

But Sri Ram did not kill Ravana at that moment (i.e. at the time of abduction), but waited till the proper time came. This is why saints praise the importance of ‘proper time’ to do anything.

[The word 'Sadhu' literally means those who are pure-hearted, but here it implies those who have the knack to learn something good, wise and useful from everything one witnesses in this world. If Lord Ram would have killed Ravana at the moment when he stole and took away Sita to Lanka, then a lot many things would have been left undone for which Lord Vishnu had come down to this world in the form of Lord Ram. For instance, the Lord had to meet Hanuman, he had to provide salvation to Jatayu (the vulture) and Sabari (the low-caste woman), then there was the need to eliminate the rest of the cruel and sinful demon race, to rescue Vibhishan from their clutches and make him the future king of the demon race, and so on and so forth.

Therefore, in spite of being able to kill Ravana then and there, the Lord desisted. The establishment of Lord's fame and the narration of the great epic Ramayana as we know it today that came after his success in the epic war of Lanka would not have been possible had the Lord killed Ravana while he was running away with Sita.

Hence, wise men deduced that the same action gives more rewards to a person if is taken at the right time than when taken at the wrong time, or when taken prematurely.] (448)

[Note—The importance of taking action at the right and opportune moment is also stressed in Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse no. 5, stanza no. 3 that says—“He (Hanuman) suppressed his desire or refrained from exhibiting his immense prowess, strength, courage, valour, powers and abilities when he watched Ravana tormenting Sita in the garden where she was held captive, because he thought that wise men have said everything must be done when the time is proper and ripe to bear the best of fruits or give the best of rewards”.]

449. तुलसी तीरहु के चलें समय पाइबी थाह ।  
धाइ न जाइ थहाइबी सर सरिता अवगाह ॥

449. tulasī tīrahu kē calēn samaya pā'ibī thāha.  
dhā'i na jā'i thahā'ibī sara saritā avagāha..

Tulsidas says that by walking along the banks of a river or a lake, one would eventually be able to know its depth at the correct (opportune, proper) time. It is not advisable and it makes no sense to rush in the water just to know its depth (because one might get trapped, drowned and washed away).

[The idea is that wisdom lies in waiting for the proper time and the right opportunity to do anything. Rushing ahead to do something without proper application of mind and giving thought to the pros and cons of any decision would more often than not result in confusion and negative consequences.] (449)

[Note— If one wishes to know how deep the water of the river or the lake is, it is wiser to walk along their banks and closely observe the flow of currents as well as the presence and behaviour of aquatic animals such as fish, crocodiles, cranes etc. present in the water than to plunge directly in it to determine how deep the water is.

Similarly, to judge the world it is wiser to follow the advice of scriptures and learned men than to become a dare-devil and plunge right in it by getting engrossed in the world's activities. Then again, in order to cross this ocean-like world of spiritual delusions in order to find emancipation and salvation for the soul it is wiser to follow the

easy path as shown by ancient sages and seers instead of acting smart and interpreting the scriptures to suit one's fancies and whims.

The world is compared to the swift currents of the river or the huge lake. A large river or a lake has swift currents and rapid whirlpools that are powerful enough to either sweep one off or drown him. So it is wise to follow the advice of learned and enlightened people as well as the scriptures if one were to easily and comfortably overcome all the moral and spiritual hurdles of this entrapping and delusory world.

In order to obtain spiritual and mental peace, as well as to obtain liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death in this gross world, the scriptures and ancient wise ones have prescribed a number of easy paths—such as the path of 'Karma', i.e. doing deeds righteously and in accordance to the guidance provided by them, the path of 'Bhakti', i.e. having devotion for Lord God and serving him while doing everything in this world, and so on. Following this advice is like walking along the banks of the river or the lake—because one has solid ground under one's foot and there is no risk of the unknown. This idea is endorsed in the Geeta, 5/6.

On the other hand, other paths such as 'Yoga', i.e. meditation in a broad sense and its related aspects that also lead to the same goal but are very tough and full of hurdles, are akin to jumping in the unknown waters of the river or the lake. A tiny error of judgement will have fatal consequences for the practitioner. It is similar to the great fear of getting drowned if one jumps into the unknown part of the river or the lake. This idea is also endorsed in the Geeta, 12/3-5.]

Destiny and Providence play a powerful role in one's life

450. तुलसी जसि भवतब्यता तैसी मिलइ सहाइ ।  
आपुनु आवइ ताहि पै ताहि तहाँ लै जाइ ॥

450. tulasī jasi bhavatabyatā taisī mila'i sahā'i.  
āpunu āva'i tāhi pai tāhi tahām'lai jā'i..

Tulsidas says that whatever is destined to happen in one's life, or is provided for by providence, is bound to happen at the right moment. The happening of the destined event in any particular moment in a person's life may occur even as a coincidence either right at the place where the person is, or it would drag him to the place where it is destined to happen.

[For instance, if certain Mr. A is destined to meet Mr. B at any given moment in life, then either A will go to B to meet him, or B will come to A to meet him. But they will meet each other at the given moment somehow.] (450)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, as Doha no. 159. The context is the narration of the story of king Bhanupratap to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyawalkya. The king was renowned, and was very wise, righteous and honourable, but at the same time he was ambitious and wished to rule over the whole world. It was written in his destiny that he would indeed rule the world, but not as a righteous king but as a cruel ruler. Due to this provision in his destiny he got deceived by a false hermit, and this culminated in his getting cursed by Brahmins to become a demon.

In order to give effect to this eventuality as written in his destiny, the king once went to hunt and got lost. While wandering in the forest he came to the hermitage of a false hermit. This fellow was earlier a king who was defeated by Bhanupratap, so he ran away

to escape capture and became a hermit, waiting for his time to take revenge. Bhanupratap could not recognize him, but the cunning hermit immediately realised that his prey has come to him. He convinced Bhanupratap that his desire to become an un-opposed emperor of the world can be realised if he hosted a grand feast for all the Brahmins and took their blessings, subject to the condition that the meal is prepared by this hermit in disguise.

When the ambitious king returned home, he organized the grand royal feast, inviting all the Brahmins in the kingdom. The pervert hermit had meanwhile disguised himself as a cook and while preparing the meal he had mixed meat in it. Just when the Brahmins were about to eat, a voice in the heaven warned them that the food was contaminated with meat. The Brahmins got infuriated, and they vehemently cursed the king, Bhanupratap, to become a demon, and that his entire clan would come to ruin.

This entire story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153, to Doha no. 176.

How a helpful providence helps one attain certain exceptional good fortunes is exemplified in the cases of Sabari and Jatau. Sabari was a low-caste woman, and Jatau was a vulture. None of them had ever expected, even in their wildest of dreams, that they will one day die a death that is rare even for the greatest of sages and seers to die—i.e. die while the Supreme Being is standing right before them in a personified form. Not only this, the magic was that they did not have to go search for the Lord anywhere in this world, and neither did they do any great religious deed or penance at all to be entitled to this rarest of rare privilege. This is exactly what had happened in both their cases—Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being had come visiting them right at the place where they were in order to bestow them with this blessing. Both of them had died looking at the Lord standing right before their eyes, and the miracle of the event was that the last rites of both of them were performed by the Lord himself with his own hands.

These events are narrated by Tulsidas in his great books as follows—

(a) The Lord meeting Sabari:--Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36; Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 17/1—17/8.

(b) The Lord meeting Jatau, the vulture:-- Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Doha no. 32; Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 12—16.]

#### The four noble paths

451. कै जूझिबो कै बूझिबो दान कि काय कलेस ।  
चारि चारु परलोक पथ जथा जोग उपदेस ॥

451. kai jūjhibō kai būjhibō dāna ki kāya kalēsa.  
cāri cāru paralōka patha jathā jōga upadēsa..

For attaining a noble destination for the soul, there are said to be four noble paths prescribed for the different sections of the society.

[In other words, if a man does his prescribed duties faithfully and to the best of his abilities, strictly following the instructions of the scriptures, then he is deemed to be following a religiously correct path which would lead him to his spiritual destination of liberation and deliverance. He may not be expressly and overtly doing some special

penances or sacrifices, but his diligence in adhering to the principles of doing his prescribed duty honestly and faithfully is as good as any other auspicious religious activity. Now, since the society is divided into four sections, i.e. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Sudras, these four noble paths pertain one each to them as follows—]

The first noble path is to obtain true knowledge. [This is the path prescribed for the Brahmins, the first of the four sections of the society. Their main duty is to study the scriptures and understand them properly so that they can guide the rest of the society to follow the correct path of Dharma, the path of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility. In this role they act as the moral guardians of the world in a similar way as the Lord God who is also responsible for showing the world the correct way to live a life of Dharma. The Brahmin race is the moral preceptor for the rest of the society—they are supposed to act as the flag-bearers of law of Dharma. In this role they are like the Lord God who has devised the laws of Dharma so that the creation that he created is regulated and maintained properly. The same Lord God is also responsible to enforce these laws and punish the violators. The first role of the Lord is assumed by the Brahmins, and the second by the Kshatriyas as noted below.]

The second noble path is to oppose and fight enemies symbolizing forces that are oppressive and cruel, forces that go against the laws of Dharma, forces that create disharmony, enmity, discord and restlessness, forces that eclipse the virtues of righteousness and auspiciousness, and instead enforce negativity, perversions, depravity and decadence. [This is the path prescribed for the Kshatriya race. This is the second section of the society and is the traditional warrior race supposed to give protection to the rest of the society. The chief duty of this race is to fight enemies of the society so that the rest of the people can live in peace. In this role they act as the guardian of the world in a similar way as the Lord God who is also responsible for protecting the world. The duty of the Kshatriya class is to protect the rest of the society from unscrupulous elements, and prevent plunder and destruction.]

The third noble path is to make charity and help those who are less fortunate and privileged. [This is the path prescribed for the Vaishyas, the trading community. They provide for the basic material needs of the society and generate wealth that helps the people live a reasonably comfortable life. If they do this with a sense of duty to their brethren and share their wealth with the rest of the society by way of making charities and giving liberal donations and alms to the needy, then they are deemed to be doing a holy and noble deed which is equivalent to any other auspicious religious activity. If on the other hand they generate wealth and start hoarding it for their personal use without any inclination to share it with the rest of the society, then the same activity becomes sinful and violative of the principles of Dharma. Such Vaishyas do not get any spiritual rewards. On the other hand, those Vaishyas who regard themselves as being merely custodians or as trustees of the wealth of the Lord God that has been kept with them for safe-keeping so that it can be used for the general welfare of the whole world—such Vaishyas are actually serving the Lord God and acting on his behalf. Thus, such Vaishyas get all the spiritual rewards one gets by doing any auspicious religious activity. ]

The fourth noble path is to bear physical suffering and discomfort to help and serve others selflessly. [This is the noble path prescribed for the fourth section of the society—i.e. the Sudras. It will be observed that even by the benchmark of common

sense, this is the best of all the virtues a man can possess. This path essentially means that 'selfless service' to others is the most desirable trait in a man if he wishes to attain spiritual rewards easily, and it is of no less importance than acquiring spiritual knowledge by studying of the scriptures, by striving to uphold the laws of Dharma and affording protection to these laws, and by helping the less fortunate creatures by providing for their needs.] (451)

[Note—Refer also to Doha no. 182 in this context.]

#### Importance of wisdom and application of mind

452. पात पात को सींचिबो न करु सरग तरु हेत ।  
कुटिल कटुक फर फरैगो तुलसी करत अचेत ॥

452. pāta pāta kō sīñcibō na karu saraga taru hēta.  
kuṭila kaṭuka phara pharaigō tulasī karata acēta..

Tulsidas advises that in order to get succulent and ripe fruits from a tree, there is no need to water each of its branches and leaves, because it is sufficient to water the root of the tree. Similarly, if one wishes to get divine fruits from a holy tree, it is futile to go and water all the trees at random in a garden. One must first determine which tree is the one that will give the desired fruit, and then nourish or serve this particular tree instead of wasting time and energy in watering all the trees, because in the latter case one will be watering useless trees and plants which may produce sour and unwanted fruits that may be poisonous and not suited for consumption so much so that if one eats them in the belief that these are the succulent and sweet fruits one had wished to eat then he may fall sick and become unconscious.

[The idea is that one must first determine his spiritual goal by diligent research and study of the scriptures as well as consultation with wise men. Once this is determined, he should follow this path with firmness and diligence instead of running here and there in the hope of finding a better option or an easier path. If one does the latter then he is bound to fall astray and get distracted. It will be like jumping from one boat to another mid-stream.

Tulsidas stresses that in a hurry to get liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, one must not do any and all types of deeds haphazardly on advice of so many people, but he should be careful and discriminating, selecting wisely what to and what not to do. For, indiscreet actions may be more harmful than doing any good to him. If one selects a wrong path in his spiritual endeavour, then all the efforts he makes during his lifetime go in vain, resulting in frustration and bitterness.] (452)

#### Importance of faith, trust and conviction

453. गठिबंध ते परतीति बड़ि जेहिं सबको सब काज ।  
कहब थोर समुझब बहुत गाड़े बढ़त अनाज ॥

453. gaṭhibam̐dha tē paratīti baḍi jēhim̐ sabakō saba kāja.

kahaba thōra samujhaba bahuta gārē barhata anāja..

Faith, trust and conviction in a relationship are of utmost importance, and they take precedence over formal alliance (in the form of written documents for instance). [In other words, if one loses faith and trust in the other person, if he is not convinced of the other person's integrity and sincerity, then mere formal agreements and alliances have little or no value, because both the parties see each other with suspicion and mistrust. Even if a formal alliance exists, it is bound to fall apart sooner or later if there is lack of trust and faith.]

This appears to be an ordinary matter and a very small thing, but it is a very serious advice if one weighs its long term consequences. For instance, only a few grains sown in the soil with confidence and trust produce a huge harvest.

[When a farmer sows seeds in his field, he has full faith in the ability of the soil and the seeds that they will produce a good harvest. It is with this conviction that he toils day and night. But suppose he has initial doubts then obviously he will do everything half-heartedly and become prone to dejections and depressing thoughts at the slightest hint of failure of the crop instead of making efforts to correct any errors and overcome any circumstantial and seasonal problems that may occur from time to time. He will be lacking self-confidence and seek random advice, causing more confusion and doubts in his mind.

On the other hand, if a farmer is confident about the soil and the seeds then he will put in his best efforts, and this will result in the best of harvests.

In other words, just like a few grains sown in the earth with the conviction, faith and trust that they would germinate and produce a huge crop, if one has faith and trust in his partner than this relationship will blossom into a great, robust and sustainable partnership over time. But on the other hand, if any one of the partners become suspicious of the other, and begins to harbour doubts and mistrust, then this relationship will crumble in due course of time.] (453)

[Note—This Doha lays stress on the need and importance of having trust, faith and conviction in any endeavour, whether worldly or spiritual, that a man undertakes in order to succeed in it. In the spiritual field it is important to have complete faith and trust in one's chosen path, in the deity one worships, and in one's own self and the scriptures. One must be convinced that whatever is advised in the scriptures—for instance, that this world is deluding and artificial, and that it is not in one's spiritual interest to be indulgent in it—is for one's own good. If one begins to doubt these scriptures and the advice given by learned sages and saints, then it is sure that he will not be able to get the desired result by his religious and spiritual practices.

In the same vein, these virtues of mutual trust, faith and conviction are necessary if any relationship is to be sustained and happiness is to be fostered.]

454. अपनो ऐपन निज हथा तिय पूजहिं निज भीति ।  
फरइ सकल मन कामना तुलसी प्रीति प्रतीति ।।

454. apanō aipana nija hathā tiya pūjahim nija bhīti.  
phara'i sakala mana kāmanā tulasī prīti pratīti..

[To emphasise how faith gives the desired results to followers of certain rituals and practices even if the latter appear to be irrational, Tulsidas gives the following example—  
]

It is a household practice (in India) that women-folk prepare a paste of powered rice and turmeric, apply it on their palms, and then make a mark of their own hands on the walls of the house with this paste. Then they offer worship to it as if this mark was some deity's sign.

Emphasizing the importance of having faith, trust and conviction in one's beliefs and practices, Tulsidas says that these innocent women have such a strong conviction and a firmness of belief in the mystical powers of this sign of their own palms made on the walls of their homes that they make wishes before it and offer worship to it. They are convinced that all their desires will be fulfilled with this ritual, and are very sure of its result. They feel so contented with this form of worship that they do not find it necessary to follow any other practice or offer worship to any other deity. And the wonder is that their desires are fulfilled—thus proving the importance and relevance of having firmness of faith, trust and conviction as well as complete devotion and loyalty towards one's chosen (spiritual and religious) path and beliefs. (454)

Gods and saintly people are contented by showing respect to them

455. बरषत करषत आपु जल हरषत अरघनि भानु ।  
तुलसी चाहत साधु सुर सब सनेह सनमानु ॥

455. baraṣata karaṣata āpu jala haraṣata araghani bhānu.  
tulasī cāhata sādhu sura saba sanēha sanamānu..

The Sun is so powerful and able itself that it can suck up the water from the surface of the earth (by way of evaporation when it is very hot and the sun is shining brilliantly). It is so magnanimous that it does not keep even a tiny drop for its own use, as it returns all the water back to earth in the form of rain. [It is an established fact that the water that is evaporated from the oceans and other large water bodies during the hot summer months is turned into cloud, and then it falls back upon the earth as rain. This whole cycle is controlled by the Sun.]

But the same Sun is extremely pleased when a worshipper offers it a little amount of water during worship, and it not only gladly accepts this water but retains it to honour the sentiments of the worshipper. The Sun does not return the water offered by the worshipper in order to show respect to him, but instead returns the favour by way of fulfilling the wishes of the worshipper.

Tulsidas says that saints and Gods are like the Sun as they are very powerful entities who possess great mystical powers so much so that they actually do not need any service or offering of help from ordinary mortals. But at the same time they are so kind-hearted, gracious, magnanimous and benevolent that they want to honour the gesture of affection and respect that the worshipper shows towards them. They are easily pleased with the minimal show of respect, honour, affection and reverence by the worshipper just to honour his sentiments, though they don't need any such worship. (455)

[Note—Tulsidas points out that it is very easy to please Gods and saintly people as they are very gracious, kind-hearted and soft-natured as compared to worldly people. In spite of this awareness people continue to make so much effort to please the world, and pay little attention to Gods and saintly people. If even a tiny fraction of effort that one makes to please the world is diverted to please the Gods and saintly persons, the returns or rewards will be much more and of better quality, both in terms of worldly achievements as well as spiritual attainments.]

The 12 Nakshatras (asterisms) that are auspicious for financial transactions

456. श्रुति गुन कर गुन पु जुग मृग हय रेवती सखाउ ।  
देहि लेहि धन धरनि धरु गएहुँ न जाइहि काउ ॥
456. śruti guna kara guna pu juga mrga haya rēvatī sakhā'u.  
dēhi lēhi dhana dharani dharu ga'ēhum'na jā'ihī kā'u..

Tulsidas advises that during the following 12 Nakshatras (asterisms), one should deal in transactions relating to 'Dhan' (i.e. relating to wealth, property, financial and other money matters), 'Dharani' (matters relating to real estate, farmland, homestead etc.), and 'Dharu' (matters relating to trust property; to heirloom, heritage, hereditary and accumulated property) because these Nakshatras are auspicious for such transactions or dealings, and if any of the above entities appear to be virtually lost and there seems to be no chance of recovering them or making any gain from them, no such misfortune will actually happen. [That is, if any kind of financial, real estate or any other property dealings are done during these 12 asterisms, the dealer is assured of a positive outcome. Or at least he is assured of either no loss or minimal of losses.]

These 12 Nakshatras are the following—(i) the 3 Nakshatras that follow 'Srawan' (viz. Srawan, Dhanisthaa, Shatabhish); (ii) the 3 Nakshatras that follow 'Hastha' (viz. Hastha, Chitraa, Swaati); (iii) the 2 Nakshatras starting with the letter 'Pu' (viz. Pushya, Punar-vasu); and (iv) the 4 other Nakshatras of 'Mrig-shira', 'Ashwini', 'Revti' and 'Anuraadhaa'. [Total = 12] (456)

[Note—Doha nos. 456-461, 463 show that Goswami Tulsidas was well-versed in Astrology.]

The 14 Nakshatras (asterisms) that are inauspicious for financial transactions

457. ऊगुन पूगुन बि अज कृ म आ भ अ मू गुनु साथ ।  
हरो धरो गाड़ो दियो धन फिरि चढ़इ न हाथ ॥
457. ūguna pūguna bi aja kṛ ma ā bha a mū gunu sātha.  
harō dharō gārō diyō dhana phiri carḥa'i na hātha..

During the following 14 Nakshatras, any kind of asset (property, money any other kind of wealth) that has been stolen, kept as a pawn or security, burried underground (for security reasons), or given as a loan, is lost for good and cannot be ever retrieved:—(i) The 3

Nakshatras starting with the Hindi alphabet 'Oo', which is a vowel and the 5<sup>th</sup> alphabet (viz. Uttaraa-falguni, Uttaraa-shaadaa, Uttaraa-bhaadrapad); (ii) the 3 Nakshatras starting with the Hindi letter 'Pu' (viz. Purvaa-falguni, Purvaa-shaadaa, Purvaa-bhaadrapad); (iii) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi letter 'Vee' (Vee-shaakhaa); (iv) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi letter 'Aja' (i.e. Rohini); (v) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi letter 'Kri' (i.e. Kritikaa); (vi) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi alphabet 'Ma', which is a consonant (i.e. Maagha); (vii) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi alphabet 'Aa', which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> vowel (i.e. Aadra); (viii) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi alphabet 'Bha', which is a consonant (i.e. Bharani); (ix) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi alphabet 'A', which is the first alphabet and the 1<sup>st</sup> vowel (i.e. Ashleshaa); and (x) the Nakshatra starting with the Hindi letter 'Moo' (i.e. Mool or Mul). (457)

Harmful dates when the result of any deed done is negative

458. रबि हर दिसि गुन रस नयन मुनि प्रथमादिक बार ।  
तिथि सब काज नसावनी होइ कुजोग बिचार ॥

458. rabi hara disi guna rasa nayana muni prathamādika bāra.  
tithi saba kāja nasāvanī hō'i kujōga bicāra..

If the seven lunar days (i.e. the days according to the lunar month consisting of a thirty-day cycle) of 'Ravi' (corresponding to 'Dwaadashi' or the 12<sup>th</sup> day after the full moon), 'Har' (corresponding to 'Ekaadashi' or the 11<sup>th</sup> day after the full moon), 'Disi' (corresponding to 'Dashmi' or the 10<sup>th</sup> day after the full moon), 'Guna' (corresponding to 'Tritiyaa' or the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after the full moon), 'Rasa' (corresponding to 'Sashti' or the 6<sup>th</sup> day after the full moon), 'Nayan' (corresponding to 'Dwitiya' or the 2<sup>nd</sup> day after the new moon), and 'Muni' (corresponding to 'Saptami' or the 7<sup>th</sup> day after the new moon), fall respectively on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday—then these are considered very inauspicious dates and they prove detrimental for success in any work.

[In other words, one must avoid doing anything new, anything other than the routine, or enter into any new venture on any such date of the calendar month which corresponds to the above combination. For instance, if a Monday happens to fall on the 12<sup>th</sup> day after the full moon, then it is an inauspicious combination, and one must avoid doing anything new on this day.] (458)

[Note—The lunar dates have been indicated symbolically in this Doha as follows:-

(a) The Ravi is the name of the 'Sun'. According to ancient scriptures, the Sun God is also known as Aditya, and there are said to be 12 such Adityas. Hence, by referring to 'Ravi', the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the moon known as 'Dwaadashi' is indicated.

(b) The same principle applies to the rest of the dates. The word 'Har' refers to Rudra, a form of Lord Shiva. There are said to be 11 Rudras. Hence, the term 'Har' refers to the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the moon known as 'Ekaadashi'.

(c) The word 'Disi' means direction. There are said to be 10 directions—viz. north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir. Hence, the term 'Disi' refers to the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the moon known as 'Dashmi'.

(d) The word 'Guna' means the basic qualities that are inherent to all the creatures in this creation. There are said to be 3 Gunas—viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna, and Tama Guna. Hence, the term 'Guna' refers to the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the moon known as 'Tritiya'.

(e) The word 'Rasa' means juice or taste. There are said to be 6 types of tastes. The six tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

Hence, the term 'Rasa' refers to the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the moon that is known as 'Shashti'.

(f) The word 'Nayan' means the eye. Since there are 2 eyes, the term refers to the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the moon known as 'Dwaadashi'.

(g) The word 'Muni' means a sage. There are said to be 7 celestial sages—viz. Gautam, Bharadwaj, Vishwamitra, Jamdagni, Vashishtha, Kashyap and Atri. They belonged to the early Vedic period called the Vaivastava Manu Manvantar (the period of ancient history during the time of Vaivastava Manu).

According to the epic *Mahabharata*, they are however the following—Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulaha, Kratu, Pulastya and Vashishtha. They belonged to the era known as the Swayambhu Manu Manvantara.

Hence, the term 'Muni' refers to the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the moon known as 'Saptami'.]

#### The dangerous lunar mansions

459. ससि सर नव दुइ छ दस गुन मुनि फल बसु हर भानु ।  
मेषादिक क्रम तें गनहि घात चंद्र जियै जानु ॥

459. sasi sara nava du'i cha dasa guna muni phala basu hara bhānu.  
mēṣādika krama tēm ganahi ghāta candra jiyam̐ jānu..

If the moon falls in the following signs of the Zodiac, it should be considered very dangerous and harmful:— in the first house of Aries ("Mesha"), in the second house of Cancer ("Karka"), in the third house of Libra ("Tulaa"), in the fourth house of Sagittarius ("Dhanusha"), in the fifth house of Taurus ("Vrisha"), in the sixth house of Leo ("Singha"), in the seventh house of Scorpion ("Vrishchika"), in the eighth house of Capricorn ("Makar"), in the ninth house of Gemini ("Mithun"), in the tenth house of Virgo ("Kanyaa"), in the eleventh house of Aquarius ("Kumbha"), and the twelfth house of Pisces ("Meen"). (459)

#### The 6 auspicious sights

460. नकुल सुदरसन दरसनी छेमकरी चक चाष ।  
दस दिसि देखत सगुन सुभ पूजहिं मन अभिलाष ॥

460. nakula sudarasana darasanī chēmakarī caka cāṣa.  
dasa disī dēkhata saguna subha pūjahim̐ mana abhilāṣa..

If the following six entities are sighted in any one of the ten directions, they are considered auspicious and harbingers of success in any effort:—a ‘Nakul’ (mongoose), a ‘Sudarsan’ (fish), a ‘Darsani’ (mirror), a ‘Kshemkari’ (white-faced kite), a Chakva (ostrich), and a ‘Chaash’ (also known as a ‘Neelkantha’; the magpie).

[In other words, if a person sees anyone of them anywhere when he is about to do anything, start any new venture, or go on a journey, then this sighting is regarded as auspicious for him, and there are good chances of him being successful in his endeavour.] (460)

#### The 7 entities that are always auspicious

461. सुधा साधु सुरतरु सुमन सुफल सुहावनि बात ।  
तुलसी सीतापति भगति सगुन सुमंगल सात ॥

461. sudhā sādhu surataru sumana suphala suhāvani bāta.  
tulasī sītāpati bhagati saguna sumāṅgala sātā..

Tulsidas says that the following seven entities are always good and auspicious, and they invariably provide happiness, peace, welfare and cheerfulness:—(i) ‘Sudha’ or Amrit (nectar; the elixir that provides rejuvenation and bliss, and is drunk by the Gods), (ii) a ‘Sadhu’ (a saintly and pure-hearted person), (iii) the ‘Sur-Taru’ or the ‘Kalpa Tree’ (the heavenly all wish-fulfilling tree of the Gods), (iv) the ‘Suman’ or the flowers (which are offered to deities, which provide a sweet fragrance, and are soothing for the nerves as well as the senses of smell, sight and touch), (v) the ‘Sufal’ (meaning—a sweet, succulent and ripe fruit, as well as the fruit of success of any enterprise), (vi) ‘Suhaavani Baat’ or talk that is sweet, pleasant, friendly and affable, and (vii) ‘Sita-pati Bhagati’ or having deep devotion and faith in Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being and the dear husband of Sita, the divine Mother Goddess. (461)

[Note—Tulsidas means that if one has access to any one of these seven entities, then he must be rest assured that all sorts of happiness and good tidings are his. This observation is evidently obvious if we take a careful look at these seven entities. All of them have positive value, and it is undeniable that they provide happiness to all living beings.

Which man will not like to drink elixir, or have the company of holy persons, or find a divine tree that can fulfill all his wishes, or receive a beautiful flower, or taste a sweet fruit of success in his efforts, or hear sweet and pleasant words being spoken, or have devotion for Lord God and benefit from its spiritual bonanza?

In other words, if one can have access to any one of these seven entities, then he must not think twice before accepting it; he must grab it forthwith.

This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 7/3/1.

Devotion for Lord Ram in any phase of life and under any circumstance is always and invariably good and auspicious for a person—this has been endorsed at a number of places in all the books written by Tulsidas. One such express place is in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 243 where the Gods have showered flowers on the party that accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot. “The Gods showered flowers from the sky to praise and honour the virtue of devotion for Lord Ram, because it the root that provides all auspiciousness and welfare”.]

Importance of having devotion for Lord Ram

462. भरत सत्रुसूदन लखन सहित सुमिरि रघुनाथ ।  
करहु काज सुभ साज सब मिलिहि सुमंगल साथ ॥
462. bharata satrusūdana lakhana sahita sumiri raghunātha.  
karahu kāja subha sāja saba milihi sumaṅgala sātha..

If one employs righteous, noble, auspicious and proper methods to do anything, and simultaneously remembers (i.e. invokes and prays to) Lord Sri Ram ('Raghunath') along with (his brothers) Bharat (who gives the boon of sustenance), Shatrughan (who helps overcome opponents) and Laxman (who helps to reach the target or attain the desired results)—then one will get the fruit of success along with the additional bonus by way of auspiciousness, happiness, joy and goodwill. (462)

What to remember at the beginning of a journey

463. राम लखन कौसिक सहित सुमिरहु करहु पयान ।  
लच्छि लाभ लै जगत जसु मंगल सगुन प्रमान ॥
463. rāma lakhana kausika sahita sumirahu karahu payāna.  
lacchi lābha lai jagata jasu maṅgala saguna pramāna..

When embarking upon a journey, one is advised to remember sage Vishwamitra along with Lord Sri Ram and Laxman. This would help in financial gain and acquisition of fame in this world.

This works like a magical charm (i.e. magical formulae), and it is truly auspicious and gives all round welfare to its practitioner. (463)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Agya Prashnawali as no. 1/3/4.]

This invocation refers to the incident in the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the epic Ramayana where the Lord and his brother Laxman had accompanied sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice which was continuously defiled by demons. This was the maiden journey of Lord Ram when he started eliminating the demons one by one. It was during this journey that his fame spread far and wide in this world as the protector of the sage's fire sacrifice, as the warrior who killed fearsome demons without fear, and then went on to marry Sita by breaking the formidable bow of Lord Shiva. It was during this journey that the Lord had provided liberation to Ahilya who was converted to a stone, and he had also subdued sage Parashuram who was known to be an epitome of anger and wrath as well as a merciless killer of the Kshatriya race.

Had Lord Ram not gone with sage Vishwamitra, none of the events that unfolded during this journey would have happened, and the Lord's fame would not have spread in the world in the way it did.

Therefore, if a person invokes this event in the Lord's life at the time of embarking on a journey, he is reminding the Lord of the incident and requesting the Lord to bless

him with the same auspiciousness and success that the Lord had enjoyed during that maiden journey of his.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 208—to Doha no. 262 (going with sage Vishwamitra, liberation of Ahilya, defeat of the demons and protection of the fire sacrifice, going to Janakpur, breaking of Lord Shiva's bow), from Doha no. 268—to Doha no. 285 (subduing sage Parashuram), and from Doha no. 314—to Doha no. 329 (marriage of Lord Ram with Sita).]

#### The profound glory of the Vedas

464. अतुलित महिमा बेद की तुलसी किँ बिचार ।  
जो निंदत निंदित भयो बिदित बुद्ध अवतार ॥

464. atulita mahimā bēda kī tulasī ki'ēm' bicāra.  
jō nindata nindita bhayō bidita bud'dha avatāra..

Tulsidas extols the superiority of the Vedas over all other ancient scriptures, and he says that their honour and fame are matchless, beyond reproach and doubt.

Everyone knows that even the Lord's incarnation in the form of Gautam Buddha (who established Buddhism as a religion) was subjected to ridicule because the latter had criticised the Vedas. (464)

[Note—It is believed that Gautam Buddha is one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. this story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat, 1/3/24 and 10/40/22. In spite of Lord Buddha being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself, and the fact that he preached 'Ahinsaa' (non-violence) and 'Dayaa' (mercy) as his main doctrine, he did not get praise by the traditionalists because he had undermined the importance of the Vedas, criticized them and their practices.

Tulsidas cites this instance to stress the point that one must not criticize the Vedas, or for that matter, any of the ancient and traditional scriptures of any religion. The next Doha no. 465 tells us why it is not wise to criticize the Vedas.

In other words, a wise man does not prick holes in any holy book of any religion because all of them speak the truth, all of them tell us about the Lord God, and all of them talk about how a person can become good and noble. Though these scriptures use different languages and terminology in accordance with the time and place and society in which they were conceived, but all of them speak about the same Truth.]

465. बुध किसान सर बेद निज मतेँ खेत सब सींच ।  
तुलसी कृषि लखि जानिबो उत्तम मध्यम नीच ॥

465. budha kisāna sara bēda nija matēm khēta saba sīnca.  
tulasī kṛṣi lakhi jānibō uttama madhyama nīca..

Tulsidas says that the Pandits (literally the learned men; formally the Brahmin class) are like farmers, and the Vedas are like huge water bodies such as a large pond or lake, the water of which is used by these farmers to water their respective fields which can be likened to various schools of thoughts, philosophy and ideology.

The water of the pond is not responsible for the type of produce of these fields. All the fields are equally irrigated by this water, and all the crops are equally nourished by it. The produce of the fields depend on other extraneous factors, and not on the water. The type of crop that the fields yield depend upon such factors as the seed sown, the climatic conditions, the condition of the soil, the effort and labour put in by the farmer, the expertise he has, and so on. Therefore, it is unwise to criticize the 'water of the pond or the lake' if the crop fails, or to hold it responsible for different type of crops that are produced in the fields.

Similarly, which of the numerous schools of thoughts, philosophy and ideology arising from the primary scriptures, the Vedas, is the best, which among them is medium and mediocre, and which is bad does not depend upon their primary source, the Vedas, but on other factors (such as the way the Vedas are interpreted, understood and propagated by different men in different regions of the earth, in different situations and circumstances, to people of different intellectual and moral standards, and so on and do forth). (465)

[Note—The Vedas, like the water, are impartial. They provide basic knowledge and wisdom to the society like the basic nourishment given by the water. How the society uses this knowledge and how it interprets it depends upon so many other factors not related to the Vedas. Therefore, to criticize the Vedas for any sort of negativity created by their misinterpretation is unjustified and wrong.

If one blames the Vedas for being too ritualistic in nature then he forgets that it is from the same Vedas that the great Upanishads have emerged. It is an established fact that the Upanishads are the best metaphysical and spiritual literature that has ever been produced in the world. Their primary philosophy forms the foundation of all other religions of the world, including Buddhism.

To prove this point it ought to be noted that all the basic tenets on which Buddhism is based are enumerated in a single Upanishad known as the 'Mahopanishad'. It is the 9<sup>th</sup> Upanishad of the Sam Veda, and even a cursory reading of this Upanishad's Cantos 1 and 2 will make it evident that not only Buddhism but also Jainism, the other religion originating from India, are fundamentally based on its teachings.

Just like the case when whether the crop is bad or good depends not only on the water but also on numerous other extraneous factors as well, the way the texts of the Vedas have been presented to the world varies from one person and culture to another, and from one part of the world to another. While one section of society regard them highly as epitomes of knowledge and a treasury of all spiritual philosophy, there are other sections of the society that decry them as being meaningless and ritualistic.]

One must never abandon Dharma

466. सहि कुबोल साँसति सकल अँगइ अनट अपमान ।  
तुलसी धरम न परिहरिअ कहि करि गए सुजान ॥

466. sahi kubōla sām̐sati sakala am̐ga'i anaṭa apamāna.  
tulasī dharama na parihari'a kahi kari ga'ē sujāna..

One must cope with and tolerate offensive talk and uncouth words, all types of sufferings, and even politely accept being falsely insulted or humiliated or accused for no fault of

his. But Tulsidas says that under no circumstance should one abandon the glorious principles of Dharma (righteousness, propriety, probity, ethics, morality, nobility etc.).

Those who were highly wise and learned have unanimously advised this as the best code of conduct for all, and they themselves had practiced it during their lifetimes. (466)

[Note—The principles of ‘Dharma’ are the guiding light for humanity. If all human beings were to live a life according to these principles, then heaven would have descended upon earth. But unfortunately, this is not to be so, for there are more violators of its principles than followers.

In Manu Smriti, 8/15, it is said that “when Dharma is ruined, it becomes the cause of all round destruction, while if Dharma is protected and fostered it leads to all round welfare and well-being”.

In Agni Puran, 224/2, Pushkar has said while describing the basic principles of political science that—“The three sections of the society is like a huge tree, and Dharma is the root of this tree. Financial well-being is its stem, and fulfillment of desires is the fruit. If the root is well-maintained and safe, this tree will produce good flowers, fruits and seeds”.

In Valmiki’s epic Ramayana, 3/9/30-31, Sita has advised—“Artha (financial well-being) and its attendant comfort and joys arise from upholding Dharma. Everything conducive to happiness and well-being can be obtained by following Dharma. It is like the Pran (vital life-sustaining dynamic force) of this world. It has many branches, and there are various ways to implement its principles.”

In Mahabharat, Karna Parva, 69/56-58, Lord Krishna has advised Arjun “Dharma plays a vital role in the rise and sustenance as well as peace and non-violence in the society of living beings”. The meaning is clear—if there was no Dharma, there will be no civil society; the people will be like savages and be at each other’s throat like wild animals.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 294, sage Vashistha tells kind Dasrath—“Even as rivers go towards the ocean and pour themselves in it though the ocean has no desire for water or any inclination to invite these rivers, all sorts of happiness, financial well-being, pleasures and comforts go willingly, and uninvited, to a person who follows the path and principles of Dharma”.]

One must always do good to others

467. अनहित भय परहित किँ पर अनहित हित हानि ।  
तुलसी चारु बिचारु भल करिअ काज सुनि जानि ।।

467. anahita bhaya parahita ki'em̐ para anahita hita hāni.  
tulasī cāru bicāru bhala kari'a kāja suni jāni..

Doing something good for others or sacrificing one’s own interests for their welfare may create a situation where one may fear for his own harm or loss, but hurting the interest of others so as to serve one’s own interests would surely and certainly have a negative repercussion on one’s own good and well-being.

[By being good to others, one creates an environment of goodwill and friendliness. He may have to make certain sacrifices in the process, but it is more than compensated by the amount of goodwill and positive energy that is generated. People

come forward to help him in any way they can when such a helpful person faces certain personal problems and tragedy. On the other hand, if a man is selfish and exploits others, or if he uses his powers and strength to harm the interests of others, then the people become opposed to him, and though they might not immediately confront him because he is powerful and strong but they harbour animosity for him. Should this person face adversity in life, no one will come forward to lend him a helping hand.]

Therefore, Tulsidas says that, after due consideration, it appears prudent, wise and advisable to weigh all the pros and cons before doing anything. [That is, one should work towards good of others if one wants his own welfare.] (467)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 41, Lord Ram tells Bharat—“There is no other Dharma (religious behaviour) greater than doing good to others, and there is no bigger evil or sin than causing harm to others. All the Vedas and Purans have decided this principle, and it has been reiterated by wise men. It is the same thing that I am telling you. If a person having the body of a human being becomes the cause of torment and suffering for others, then he is bound to suffer himself from the greatest of hell-like horrors associated with the cycle of birth and death.”]

### The 3 universal helpers

468. पुरुषारथ पूरब करम परमेस्वर परधान ।  
तुलसी पैरत सरित ज्यों सबहिं काज अनुमान ॥

468. puruṣāratha pūraba karama paramēsvara paradhāna.  
tulasī pairata sarita jyōm sabahiṁ kāja anumāna..

There are three things essential and helpful for any action, endeavour or enterprise to succeed—(i) right effort, (ii) the good effects of one’s past deeds (or providence), and (iii) the grace and blessing of the Lord God.

Tulsidas says that like swimming helps one to cross a river, these three entities can help one to cross over (i.e. overcome) all the hurdles one is likely to face in anything one does in this world. (468)

[Note—Let’s take an example. The success of a farmer depends on three factors—the amount of effort he puts in in his field—(i) such as watering it, tilling it, taking proper care of the seeds and the crop, and so on; (ii) the preliminary good research work that he has done—such as procuring good seed, determining the correct time to sow the seeds, how to water them properly, using the correct fertilizer in the correct way, harvesting and thrashing the grain intelligently, and so on; and (iii) conducive or benevolent Nature that determines rainfall, proper sunlight, avoidance of storms and attack of insects, proper season and climate—all such factors that are governed by Nature and depend upon the grace of God, things over which the farmer has no control.

Good crop will depend upon a combination of all these three factors working hand-in-hand.]

### The 2 best paths to be followed by a man

469. चलब नीति मग राम पग नेह निबाहब नीक ।  
तुलसी पहिरिअ सो बसन जो न पखारें फीक ॥

469. calaba nīti maga rāma paga nēha nibāhaba nīka.  
tulasī pahiri'a sō basana jō na pakhārēm phīka..

To follow the path of 'Niti' (i.e. the laws pertaining to proper conduct in all spheres of life), and having steady and sturdy devotion and faith in the holy feet of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, are the two best options or paths for any person in this world. [That is, if one follows these two paths, then he is assured of happiness and success in whatever he does. He would then no longer need to exert himself in researching which of the numerous paths is best for him in his life.]

Drawing a parallel, Tulsidas says that one should wear only those clothes that have durable colour which do not fade away when washed. [Here, the two tenets mentioned above, viz. following the laws of proper conduct, and having faith and devotion for Lord Ram, are sure-shot and sustainable methods for all types of well-being in this world, and therefore they are likened to fast colours of a cloth. No matter what adversities one faces, these two virtues will never betray him just like the case of the cloth with durable colours that lasts for a very long time even after repeated washings.] (469)

[Note—The importance of following Niti has been emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 131 when sage Valmiki declares that “the heart of those who are steady in following the path of Niti is an abode of Lord Ram—i.e. Lord Ram always lives in their heart in a subtle form”.

Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38, Lord Ram says “a saintly man is one who does not move away from the path of Sam (treating all alike), Dam (self control), Niyam (following tradition and established practices) and Niti (laws of proper conduct); who does not use harsh words at any time”.

As for having devotion for Lord Ram, it is declared in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 200 that “if one worships, has devotion for and faith in Lord Ram without harbouring any trace of deceit and conceit in his heart, then it is sure that Lord Ram will be gracious and kind towards him”.]

470. दोहा चारु बिचारु चलु परिहरि बाद बिबाद ।  
सुकृत सीवँ स्वारथ अवधि परमारथ मरजाद ॥

470. dōhā cāru bicāru calu parihari bāda bibāda.  
sukṛta sīvaṁ svāratha avadhi paramāratha marajāda..

A wise man should understand and grasp the essential subtle meaning and message encrypted in the forgoing Doha (no. 469), and follow its advice (tenet, precept, principle) without having any doubt, and without entering into futile debates.

[There are thousands of people, and each one has to offer countless suggestions. If one were to hear them all, then he will be literally lost in a maze of advices and become more confused than ever. When one is in doubt, one consults an expert, and Tulsidas is such an expert. He has given the above advice after closely studying the scriptures, after filtering through their thick tomes and analyzing his personal experiences of life and the world. In a nutshell he says that living a life of righteous thinking and noble conduct, as

well as having unflinching faith and devotion in Lord God are the only two fundamental doctrines which one ought to follow, because they are self-sufficient and fully empowered to provide all sorts of temporal and spiritual welfare to the practitioner.]

Indeed, these two auspicious tenets form the benchmark for meritorious, laudable and virtuous life and conduct in this world; they foster, enhance and take care of one's self-interest and well-being; and they pave the way for one's spiritual welfare and exaltedness. (470)

#### Importance of being financially prudent

471. तुलसी सो समरथ सुमति सुकृती साधु सयान ।  
जो बिचारि ब्यवहरइ जग खरच लाभ अनुमान ॥

471. tulasī sō samaratha sumati sukrṭī sādhu sayāna.  
jō bicāri byavahara'i jaga kharaca lābha anumāna..

Tulsidas says that those people who spend according to their estimated income (i.e. who live within their means), are to be regarded as financially sound and able ('Samarath'—because they are never short of money and never have to beg for anything), are wise, prudent and intelligent ('Sumati'—because they do not act foolishly by coming to financial ruin, and are able to maintain their status and dignity in life), are deemed to have done auspicious and righteous deeds ('Sukriti'—because assets and happiness that are generated by adopting righteous means are stable and sustainable, while those that are obtained by sinful means would come to decay sooner or later), are regarded as saintly and pure at heart ('Sadhu'—because, for one, they regard everything they possess as a blessing of the Lord God, and therefore strive to use their possessions in a noble and charitable way, which in turn generates a lot of goodwill and positivity for them in this world, and second, they treat themselves as merely trustees of the assets they possess, for they believe that all the wealth belongs to the Lord God and the society at large), and finally, they are regarded as clever and wise ('Sayaan'—because they have been able to retain control over temptations and other negative factors such as pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness, vanity etc. that usually corrupt the moral fibre of everyone who get rich and powerful, because they are able to enjoy sustainable joy, pleasure and comfort that come with financial well-being without the fear of losing these privileges at any time ). (471)

[Note—The main idea in this Doha is that one should never spend beyond one's income. If one is financially prudent and lives within one's means then he will be able to live a life of self-respect and dignity. Money is like a flowing river; it is here now and gone the next moment. A wise man is one who prepares for the rainy day well in advance, and never splurges recklessly without weighing the pros and cons of his indulgences.

He must understand that the hordes of friends and sycophants that surround him when he is rolling in money are there only as long as the money is with him, and when the money leaves him so will all of them.

Therefore, Tulsidas says that a clever and wise—'Sayaan'—man is one who is financially prudent, and such a man will never face dearth of anything—i.e. he will be self-sufficient or 'Samarath'. If he is prudent financially, if he has generated wealth by adopting righteous means and also spends it in the proper way, he is sure to get a good name and fame in this world—'Sukriti'.

Since he has handled his finances carefully with prudence, applying wisdom and intelligence, he is deemed to be a ‘Sumati’—i.e. a wise and intelligent man who can make the right choices and discriminate between the good and the evil.

Finally, since he has successfully maintained self-control and desisted from being arrogant and proud inspite of being financially well-off, treating his wealth as a gift of the Lord God meant for the welfare of the society as a whole and regarding himself as its trustee, then obviously he is a saintly and pious man—i.e. a ‘Sadhu’.]

#### Importance of protecting one’s acquisitions/achievements

472. जाय जोग जग छेम बिनु तुलसी के हित राखि ।  
बिनुऽपराध भृगुपति नहुष बेनु बृकासुर साखि ॥

472. jāya jōga jaga chēma binu tulasī kē hita rākhi.  
binu’ parādha bhrgupati nahuṣa bēnu brkāsura sākhi..

Tulsidas says that in this world, success in ‘Yoga’ (success in obtaining or accessing desired fruits or rewards of doing deeds or making efforts, both temporal as well as spiritual) depends upon the ability of a person to sustain it and protect its rewards or results (known as ‘Kshema’). It is the only way one can protect one’s interests and welfare.

Or in other words, Tulsidas says that no one else can protect one’s self interest and well-being if he himself is incompetent to do so, and is unable to take care of the achievements or gains that he has made by making so many strenuous efforts.

[That is, one has to look after his own interests, worldly as well as spiritual. No one else can do it for him. Further, it is very important to maintain the level of success one has already obtained in any sphere of life, and then gradually enhance it to higher levels. Worldly gains as well as spiritual achievements need constant vigil and diligent effort not only to maintain them and keep them fresh and vibrant, but also to prevent them from being decimated or becoming stale over time.

The word ‘Yoga’ here refers to worldly achievements and successes that are the result of a positive combination of various factors and a coordination between them. Any acquisition requires a lot of effort, and everything will be in vain if one is not able to afford protection to whatever one has gained or acquired.

From the spiritual perspective, if one’s efforts are righteous and noble and in accordance to the principles of ‘Niti’ as mentioned in Doha no. 469, then the rewards will also be equally auspicious and happy. This is equivalent to protecting and enhancing good form of Yoga. On the other hand, successes obtained by unrighteous and sinful methods are demeaning for the soul, and they invariably lead to ruin and destruction.]

If one uses his powers and abilities to torment others without their fault, then there are instances which prove that such persons are defeated and they are subjected to ruin and shame. These instances are the following—Bhrigupati (sage Parashuram), king Nahush, Ven, and Brikaasur. (472)

[Note—(i) *Parashuram* = He used his strength and power to attempt to destroy the Kshatriya (warrior) race by waging war against them 21 times on earth. But it so happened that they survived, and it was he who was finally defeated at the hands of Lord

Ram who was himself a Kshatriya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha 267—to 285.

(ii) *King Nahush* = He attained the throne of Indra, the king of Gods, due to his high virtues and righteousness. But then he tried to misuse his position by attempting to have sex with Indra's wife, which infuriated the sages who cursed him to fall from heaven. According to Mahabharat, Anushashan Parva, 99-100, the story in brief is as follows: The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake.

(iii) *King Ven* = The story of king Ven appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 4/13-15, and in Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 59. He tried to eliminate or destroy 'Dharma' misusing his powers. But by the curse of sages he died while Dharma survived.

The story of king Ven in brief is as follows. In the clan of Dhruv, the great devotee of Lord Vishnu, there was a king named Anga. His wife was Sunitha, the daughter of Mritu, the God of death. Ven was their son. Since he was a grandson of Mritu, he inherited negative traits from his mother, and became cruel and merciless since birth. He used to kill innocent humble animals in the forest, and mercilessly beat his companions for no rhyme or reason. His father Anga was extremely frustrated and peeved at his misdeeds, and tried his best to correct Ven, but failed. So one day he renounced the kingdom and went incognito to the forest to become a hermit. The royal courtiers were left with no choice but to anoint Ven to the throne. Instead of having any guilt that he was the cause of his father going to the forest and mending his ways, Ven became more arrogant and reckless once he was made the king.

He issued a proclamation that he is to be worshipped as a living God, arguing that a king takes the care of his subjects on behalf of the Lord God and therefore is an incarnate God. All the Gods lived in the body of the king and act through him. So henceforth, all his subjects were required by royal mandate to offer all their worship only to him, and not to any other deity. The elders in the kingdom did their best to make him come to senses, but he was so stupid and stubborn that he paid no heed.

The sages and saints of the time determined that he was a living Satan, and so they destroyed him by using their curse. His mother Sunitha however managed to keep his body intact (in the way mummies are preserved in today's world) by employing her mystical powers. Since the throne became vacant as Ven had no sons, and the tradition was that only someone who was a direct descendant of the king was to ascend the throne, the elders churned the left thigh of the embalmed body of Ven to produce an off spring. From this churning was born Nishad. From him emerged the tribal clan who hunted and ate flesh.

Then these elders churned Ven's arms, and from it was produced the great king Prithu after whom the earth was named as 'Prithivi'. His wife was Archi.

The various factors determining the destiny of the soul of Ven were such that he was destined to become a king. In fact, he was born in a royal family and eventually ascended

the throne. But unfortunately he did not put the golden opportunities to good and proper use, and so had to suffer infamy and death.

(iv) *Vrikaasur* (also known as *Bhasmaasur*) = His story appears in *Srimad Bhagwat*, 10/88. He received a boon from Shiva that anybody on whom the demon put his hands would be burnt to death. The idiot tried to test it on Lord Shiva himself. At last, by the cunning of Lord Vishnu, he burnt himself to death.

The story in brief is this. He was the son of the evil-minded Shakuni. *Vrikaasur* once went to do *Tapa* (penance) and met the celestial sage *Narad* on the way. He asked *Narad* who was the greatest amongst the Gods and easiest to please so that he will propitiate this God alone. *Narad* replied that it was Lord Shiva. So *Vrikaasur* went to the terrestrial abode of Lords Shiva at *Kedar* (in the Himalayas) and did severe *Tapa* by cutting his own body and offering the parts to the fire sacrifice to please Shiva. He continued the ritual for seven days but still the Lord did not appear before him. So finally *Vrikaasur* drew his sword to offer his head to the fire. Suddenly Shiva appeared before him and held his hand, thereby preventing him from chopping off his head and dying. As soon as Shiva touched him to hold his hands, the demon was restored miraculously to his original form by the divine touch of the Lord. When Shiva asked him to request for a boon, the stupid fellow requested for a senseless boon, that anyone on whose head he places his hands would be burnt to ashes immediately. Though Shiva was stunned at this nonsense but he was bound by his vows to grant a boon, and therefore he conceded and said 'alright, it will be so'.

To test the effectiveness of the boon, the wicked *Vrikaasur* decided to touch the head of Shiva himself to see if the Lord indeed gets reduced to ashes! Shiva ran to all corners of the world to escape the demon, but the latter pursued him everywhere. At last, Shiva went to the divine abode of Lord Vishnu and requested him to help. Vishnu assumed the form of a *Brahmachari* (a celibate Brahmin) and appeared instantly before *Vrikaasur*.

The demon bowed before the Brahmin to pay his respects. The *Brahmachari* pretended to be his friend and suggested that he must be tired running behind Shiva, and so why not take a bit of rest. Then Vishnu told him that he possesses mystical powers, and if the demon takes him into confidence and tells him why he has been running around then perhaps he (Vishnu) might be able to help him.

When *Vrikaasur* told Vishnu about the boon granted to him by Shiva, Vishnu tricked him into believing that the boon is worthless and ineffective because Shiva is an unholy God as he lives in the company of ghosts in the cremation ground. How such a god can ever have the power to grant boons, reasoned Vishnu. This logic sowed doubts in the mind of *Vrikaasur*. Then Vishnu told him—'If you do not believe me that this is a worthless boon and you have been tricked by Shiva then why not prove its worthlessness by putting your hand on your own head? See, you can't burn your own self because a boon always applies on others. So test its effectiveness right now.'

Stupid as he was, and eager to prove the effectiveness of his newly acquired powers, *Vrikaasur* got confused under the influence of the delusion-creating powers of Lord Vishnu. So he put his hand on his own head—and was burnt to ashes instantly.

*Vrikaasur* was fortunate to have been able to please Lord Shiva, but his stupidity had the better of him and it lead to his ruin.]

### What is more important

473. बड़ि प्रतीति गठिबंध तें बड़ो जोग तें छेम ।  
बड़ो सुसेवक साइँ तें बड़ो नेम तें प्रेम ॥

473. baḍi pratīti gaṭhibandha tēm̄ baṛō jōga tēm̄ chēma.  
baṛō susēvaka sā'im̄ tēm̄ baṛō nēma tēm̄ prēma..

Faith, conviction, firmness of belief and trust (in any relationship) are more important than formal ties, bonds, treaties or agreements. [Refer Doha no. 453 also.]

Similarly, 'Kshem' is of greater importance than 'Yog' (as described in Doha no. 472).

Between a Lord and his servant or attendant, it is the latter who is more important than the former<sup>1</sup>. [The Lord is praised and acquires his stature because he is honoured and raised to the exalted position by his attendants and followers who serve him diligently and faithfully. The king for instance wins a war relying on his soldiers; it is the soldier who lays down his life to serve his lord, the king, and all the glories that the king possesses are due to his subjects. Even in an ordinary household, it is the junior members of the family who do odd jobs, attend to the daily household chores and run around errands, freeing senior members to attend to their business affairs. Otherwise, the lord of the house and other senior members would be spending the whole day just running around errands and worrying for such routine matters as buying vegetables and grocery for the kitchen, washing clothes and sweeping the house, dropping children to school, and so on instead of paying attention to more important business matters upon which depend the bread and butter needs of the entire family. The chief supervisor in any organization can't work efficiently and look over a large office or workplace if he is not helped by a retinue of subordinates and functionaries working obediently under him. The credit of course goes to the supervisor, but it ought to be the workers who must be honoured for well-oiled official machinery. If we take another example, it is the devotee who is instrumental in giving importance to a particular deity as compared to others. This logic can be extended to any number of situations, and we find that it is always the junior who help the senior perform his tasks efficiently and with ease. Therefore, upon analysis one comes to the conclusion that whatever glory and honour the lord or the senior has is due to the subordinates working backdoor and behind the scene for him.]

Finally, the virtue of sincerity and truthfulness in love, affection, devotion and dedication are more important than merely pretensions of these virtues and doing a routine form of service. External appearances or pretensions of love and dedication are worthless if there is no element of sincerity and honesty in them<sup>2</sup>. [For instance, to have love and devotion for Lord God is more important than merely doing rituals and observing sacraments in a mechanical manner. Similarly, a subordinate who goes the extra mile to serve his organization diligently and faithfully with the best of his ability and is never concerned about his personal comfort when it comes to service matters is always praised and becomes close to his seniors as compared to those who are merely working in a routine manner for a salary and are more interested in looking at the clock to stop work when the time of work ends than to put in an extra hour to serve the organization which has provided them with their bread and butter. Any master or teacher or parent, for instance, will love his respective subordinate or servant or student or offspring more who serves him with dedication and love, who is ever eager to carry out any orders given to him by his master, teacher or parent as the case may be, as compared to others who just observe formalities and are more interested in their own selves than their benefactors.] (473)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>The fact that the servant is more important and praiseworthy than his lord is expressed in Doha no. 528 also which says “The servant is more important and praiseworthy than his lord if the former is sincere, wise and intelligent. For instance, Lord Ram had to construct a bridge to cross the mighty ocean, but his servant Hanuman had simply jumped over it to cross it.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 16-17 that precede Doha no. 120, the crow saint Kaagbhusund says “I believe that Lord Ram’s servant or follower or devotee is greater and more important than the Lord himself. If one compares Lord Ram to an ocean, then wise men are like the cloud. If Lord Ram is like the tree of the sandalwood, then wise men are like the wind. {The water of the ocean is not drinkable, but the clouds convert it into rain which is sweet and drinkable. The sandalwood tree’s fragrance is spread far and wide by the gust of wind blowing away from it, and hence it is the wind that helps to spread the glory of the sandalwood tree. Otherwise it would have been little known and had remained obscure.}

<sup>2</sup>As for the virtues of having love and devotion being superior to anything else, Ram Charit Manas says in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 49 that “to have love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram is the best and the most beautiful of all means and ways to find one’s welfare”.

A similar idea is expressed in Tulsidas’ Vinai Patrika, verse no. 194, stanza no. 3 that says “in this world there is no dearth of ways to find spiritual bliss and happiness, such as acquiring Gyan (spiritual knowledge), practicing Vairagya (renunciation), doing Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of divine name of the Lord God), Tapa (penances), performing Yagya (fire sacrifices and other religious duties), and so on. But without having sincere love and devotion for Lord Ram all of them are futile and meaningless just like the waves in an artificial ocean of desires having its resemblance in the mirage seen in the hot desert.”]

#### One should be wary of betrayers

474. सिष्य सखा सेवक सचिव सुतिय सिखावन साँच ।  
सुनि समुझिअ पुनि परिहरिअ पर मन रंजन पाँच ॥

474. siṣya sakhā sēvaka saciva sutiya sikhāvana sām̃ca.  
suni samujhi'a puni parihari'a para mana rañjana pām̃ca..

If one hears that the following five people, viz. his disciple or student, his friend and companion, his servant or subordinate, his minister or advisor, and his wife, have betrayed him—i.e. they have become disloyal to him, have started serving and courting someone else, finding the other person more worthy of service and loyalty than their original lord, and have thus shifted their alligance away from him to the other person—then it is advisable for him to first examine the allegations or suspicions closely to determine the truth, and if it turns out that the betrayal is for real and not imaginary, then he should abandon these five persons forthwith. This is the best path for his welfare. [That is, it is prudent and wise for a man to distance himself from betrayers because no one can tell when they will stab him on his back. A wise man will not trust such betrayers, and he is well advised to be on the guard. He must not divulge any secrets to them, and if it is possible then he should break off all relations with them to safeguard his own interests.] (474)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 7, Lord Ram has himself said that it is very sinful to even glance at a man who does not empathise with his friend and is not sorry when his friend is in distress. A true friend is one who stands by a person's side when the latter is facing adversities. It is always better to abandon a friend who speaks affable while in front, but speaks ill behind one's back. Such friends are like serpents, and it is better to abandon such wicked friends.

The importance of an obedient and honest servant or follower or subordinate is stressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 86 which says “who does not like a servant or subordinate or follower who is wise, polite, devoted and sincere in serving his lord”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precede Doha no. 7, Lord Ram says “a crooked and stupid servant, a crooked and foolish king, a wicked and miserly wife, and a crooked and wicked friend—these four are like a sharp spear that gives immense pain to a person”.

Who is a good minister and advisor? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 155 which says “a good minister is one who is interested in upholding and practicing the laws of Dharma (righteousness and ethical conduct), who has devotion for the holy feet of Lord God, and who always strives to protect the interest of the king by worrying for his welfare and giving him wise and prudent advice without fear or bias”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9 it is stressed that the minister must never speak things just to please his king; he must not be a sycophant or a yes man, as this leads to the king's ruin.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 37 which says “a minister, a doctor, and a moral preceptor or teacher—if any one of them gives an advice out of fear from their lord, i.e. the king, the patient and the disciple respectively, then it is sure that the king and his kingdom, the body of the patient, and the principle of Dharma are bound to come to ruin sooner than expected.”

Finally, as regards a disloyal wife is concerned, in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 5, the learned wife of sage Agastya, Ahilya, tells Sita, the consort of Lord Ram, while preaching her on the virtues of a good wife, “a woman who abandons her own husband, becomes unfaithful to him, and instead begins to love the husband of some other woman (practices promiscuity and extra marital affairs), then such a woman falls in the worst of hells known as Raurav, and there she has to suffer for seven long Kalpas (eras measured in celestial time—i.e. a very long time)”.]

The 7 entities one should leave aside if he loses interest in them

475. नगर नारि भोजन सचिव सेवक सखा अगार ।  
सरस परिहरें रंग रस निरस बिषाद बिकार ॥

475. nagara nāri bhōjana saciva sēvaka sakhā agāra.  
sarasa pariharēm raṅga rasa nirasa biṣāda bikāra..

As soon as one finds that the following seven entities have become uninteresting or unattractive for him, when he loses interest in them and becomes disenchanted with them, or they themselves become hostile to him and it becomes difficult to cope with them, then it is wiser and prudent for a person to abandon them, break away from them and snap his

ties with them before its too late and situation goes out of hand to create an environment of open hostility, ill-will and bad relations:—(i) a person's city or town (either his native place or where he has migrated to make a living), (ii) his woman (wife and companion), (iii) the food he eats, (iv) his ministers or advisors, (v) his servants or attendants or subordinates, (vi) his friends, and (vii) his household. (475)

[Note—Doha no. 474 has already listed five people whom one should abandon when he finds that they are becoming disloyal towards him, or when he finds that dealing with them and keeping their company is not conducive to peace and happiness—viz. one's disciple or student, a friend and companion, a servant or attendant or subordinate, a minister or advisor, and a woman (wife).

This Doha no. 475 goes further to add three more entities to the list—viz. (i) a city or one's native place, (ii) the food that he eats, and (iii) his home. This is obvious and easy to understand.

For instance, if one has fallen on bad times and the people of the place where he lives begin to taunt and insult him, trouble him in any other way, or exploit his misfortunes to force him to do or agree with things he does not subscribe to, then in such adverse conditions it is better for him to leave the place and migrate somewhere else where no one knows him, and start life afresh.

Similarly, if one finds that the food that he has been accustomed to eating and of which he was extremely fond actually harms his health, then its wise to say 'no' to it.

Likewise, if the general environment of the household is not conducive to peace and harmony, if he loathes coming back home after a hard day's toil and prefers to stay outside somewhere for peace and mental balance, then there is of course no use of living in such a home. It is worse than a prison.]

#### The 4 persons who create mental unease

476. तूठहिं निज रुचि काज करि रुठहिं काज बिगारि ।  
तीय तनय सेवक सखा मन के कंटक चारि ।।

476. tūṭhahim nija ruci kāja kari ruṭhahim kāja bigāri.  
tīya tanaya sēvaka sakhā mana kē kaṇṭaka cāri..

When someone's woman (wife), son, servant and friend find pleasure in doing whatever they want to do without paying any heed to his wise advice, directions, emotions and views, when they begin to neglect him and disregard his considered suggestions on any subject, thereby ruining the work at hand, and to make things worse for him they get annoyed with him either for constantly nagging at them or when the work itself fails because they put the entire blame on his shoulders for such failure—then such people (wife, son, servant or friend) become a source of great mental pain and dismay as if they were four painful thorns sticking at his side. They create mental restlessness and frustration for the concerned person; he becomes distraught and unhappy with this relationship. (476)

#### The 4 persons who are subjected to insults

477. दीरघ रोगी दारिदी कटुबच लोलुप लोग ।

तुलसी प्रान समान तउ होहिं निरादर जोग ।।

477. dīragha rōgī dāridī kaṭubaca lōlupa lōga.  
tulasī prāna samāna ta'u hōhiṃ nirādara jōga..

Tulsidas says that inspite of their being very close and dear to a person, the following four types of people become unbearable for him, and are subjected to scorn, insult and rejection either overtly or covertly:—(i) he who is chronically sick, (ii) he who is poor and impoverished, (iii) he who has a sharp (offensive) tongue, and (iv) he who is greedy and selfish. [They become a burden on the person, and no matter how dear they are to him a time comes when he begins to loathe them. We can read this Doha in conjunction with the previous Doha no. 476 which also lists four entities one must avoid as far as possible.] (477)

The 5 entities that give sorrow

478. पाही खेती लगन बट रिन कुब्याज मग खेत ।  
बैर बड़े सों आपने किए पाँच दुख हेत ।।
478. pāhī khētī lagana baṭa rina kubyāja maga khēta.  
baira baṛē sōm āpanē ki'ē pām̐ca dukha hēta..

The following five entities are always troublesome and become a cause for misery and sorrow:—(i) to do farming in a far away village (instead of the village where one resides), (ii) to develop some sort of attachment or affection with strangers who one meets casually somewhere during the course of his journey (i.e. with whom he cannot sustain any kind of long-term relationship, and whom he happens to meet for a passing moment), (iii) taking a loan with a high rate of interest, (iv) a field which lies in the way to obstruct one's journey onwards, and (v) enmity with someone who is superior, powerful and stronger. (478)

It is not advisable to antagonise an able and powerful enemy

479. धाइ लगै लोहा ललकि खैंचि लेइ नइ नीचु ।  
समरथ पापी सों बयर जानि बिसाही मीचु ।।
479. dhā'i lagai lōhā lalaki khain̐ci lē'i na'i nīcu.  
samaratha pāpī sōm bayara jāni bisāhī mīcu..

Just like a piece of iron rushes willingly and cheerfully towards (i.e. gets attracted to) a magnet and sticks to it, so does a rascal and a felon attract his prey by showing great friendliness, affection, humility and affinity towards him. [A selfish, wicked and cunning person acts with exceptional affection and humility to trap his victim. His act is so perfect

that the victim thinks he is his best friend and well-wisher. But as soon as his purpose is served, the wicked man would not think twice to discard his victim as if he was a worm.]

In a similar way, one should regard antagonizing an able and powerful enemy as being equivalent to buying death at a discount. [That is, one must not provoke an enemy who is strong and powerful, because this is only done at his own peril. It is wiser to keep such an enemy at a length, and not to do anything that instigates him and lets him find an excuse to wreak vengeance upon the weak opponent.] (479)

#### The 2 types of persons who are worthy of pity

480. सोचिअ गृही जो मोह बस करइ करम पथ त्याग ।  
सोचिअ जती प्रपंच रत बिगत बिबेक बिराग ॥

480. sōci'a grhī jō mōha basa kara'i karama patha tyāga.  
sōci'a jatī prapañca rata bigata bibēka birāga..

The following two types of persons are worthy of pity and lament—(i) A 'Grihastha' (householder) who has abandoned the righteous path prescribed by the scriptures due to his ignorance, and (ii) a 'Jati' (ascetic, mendicant, or one who has renounced the world to pursue his spiritual path) who is still attached to and yearns for the objects of the delusory and artificial world of material sense objects and their charms and pleasures.

[These two types of people are cause of grave concern, and they deserve one's pity as well as scorn. It is because they are deemed to be very sinful, and are like spiritual maggot for the society at large because they present a very bad example for others. The society depends upon a householder for all its needs and for its general upkeep. If this very foundation gets rotten, the edifice is bound to crumble and fall apart.

Similarly, the ascetic is looked upon by the society with great respect, and if he falls from his exalted stature then the rest of the world would sink in a chasm of moral degradation.

These negative effects on the society apart, the individual householder or ascetic who falls from the path of righteous behaviour and proper conduct as prescribed for him in the scriptures, and instead begins to act in a way not deemed proper for him then he ruins his own self and his future.

In other words, Tulsidas warns us from doing anything of this sort for our own moral good and spiritual welfare.] (480)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, as Doha no. 172 where sage Vashishtha tries to console Bharat in connection with the death of his father, king Dasrath. Here, Vashishta tells Bharat that he should not regret for Dasrath because he was a very righteous person, and then he lists those who should be regretted for. This Doha appears in this context.

A householder who lives a sinful life and does all sorts of misdeeds to earn money and fame is despicable and worthy of scorn. He deserves pity because inspite of getting all the comforts and opportunities in this world he still fritters this golden chance away, and does not either ensure his own spiritual well-being or the spiritual welfare of his dependants. His off springs and dependants follow his example, and if he sets a wrong example himself then it magnifies manifold times in the coming generations.

Similarly, an ascetic or a hermit is supposed to act as a moral guide and preceptor for the society. He is supposed to keep the world on its right moral track like a school principal who is responsible for proper training of his pupils for whom he is like a guardian, and if he himself goes astray then the worst form of moral decadence in the society can't be avoided.]

Who is deemed to be actually blind?

481. तुलसी स्वारथ सामुहो परमारथ तन पीठि ।  
अंध कहें दुख पाइहै डिठिआरो केहि डीठि ॥

481. tulasī svāratha sāmuhō paramāratha tana pīṭhi.  
andha kahēm dukha pā'ihai ḍiṭhi'ārō kēhi ḍiṭhi..

Tulsidas says that a person who has eyes to see what is good for him in this material world, but who has turned his back to (i.e. is unable to see) his spiritual future and well-being (by turning against the principles of Dharma and against the Lord God)—if such a stupid person is called 'blind' then he will feel offended, but what else can one call him?

[To take an example, if a person is so foolish that he runs behind a desert mirage in search of water to quench his thirst, then he is indeed as good as being blind—because even a rudimentary knowledge of the desert would have made him know that there is no water anywhere where he sees it in the mirage. Similarly, if a man sees his well-being in this material world and believes it to be true in spite of being told and made aware about the futility of this effort by the scriptures, then surely his eyes cannot see the right thing and are deluded like the man seeing water in the desert mirage.

Here being 'blind' does not refer to being physically deprived of the ability to see gross things, but to the inability to see subtle and finer things of life and its reality. If one does not 'see' what is actually good for his own long-term welfare and spiritual well-being, happiness and peace, and is instead guided by the urges of his sense organs which need gratification then surely he is no better than a blind man who cannot see things for himself and is guided by what others say.

The true eyes that help one to see what is good for his spiritual well-being are not the ones located on the body as physical eyes, but are the ones located in the inner-self as the eyes of wisdom, enlightenment and discrimination that lead to self-realisation and awareness of the truth of Consciousness. The physical eyes of the gross body can see things that are gross and mundane; they cannot see things that are of subtle nature and of a finer dimension.

Therefore, if one judges whether a man is blind or not merely on the basis of what his gross physical eyes of the body see then he is making a wrong judgement. True eyes are the ones that can see the truth and reality, and these eyes are the eyes of wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge that tells the person what is good for his spiritual welfare and well-being. In the absence of these eyes, the physical eyes of the body show only the illusions of the world. So Tulsidas wonders, of what real good are they? He refers to such persons as 'blind'.] (481)

482. बिन आँखिन की पानहीं पहिचानत लखि पाय ।

चारि नयन के नारि नर सूझत मीचु न माय ॥

482. bina āmīkhina kī pānahīm pahicānata lakhi pāya.  
cāri nayana kē nāri nara sūjhata mīcu na māya..

A footwear recognises or virtually 'sees' the foot which wears it (i.e. though a footwear does not have an eye, it virtually 'sees' the foot which fits into it; any other person's feet will misfit into the pair of footwear and the latter won't accept them). But these men and women are so stupid and literally blind for they can't even see 'death' and 'illusions of this world' glaring at their faces though they possess four eyes—viz. the two physical eyes present on the exterior part of their bodies which enable them to see the grosser aspects of the world, and the two internal eyes of Mana and Buddhi (mind and intellect respectively) that helps them to have the wisdom and the intelligence to see the subtler and finer aspects of this existence. (482)

[Note—Tulsidas uses the example of the shoe to illustrate the extent of stupidity a person can have if he is unable to judge what is good for him and what is not. The poet says that the shoe will not fit in a foot for which it is not meant. For example, the shoe meant for the right foot won't fit in the left foot, or of one size won't fit in the foot of another size in spite of the fact that the shoe is a lifeless entity that has no brain. But a man is so stupid and ill-witted that he is not able to see what is good for him and what is harmful for him.

No one is so stupid that he does not know that one day he will have to die. But in spite of this knowledge, rarely do we find a person who diverts his time and energy to pursue spiritual matters and live a life of austerity and renunciation. People remain indulgent in the affairs of this material world as if it is the only thing that matters, and they employ all methods available to them to accumulate worldly material things, to achieve worldly gains, and to pamper their gross bodies though they know for sure that everything in this world is transient and perishable, including their own body.

In this scenario, it is not wrong to call them 'blind to the reality'. This Doha must be read alongside the previous Doha no. 481.]

It's useless to give good advice to stubbornly stupid and haughty persons

483. जौ पै मूढ़ उपदेस के होते जोग जहान ।  
क्यों न सुजोधन बोध कै आए स्याम सुजान ॥

483. jau pai mūrḥa upadēsa kē hōtē jōga jahāna.  
kyōm na sujōdhana bōdha kai ā'ē syāma sujāna..

If fools and idiots who are proud, stubborn, arrogant and haughty are worthy of being taught and preached, then why couldn't Lord Krishna convince and explain to Duryodhan (the necessity of following the path of righteousness, probity, propriety and ethical conduct, restrain him from great misdemeanours, deceit and perversions, prevent him from resorting to extraordinary follies and crookedness, and the futility of waging a ruinous clan war called the Mahabharat that led to the extinction of the Kaurav clan)?

[At the end of the forest exile period of the Pandavs, Lord Krishna had gone as an emissary to Duryodhan on their behalf in an attempt to convince him to see reason and

give the Pandavas their rightful share of the kingdom. The Lord had tried his best to make a compromise deal to avoid the havoc of the forthcoming Mahabharat War, but the haughty, arrogant, ill-witted, selfish and narrow-minded Duryodhan, the head of the Kaurav clan, just wouldn't listen to his pleas and entreaties. This is described in detail in the epic Mahabharat, Uddyog Parva.] (483)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 9, Lord Ram tells Baali that “he was so arrogant, proud and haughty (of his strength and invincibility) that he would not listen to the advice of his wife (Tara) who had tried her best to dissuade him from confronting Sugriv (Baali’s younger brother) and inviting unnecessary death”.

Refer the following Doha nos. 484-485 also.]

484. फूलइ फरइ न बेत जदपि सुधा बरषहिं जलद ।  
मूरुख हृदयँ न चेत जौं गुर मिलहिं बिरंछि सम ॥

484. phūla'i phara'i na bēta jadapi sudhā baraṣahim jalada.  
mūrukha hr̥dayam̃ na cēta jaur̃m gura milahim̃ biran̄ci sama..

The tree known as ‘cane’ does not bear fruits or flowers even though the clouds pour nectar-like rain on them for their nourishment. [All other trees bear fruits and flowers when they are nourished by rain-water, except the cane. In other words, the cane tree is so stubborn that no matter how much it is pampered and nourished by Nature, it will not produce flowers and fruits.]

[Tulsidas uses this metaphor to stress that—] Similarly, an idiot or a fool can never have enlightenment and wisdom even though he finds an excellent teacher who is as exalted and learned as the creator Brahma himself. [In other words, it is absolutely futile to attempt to teach or give wise advice to those who are block-heads and stubborn.] (484)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 483 and 485.]

485. रीझि आपनी बूझि पर खीझि बिचार बिहीन ।  
ते उपदेस न मानहीं मोह महोदधि मीन ॥

485. rījhi āpanī būjhi para khījhi bicāra bihīna.  
tē upadēsa na mānahim̃ mōha mahōdadhi mīna..

Those who are overcome with an erroneous and misplaced notion that they are extremely wise, intelligent and knowledgeable, exulting in the false belief that their knowledge is the best and superior to that of others (and therefore feel ashamed at listening to any sane advice given by anyone else), and whose anger originates from their ignorance, arrogance, pretensions and vanity – such stupid, haughty and stubborn people are like a fish in the great Ocean of Moha (i.e. endless attachments and delusion pertaining to this world; countless pretensions and illusionary ideas of self importance and vanity). They do not pay attention to anyone's sincere advice, no matter how beneficial it is. (485)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 483 and 484.]

The importance of contemplation and understanding things for oneself

486. अनुसमुझें अनुसोचनो अवसि समुझिऐ आपु ।  
तुलसी आपु न समुझिऐ पल पल पर परितापु ॥

486. anāusamujhēm̄ anusōcanō avasi samujhi'ai āpu.  
tulasī āpu na samujhi'ai pala pala para paritāpu..

If one cannot understand anything, it is advisable for him that he should deeply contemplate and think over it repeatedly so that he is able to fully understand and grasp the subject contemplated upon, and its meaning, consequences as well as import becomes clear to him.

Tulsidas says that if one does not follows this precept (or wise path) and does anything without fully understanding the cause and effect of any action or deed, then he is bound to face sorrow every other moment.

[This is because, amongst other reasons, if he does not understand the things himself then he will have to depend on others for guidance at every step; he will not be able to learn anything and act independently. Without understanding the benefits of any thing, one would not be totally committed to it or involved in doing it; he would be doing it half-heartedly and mechanically. The result would also be un-ripe and distorted, and this will be the cause of dismay and frustration for him, which in turn produce doubts in his mind about the object or destination he is pursuing as well as his own abilities, leading to lack of self-confidence that produced further sorrows and grief.

When this argument is applied in the spiritual field and the study of the scriptures, it becomes obvious that if a person is able to fully grasp the profound benefits of following the path of Dharma (righteousness, probity and propriety) and steadfastly obeying the tenets of the scriptures after understanding them himself, when he harbours no doubts about their authenticity, integrity, truthfulness and effectiveness, then it becomes easier for him to voluntarily complying with them without the need for prodding and cajoling. In the spiritual realm this will have a stupendous effect on his efforts as now he will be fully committed to spiritualism and a life of Dharma instead of following it half-heartedly with doubts lurking behind his mind.

Now suppose he does not fully understand anything himself, then every now and then he will ask someone else for guidance, and there are good chances that each time a different path is shown to him, each new advisor ridiculing his predecessor. This is bound to create perplexity, more confusion and consternation than removing them.] (486)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 231, Lord Ram advises Laxman to observe restraint and think before acting recklessly. The Lord says “those who act in a haste only to regret later on are not regarded as wise and intelligent by the Vedas and learned men”.]

Who is an epitome of stupidity

487. कूप खनत मंदिर जरत आएँ धारि बबूर ।

बवहिं नवहिं निज काज सिर कुमति सिरोमनि कूर ॥

487. kūpa khanata mandira jarata ā'ēm̃ dhāri babūra.  
bavahim̃ navahim̃ nija kāja sira kumati sirōmani kūra..

Those who dig a well when the house is set on fire<sup>1</sup>, those who start sowing mangrove trees (around the walls of the fort) when the army of the enemy has already attacked<sup>2</sup>, and those who bow their heads at every nook and corner (i.e. at all and sundry, without paying heed whether such entities are worthy of respect or not; who offer their respects to all sorts of entities instead of worshipping one Supreme God) to meet their selfish interests<sup>3</sup>—well, such people are to be regarded as being utterly stupid and the best among all the fools (i.e. they are stupid fools and block-heads of the highest order). (487)

[Note—(i) A man must prepare for every eventuality of life in advance, and not wait for the last moment when there would be no chance to take remedial actions. What is the use and where is the time to dig a well to fetch water to douse the fire when the house is already alight? Of course if a man does this then he is exceptionally stupid.

(ii) Another example is of a king who tries to protect the ramparts of the fort by planting trees around the walls to ward off an attack by an enemy when the latter has already launched his attack. Obviously this is madness.

(iii) A dignified and upright man will not bow to any person at random; it is a characteristic of a scoundrel to do so. Only a selfish man who is very cunning and lacks principles, will try to keep everyone pleased and pampered because he is not sure when he will need them to meet his selfish requirements. Such men are not only un-principled but unreliable also.

From the spiritual perspective it means that one must submit himself to only 'one God' and worship him alone, instead of attempting to appease hundreds of gods because he is not sure who to worship. In this context, Doha no. 486 comes to mind—that one must first understand things for himself before proceeding ahead in any endeavour, worldly or spiritual.]

488. निडर ईस तें बीस कै बीस बाहु सो होइ ।  
गयो गयो कहैं सुमति सब भयो कुमति कह कोइ ॥

488. niḍara īsa tēm̃ bīsa kai bīsa bāhu sō hō'i.  
gayō gayō kahaim̃ sumati saba bhayō kumati kaha kō'i..

If one abandons his fear of the Lord God (and becomes haughty and arrogant enough to think that he is very strong and powerful and almighty so much so that he has nothing to fear from even the Supreme Lord of this world, when he thinks that there is no such thing as 'God' and therefore he has nothing to fear for his sins and misdeeds, that he can act with impunity and commit any misdemeanour he likes because there is no one to judge him and punish him, that he is superior to everyone else in this creation, and so on and so forth)—then even if he acquires the strength and powers of a man who has twenty multiplied by twenty arms (i.e. acquires strength and powers equivalent to 20 x 20 strong arms as possessed by the demon king Ravana who also had twenty arms and was regarded as invincible in the world), wise men regard him 'as good as gone'. [That is,

wise men treat him as a lost case who is paving his own path to his grave, to his ruin and infamy. They pity him as all chances of his salvation and emancipation are lost. Just like Ravana whom none of the Gods could conquer or face, but who was finally defeated and killed by the Supreme Being in his incarnation as Lord Ram, those who become haughty enough to think that no one is superior than themselves also meet the same fate.]

Only someone with a highly incompetent and corrupted intellect, and who is as stupid as this haughty person (who has no fear of Lord God and who thinks that he is the almighty one) will gather courage and have the temerity to praise him, saying that he is an achiever who has attained success.

[The idea is that no one should regard himself as being superior to the almighty Lord God. 'Fear of God' does not imply that the Lord is a merciless tyrant thirsting for the blood of sinners in the guise of punishing them, because the Lord God is eternally mercifully and compassionate, but it means that one would voluntarily abstain from committing sins and leading an unethical way of life because he fears punishment for his soul by way of suffering from the automatic negative consequences of the bad deeds done by him. Just like the fear of a strong and neutral king or government helps to maintain discipline and order in civil society, fear of the Lord God helps a man to walk the path of Dharma, the path of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality and nobility.] (488)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precedes Doha no. 23, Hanuman advises Ravana—“All wealth and prosperity that one may have are as good as being naught if he is opposed to Lord Ram just like those rivers which have no perennial source of water going dry after rains. Listen, the ten-headed Ravana! I say emphatically that there is no one who can give protection to a person who is inimical or opposed to Lord Ram. Thousands of Gods such as Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma cannot save you even if they act jointly if you are opposed to Lord Ram”.

A similar idea is expressed in Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 2 which says “The creator Brahma used to recite the Vedas in the court of Ravana. Lord Shiva was so scared of Ravana that he came to accept worship right at his palace. Other Gods and demons were so terrified of him that they regularly bowed their heads before him from a distance (because they did not have the courage to go near). Such a fantastic good fortune left Ravana and ran away when he became opposed to Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being.”]

It's useless to give good advice to stubbornly stupid persons

489. जो सुनि समुझि अनीति रत जागत रहै जु सोइ ।  
उपदेसिबो जगाइबो तुलसी उचित न होइ ॥

489. jō suni samujhi anīti rata jāgata rahai ju sō'i.  
upadēsibō jagā'ibō tulasī ucita na hō'i..

Those who willingly, purposely and stubbornly indulge in unrighteousness and impropriety inspite of being well aware of everything, pretending to be asleep while being actually wide awake (i.e. who turn a blind eye to the realities and a deaf ear to the good advice given to them, who do not see reason and prefer to look the other way for their misdeeds and wrong choices made deliberately, who know that their acts are not

right and correct but still do not mend their way, who are not ignorant of the truth and reality but feign ignorance and innocence, who do not lack the wisdom to determine what is good and what is bad for them but still act like a man in dream, who are well aware that they will have to suffer the consequences of their misdemeanours but do not fear it, and who know that no goodness is attained by being reckless, arrogant, unrepentant and stubborn but nevertheless prefer to be so)—well, Tulsidas says that it is not proper and wise as well as futile to teach or give any advice to such persons, or make an attempt to wake them up.

[It is an old adage that one can wake up a sleeping man, but not someone who pretends to be asleep while being wide awake just to deceive the other person. If a man acts like an ostrich, burying his head in the ground to avoid the harsh realities, then after some limit and time it is useless to advise him because he would just not listen. On the contrary, he might get irritated and vent his anger at the good Smaritan who is sincerely trying to help him in good faith.] (489)

[Note—In this context, one should read Doha nos. 483—485 above, and 490 below.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 41, Lord Ram tells Bharat and others who had assembled to hear wise words from him that—“Anyone who commits all sorts of sins and misdeeds out of ignorance and delusions created by this world, who is indulgent in selfishness and never bothers about his spiritual destiny—well, I, the Supreme Being and the Lord who is responsible for judgment, punishing the guilty and rewarding the righteous ones, am like their ‘Kaal’ or death. I am neutral—for I give rewards according to one’s auspicious or inauspicious deeds.”]

Which 4 types of people can never be happy

490. बहु सुत बहुत रुचि बहु बचन बहु अचार ब्यवहार ।  
इनको भलो मनाइबो यह अग्यान अपार ॥

490. bahu suta bahuta ruci bahu bacana bahu acāra byavahāra.  
inako bhalo manā'ibō yaha agyāna apāra..

Those who have many sons, those who have many and varied desires, those who make many pretensions and are full of deceit and conceit, and those whose behaviour and character are dubious and ever-changing—it is extremely foolish to ever think of their welfare and happiness. [That is, these people can never be happy and contented.] (490)

[Note—The sons will fight with each other and destroy their father’s peace. With many unsatisfied desires and wants, the man cannot remain happy because it is not possible to realise all of them. Pretensions and deceit can never give peace of mind, and they create an aura of dishonesty and untrustworthiness around the concerned person. Similarly, dubious character, and those with a fickle mind and behaviour can also not expect any happiness and peace in their entire lives.

According to some versions of the text, the second word of the Doha is “Mukha” meaning ‘a mouth’. In this case, the first condition of a man having a number of sons is to be replaced with “a man who looks up to many people for help and support”---. Well obviously he will not be happy because when the time of an emergency arises, no one will come forward, each person passing the buck on the other person.]

It is impossible to please the world

491. लोगनि भलो मनाव जो भलो होन की आस ।  
करत गगन को गेंडुआ सो सठ तुलसीदास ॥

491. lōgani bhalō manāva jō bhalō hōna kī āsa.  
karata gagana kō gēṇḍu'ā sō saṭha tulasīdāsa..

Those who keep on trying to please the people of the world in the hope of deriving some sort of (long term) gains from them—Tulsidas says that such a person is foolish enough to try and make the sky as his pillow (which is utterly impossible).

[In other words, Tulsidas advises that one should expect only from the Lord God if he wants some sustainable welfare for himself. The people of the world are all self-centered, and even if they help out it is because they expect something in return. It is only the Lord God who helps a person without any selfish interests. Besides this point, the gross world is transient and perishable, and so are its inhabitants and benefits. They cannot give anything beyond their means. On the other hand, the Lord God is eternal, and it is only he who can provide the seeker benefits that not only last a lifetime but even ensure his welfare in the afterlife—i.e. the Lord God can take care of the fate of the soul which is more important than procuring some pecuniary material benefits that are inconsequential, transient and unsustainable.] (491)

[Note—Other references: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 152 and 252.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that preceded Doha no. 267 it is said “Oh Lord, what and how does it matter even if the whole world goes against a person and acts in a manner detrimental to his welfare, but you are in his favour and help him?”]

492. अपजस जोग कि जानकी मनि चोरी की कान्ह ।  
तुलसी लोग रिझाइबो करषि कातिबो नान्ह ॥

492. apajasa jōga ki jānakī mani cōrī kī kānha.  
tulasī lōga rijhā'ibō karaṣi kātibō nānha..

[To cite examples to prove his point made in Doha no. 491 above, Tulsidas gives us two examples now.]

Was Janki (Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram) fit for the dishonour or aspersions cast on her character (by a citizen of Ayodhya after she and the Lord had come back from their 14 year forest exile which led to her being abandoning by Ram and being sent to the forest for the second time to live thereafter at the hermitage of sage Valmiki)<sup>1</sup>, or did Sri Krishna actually steal the gem (for which he was accused)<sup>2</sup>?

Definitely it was not so. (But nevertheless, they were accused of being of a tainted character by the people of the world.) Therefore, Tulsidas says that it is as impossible to please everyone in this world just as it is impossible to spin a fine thread of cotton by pulling hard at it (because it would certainly snap in the process). (492)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>After Lord Ram and Sita came back from their forest exile during which Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana of Lanka and confined for a considerable period of time there before the Lord rescued her by waging a fierce war in which Ravana and his kith and kin were killed, it so happened that at certain point of time a citizen of Ayodhya had an argument with his wife and he accused her of being of a loose character. He refused to allow her in the household, saying that he is not like Ram who kept Sita as his wife inspite of her remaining with another person (Ravana) for so many long days at Lanka. When Lord Ram heard of this incident he decided to leave Sita and send her back to the forest to live in the hermitage of sage Valmiki so as to uphold the principle that a righteous king should be above reproach to set a personal example for his subjects. This story is narrated in all the versions of the epic Ramayana, viz. (i) in Uttar Kand of sage Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan', in Canto 4, and (ii) in Uttar Kand of sage Valmiki's epic 'Ramayana' in its Canto 43-51, and 95-97.

It is also described in Tulsidas' Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 25-30.

The accusation leveled against Sita was absolutely baseless as she had passed the 'fire test of purity' at the end of the war at Lanka before Lord Ram had accepted her back. This incident is also mentioned in all the versions of the epic story of Ram—viz. (i) Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Doha no. 109; (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 12-13.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Krishna was accused of stealing a gem. It is described in Srimad Bhagwat, 10/56-57.

Briefly, the story is as follows—A member of the Yadav clan, named Satraajit, was a great devotee of the Sun God who gifted him a 'Mani' (a precious gem having magical powers) called 'Syamantak'. This Mani had the unique ability to produce 8 grams of gold daily besides being as splendid and radiant as the sun itself. Further, no premature death and famine or dearth of anything could happen wherever it stayed.

Once, Satraajit came to Dwarka, the capital of Krishna. The Mani made him glow radiantly like the sun, so the people mistook him to be the Sun God himself. Krishna was beguiled and bowled over by this magnificent Mani, and he requested Satraajit to give this Mani to king Ugrasen, but Satraajit refused.

It so happened that one day Satraajit's brother named Prasen wore it and went to hunt in the forest riding a horse. There, he was attacked by a lion who killed both the horse as well as Prasen, and took the Mani. This lion met Jamvant, the old bear king who is also mentioned in the story of Lord Ram in the Ramayana. Jamvant killed the lion and took the Mani to his cave where he gave it to his daughter named Jamvati to play with.

Meanwhile, when Satraajit heard of the death of his brother, he deduced that it must be Krishna who had killed him to usurp that Mani because, he reasoned, he had refused to give it to Krishna when the latter had asked him for it earlier. This false accusation on the character of Lord Krishna spread like wild-fire and reached his ears. Krishna collected his friends and citizens of Dwarka and went on a search of Prasen to prove this accusation wrong. In the forest he saw both Prasen's dead body and that of the lion who was killed by Jamvant. Then he saw the deep and formidable cave of Jamvant from which emerged the glow of the splendid Mani lying inside. Krishna ordered his companions to remain at the mouth of the cave and went inside alone. There he found the Mani in the hands of Jamvant's daughter. A fierce battle ensued between Jamvant and Krishna, and it lasted for almost 28 days. Then Jamvant realised that Krishna was no ordinary human being, but Lord Vishnu in this incarnation, the same Lord whom he had lovingly served in his incarnation as Lord Ram. So, he offered his prayers and reverence to the Lord and submitted both his daughter Jamvati as well as the Mani to Krishna.

The companions who had been waiting at the mouth of the cave become hopeless after 12 days of waiting, and returned to pray to a Goddess for the safety of Krishna. The Goddess assured them that Krishna was safe, and would return soon. So, there was rekindled hope, and when finally Krishna returned with the Mani and Jamvanti, there were celebrations. Then Krishna invited Satraajit to return the Mani. Satraajit was extremely ashamed at the false accusation he had made against Krishna, and gave his own daughter Satyabhama to Lord Krishna in marriage as a token of his repentance. Krishna returned the Mani to Satraajit, saying that it was gifted to him by the Sun God so it rightly belonged to him. Instead of keeping the Mani itself, Krishna requested Satraajit to give him the gold it produced daily.

Once, when Krishna and his elder brother Balraam had gone to Hastinapur, Satraajit was killed by Shatdhanva at the behest of Akur and Kritvarma. The reason was Kritvarma felt insulted and short-shrifted because Satraajit had promised to marry his daughter Satyabhama to him on some earlier occasion but later on he married her to Krishna. Satyabhama wept and told Krishna the entire episode.

Krishna returned to Dwarka and decided to kill Kritvarma and retrieve the Mani. Krishna chased him and finally managed to kill him near the forest of Mithila, but he did not find the Mani as Kritvarma had kept it for safe-keeping with his friend Akur before fleeing the place. Krishna returned to Dwarka and asked Akur to produce the contentious Mani, promising him that he will let him keep it but he wants it produced to convince his elder brother Balraam that he has not hidden it somewhere himself to cheat him. So, Akur produced the Mani and Krishna allowed him to retain it.

These two incidents are cited by Tulsidas to emphasise that the people of the world find sadistic pleasure in accusing others of things they are not guilty of, and it is impossible to please the world. So, instead of wasting time to appease the world one will be wiser to devote the same energy and effort to please the Lord God who stands one in good stead.]

493. तुलसी जु पै गुमान को होतो कछू उपाउ ।  
तौ कि जानकिहि जानि जियँ परिहरते रघुराउ ॥

493. tulasī ju pai gumāna kō hōtō kachū upā'u.  
tau ki jānakīhi jāni jiyam̐ pariharatē raghurā'u..

Tulsidas says that if it was at all possible to eliminate doubts and suspicions from the minds of the people of the world then would Lord Ram had abandoned Sita knowing fully well that she was innocent and of a chaste character?

[Refer to Doha no. 492 and its note no. 1 above.] (493)

Worldly achievements and praise don't give mental peace

494. मागि मधुकरी खात ते सोवत गोड़ पसारि ।  
पाप प्रतिष्ठा बढि परी ताते बाढ़ी रारि ॥

494. māgi madhukarī khāta tē sōvata gōṛa pasāri.  
pāpa pratiṣṭhā baḍhi parī tātē bāḍhī rāri..

As long as the meals were obtained by 'Madhukari'<sup>1</sup> (i.e. there was no tendency to hoard or accumulate wealth and other worldly acquisitions), one could stretch one's legs in peace and sleep comfortably. But as soon as one began to gather worldly fame, honour and acquisitions around him, the result was a proportionate increase in troubles and worries for him, and an equivalent reduction of peace and tranquility.

[Tulsidas means that the lesser worldly possession one has the happier and the more peaceful will he be. Mental worries and troubles rise exponentially with the increase of worldly gains. This principle should not be construed as being against making all efforts to succeed in life, but it implies that one should exercise prudence and diligence in such matters, balancing his worldly efforts with his spiritual goals in life. A wise man must understand and realise that though money and other such material gains are necessary for survival in the harsh practical conditions of life in this gross world, but he should not make them his only objective to live, but use them like one uses a boat to cross the river. The objective should be to realise one's spiritual goals in life with as much ease as possible, and the material comforts of the world should be viewed with this perspective—they are the means for doing good in the world and not the aim of life so much so that one goes on hoarding them even at the cost of making others miserable.] (494)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>*Madhukari* is a system where a mendicant goes from house to house, or a certain fixed number of households, to ask for food on a daily basis, taking only sufficient enough to sustain himself, and not more to be stored.]

495. तुलसी भेड़ी की धँसनि जड़ जनता सनमान ।  
उपजत ही अभिमान भो खोवत मूढ़ अपान ॥

495. tulasī bhērī kī dhamṣani jaṛa janatā sanamāna.  
upajata hī abhimāna bhō khōvata mūrha apāna..

Tulsidas further says that praise by a crowd of foolish and sycophantic people is akin to a herd of sheep (because if one falls in a ditch, the rest would follow). [Tulsidas means that in a crowd if one person begins to applaud and clap, the rest follow suit, though the majority of those who applaud and clap do not grasp the reason for doing so. The members of a crowd simply do it involuntarily in a reflex action because they think that if others are praising someone then surely he is worthy of such praise, and if they keep silent than it would look very odd and impolite. This is the so-called 'crowd mentality'. It is a situation like the case of jackals when all of them raise their heads and start howling if one of them does so.]

But the negative effect of this false praise is that the person being praised develops a false sense of importance, achievement, stature and glory for which he is actually not fit and worthy. This illusion of grandeur and success fills him with pride, vanity and ego that lead to arrogance and haughtiness, which in turn make the person lose his bearings and foothold over the truth. He begins to hallucinate and gets filled with an air of superiority complex which ultimately leads to his downfall and ruin.

[So, Tulsidas warns us against such midemeanours and from falling prey to the temptations of false praises. One must not lose his grasp over realities, and one must

always be wary of sycophants who weave an illusion of grandeur and charm that do not exist.] (495)

How stupid the world is

496. लही आँखि कब आँधरे बाँझ पूत कब ल्याइ ।  
कब कोढ़ी काया लही जग बहराइच जाइ ॥

496. lahī ām̄khi kaba ām̄dharē bām̄jha pūta kaba lyā'i.  
kaba kōṛhī kāyā lahī jaga baharā'ica jā'i..

The people (of the world) rush to Baharaich (a town near Ayodhya in the state of Uttar Pradesh of India) seeking boons and blessings to overcome their problems, but no one has tried to find out which blind man got back his sight, which barren woman brought back a child (from there as a blessing), and which leper got a healthy and handsome (i.e. disease free) body by going to that place. (496)

[Note—In Baharaich, there is the tomb of Sayed Salarjung Masood Gazi, who was said to be a maternal cousin of the great Muslim plunderer Mahamood of Gazni who had attacked India around A.D. 927. He had destroyed and looted countless Hindu temples, including the famous and rich temple of Somnath dedicated to Lord Shiva on the western seaboard of India. Masood had reached Ayodhya's nearabouts with the intention to become a 'Gazi' i.e., a Muslim folk hero who fought legendary battles for the spread of Islam— a modern day 'Jehadi'. He was ultimately killed in battle by King Surhid Deo of Srawasti. His tomb is said to grant boons, so people flock to it from all the neighbouring areas with various desires and ailments for a quick-fix solution for them.

The irony is that the majority of visitors to this tomb are Hindus whose temples and shrines were desecrated by this cruel plunderer. Tulsidas refers to this foolish and absurd practice and admonishes the world for following nonsensical doctrines and meaningless blind practices which are equivalent to one sheep falling in the ditch, and the others following behind him blindly.

Tulsidas says that even if one is cured of his diseases due to medical treatment or natural healing process, he thinks that it is the wonder done by the Spirit of the tomb. If such people have faith in the dead 'Spirit' then can't they have the same faith in the dead Spirits of their own saints and sages, or on their own Gods and Goddesses?

Here, Tulsidas has expressed his disapproval for superstition and blind worship. One must only have faith in the Lord God and desist from falling prey to temptation of gaining some quick benefits by pursuing superstitious beliefs and doing blind worship as it demeans the Atma, the Soul, and leads the person to no where. Only those who have commercial vested interests in propagating such idiotic ideas are the ones who gain from them, but no benefit actually accrues to the worshipper except some superfluous satisfaction that comes with the notion of having done some auspicious thing or religious duty just because others are doing it.]

Acquisition of powers and authority makes a man proud and haughty

497. तुलसी निर्भय होत नर सुनिअत सुरपुर जाइ ।  
सो गति लखि ब्रत अछत तनु सुख संपति गति पाइ ॥

497. tulasī nirbhaya hōta nara suni'ata surapura jā'i.  
sō gati lakhi brata achata tanu sukha sampati gati pā'i..

Tulsidas says that it is heard that if one goes to heaven, he becomes free from the fear of old age and disease (because the inhabitants of heaven have eternity and freedom from misery of all sorts). A similar situation is also seen here in this world too when one achieves wealth, comfort and a high position or status in society.

[Tulsidas means that people become proud and haughty once they acquire powers and high status. They begin to imagine things that are not practical and true. People become 'fearless' when they go to heaven, but this sense of 'fearlessness' is also experienced by those who have acquired power and authority in this gross world itself. So, if 'becoming fearless' is the aim then one need not go to the heaven to get it, for it is easily available here in this world itself. A person forgets that everything is transient in this creation—even the duration of abode in the heaven has a limited time span, for it lasts only as long as one's good deeds and their effects that have catapulted him to the heaven do not get exhausted or have run their full course, because once this happens he will have to come back to this world to take a new birth.

If this is the case with the residents of the heaven, then obviously worse can be expected from the inhabitants of this mortal world where life terms are exceedingly short as compared to the heaven.

But the great irony is that inspite of this knowledge people tend to become proud of their positions either in the heaven or in the world. They forget about the reality and begin to neglect the Lord God. It is commonly observed that when one faces misfortunes he prays to God to help him, but once his good times come he forgets the same God. He thinks that the good fortune has come due to his own efforts, and rarely even thinks of at least thanking the Lord.

Tulsidas' main idea is that one should never become proud of his achievements, and he should always treat himself humble.] (497)

[Note—The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 70 Kha, line no. 1 which says "who does not become crooked by acquiring power and fame, and who is not made deaf by authority and high status?"

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 102 it is said "a person's life in this world is of a short duration lasting around say five-ten years so so, but his sense of pride, ego and arrogance is so huge as if they would last even beyond the end of the era".

The fact that even the comforts and pleasures of the heaven come to an end is stressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44 which says that—"Oh brother, the reward of acquiring the human body is not to indulge in enjoying the pleasures of the sense organs and their respective objects in this world. What to talk of this world, even the comforts of the heaven are short-lived and produce misery in the end."

The same idea is expressed in Geeta of Lord Krishna, 8/14-16, and 9/25.

Even the Gods who live in heaven are not eternally free from fear as is evident in the case of them fleeing when attacked by demons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 1/179/8, 1/179, 1/182/1-13, and 1/182.]

498. तुलसी तोरत तीर तरु बक हित हंस बिडारि ।  
बिगत नलिन अलि मलिन जल सुरसरिहू बढि आरि ।।

498. tulasī tōrata tīra taru baka hita hansa biḍāri.  
bigata nalina ali malina jala surasarihū baḍhi āri..

[To give another example of how acquisition of powers and abilities makes one haughty and arrogant, Tulsidas gives the instance of the holy river Ganges here.]

Tulsidas says that even the holy river Ganges (which is highly regarded as holy where people go to take a dip in its water for purification, which is supposed to be calm and welcoming to all, which is never supposed to being a cause of suffering for others, and which is expected to be free from any of the negativities associated with other rivers of this world), overflows its banks and causes all round havoc when it is in spate, such as uprooting trees on its flanks, chasing away swans (representing wise, honest, righteous and pious people who live on its banks in hutments, but who are uprooted and chased away by the swirling water currents when the river rises during floods) to make place for cunning storks who sit in its waters to catch innocent fish (a reference to the cunning, wicked and deceitful people who pretend to dip in the river daily and perform all sorts of religious rituals to deceive others into believing that they are holy men, but who are very wicked from the inside, as well as professional priests who pitch temporary camps on struts protruding out of the water and make a living by performing rituals for visiting pilgrims though they are themselves unholy and have no belief in any thing religious).

Besides this, the river itself becomes devoid of beautiful lotus flowers and the bees that hover around them (representing all the good virtues and their seekers), and its waters become turbid and filthy with the rubbish that it collects from its overflowing banks (thereby losing its inherent cleanliness and the characteristic crystal-clear water that is its hallmark as it descends upon the plains from its source in the mighty Himalayas).

[That is, the otherwise calm and serene river Ganges that is said to provide spiritual bliss and mental peace to tormented people who come to seek its shelter and blessing by living near its banks, becomes a cause of their horrors when it is in flood—i.e. when it has become proud of its holy and exalted nature, resulting in its transformation into a horror-creating merciless river which inundates the surrounding fields and plains so ruthlessly that it chases away households who have been living a peaceful life on its banks for a long time. Instead, cunning and corrupted priests, who use religious rituals as a means to cheat innocent pilgrims, throng its banks in make-shift camps that they constantly shift according to the changing course of the water. This ‘changing course’ is a metaphor for fickleness and uncertainties in the character and virtues in a man—i.e. the proud river that is lauded by the scriptures as being steady in its resolve to provide solace and succor to the living being becomes uncertain of its divine role and falters in observing its mission because while it continues to give religious benefits to the believers it also continues to cause havoc all around for innocent persons.

The reckless way in which a river in spate behaves is a metaphor for being haughty, arrogant and proud of its powers and authority. The river that is praised in the scriptures as being clean and holy, itself becomes unclean and unholy. It loses its pristine

beauty and cleanliness as well as the good virtues of providing spiritual bliss and liberation for which it is so much respected in the scriptures—where it is said that it emerged from the nails on the toe of Lord Vishnu, and then is given place on the head of Lord Shiva. Even Brahma the creator has its waters in his water-pot. Its waters are used to purify and sanctify religious altars and other grounds where some auspicious deed is to be done, but ironically the same river itself becomes filthy and horrible.

With this example, the wise Tulsidas indicates that by gaining worldly fame, a false notion of superiority and authority overwhelms even a saintly, holy and pure person who can be compared to the holy river Ganges. Then such a person starts acting haughtily and arrogantly, eliminating and tormenting his weaker neighbours—here symbolized by the flooding river uprooting and wiping out the trees and shrubs on its sides, and chasing away innocent people who have been living on the banks of the calm river for a pretty long prior to its flooding. A proud man who develops a sense of superiority complex would chase away wise advisors and friends who are compared to the ‘swan’ in this Doha, and instead he befriends rascals and sycophants who are compared to the cunning ‘stork’ here. They swell-up in false pride like the above example of the Ganges, and in their folly they become sinful and degraded, corrupted and bankrupt morally and spiritually.] (498)

[Note—The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 228 that says “those who are stupid and morally corrupt reveal their true form and nature (of being arrogant, haughty, rowdy, egoist, proud and reckless in spite of external pretensions of humility and piety) when they acquire powers, strength, authority and stature”.]

No one helps when a person faces bad times

499. अधिकारी बस औसरा भलेउ जानिबे मंद ।  
सुधा सदन बसु बारहें चउथें चउथिउ चंद ॥

499. adhikārī basa ausarā bhalē'u jānibē manda.  
sudhā sadana basu bārahēm ca'uthēm ca'uthi'u canda..

If a person faces a hostile time (adverse fate, destiny, situation and circumstance), even good officers (i.e. his superiors who had always been helpful and compassionate hitherto) tend to become hostile themselves towards him.

For instance, even though the moon is regarded as being a celestial reservoir of elixir (‘Sudhaa’) that is soothing and comforting for the world, but it becomes harmful and malignant for a person if it happens to sit in 4th, 8th and 12th house of his horoscope, and when it is seen on 'Bhado Sudi Chauth' (roughly in September, the forth day after the new moon, when its sighting is considered as inauspicious). (499)

Uncontrolled servants are crueler than their masters

500. त्रिबिध एक बिधि प्रभु अनुग अवसर करहिं कुठाट ।  
सूधे टेढ़े सम बिषम सब महँ बारहबाट ॥

500. tribidha ēka bidhi prabhu anuga avasara karahim kuṭhāṭa.  
sūdhē ṭēṛhē sama biṣama saba maham̃ bārahabāṭa..

If due to circumstances a master takes any action which is regarded bad by one count, then his servants and subordinates surpass him in being harsh and ruthless by three times – i.e. their actions can be thrice as ruthless, harsh, rash and punishing as the action of the king himself.

(In order to either please the king or to show off their newly acquired powers and authority—) These ill-witted and proud servants behave most arrogantly and without any civil sense of courtesy even with gentlemen or those who are much higher in the social hierarchy as compared to these lowly servants. These foolish servants become enthusiastic in creating unnecessary difficulties, hurdles and troubles for others when there is no need for it.

In the process, they ruin the main aim of the king to control his subjects and enforce the rule of law (because they create more lawlessness by their actions), give the king an unwarranted bad name (because they act on his behalf), and instead of producing any positive result they only cause resentment and anger against the king and the kingdom amongst his subjects. (500)

[Note—Refer also to Doha no. 501 below.]

501. प्रभु तेँ प्रभु गन दुखद लखि प्रजहिँ सँभारै राउ ।  
कर तेँ होत कृपानको कठिन घोर घन घाउ ॥

501. prabhu tēm̃ prabhu gana dukhada lakhi prajahim̃ sam̃bhārai rā'u.  
kara tēm̃ hōta krpānakō kaṭhina ghōra ghana ghā'u..

The servants and subordinates of a Master are more troublesome and harsh compared to the Master himself. Keeping this in view, a King should personally take care of his subjects and solve their problems (instead of relying too much on his ministers and courtiers).

Tulsidas cites an example to emphasise his observation. He says that the injury caused when someone hits another with his bare hands is less painful and serious than that caused by the sword held in the same hand. [Here, the bare hand symbolize the King, and the sword stand for the King's servants, subordinates, ministers and courtiers because they are deemed to be controlled by the king like the sword that is controlled by the hand of the person.] (501)

[Note—Refer also to Doha no. 500 above.]

What is more dangerous

502. ब्यालहु तेँ बिकराल बड़ ब्यालफेन जियँ जानु ।  
वहि के खाए भरत है वहि खाए बिनु प्रानु ॥

502. byālahu tēm̃ bikarāla baṛa byālaphēna jiyam̃ jānu.

vahi kē khā'ē bharata hai vahi khā'ē binu prānu..

A wise man considers opium ('Ahifen') as being more dangerous than a serpent ('Ahi') because a man will surely die when bitten by the latter, but by eating the former he becomes as good as a corpse (because he loses consciousness, and if he becomes addicted to opium then his life and health are ruined permanently, causing him life-long suffering as compared to some few moments of pain before he dies by snake bite).

When a person dies due to snake bite, his sufferings come to an end and he does not become a headache for others around him, but if he becomes addicted to opium then not only his entire life is ruined but he also becomes a huge burden for those around him.

[Tulsidas means that if one develops bad habits then it is not only a cause of great misery and pain for him but also for others around him. It would be better if such a man dies than his living like a thorn on the back of the society.] (502)

503. कारन तें कारजु कठिन होइ दोसु नहिं मोर ।  
कुलिस अस्थि तें उपल तें लोह कराल कठोर ॥

503. kārana tēm kāraju kaṭhina hō'i dōsu nahim mōra.  
kulisa asthi tēm upala tēm lōha karāla kaṭhōra..

[Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, laments upon the sternness and harshness of his own heart because he did not die when he heard that Lord Ram, his beloved brother, had to go to the forest due to him. Regretting at this development, he says—]

“It is not my fault that I am so harsh or stern in heart. This is because reaction is harsher than the cause of it. [Here, the ‘cause’ is his mother Kaikeyi who had sent Ram to exile in the forest, and the ‘reaction’ is Bharat who had to face all the consequences of her misdeeds, including facing public scorn and infamy.]

For instance, the ‘Kulis’ (also known as the ‘Bajra’, the weapon of Indra, the king of Gods) is many times stronger and harder than the bones from which it is made. [The Bajra is made from the bones of Dadhichi.]

Similarly, ‘Loha’ (iron) is many times stronger harder as compared to the stone from which it is derived (i.e. the earth's crusts; iron-ore).” (503)

[Note—When this Doha is read in the context of the previous Doha nos. 501—502, the meaning becomes clearer. The ‘king’ is like the bones and the iron-ore respectively, because the king is the primary source of the powers wielded by his subordinates who are like the ‘Bajra’ and the ‘iron’ which owe their existence to the bones and the ore in that order. The king is harmless but his juniors are very frightening.]

Who follows whom

504. काल बिलोकत ईस रुख भानु काल अनुहारि ।  
रबिहि राउ राजहि प्रजा बुध ब्यवहरहिं बिचारि ॥

504. kāla bilōkata īsa rukha bhānu kāla anuhāri.  
rabihī rā'u rājahi prajā budha byavaharahim bicāri..

[Tulsidas makes the following four observations—]

(i) The Kaal (time) follows the will of the Lord God (i.e. time changes in accordance with the will of the Lord God);

(ii) The sun follows the time (i.e. the sun rises and sets at fixed times; it is the time that determines when the sun must rise and when it must set); a king follows (the example of) the sun (i.e. just like the sun that extracts or evaporates water from the ocean and nourishes the earth by pouring it back through the medium of the clouds as rain, a wise king too extracts taxes from his richer subjects and uses them to take care of the poorer subjects of his realm);

(iii) The subjects follow (the example and orders set by) the king (i.e. the people of the kingdom do what the king likes and obeys him; they follow his instructions, orders, rules and mandates); and

(iv) Wise people do anything after giving it due thought (i.e. wise men weigh all the pros and cons before taking any action or decision; they follow only what their wisdom and intellect advises after they have thoroughly investigated the options and opportunities). (504)

The effect of the company one keeps

505. जथा अमल पावन पवन पाइ कुसंग सुसंग ।  
कहिअ कुबास सुबास तिमि काल महीस प्रसंग ॥

505. jathā amala pāvana pavana pā'i kusaṅga susaṅga.  
kahi'a kubāsa subāsa timi kāla mahīsa prasaṅga..

Just like fresh air that begins to smell either as foul or as fragrant depending upon the place it passes through or the surface it grazes upon during its passage, the time and circumstances that the subjects of a kingdom face too depends upon the nature of the king, whether the king is bad or good.

[If the king is good and wise, if he is merciful and compassionate, his subjects live happily and in comfort. On the contrary, if the king is cruel and stupid, the subjects of the kingdom have to face hard times. In other words, the company of a good king makes his subjects happy and the kingdom prosperous, while a wicked king causes pain and ruin.] (505)

[Note—With reference to the effect of the company one keeps, refer also to Doha nos. 140, 178, 336-337, 340, 358-364, 366, and 438.]

Importance of following the laws and orders of a righteous king

506. भलेहु चलत पथ पोच भय नृप नियोग नय नेम ।  
सुतिय सुभूपति भूषिअत लोह सँवारित हेम ॥

506. bhalēhu calata patha pōca bhaya nr̥pa niyōga naya nēma.  
sutiya subhūpati bhūṣi'ata lōha samṽārīta hēma..

Though lowly and wicked people have a natural tendency to walk on a path that is wrong and unrighteous, but if the king is strict and wise and is able to enforce laws judiciously then the same people begin to walk on the correct path of righteousness out of the king's fear. [Here, the king might appear to look harsh and cruel as far as the wayward subjects of the kingdom are concerned, but his sternness is not only good of the rest of the society because it helps maintain order and discipline in the kingdom, but it also helps to bring these wayward subjects on the path of correct conduct. If there was no fear of the king then these wicked members of the society would have acted like cancer and destroy the whole structure of morality and proper behaviour. Therefore, the same king may be harsh and cruel in the eyes of some people but very wise and praiseworthy in the view of others.]

Tulsidas cites an example to show how being stern is often better and beneficial for the long term good of the concerned person than being mild and unnecessarily friendly towards him—] It is the beating done by a goldsmith's iron hammer that gives raw gold its beautiful form in the shape of wonderful ornaments that are not only charming and magnificent to look at but also add more market value to the gold itself. [In other words, the sternness of a good king leads to improvement in the character of his subjects, and this translates into the whole kingdom acquiring fame and a good reputation in the world.] (506)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 15 the same idea is expressed when it is said that “during the rainy season, the trees of Madaar (swallow wart; *Calotropis Gigantea*) and Javaas (a prickly plant used in herbal medicine) lose their leaves just like wicked people fail in their evil deeds in an excellent kingdom that is well governed by an excellent king”.]

#### The qualities of an excellent king

507. माली भानु किसान समय नीति निपुन नरपाल ।  
प्रजा भाग बस होहिंगे कबहुँ कबहुँ कलिकाल ॥

507. māli bhānu kisāna samaya nīti nipuna narapāla.  
prajā bhāga basa hōhiṅgē kabahum̐ kabahum̐ kalikāla..

In Kaliyug, a king who is an expert in rules, laws and regulations like a gardener<sup>1</sup>, the sun<sup>2</sup> and a farmer<sup>3</sup>, shall be few and far between, and may emerge or shall be found only due to good fortunes and luck of subjects of the kingdom (i.e. such good kings shall be rare). (507)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>A *Gardener*: – He waters the dry plants, prunes and cuts them, provides props to support weak ones, collect flowers and fruits, and takes general care of the garden. Had it not been for the diligent efforts of the gardener, the garden would be ruined; it will be filled with undergrowth and rubbish, with all sorts of wild creepers, flowers, plants and insects destroying the area one recognizes as a ‘garden’. Similarly, a wise king uses state resources to give a healthy look to his kingdom—he builds public places, green gardens, roads, digs wells and other facilities for drinking water, constructs inns for travelers, shelters for the poor and less fortunate, and keeps the kingdom facelifted.

<sup>2</sup>*The Sun*:— It evaporates water from the rivers and oceans, and pours it down upon the earth as the life-sustaining rain. Similarly, a wise king takes taxes from the wealthy and uses it for the welfare of his other subjects. A wise, intelligent and benevolent king gets the same glory as that possessed by the sun in as much as his fame and reputation spread far and wide to all corners of the globe. People from other kingdoms flock to his realm; his kingdom not only becomes prosperous and happy but also an example for other kings. Like the sun shines brilliantly in the sky, dimming its lesser compatriots such as the moon and the stars, such a noble king outshines all his peers and stands tall in the community of kings.

<sup>3</sup>*The Farmer*:— He prepares the field, puts fertilizers, sows the seeds, waters the crops, harvests and sells the produce for the sustenance of the rest of the members of the society. It is the farmer who virtually feeds the world. Likewise, the king must ensure that all the subjects of his kingdom are well-fed and looked after, that no one starves. During famines and other natural calamities, he is expected to open the royal treasury and granary for his subjects.

In short, a king who treats himself as a mere custodian of the wealth of the kingdom which he regards as being the rightful belonging to the Lord God, who serves his kingdom and its subjects not for selfish gains but as his moral responsibility and for which he is answerable to no one else but the supreme owner, the Lord God, such a king will automatically behave like the gardener, the sun and the farmer.

In this context, refer to Doha nos. 416, 417 above, and nos. 508-509 that follow below.]

508. बरषत हरषत लोग सब करषत लखै न कोइ ।  
तुलसी प्रजा सुभाग ते भूप भानु सो होइ ॥

508. baraṣata haraṣata lōga saba karaṣata lakhai na kō'i.  
tulasī prajā subhāga tē bhūpa bhānu sō hō'i..

When the sun extracts water (i.e. evaporates) water from the rivers and oceans, no one knows about it (i.e. the sun does it so subtly, imperceptibly and secretly that neither anyone comes to know about it nor anyone is harmed or their interests affected by it). But when the sun allows the same water to fall back upon the earth as rain, everyone comes to be aware of it, and everyone celebrates and becomes happy.

Citing this example Tulsidas says that the people of a kingdom are extremely lucky and fortunate if they have a king who is like the sun. And indeed, such a king is worthy of glory and fame that is equivalent to that of the sun; such a noble king should be honoured by the epithet of a 'sun amongst the kings'.

Tulsidas is of the view that the people of the kingdom are very lucky to have a king who has qualities like that of the sun—the king who generates taxes which are mild and do not put the people to any hardship, and who uses the taxes for the welfare of the people and his kingdom in a wise and judicious manner.

[A wise and noble king is one who takes taxes from his subjects without harming them or causing them inconvenience in any way, and then ploughs the income back into the kingdom to be used for the general welfare of all the subjects of his kingdom at large. Like the sun not retaining even a molecule of water for itself, a wise king does not use the state revenue for his own pleasures and comfort, as he treats himself as a trustee of the

wealth and a custodian of the kingdom. He is wise enough to realise that the true owner is the Lord God, that he is fortunate that the Lord had selected him to represent him, and that therefore the subjects of the kingdom are like his ward whom he must look after with the same care and love as a parent does his children.] (508)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 507 above, and 509 below.

There are elaborate references in the epic Ram Charit Manas to a noble king who is like the sun. In Uttar Kand, verses that accompany Doha nos. 31-32 refer to the reign of Lord Ram who is referred to as the sun that removes all darkness, here meaning that in the kingdom of Lord Ram there was no pain and grief, no unrighteousness and unholiness, and none of the other negativities that usually prevail in the world.]

509. सुधा सुजान कुजान फल आम असन सम जानि ।  
सुप्रभु प्रजा हित लेहिं कर सामादिक अनुमानि ॥

509. sudhā sujāna kujāna phala āma asana sama jāni.  
suprabhu prajā hita lēhiṁ kara sāmādika anumāni..

A wise and noble king accepts whatever is given to him as tax by his subjects according to their means and abilities. For instance, he welcomes and accepts any kind of material thing that his subjects offer him as their share of the tax, treating them equally with respect. He does not distinguish between nourishing liquids (such as pure milk, clarified butter known as ghee, etc.), the best or the worst of the cereals (i.e. the produce of good or bad harvest, or high and low quality grain etc.), or the fruits of creepers or those that grow on trees (viz. vegetables growing on creepers such as pumpkins, cucumber, guard, brinjal, beans etc., and fruits that grow on trees such as mangoes, apples, papaya, grapes, cocoanut etc.), regarding them all as providers of nourishment to the body and meeting the its varied needs.

[In other words, he treats the offering by way of taxes of his poorer subjects with the same respect as he accepts those from the well-off citizens. All are readily accepted and tax revenue is evenly distributed.]

Tulsidas says that such a king who acts like the gracious and benevolent sun is rare to find, and the people of a kingdom are extremely lucky and fortunate if they have such a magnanimous benefactor as their king. (509)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 507—508 and 510 in this context.]

510. पाके पकए बिटप दल उत्तम मध्यम नीच ।  
फल नर लहैं नरेस त्यों करि बिचारि मन बीच ॥

510. pākē paka'ē biṭapa dala uttama madhyama nīca.  
phala nara lahairṁ narēsa tyōm kari bicāri mana bīca..

[Elaborating further on the qualities of a noble and an excellent king, Tulsidas says—]

The 'best' person is one who eats fruits that have been plucked from the trees after they have ripened, the 'medium' class of persons are those who (can't wait for the fruits to ripe on the tree, but) pluck half-ripened fruits and leave them to ripen in their homes

(even using artificial means to do so) before eating them, and the 'worst' type of people are those who become so impatient as to snatch and tear at the leaves, buds etc. of the tree (to squeeze them to extract their essential juices which they then use to give a fruit-like flavour to their ordinary drinks such as water etc., and pretend that they are drinking the juice of the concerned fruit).

Similarly, the 'best' king should exact tax only when the harvest is cut (so that the farmer can give easily without any sufferings and difficulties); the 'medium' king is one who extracts tax in advance even though the crops have not matured yet; and the 'worst' king (who is cruel and tyrant) is so selfish and harsh that he exacts taxes even during famines and droughts.

[In other words, a noble king waits till the subjects of the kingdom are able to pay their taxes from the sale of the harvest, or after they have provided for themselves and their families.

The medium type of king is one who forces his subjects to pay taxes in advance in the fear that later on they will make all sorts of excuses to avoid it.

And the worst type of king is one who is not bothered about the conveniences of his subjects and extracts taxes inspite of bad harvest or other financial losses that his subjects have suffered during the year.] (510)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 507—509.]

One must wait till the fruits ripen on the tree  
(Importance of patience)

511. रीझि खीझि गुरु देत सिख सखा सुसाहिब साधु ।  
तोरि खाइ फल होइ भल तरु काटें अपराधु ॥

511. rījhi khījhi guru dēta sikha sakhā susāhiba sādhu.  
tōri khā'i phala hō'i bhala taru kāṭēm aparādhu..

A good Guru (a wise teacher), a good friend (who is sincere and true), a good master (who is favourable and wise) and pure-hearted saints and gentlemen (or wise advisors) give the same advice that is practical, wise, well-thought and beneficial for one's own welfare, either politely (if one is willing to listen to them willingly and carry out their advice) or angrily (forcefully if one does not seem to pay heed to them)—and their advice is this: 'It is always good and advisable that if one wants to eat a fruit then he must have patience and wait till the time the fruit ripens on the tree, instead of becoming impatient, restless and angry at the tree that it is taking so long to make the fruit ripe and cutting it down in a hurry.' (511)

[Note—There are two points that are made out in this Doha. (i) One is that one must heed advice of one's sincere well-wishers such as a teacher, a friend, a benevolent master and a saintly gentleman because they always speak for the good of a person. Even if they seem to be angry at a person for not obeying them it is because they find the concerned person is doing the wrong thing under some misconception of the reality and they don't want to see harm coming to him. That is why they are insistent that their request or advice be followed, and when they find that inspite of trying their best to prevail upon the

person he is still not mending his ways they get angry at him. But this anger is for the person's own good and welfare.

(ii) The second point is that one must be patient and wait for the correct time for his efforts to bear fruits. Hurrying, over-reaction, impatience and impulsive action will ruin things for ever and never give desired results. It is killing the hen even before it can lay the egg. Everything takes time, and if one does not show patience then he will either get a raw deal like an un-ripened fruit that is sour and lacks succulence, or he will start harbouring negative notions and doubts such as whether his effort was right or whether the advice he followed was correct. He will end up feeling restless and frustrated. But if he is wise he will wait for the correct time for his efforts to show results as desired, which would mean 'allowing the tree to bear fruits and then waiting till the fruits ripen'.

The benefit of having patience with the tree and practicing tolerance is that the tree will survive and produce more fruits on the one hand, and the fruits that one gets to eat would be sweet and succulent. On the other hand, if a person is impatient, irritated and unduly hurried that he must get the ripe fruit immediately or before its time to ripen is due, and gets angry at the tree for delaying the fruit's ripening and cuts it down—then such a foolish person would lose both the fruit as well as the tree.

In the context of Doha no. 510 that describes the types of kings, this Doha would mean that a wise king should never punish his subjects if they are honestly unable to pay their taxes, or are late in doing so. He must wait and show compassion; he must not show cruelty and exert coercive force upon them. There may be a variety of reasons why his subjects haven't paid their taxes or have delayed in paying them: for instance there may have been a bad crop, there could be a disease in the community and all their resources were exhausted, and so many other reasons. After all, if the subjects of a kingdom suffer and they are unduly harshly treated, not only there would be suppressed emotions of anger and revolt but also good chances of his able subjects fleeing his tyrannical rule and going to other kingdoms.

But on the other hand if the king is merciful and understanding and forgoes his taxes or reduces them on case-by-case basis, then his subjects will be happy and prosperous, and they will willingly comply with the king's orders in future and even lay down their lives for him because he would have endeared himself to them.

This idea is further elaborated in the next Doha no. 512.]

The rewards that accrue when the king is good and noble

512. धरनि धेनु चारितु चरत प्रजा सुबच्छ पेन्हाइ ।  
हाथ कछू नहिं लागिहै किँ गोड़ की गाइ ॥

512. dharani dhēnu cāritu carata prajā subaccha pēnhā'i.  
hātha kachū nahim̐ lāgihai ki'ēm̐ gōṛa kī gā'i..

When the earth (kingdom) represented by a 'cow' is properly nourished and taken care of by a loving, caring, noble, wise, magnanimous and benevolent king, it produces abundant 'milk' by way of general prosperity and all-round happiness in the kingdom. When this happens, this cow produces an abundance of milk which is then drunk by its 'calf' which becomes healthy due to proper nourishment, and as a result feels contented and happy.

[Here, the 'cow' stands for the kingdom, the 'calf' represents citizens or subjects of the kingdom, an abundance of 'milk' symbolizes material wealth and prosperity, and

‘healthy calf’ means that the subjects of the kingdom enjoy all-round happiness, prosperity and well-being. In other words, when the king is noble and caring, his kingdom prosperous and its citizens are happy and contented.] (512)

[Note—A similar metaphor is used in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand while describing the kingdom of king Pratapbhanu. In its Doha no. 155 and its preceding Chaupais it is clearly said that under the kingship of Pratapbhanu, the earth was transformed into a Kaamdhenu, the celestial cow that gives whatever is asked of it. The citizens were extremely happy and contented and righteous; there was no trace of sorrow anywhere. The chief minister was wise and always gave wise advice to the king fearlessly and in the correct way. The king honoured elders in the society, and followed the path shown by them and the scriptures. He gave liberal charities and heard the scriptures explained daily. He got numerous gardens, water holes and buildings constructed for the welfare of his subjects. He performed thousands of religious deeds, ceremonies and sacrifices with great faith and diligence for the welfare of the kingdom.]

### What happens in a bad kingdom

513. चढे बधूरें चंग ज्यों ग्यान ज्यों सोक समाज ।  
करम धरम सुख संपदा त्यों जानिबे कुराज ॥

513. caṛhē badhūrēm caṅga jyōm gyāna jyōm sōka samāja.  
karama dharama sukha sampadā tyōm jānibē kurāja..

The condition that befalls a kite caught in a violent storm that produces whirlwinds, and of the principles of Gyan (knowledge of what is righteous and noble, and acting according to them) when one is engulfed in rising waves of sorrows, miseries, grief and bad times, the same condition prevails for the citizens of a bad kingdom (that is not properly ruled and whose king is unwise) where good deeds, the principles of Dharma (right code of conduct), prosperity and happiness are very badly affected.

[Just like a poor kite that gets violently tossed and kicked in a storm, and just like it is impossible to even think of obeying rules and laws when one is overwhelmed by sorrows and misery that eclipse his wisdom and forces him to do anything for survival, it becomes impossible for the subjects of an unruly and cruel king and his misruled kingdom to adhere to the proper way of righteous life and conduct as ordinarily required of them. The subjects are forced live under harsh conditions and adopt unrighteous and all sorts of unscrupulous methods in order to survive. In this situation it is wrong to expect them to do things correctly and honestly, to follow the laws and principles of Dharma, or to be happy and contented. The net result is that the kingdom comes to ultimate decay and ruin.] (513)

[Note—Contrary to the kingdom of a noble king, what prevails in the kingdom of a bad king is briefly indicated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand when the rule of the demons and their king Ravana is being described in its Doha no. 183 and its preceding Chaupais. Briefly it says “The demons did everything possible to decimate Dharma, and acted in a way opposite to the principles outlined in the Vedas. Wherever they found cows and pious people, they burnt down entire towns and villages. No one their rule observed Dharma or paid respects to the elders; no one honoured God or the Vedas. All religious activities were stopped. If the 10-headed king Ravana heard of any religious activity

being performed anywhere, he would personally go there to defile it and punish the persons who did it. The whole world became corrupt and morally ruined. He used to throw out of the kingdom anyone he heard of hearing or reciting the Vedas. It is impossible to describe the wholesome sinful way in which these demons acted. They had the propensity to be cruel and merciless, and there was no limit or comparison to their sins.”

How one forgets the principles of Dharma when confronted by overwhelming sorrows and grief is stressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 276 where it is said “the two communities (i.e. the citizens of Ayodhya and Janakpur) were so overwhelmed with grief and sorrows that they lost all patience, courage, shame and wisdom”.

[Refer Doha no. 514 below.]

514. कंटक करि करि परत गिरि साखा सहस खजूरि ।  
मरहिं कुनृप करि करि कुनय सों कुचालि भव भूरि ॥

514. kaṅṭaka kari kari parata giri sākhā sahāsa khajūri.  
marahim kunrpa kari kari kunaya sōm kucāli bhava bhūri..

Cruel and tyrant kings repeatedly die and take re-birth in this world (i.e. their kingdom never survive for long in history) due to their cruel laws, policies, deeds and actions in the same way as the tree of the date-fruit which produces thousands of thorns on its numerous branches to prick others and give them pain, only to ultimately fall down themselves. (514)

[Note—The bad deeds of a bad king are like so many sharp spikes protruding menacingly from the stem of the tree-like kingdom. These spikes continue to prick, injure and oppress innocent people or the subjects of the kingdom even after the king is dead and gone. He is easily forgotten or betrayed by his subjects who prefer another invading king about whom they have heard that he shows compassion on his subjects.

The statement ‘dying and taking birth repeatedly’ has two meanings: (i) One is that such cruel kings are like mushrooms that grow during the rainy season all over the place. They come and go without being noticed. They are compared to a date tree which has sharp-edged rugged stem with a lot of spike-like protruberances. If anyone rubs himself against this tree he gets his skin lacerated. Compare this sort of stem with the stem of say a plantain tree that is smooth and shiny.

(ii) The other connotation of this statement is that such kings never find peace for their souls; their souls never find emancipation and deliverance. They have to suffer the consequences for their cruelty—which implies that these kings have to take repeated births in this world to suffer the consequences of the evil deeds they had committed in their past lives.]

515. काल तोपची तुपक महि दारु अनय कराल ।  
पाप पलीता कठिन गुरु गोला पुहुमी पाल ॥

515. kāla tōpacī tupaka mahi dāru anaya karāla.  
pāpa palitā kaṭhina guru gōlā puhumī pāla..

[In this Doha, Tulsidas uses the metaphor of the ‘cannon’ to describe why and how a bad king is ruinous for his kingdom and subjects.]

The ‘Kaal’ (or time, circumstance, situation, occasion) is the gunner; the ‘Mahi’ (earth; the land of the kingdom) is the cannon; cruel and thoughtless policies and laws (of the king) are the ‘Daru’ (gunpowder); the ‘Paap’ (sins, misdeeds and unrighteousness; deep-rooted evils in the society) prevailing in the kingdom is the spark or the fuse (which ignites the gunpowder in the cannon), and the ‘Paal’ (the king himself) is the hard and heavy bomb-shell that causes havoc in the land (the kingdom) and amongst the masses (people of the kingdom) where it falls (i.e. where the writ of the king prevails). (515)

[Note—When the people of a place become sinful beyond a limit, the Lord God needs to punish them for their misdeeds. Their misdeeds and sins continue to get accumulated, and over time they assume a proportion that finally explodes in the form of punishment by the supreme regulator and controller-general of the world, that is, from the Lord God. The sins, misdeeds, evil actions and misdemeanours of the citizens invite a natural reaction from the forces of Nature which have a natural tendency to restore balance in favour of the good and the righteous when the balance begins to tilt towards the bad and the unrighteous. This translates into bad times and adverse circumstances, known as the ‘Kaal’, that descend upon a kingdom.

The ‘land’ will, for example, not produce proper crop, and there will be drought and famine and other natural calamities. The land is compared to a cannon because it is the land suffering from natural calamities and disaster that becomes the cause of apparent problems of the citizenry.

The misery of the people is compounded by stupid, irrelevant, impractical and thoughtless ‘policies and laws’ of the king which are forced upon the helpless people mercilessly.

And what is the ‘fuse’ that ‘sparked’ this chain of events? It is the ‘Paap’ that is prevalent in the country.

And who actually causes ruin and misery in the kingdom; or who becomes instrumental in it? It is the ‘king’. Why is it so? It is because the king is supposed to act on the behalf of the Lord God and is responsible for the care-taking of the kingdom. So, if the Lord God wishes to punish the wrong people, he does it through the king.

In other words, put simply, it means that the forces of Nature reveal themselves in the form of ‘bad times for the kingdom’, and they use the king as a medium to destroy the subjects of the kingdom. For this fate of the kingdom, both the king and his subjects are to be equally blamed.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71 it is said that “a king in whose kingdom the subjects/citizens are unhappy is surely eligible to go to hell”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 57 it is said that “all the good effects of the good deeds done by the citizens of Ayodhya were exhausted, resulting in the Kaal (time, situation, circumstance) turning against them and becoming horribly unbearable for all of them”.

So, how did the citizens of Ayodya suffer? Their beloved prince Lord Ram was sent to exile in the forest, accompanied by his wife Sita and his brother Laxman. The problems were compounded by the death of the king, Dasrath. To add salt to their wounds, the nominated heir, Bharat, refused to accept the crown. Then a royal entourage went to the forest to attempt to bring Ram back to Ayodhya, but failed. For 14 long years there was no one on the throne, and the kingdom which was extremely happy and the envy of even the Gods was suddenly engulfed in misery and grief.

Who became the ‘spark’ or the ‘fuse’ that ignited all-round grief? It was king Dasrath himself who had become a victim of passion for one single woman, his beloved wife Kaikeyi.

What prominent sin did he commit because of which he had to die lamenting for his son Ram? Well, he had once mistakenly shot and killed the faithful son of a blind couple when he had gone to fetch water for his parents when he had taken them on a pilgrimage. The couple cursed Dasrath that like they were dying lamenting for their beloved son, the king would also die in the same manner. And as it happened, Dasrath died lamenting and wailing for Lord Ram as he proceeded to the forest.

This entire episode is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154—to Doha no. 155.]

Which kingdom becomes happy/The qualities of a good king

516. भूमि रुचिर रावन सभा अंगद पद महिपाल ।  
धरम राम नय सीय बल अचल होत सुभ काल ॥

516. bhūmi rucira rāvana sabhā aṅgada pada mahipāla.  
dharama rāma naya sīya bala acala hōta subha kāla..

[After describing in the previous Dohas how a kingdom suffers under a bad king, Tulsidas now describes what happens when the king is good and righteous. For this purpose, Tulsidas uses the parable of the incidence when Angad had planted his foot on the ground in the court of Ravana and proclaimed that if the demons could move it from the ground then Lord Ram will deem to have lost and would return empty-handed without Sita. Angad had made the vow which implied that if Lord Ram is righteous and noble, and if Sita is chaste and untainted, then his foot would become immobile! And as it happened, it did, and the demons could not move it a bit.]

The ‘Bhumi’ (earth) is like the attractive court (kingdom) of Ravana (the demon king whose kingdom, Lanka, was said to be made entirely of gold—i.e. it was extremely prosperous and rich), and the ‘Mahipaal’ (the king and the guardian of the land) is like the ‘Pad’ or the foot of Angad.

During good times, this foot (i.e. the Mahipaal, the righteous king) becomes ‘Achal’ (stable) relying on the strength of Ram (i.e. on the strength of Dharma, the principles of righteousness, ethics, probity, propriety etc.) and Sita (representing humility, goodness, morality, compassion, mercy, faithfulness, devotion, chastity etc.).

[The story goes that Lord Ram had sent Angad as his emissary to Ravana in an attempt to persuade him to give Sita back and avoid the ruinous war. In the court of Ravana, after having tried and failed in all his arguments and attempts to make the demon king be reasonable and avoid the war by returning Sita to Lord Ram, Angad had planted his foot on the ground, declaring that if Ram is righteous and Sita is untainted then his foot will become un-movable. So, if any amongst the demons could move it, symbolizing that he is incorrect, then Lord Ram would be deemed to be defeated. As it happened, no one, not even the mighty Ravana who could lift Mt. Kailash, the heavy mountain which is the abode of Lord Shiva, by his left arm, could move Angad’s foot even a tiny inch.

This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35.

Tulsidas cites this incident to emphasise how the subjects of a kingdom gain moral strength and automatic mystical powers or divine blessings to overcome the greatest of opponents and misfortunes if their king is good and righteous and a stringent follower of Dharma.] (516)

[Note—So we see that after having described in the previous Dohas how a kingdom suffers under a bad king, Tulsidas now describes what happens when the king is good and righteous. For this, he takes the example of the incident in the story of Lord Ram's conquest of Lanka where his emissary, Angad, had planted his foot firmly on the ground in the court of Ravana, the demon king, declaring that if anyone of the demons could move it then it will be deemed to Lord Ram's defeat, and he will surrender Sita to Ravana. As it transpired, none of the mighty demons, including their king Ravana himself, could move Angad's leg a fraction of an inch. This incident is narrated in Tulsidas' epic "Ram Charit Manas", in its Lanka Kand (Canto 6), from Chaupai (verse) line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.

What strength did Angad have? His moral strength came from the fact that Lord Ram was utmost righteous and noble, and the cause he was pursuing for which war has become inevitable was equally righteous and noble. Ravana had stolen Ram's wife, and the latter had tried all his best not to ruin the demon race if his wife was restored to him. But Ravana refused. What choice was left for Lord Ram then?

And what was it? Lord Ram's chaste wife, Sita, was abducted by Ravana, and it is absolutely necessary to rescue her from his clutches.

Why was Ram not guilty of waging a war just to rescue his wife? It was because he had tried his best through the medium of emissaries such as Hanuman and Angad to convince Ravana to act sensibly. Even Ravana's own kith and kin, such as his wife Mandodari, his brother Vibhishan, his maternal uncle Malyawaan etc. had did their best to bring him to senses. So the war was forced upon Lord Ram though he would not have wanted to shed blood unnecessarily.

Was Ram against all the demons as a race? No, because the Lord had accepted Vibhishan, Ravana's own younger brother, as his friend, minister and companion.

Refer also Doha nos. 517-518.]

517. प्रीति राम पद नीति रति धरम प्रतीति सुभायँ ।  
प्रभुहि न प्रभुता परिहरै कबहुँ बचन मन कायँ ॥

517. prīti rāma pada nīti rati dharama pratīti subhāyam̐ .  
prabhuhi na prabhutā pariharai kabhum̐ bacana mana kāyam̐ ..

[Elaborating further on the qualities of a good king, Tulsidas says—]

A 'Prabhu' (literally meaning a 'lord', the king) who has devotion in the feet of Lord Sri Ram (i.e. who is devoted to Lord God and is fearful of doing anything unrighteous and unethical), who is concerned about and deeply involved in looking after the welfare of his subjects, and who has a natural faith in the laws of Dharma, the laws governing propriety, probity and justice—such a Prabhu is never abandoned by the virtue of 'Prabhuta'—that is, his majesty, glory, fame, dignity and honour become steady and robust. (517)

[Note—In this Doha, ‘Prabhuta’ has been personified as if it was the king’s faithful assistant and close companion, or as the royal herald who holds the royal emblem of the king and always accompanies him when he moves out of the palace.

Just like a good assistant, companion or herald who serves his master wholeheartedly, faithfully and to the best of his ability, symbolized by serving the master with his ‘Mana’ (mind and heart), ‘Bachan’ (words) and ‘Karya’ (deeds and actions), ‘Prabhuta’ too does its best to ensure that the noble king’s glory and fame does not diminish, but goes on increasing and spreading far and wide. The fame of a good king becomes long-lasting, the kingdom enjoys peace and prosperity, and the subjects flourish.

Refer also to Doha no. 516, 518.]

518. कर के कर मन के भनहिं बचन बचन गुन जानि ।  
भूपहि भूलि न परिहरै बिजय बिभूति सयानि ॥

518. kara kē kara mana kē bhanahim bacana bacana guna jāni.  
bhūpahi bhūli na pariharai bijaya bibhūti sayāni..

A king whose ‘hands’ possess the praise-worthy, good and auspicious virtues for which the hands of a living being are honoured, whose ‘Mana’ (mind and heart) possesses the praise-worthy, good and auspicious virtues for which the Mana of a living being is honoured, and whose ‘words and speech’ (i.e. whatever he says) possess the praise-worthy, good and auspicious virtues for which the wise spoken words of a living being are honoured—such a wise and noble king is never abandoned by ‘Vijai’ (victory), ‘Bibhuti’ (majesty, glory, fame, honour etc.).

[The ‘hands’ are supposed to do noble deeds, such as for instance help and protect others, give charity, serve the society as a service to the Lord God, worship the Lord and do whatever is within one’s ability and jurisdiction for the welfare of the world, and so on. Therefore, a king must have these qualities in him.

Likewise, the ‘Mana’ is supposed to be wise and intelligent, self-restrained and involved in righteous thoughts. It should not harbour evil thoughts and intentions; it should not think of harming or giving pain to others; it should devote its energy and powers for the welfare of others and in serving the Lord God. One’s Mana is expected to be merciful, magnanimous, caring, compassionate, generous and benevolent. And so on and so forth. So a noble king is expected to have these virtues in him.

Similarly, one is expected to be soft-spoken and wise in his ‘words’; he must ‘speak’ for the good of others and not for their harm. One must not speak a lie or use harsh words against anyone. One must speak articulately, truthfully, politely and pleasantly. One must not use words sounding boastful, arrogant and haughty. One must give proper thought before speaking anything at all, and not just say any rubbish that boomerangs on himself. These are some of the many good qualities of good speech or good spoken words.

Thus, a good king is expected to have these good qualities in his speech and what he says.] (518)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precedes Doha no. 38, the four prominent virtues of a king are listed as the following—(i) Saam (to treat all his subjects equally), Daan (to be charitable in disposition), Danda (use laws strictly with

prudence), and Vheda (to be able to discriminate between the good and the bad, the beneficial and the harmful).

Then again, in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254 it is said about Lord Ram—“no one knows the essence and how to implement the laws of ‘Niti’ (principles of nobility, propriety, probity, ethics and morality), ‘Priti’ (principles governing affectionate relations), ‘Parmaarath’ (the welfare of one’s soul and its long-term good), and ‘Swaarath’ (one’s interests in this world) as much as Lord Ram”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 112 it is stated that “a kingdom can’t survive if the king does not know the principles of politics and statecraft”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24, Tulsidas has described the glorious kingdom of Lord Ram to highlight what a good king’s kingdom should be like.]

### The 3 types of kings

519. गोली बान सुमंत्र सर समुझि उलटि मन देखु ।  
उत्तम मध्यम नीच प्रभु बचन बिचारि बिसेषु ॥

519. gōlī bāna sumantra sara samujhi ulaṭi mana dēkhu.  
uttama madhyama nīca prabhu bacana bicāri bisēṣu..

Take a (i) bullet, (ii) an ordinary arrow, and (iii) an arrow especially empowered by invoking special Mantras (magical formula that gives additional power, strength and ability to the concerned entity), and then reverse this order.

When one does so, he comes to know the type of words spoken by the three types of kings, which in turn indicates to the corresponding type of the king—one who is the best, one who is medium or mediocre, and one who is the worst of the lot.

[The reverse order is as follows—(i) the arrow empowered by the Mantra, (ii) the ordinary arrow, and (iii) the bullet. The two types of arrows can also refer to the ones that are made especially for use of the king, such as being plated with precious metals or embossed with the royal emblem, and the ones that are meant for the soldiers.

Now, the special arrow is said to be infallible. To formally empower it, a religious ritual is done where it is first worshipped and offered to one’s chosen deity before the relevant Mantra is invoked. Hence, the best king is one who offers everything to the Lord God before doing anything. Like the infallible arrow that is not only properly made and charged but also aimed at the target and shot carefully, all the orders of the best king are well considered and thought of before being declared, and then they are couched in proper and correct words that are polite as well as understandable by the target audience—the royal machinery which enforces them, and the subject who obey and implement them. The result is that they are fully obeyed and respected by the subjects of the kingdom. They do not go in vain, and they do not cause harm to the not-targeted subjects of the kingdom for whom they are not meant.

If we take into consideration the other interpretation of the ‘special arrow’, viz. it being made of special metals for the exclusive use of the king or being embossed by his royal emblem, then also the meaning of this metaphor falls into place. The royal mandates of a great king are proclaimed throughout the realm in formal regal settings by



When the opponent falls on bad times, or when this cunning enemy discovers some flaw in him, he will go hammer-and-tong to ruin the opponent.

Therefore, Tulsidas warns us to be careful with the wolves in disguise.]

### Which king is happy

521. रैअत राज समाज घर तन धन धरम सुबाहु ।  
सांत सुसचिवन सौपि सुख बिलसइ नित नरनाहु ॥

521. rai'ata rāja samāja ghara tana dhana dharama subāhu.  
sānta susacivana saumpi sukha bilasa'i nita naranāhu..

A king can live in peace and happiness only when he entrusts the affairs of the kingdom, its subjects, the care of the royal household, his own security as well as that of the wealth of the kingdom, implementation of Dharma (principles of righteousness and propriety) in the kingdom, the affairs of the army, and so on, in the competent hands of able and wise ministers who have a calm and peaceful mind (i.e. ministers who can think with a cool head, make balanced decisions after proper analysis, are wise and intelligent, act prudently and according to the needs of the situation, and are peace loving instead of being war-mongering). (521)

[Note—A minister who has a calm mind and peaceful temperament would not only give a well-thought advice to the king but also prevent the latter from becoming angry on his subjects and planning unnecessary warfare to expand his kingdom. Such a minister is instrumental in the kingdom's prosperity and happiness.

This wisdom is reflected in the events narrated in the epic story of Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas. Let us briefly see some instances.

When Bharat had decided to go to Chitrakoot to try and bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, he was worried about the affairs of the kingdom in his absence. He wanted to ensure that proper arrangements were made in the capital and the kingdom before his departure so that the affairs would be run smoothly in the correct manner during his absence. So he summoned wise ministers and assistants who never faltered or wavered from their duties and principles of righteousness, briefed them about their duties and responsibilities, exhorted them to be diligent, faithful and careful, and appointed them to proper places according to their competence and abilities to look after the kingdom. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 186.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand it is stated how king Janak stayed in Ayodhya for 4 days, oversaw arrangements for running the routine affairs of the kingdom, and then went back to his own kingdom after leaving the reins in the hands of proper ministers, the royal priest (Vashistha) and Bharat (the younger brother of Lord Ram). As a result of this proper arrangement, the citizens of Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Ram, began living in peace and harmony. Refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 322.

Bharat, meanwhile, decided to spend his time like a hermit during the length of Lord Ram's forest exile, suffering the same hardships that his dear brother Ram was undergoing in the forest. So he renounced his claim on the throne, and retired to a place near the capital. Before doing so, he summoned his wise and loyal ministers and assistants, as well as his younger brother Shatrughan and the elderly men of the kingdom.

He then briefed them about all the necessary things regarding the running of the routine affairs of the vast kingdom. He placed the sandals of Lord Ram (which he had brought back from Chitrakoot as the Lord's symbolic presence in Ayodhya) on the throne to indicate that the Lord is the actual king, and the rest of them are merely acting on his behalf. Leaving the affairs of the kingdom in competent hands of ministers, royal priest, his brother, elderly citizens of the kingdom etc, he then retired to a life of seclusion at a place called Nandigram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324.]

#### The quality of a good master/chief

522. मुखिआ मुखु सो चाहिऐ खान पान कहँ एक ।  
पालइ पोषइ सकल अँग तुलसी सहित बिबेक ॥

522. mukhi'ā mukhu sō cāhi'ai khāna pāna kahum' ēka.  
pāla'i pōṣa'i sakala amṅa tulasī sahita bibēka..

Tulsidas says a good master or chief (for instance a king or the head of a family) should be like the 'mouth'. The mouth is the only organ of the body that accepts or ingests food, but that food is used for the nourishment of the whole body.

[In other words, a good master or chief is one who uses all his resources for the welfare of his dependants or subordinates or subjects. In the case of the king for instance, he collects taxes from all sources which is equivalent to the mouth eating food of different kinds. Then a good king uses these taxes and other resources at his disposal for the welfare of his subjects and the kingdom in a dispassionate and judicious manner.

The mouth eats and relishes the taste of the food, but that is all; the mouth itself does not keep anything but passes whatever it eats to the stomach. Similarly, the king enjoys royal privileges and comforts, but that is an incidental reward of his job. He passes the real benefits to the subjects of the kingdom.

The mouth can eat and enjoy the taste of food only when the body is healthy. If the body falls sick, the man develops disinterest in eating anything, and if the mouth is forced to eat anything then it would vomit it. When a man suffers from cold, the mouth loses its ability to enjoy the taste of the food because it tastes bland and insipid. If the stomach is upset for a long time, the mouth becomes sour and ulcers or pustules appear in it.

Similarly, when the kingdom is poorly run and is in bad shape, when the subjects are unhappy and in misery, then the king can't live in peace and happiness either. This is because the kingdom is like the 'body', the subjects/citizens are like the 'various organs', and the king is like the 'mouth'. When the 'body' is sick and in bad shape, the 'mouth' too has to suffer.] (522)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, as its Doha no. 315. Lord Ram has told Bharat the qualities of a good king.

Refer Doha nos. 523-527, 534 below.]

#### The relationship between a king and his subordinates

523. सेवक कर पद नयन से मुख सो साहिबु होइ ।  
तुलसी प्रीति कि रीति सुकबि सराहहिं सोइ ॥

523. sēvaka kara pada nayana sē mukha sō sāhibu hō'i.  
tulasī prīti ki rīti sukabi sarāhahim sō'i..

A servant or subordinate should be like a 'hand, leg and eye', and the master (the chief, or the king) should be like the 'mouth'. Great poets (wise and learned men) have appreciated (understood) the significance of this relationship, and have therefore sung (lauded and approved) its importance.

[The hands help the body to collect food and other necessities of life. The hands help him to cook food and make it eatable. The legs help the man to reach his destination and the place from where such things can be got. The eyes help him see (locate) and identify the things he needs. The mouth can eat anything only when these instruments of the body facilitate availability of food. But whatever the mouth eats is meant to sustain the whole body. The mouth does not keep anything in it, but passes everything that it takes immediately to the stomach. The only benefit that the mouth enjoys is the taste of the food. But this enjoyment is also done by the other organs according to their designated function. For instance, the nose finds pleasure in the aroma of good food, the eyes enjoy the sight of the delicious food, the tongue thrills in its taste, the hands enjoy picking the food up and feeling the texture and softness of the food, and the legs enjoy taking the hungry man to the dining table.

But it is only the 'mouth' that is compared to a king. This is because like the king who does not do anything himself but depends upon his subordinates for carrying out all the functions of the state as well as his own upkeep, the mouth depends upon the hands, the legs and the eyes (and other organs of the body, such as the tongue) to make available and present the food that it eats.

Again, like a benevolent and noble king who collects taxes but ploughs it back for the welfare of the kingdom and his subjects, the mouth too uses all the food that it eats for the health and nourishment of the whole body, including the hands, the legs and the eyes.

The other organs of the body are not to be neglected by the mouth, and they have their own role to play. For instance, the stomach receives the food ingested, the intestines and their glands help in digestion of the food eaten, and the bowels help in elimination of waste. The skin protects the body from external harm, and the bones give the body its structure. But these three instruments, viz. the hand, the leg and the eye, get preference over others and given their due importance because they are directly responsible for procuring food for the body.

So likewise, a noble king treats all the subjects equally, though he is compelled to give some instruments of the state more importance than the rest because it is through them that he is able to exercise control over the whole apparatus. Even amongst these privileged class of citizens, the king gives more importance to those who are directly concerned with the collection revenue for the state exchequer, for everything else depends upon the money that is available for expenditure.] (523)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 524 below that gives another dimension to this relationship, and argues that the king also represents the ‘stomach’ because it is here that the eaten food is stored before it is digested and distributed in the kingdom.]

Why are sycophants and ‘yes men’ ruinous

524. सचिव बैद गुर तीति जौं प्रिय बोलहिं भय आस ।  
राज धर्म तन तीनि कर होइ बेगिहीं नास ॥

524. saciva baida gura tīti jaum̄ priya bōlahim̄ bhaya āsa.  
rāja dharma tana tīni kara hō'i bēgihim̄ nāsa..

If a minister, a physician and a teacher speak only pleasing and flattering words like a sycophant does, words that respectively the powerful king, the powerful patient and the powerful disciple wish to hear from them (instead of giving their honest advice that may not be liked by the hearer), then the kingdom, the body and Dharma (principles of morality, ethics, good conduct, righteousness, propriety, probity etc.) would suffer a lot, finally decaying and coming to ruin.

[A flattering minister who wants to please the king, or who is afraid of punishment if he says something that the king does not like, will give wrong advice to the king. Since the king depends upon the advice of his ministers, such wrong advice will surely be ruinous for the king and the kingdom. So a wise king should be wary of such sycophantic ministers who do not give honest and truthful advice for any reason whatsoever.

Similarly, if a doctor does not tell the patient the truth about his disease, then it is ruinous for the patient and his health.

And if the Guru, a person’s moral preceptor and advisor, does not tell him the correct moral path and warns him if he is doing something wrong, then obviously the disciple will go the wrong way to his ruin with no one to guide and stop him.

Hence, Tulsidas warns us to be wary of such advisors and friends who do more harm than good by being sycophantic instead of being honest in their views and opinions.] (524)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, as no. 37. It refers to the ministers of the demon king Ravana who are so scared of him that they always speak things that Ravana wishes to hear, and hide the truth from him. For instance, in spite of realizing that Ravana is on the unrighteous path and is sure to be defeated in the battle with Lord Ram as he represents righteousness, they continue to praise the formidable strength and invincibility of Ravana, brushing aside his weaknesses and misdemeanours, never warning him of the impending ruin and destruction that is staring in the face, thereby making him overconfident of victory and boastful.

When Ravana sought their advice when the news arrived of the assembly of the army of monkeys and bears, they all laughed derisively and boasted haughtily—“Keep quiet. What is there to worry about? We had no difficulty in conquering the mighty Gods, well then say, how do these wretched monkeys and bears count, or how do they stand any chance before us?” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 37.]

The relationship between a king and his subordinates

525. रसना मन्त्री दसन जन तोष पोष निज काज ।  
प्रभु कर सेन पदादिका बालक राज समाज ॥

525. rasanā mantrī dasana jana tōṣa pōṣa nija kāja.  
prabhu kara sēna padādikā bālaka rāja samāja..

The king is like the ‘stomach (abdomen)’, the chief minister is like the ‘tongue’, and other royal employees are like the ‘teeth’.

Just like the teeth and the tongue do their duties by filling the stomach with food, which the latter uses for the upkeep of the whole body, including the teeth and the tongue, the many royal servants, employees and ministers of a wise king perform their prescribed duties, and the king takes care of them all.

[The teeth are responsible for chewing food eaten by the body. The tongue makes the body enjoy the taste of the food, and it provides saliva to soften and lubricate the food as well as prepare it for digestion later on after it has gone down and stored in the stomach. The raw food will not enter the stomach (abdomen) if it is not chewed by the teeth and lubricated by the saliva of the tongue into a soft pulp so that it can slide into the stomach.

Now, the role of the stomach (abdomen) comes into play. The stomach accepts and stores the ingested food. It then digests it and helps the whole body get nourishment from it.

The king is one, and so is the stomach. The chief minister is also one, and so is the tongue. But the teeth are numerous; some of them decay and fall off during a man’s lifetime. He gets them replaced by artificial ones. So is the case with other royal employees—they are many, and some of them are dismissed because they do not serve the purpose or have become corrupt, and new ones are recruited in due course of time.

Since all the food eaten is stored in the stomach before it is made available to the body, all state revenues are also stored in the custody of the king who will then employ them judiciously for the welfare of the whole kingdom. A wise king looks after the interest of all his subjects.]

The army, the guards and other royal servants are like the hands and legs of the king, while all the rest of the subjects of the kingdom are like his children.

[The legs and hands protect and serve the body. Similarly, the king’s army, guards etc. not only serve the king, but through him they serve the kingdom—because if the king is well-looked after and protected, he will be free to look after the affairs of the kingdom.

Just like a parent takes care of all his or her children, a wise king makes it a point to take proper care of all the subjects of his kingdom.] (525)

[Note—Refer Doha no. 522 above. There, the king is compared to the ‘mouth’, and his ministers or subordinates to the hands, legs and the eyes.]

How a wise man uses/employs his subordinates

526. लकड़ी डौआ करछुली सरस काज अनुहारि ।  
सुप्रभु संग्रहहिं परिहरहिं सेवक सखा बिचारि ॥

526. lakaṛī ḍau'ā karachulī sarasa kāja anuhāri.  
suprabhu saṅgrahahim pariharahim sēvaka sakhā bicāri..

Like a small wooden spoon (such as a spatula used to perform rituals) or a larger metal ladle (used to prepare and serve hot food) is used according to one's necessity and the occasion, a wise person employs his servants, subordinates, employees and his friends (acquaintances) according to their individual aptitude and qualifications, the need of the hour, and so on.

[A wooden spoon is used for cold liquids, while the metal spoon is suitable for hot liquids. Again, a metal spoon is not suitable for making offering to the sacred fire during religious sacrifices, for which only a wooden spatula is used.

Likewise, a wise person understands which of his employees and acquaintances is best suited for a particular job.] (526)

[Note—In the forgoing Dohas we have studied about which king is good and wise, and which is not. This Doha adds to this knowledge. A wise king knows the inherent strengths and weaknesses of all his ministers and subordinates. Therefore, he picks and chooses them according to their individual aptitudes and qualifications for specific jobs of the kingdom.

This is what Lord Ram did on two specific occasions as follows—

(i) One was when he chose Hanuman, from amongst all the monkeys who were sent out to search Sita, to give him his finger-ring that was to be delivered to Sita when he meets her to prove his identity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-13 that precedes Doha no. 23.

(ii) The second occasion was when the Lord selected Angad to be sent to Ravana as an emissary to see if the bloody war can be avoided. Lord Ram clearly acknowledged the fact that Angad was intelligent enough to handle this sensitive task. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precedes Doha no. 17.]

527. प्रभु समीप छोटे बड़े रहत निबल बलवान ।  
तुलसी प्रगट बिलोकिए कर अँगुलि अनुमान ॥

527. prabhu samīpa chōṭē baṛē rahata nibala balavāna.  
tulasī pragaṭa bilōki'ai kara aṅguli anumāna..

[Elaborating further on what has been said in Doha no. 526, Tulsidas says as follows—] All types of people stay in the company of a master (or a king)—some are lowly and others are of a high status (i.e. some are not as wise and intelligent as others), some are weak and others are strong (i.e. some are capable and others are not so capable; some may be strong and able in one particular field but weak in other fields).

Tulsidas says that it is like the case of the hand having five fingers, none of which are of the same size. One finger is either smaller or bigger than its next finger. But that does not mean that the hand rejects any of them; the hand loves all of them equally. Even if any one of the fingers is hurt, the pain is equally intense. (527)

[Note—In a king's kingdom there are all sorts of people—there are rich people and poor people, there are wise men and stupid men, there are strong bodied men and weak persons. The wise king treats all of them equally, though of course for practical purposes

he has to pick and choose the able ones from amongst them to help him run the affairs of the kingdom smoothly. He also may have to show special favours and give privileges to some of the most useful people of the kingdom to keep them in good humour and interested in their jobs—because it on their strength that the king is able to run the affairs of the kingdom. But at the same time a wise king ensures that his lest fortunate subjects do not suffer either.]

A loyal and devoted server is more important than his lord

528. साहब तें सेवक बड़ो जो निज धरम सुजान ।  
राम बाँधि उतरे उदधि लाँघि गए हनुमान ॥

528. sāhaba tēm sēvaka barō jō nija dharama sujāna.  
rāma bāṁdhi utarē udadhi lāṁghī ga'e hanumāna..

A servant (server, assistant, subordinate) who is an expert in first understanding and then carrying out his duties diligently, who knows what his master or lord wants him to do—such a servant is said to be superior to his principal (the lord or master)<sup>1</sup>.

[Tulsidas cites the following instance to prove his point—] Lord Sri Ram had to construct a bridge in order to cross the mighty ocean (at the time of launching his campaign to liberate Sita from the clutches of her abductors, the demons of Lanka where she was help captive by them)<sup>2</sup>, but the Lord's ardent and faithful follower, Hanuman, just leapt across the same ocean with no difficulty (because Hanuman possessed greater mystical powers by the virtue of his being extremely devoted and faithful towards his Lord, Sri Ram)<sup>3</sup>. (528)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Refer: Doha no. 473 above in this book.

Tulsidas mentions this fact to emphasise the point that the Lord's devotee is more important than the Lord himself. In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 195, it is expressly stated that “there is no wonder in the fact that from time immemorial which servant or devotee is there who has not been given honour and precedence by Lord Ram”. In other words, Lord Ram prefers to bestow honour to his devotee (servant) and give him more importance and value than himself. Even Lord Ram has accepted this fact, and so has the creator Brahma.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 219, the creator Brahma gives the following advice to Indra, the king of Gods—“Listen to my wise council, oh the king of Gods (Indra). Lord Ram loves his servant (follower, server, junior, devotee, or dependant) very much. The Lord is pleased when someone serves or pleases his servant, and the Lord feels offended when someone offends his dear servant. This is inspite of the fact that the Lord is extremely impartial and equanimous—he has neither any kind of attachment with anyone nor repulsion from him, and he is neither offended by a person's sins or evils nor enamoured by his good character. The Lord has mandated that the world will be governed by the ‘law of Karma’ which states that a person gets the reward of what he does. Though this law holds good for all, the Lord still takes into consideration whether the concerned person is his sincere devotee or (when determining the sort of reward to be given to him). [This is like the case of a wise judge presiding over a legal case in a court taking into consideration many other factors besides the law of the land at the time of delivering his judgement in any particular case, such as the age of the accused, his character, his intentions in committing the crime, his

degree of involvement, and whether he is a repeat habitual offender or someone who committed a crime out of compulsion of circumstances. The Lord punishes the habitual sinners in order to offset and neutralize the negative consequences of their evil deeds, so that their soul can finally find peace. For his devotees he appears to be less harsh, but this is because the Lord knows that the devotee is not habituated to sins but like a child he may have erred. So, such a devotee does not deserve harsh punishment, but simply a mild reprimand.]

Lord Ram has always been keeping the wishes of his beloved servants (devotees). The Vedas and the Purans (scriptures), the saintly people as well as the Gods—all of them bear witness to this. Remember this fact and abandon harbouring any kind of ill-will and crooked thought against Bharat (because Lord Ram will not pardon you if Bharat has to suffer because of your crookedness or wickedness)."

Now, the question arises, what sort of devotee is loved and liked by the Lord? The answer is given by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43 where he says—"that servant or follower who diligently and faithfully follows the path of law ordained by me, or who obeys my instructions and advice, is the one whom I love very much".

It is very clear that the person who obeys the Lord by following the laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality and auspicious conduct and thought) established by him, a person who never does anything that goes against it, who is alert about not committing any kind of sins and misdeeds under any circumstance—only such a person can claim the Lord's affection and mercy.

It is very explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 268 that—"Any servant or subordinate who puts his master or lord in a sticky situation where the latter hesitates in doing anything, in carrying out his wishes or giving instructions, because they might go against the wishes or desires or expectations of the former, then such a servant or subordinate is deemed to be of a lowly intellect and selfish. It is in the best of interests of a servant or subordinate that he relegates his own pleasures and comforts as well as desires and wishes to the background, and instead give precedence to the wishes of his master or lord, upholding them and striving to carry out such wishes sincerely and diligently to the best of his ability."

Again, it is further emphasized that a bad and lowly servant is one who hesitates or demurs in carrying out the orders given to him by his master or lord, raising doubts about the orders and answering back to his master or lord without shame or regret. On the other hand, a good and praiseworthy servant and subordinate is one who never does anything that creates any sort of hesitation or shame for the master or lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 and 7 respectively that precede Doha no. 269.

The best servant is one who serves the lord diligently and selflessly without any pretention and deceit, who has sincere affection for the Lord (Ram), and who does not serve his Lord to acquire any of the four fruits of service (such as 'Artha'—acquisition of material wealth, 'Dharma'—acquisition of respect and acclaim for being honest, righteous, selfless and diligent etc., 'Kaam'—wish fulfillment, and 'Moksha'—spiritual welfare such as emancipation and salvation). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

Indeed it is not an easy thing to live upto the highest standards expected of an excellent servant and follower of the Lord, as it is an extremely difficult proposition—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 293.

Lord Ram has listed the qualities of a good devotee in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 46.

The Lord has also justified why he loves his devotees or servants more than anyone else in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 87.

A very interesting observation is made in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 295 where it is said in the context of Bharat, the devoted younger brother of Lord Ram, that—“Lord Ram and Sita live in the heart of Bharat; say, can there ever be darkness of the night where there is the light of the sun?” In other words, the devotee or the servant of the Lord is automatically free from sins by the virtue of Lord Ram residing in his heart—because ‘sin’ is synonymous with ‘darkness’, and Lord Ram is a personified form of ‘light of Consciousness’ which cannot allow darkness to survive in its presence.

It is not easy to become a sincere and devoted servant and follower of Lord Ram as clearly stressed by Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 203 where he says “I ought to go (to Chitrakoot) to meet Lord Ram with my head upside down, (but it is not possible for me to do so and I am not even competent to live upto this reputation of being a true servant of Lord Ram) because it is extremely difficult to strictly adhere to the codes of conduct expected of a true and sincere servant of one’s Lord”.

Again, Bharat says that he faces a great moral dilemma. If he acts stubbornly and insists that Lord Ram return to Ayodhya against his wish, then it will be a grave wrongdoing on his part, because to live upto the reputation of a good servant and subordinate of the Lord is as difficult as making an attempt to lift Mt. Kailash (the great mountain that is the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva). In other words, even though Bharat would have personally liked to prevail upon Lord Ram to return to Ayodhya against his wish because he was the Lord’s younger brother whom the Lord loved more than anyone else, but that would be wrong on the part of Bharat—because besides being the Lord’s younger brother he is also his subordinate, and is therefore morally bound to honour the wish of the Lord and give it precedence over his own wishes. This is a message from Bharat to all loyal devotees and followers of the Lord—that they must bow before the wish of the Lord and never force their own wishes on him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 253.

<sup>2</sup>The story of Lord Ram getting a bridge constructed across the ocean in order to land at Lanka is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, 5/57—6/5/3 in detail.

<sup>3</sup>The story of Hanuman leaping across the same distance of the ocean easily is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, 4/30/3-12—5/3/5 in detail. ]

Those who help others are honoured and appreciated by the world

529. तुलसी भल बरतरु बढत निज मूलहि अनुकूल ।  
सबहि भाँति सब कहँ सुखद दलनि फलनि बिनु फूल ॥

529. tulasī bhala barataru barhata nija mūlahi anukūla.  
sabahi bhām̐ti saba kaham̐ sukhada dalani phalani binu phūla..

[In this Doha, Tulsidas uses the metaphor of the Banyan tree to stress how a man without pretensions and pride is respected and praised by the world.]

Tulsidas says that the Banyan tree is considered worthy of praise (inspite of the fact that it does not bear any fruits or flowers) because it grows and expands according to the

capacity of its roots. Though it does not have any colourful flowers or sweet-succulent fruits to boast of, it is still praised because its rich foliage and expanded branches give refuge to countless birds (as well as cool shade to weary travelers over a wide area beneath its branches and foliage).

[The Banyan tree does not expand beyond its means like a wild creeper or a huge tree whose stem is larger and lengthier than its root, bearing a large number of branches laden with innumerable fruits and flowers that come out from the main stem, thereby putting an immense burden on the stem as well as the root that holds the tree to the ground.

The Banyan tree, on the other hand, shows moderation and wisdom as it grows to cover an area larger than all other trees. It first grows vertically and sideways to some length, and then its branches give out shoots that go towards the ground to support the expanding tree like a prop. When these props touch the ground new roots come out of them, which in turn produce their own vertical stems that grow into robust trunks. In this way, the single Banyan tree grows to a huge size covering a large area of ground underneath it without any inconvenience to its self. The huge Banyan tree with its rich foliage and extended area of shade not only gives succour to weary travelers coming to seek refuge from the heat of the sun, but it also acts as the habitat for countless birds and insects.

Therefore, though the Banyan tree does not bear any colourful flowers or succulent fruits like other trees, it is still praised by the world because of its ability to provide shade over a large area to weary travelers through its expanded branches and trunks unlike other trees that provide shade only to a limited area near their single trunk, as well as its ability to give shelter to countless creatures such as birds and insects of different varieties.] (529)

[Note—Like the Banyan tree, a man who may not have worldly riches and grandeur represented by the fruits and flowers that the Banyan tree lacks, but who lives to support and help others like this huge Banyan tree that provides shade and habitat to so many creatures, not only acquires great fame and respect in the society but also grows in stature and importance in the world. Instead of getting jealous with his growth, even his adversaries appreciate him and feel morally bound to help in his efforts to grow—because they realise that his growth will be of help to them directly or indirectly.]

A modest man who has no pride and pretensions is respected by the world

530. सधन सगुन सधरम सगन सबल सुसाइँ महीप ।  
तुलसी जे अभिमान बिनु ते तिभुवन के दीप ॥

530. sadhana saguna sadharama sagana sabala susā'im̐ mahīpa.  
tulasī jē abhimāna binu tē tibhuvana kē dīpa..

Tulsidas says that a person, be it an ordinary man or a king, who is humble, unpretentious, truthful, and without any trace of pride and boastfulness (and its attendant negative virtues of arrogance, haughtiness and ego) in addition to his being rich, possessing good virtues, being served by those who are righteous, honourable and truthful, being strong and powerful, and being competent and able in all other ways—is highly respected by the world.

[In other words, ordinarily it is extremely difficult, if not outright impossible, for a rich, powerful, strong, able, talented and skilled person to be free from the taint of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance. Such men who possess this singular noble quality of being free from the negative influences of 'pride and its attendant arrogance, haughtiness and ego' inspite of his possessing wealth, power, authority, and special skills that make him much sought-after in this world, are indeed laudable and appreciated by those who are wise and expert judges of the character of men.]

Such a man gets acclaim and honour, and he is deemed to be like the lamp that shines in the entire world having three dimensions or parts, known as the 'Tibhuvan'— i.e. in history that deals with the past world, in the current world, and also in the world of the future.

[The implicit idea is clear in this Doha. It is that merely being successful and mighty in this world is not enough to become eligible to get high honours; one must be humble and free from ego, pride and pretensions to be eligible for it.

In other words, Tulsidas advises us to inculcate this single virtue of being 'free from pride' in order to gain respect and honour in this world.

The word 'Tibhuvan' means 'three worlds'. According to ancient tradition, these three worlds are the following—the terrestrial, the subterranean, and the heavenly or the celestial worlds. In other words, such a man gets due honours everywhere in this world.

The lighted lamp removes darkness wherever it shines. This metaphor is used to indicate that the world looks up to such an honourable man with great respect, and its glory and good virtues shines in the otherwise gloomy and dark world soaked in negative virtue of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, boastfulness and ego.] (530)

#### Importance of doing good deeds

531. तुलसी निज करतूति बिनु मुकुत जात जब कोइ ।  
गयो अजामिल लोक हरि नाम सक्यो नहिं धोइ ॥

531. tulasī nija karatūti binu mukuta jāta jaba kō'i.  
gayō ajāmila lōka hari nāma sakyō nahim dhō'i..

Tulsidas says that if a person gets salvation without making any efforts in life to attain this exalted stature, be sure that such a man cannot get any fame and honour that he might expect by the virtue of his achievement that comes to him by mere coincidental good luck.

For instance, the man named Ajaamil found liberation and deliverance from this world, as well as freedom from the horrors of hell after death, merely by his good luck (as he had pronounced the holy name of Lord Narayan, one of the holy names of Lord Vishnu, at the moment of his death which ensured that he did not go to hell but went to the heavenly abode of the Lord in Vaikuntha). But this rare achievement did not ensure that he is listed amongst great spiritual persons in this world, as his name is still counted amongst those who were sinful and fallen.

[If a person's soul is liberated from the bondage of this world and attains oneness with the Supreme Being due to some mystical reason or some kind of boon that comes to

him as a coincidence, or as an unexpected good luck without his actually doing anything noble and worthy in life to become eligible for such an exalted stature or spiritual achievement, then he does not automatically get praise in this world.

Only a man who lives a life doing good deeds diligently and in accordance to the principles of Dharma (auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, nobility etc.) as ordained by the ancient scriptures, gets recognition and acclaim in this world. Even if he fails to reach his desired target, the world will still appreciate the great efforts he had made to reach there. The world will not call him lazy and careless in doing his duties.

Anything got without making an effort to acquire it is not worthy of praise by wise men. For instance, a boy born as a prince who grows to become a mediocre king just because of his hereditary rights does not get any recognition in history as compared to a man who has built his way from the bottom of the society right upto the top rung—though he may not be a ‘king’.

Ajaamil was a sinner, and he had done no good deed in life. He was not at all eligible for salvation. But he had named his son as ‘Narain’, one of the holy names of Lord Vishnu. So, when the Death God approached him to take him to hell, he was terrified and called out his son ‘Narain’ to protect him. Since he pronounced this holy name of the Lord, the attendants of Lord Vishnu immediately came and freed his soul from the snare of the Death God, and took it to heaven.

Ajaamil did nothing worthwhile in life to go to heaven, and he had not even called out to Lord Vishnu to give his soul protection. He had actually called out to his son who also had the name ‘Narain’, which happened to be the name of Lord Vishnu. So, Ajaamil’s ascend to the heaven was merely a good luck that was coincidental to his calling out the holy name of Lord Vishnu whom he did not even intend to call while in distress.

Therefore, though Ajaamil managed to go to heaven, an achievement that comes after great spiritual efforts, he still could not get the respect that this stature deserved. On the contrary, he remained in the list of sinners and wicked people. The world realised that his ascend to the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu was not due to any effort made on his part but it was due to the mystical spiritual powers of the holy name of Lord Vishnu, i.e. the name ‘Narain’, that Ajaamil had pronounced at the time of death.

The credit for Ajaamil’s soul finding liberation and deliverance went to the holy name of Lord Narain, and not to anything worthwhile he himself had done in life.

Tulsidas cites this example to advise us that if we wish to get honour and recognition in this world then we must make righteous efforts in this direction, and not expect any miracles to happen.] (531)

[Note—The fact that Ajaamil got liberation on the strength of Lord’s holy name and not due to anything holy or noble done by him, as well as the fact that in spite of this rare achievement he is still listed as a great sinner is endorsed in:--(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26; and (ii) Kavitawali, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 1 of verse no. 5.

The *story of Ajaamil*—He was a Brahmin by birth, but he became enamoured with a prostitute and married her. Bad company made him turn into a hunter. One day a group of sages passed by the village. When they asked the villagers if there was a Brahmin’s house where they could spend the night, the villagers told them of Ajaamil. So these sages decided to spend the night there. When Ajaamil returned from his hunting trip with a catch of a bird and saw the sages, he felt very ashamed. He confided with them that he

is a fallen man and that they should not eat in his house. The saints had a merciful heart and they thought amongst themselves that it is their moral obligation to show this man some way by which he can find liberation and deliverance.

They cooked their own meals with whatever they had. The next day, they summoned Ajaamil and told him, 'Look, your wife is pregnant. She will soon deliver a son. Give that son the name 'Narayan' (one of the many names of Lord Vishnu). This would lead to your emancipation.' And then the group of sages went on their journey.

When the son was born, Ajaamil named him as advised by them—he called the son 'Narayan'. He was very fond of the son, and called out his name 'Narayan, Narayan' umpteen numbers of times during the course of the day. He was unwittingly taking the name of Lord Vishnu. This continued till the time came for his death. When he was tormented by the messengers of Yam, the God of hell and death, he became terrified and called out in fear—'Narayan, Narayan. Save me'. Though he was calling his son, but the Lord heard his name being called out by someone in distress. So he sent his own messengers to protect the caller. The messengers of Lord chased away the messengers of Yam and took Ajaamil to heaven. When Yam complained to Vishnu, the Lord told him that if anyone calls out his name at the time of death he is duty-bound to liberate and protect him. This story tells us the power of the name of the Lord.

This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat, 6/1-2.]

Company of great people makes a man great himself

532. बड़ो गहे ते होत बड़ ज्यो बावन कर दंड ।  
श्रीप्रभु के संग सों बढ़ो गयो अखिल ब्रह्मंड ॥

532. barō gahē tē hōta barā jyōm bāvana kara daṇḍa.  
śrīprabhu kē samṅa sōm barhō gayō akhila brahmaṇḍa..

If great men accept someone lowly and humble, the latter too become great and exalted due to this company. [The company of great people makes a person great and exalted himself.<sup>1</sup>]

For instance, the small wooden staff (stick) in the hands of Lord Vaaman (the dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu) expanded in size exponentially along with the expanding body of Vaaman (when he enlarged himself to measure the 3 worlds in his steps in the court of demon king Bali) so much so that reached the other (i.e. the outer) edges of the Universe.<sup>2</sup> (532)

[Note--<sup>1</sup>The effect of the company one keeps is also highlighted in the following Dohas—140, 178, 336-337, 340, 358-364, 366, 438, 505.

<sup>2</sup>The story of Lord Vaaman—It is narrated in a note appended to Doha no. 382.]

Charity made deceitfully is ruinous for the donor and the recipient

533. तुलसी दान जो देत हैं जल में हाथ उठाइ ।  
प्रतिग्राही जीवै नहीं दाता नरकै जाइ ॥

533. tulasī dāna jō dēta haim jala mēm hātha uṭhā'i.  
pratigrāhī jīvai nahīm dātā narakai jā'i..

Tulsidas says that those who raise their hands to offer food to fish while standing in water (with the real intention of catching the fish with this bait) not only go to hell themselves but the fish itself dies. (533)

[Note—Tulsidas here refers to a practice whereby a person doing a religious ritual would stand half submerged in the water of a holy river, say upto his knees or waist, and raise his hands to offer oblations and libations to Gods or holy Spirits, or to make symbolic charity by offering food to fish and other aquatic animals. If this person undertakes this exercise just as a mere formality, to show the world that he is a religious person who makes charities, but his actual intention in raising his hands and sprinkling food particles on water is to bait the fish so that the latter can be caught for cooking, then obviously this man is very sinful, deceitful and pretentious. He tries to fool the world as well as the fish by his charitable gesture of raising his hands and offering food, but actually he is cruel and sinful because his actual intention is to catch and kill the fish.

Therefore, not only this man goes to hell for being cruel, merciless and killing other harmless and helpless creatures by deceiving them, but the creature who falls for his deceit and pretensions also suffers hugely. Both of them suffer—the pretentious man goes to hell because of his sinful act, and the creature who accepts his pseudo charity too dies in suffering. It would have been better for them had they not done anything at all. Hence, one must be wary of such people who are pretentious and cunning, and never accept anything from them.

The lesson to be learnt from this example is that the external behaviour of a person is often very misleading, and one must be not fall in the trap of exterior pleasantness. Not all who appear to be good and pious are actually so because there are many wolves in the guise of sheep. Another lesson is that one must be careful and selective in accepting help from strangers. More often than not freebies come with strings attached. And again, more often than not, such strings are strangulating; they act as shackles around the creature.

In the example cited in this Doha, the man is not at all making any charity by giving food to fish, but is actually spraying bait in water so that the fish can be caught. He has raised his hands not as a symbolic gesture of making charity or offering oblation or libation, but to spread the bait over a large area on the surface of water so that larger shoal of fish can be caught. This man can cheat an observer who may be watching him from a distance because he might think that he is making charity and feeding the fish, but the truth would soon come out.

Hence, those who make charity with the aim of getting fame and respect in society, or to save on taxes, or to garner support and a loyal following amongst the recipients of such charity, are actually very wicked and selfish. They have vested worldly interests in making such charities, and are not doing it for the sake of concern for the welfare of the underprivileged or even as a service to the Lord God.

Not only such people lie in the front of the Lord and exploit his holy name when they falsely say that they are making charity in the name of God, but even those who willingly accept such ill-gotten and ill-given money too fall in the same pit of shame and ignominy out of their greed for getting easy money.

Tulsidas had two pictures in mind while drawing the image of a man raising his hand to making false claims of being religious and piety. One is the picture of those who perform religious rituals while standing waist-deep in the water of a river in a mechanical manner as a mere formality as is practiced in nearly all the religious pilgrim cites. Tulsidas ridicules this practice, and says that people are mistaken that by undertaking this nonsense they can get any spiritual reward worth its name. On the other hand, they will go to hell because they are lying in the name of religion and God.

The other picture he has in his mind is that of the fisherman who also raises his hand to cast his net along with the bait to catch the fish. In this case the poor fish thinks that the person who is raising his hands is doing some religious ritual and the bait is actually the food that he is throwing at the time of performance of these rituals. So the fish willingly rushes forward to eat it as it is in the habit of grabbing food thrown in the water by pilgrims doing rituals, and gets caught by the fisherman's hook and dragged out in his net to be killed.]

When a person is abandoned by his loved ones, the world becomes his enemy

534. आपन छोड़ो साथ जब ता दिन हितू न कोइ ।  
तुलसी अंबुज अंबु बिनु तरनि तासु रिपु होइ ॥

534. āpana chōrō sātha jaba tā dina hitū na kō'i.  
tulasī ambuja ambu binu tarani tāsu ripu hō'i..

When one's loved ones such as his kith and kin, his compatriots and friends etc., abandon him or neglect him, then there is no one else to care of his welfare from that very moment. [In other words, when a person's near and dear ones turn against him, then he must not expect any help from the rest of the world which becomes hostile towards him.]<sup>1</sup>

Tulsidas cites the example of a lotus flower to explain this situation. He says that when water dries up in a pond and leaves the lotus alone in it, the sun—which is otherwise considered a 'friend' of the lotus—turns hostile and scorches the lonely lotus with its heat<sup>2</sup>.

[It is well known that the lotus flower opens up in the daytime. In other words, as soon as the lotus sees the face of its friend, the sun, it cheers and begins to smile by opening up. But in the eventuality when the water surrounding the same lotus dries up due to some cause, the same sun begins to scorch the lotus and ultimately kill the latter with its heat. The sun remained friendly only till the time the lotus was surrounded by its closer companion, the water of the pond, but as soon as the lotus was left alone and abandoned by the water, the same 'friendly sun' became 'hostile' and begins to scorch and burn the lotus to death.

From the spiritual point of view Tulsidas means that as long as a person remains close to the Lord God who is his deemed to be his closest friend and well-wisher, the world pretends to be friendly with him. But as soon as a man abandons the Lord, or when out of his stupidity or ignorance he moves away from the Lord and towards the world, thinking that this world is his true friend as it has been providing him with all sorts of comforts and pleasures till now, the same world which was hitherto friendly immediately becomes hostile. The man has to suffer immensely by turning away from the Lord God.<sup>3</sup>] (534)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>An identical view is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 65. Here, Sita tells Lord Ram that for a wife all the affectionate relations of this world make sense only till the time her husband does not abandon her.

<sup>2</sup>The same idea of the lotus getting burnt by its so-called friendly sun as soon as its nearest companion, the water, abandons it is also stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17.

<sup>3</sup>In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 290 it is reiterated that “Oh Lord Ram! You are the essence and the very life-giving force of Pran (the life sustaining vital winds); you are at the core of the Atma (the soul); and you are the one who lends the virtues of happiness and comfort their abilities to give happiness and comfort to this world. Oh Lord! If anyone thinks that he will find happiness and comfort by living in a household and turning away from you (i.e. by being indulgent in the world at the cost of having devotion for the Lord God), then certainly the creator has become malevolent and hostile towards him (i.e. such a stupid person will have to suffer a lot in this world; his destiny is ruined).”

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 74 gives the reason for this. It says “Lord Ram is the universal and selfless friend of all the creatures”.]

An individual’s glorious virtues shine when the opportunity comes

535. उरबी परि कलहीन होइ ऊपर कलाप्रधान ।  
तुलसी देखु कलाप गति साधन घन पहिचान ॥

535. urabī pari kalahīna hō'i ūpara kalāpradhāna.  
tulasī dēkhu kalāpa gati sādhana ghana pahicāna..

[Tulsidas uses the metaphor of the peacock’s feathers to say that an individual’s goodness and virtues come to the fore and is acknowledged by the world when the proper time comes.]

The feathers of the peacock do not attract any attention because they look drab, dull and lustre-less when they are folded behind the bird. But when the same set of feathers open up and spread majestically behind the peacock like a colourful hand-held paper fan, they look exceptionally wonderful and fascinating.

Tulsidas says for this to happen (i.e. for the unfolding of the feathers and display of their astounding beauty), the credit goes to the clouds (because a peacock opens its feathers to dance when it sights the rain-bearing clouds, or even hears the rumble of such clouds).

[No one would have known that the peacock possessed such beautiful feathers, which make the bird exceedingly charming when its plumes are fully opened, if the clouds hadn’t appeared and made the bird dance in merriment. In other words, the credit for unfolding and bringing to the notice of the world the beauty of the peacock’s feathers goes to the cloud. The peacock would have gone un-noticed had it not been for the clouds which made it dance to reveal its most fascinating and alluring feathers, the kind which no other bird in God’s creation possesses.

The bird gets the opportunity to display its beauty and majesty only when the time comes—i.e. only when the rain-bearing clouds appear in the sky. On all other occasions, the peacock is regarded with scorn as a bird that has a disproportionate body which has little legs and a long ‘tail’, forcing the bird to walk in a series of forward and backward jerks. Again, the bird is said to eat snakes and insects, a diet which is contemptible. But

as soon as the bird opens its wonderful plume of colourful feathers, all who were skeptics become silent, and begin to praise the peacock instead.

Similarly, a man's glorious virtues and goodness often remain hidden till the proper time comes for them to be highlighted. Therefore, Tulsidas says that one should not condemn a person outright before examining his hidden virtues and qualities; one must not judge a person on his face value because some exceptional goodness may be hidden below the surface.

The other side of the coin is that the man who is praised for his good virtues should not become proud and haughty for them, because a time will come when his lowliness and bad aspect will also come to the fore. At that time, the same world which has been heaping praises on him would begin to ridicule him for his shortcomings. It is similar to the case of the peacock which looks brilliant while its feathers are in full bloom, but after sometime when the bird gets tired and closes these feathers, it reverts back to its ugly form with a longish tail dragging behind a disproportionate body that is supported by thin legs, forcing it to walk in a series of jerks.

Another angle to interpreting this Doha is this<sup>1</sup>—one must not be dismayed at some negative qualities he might inherit due to circumstances beyond his control. The peacock can't do anything with the ugly body it has inherited, or its habit of eating snakes and insects instead of fruits like other birds. The man must feel happy instead that the Lord God has been very kind to him to grant him certain excellent virtues that no one else possesses, just like the beauty of the feathers of the peacock that no other birds possess. So, a wise man thanks the Lord God for whatever is written in his destiny and whatever he has in this world, instead of looking at the negative side of existence and accusing the Lord of being biased against him.] (535)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 161 Kha, also refers to the peacock and its feathers, but here the implication is different. A crooked man is compared to the peacock in this Doha. Even wise men are fooled by pretensions of goodness and friendly demeanours of wicked men. The Doha says “What to talk of foolish people, even wise ones are fooled or tricked by the deceitful nature of wicked persons who pretend to be nice and good on the surface but are inherently very bad and crooked. It is like the case of the colourful plumes of the peacock that makes the bird look exceptionally charming and lovable, but the fact is that this creates an illusion of beauty about the bird. The peacock has beautiful feathers and a sweet voice, but it feeds on snakes—i.e. it is exceedingly poisonous from the inside though it presents a charming and friendly appearance on the outside.”]

The Lord God helps if one invokes him in any form

536. तुलसी संगति पोच की सुजनहि होति म-दानि ।  
ज्यों हरि रूप सुताहि तें कीनि गोहारी आनि ।।

536. tulasī saṅgati pōca kī sujanahi hōti ma-dāni.  
jyōm hari rūpa sutāhi tēm kīni gōhārī āni..

Tulsidas says that for a person who is sincere and truly pious, even the company of an evil or lowly person does not act as a hindrance to his welfare and well-being.

For instance, even though a princess who was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu was tricked into marrying a crooked carpenter disguised as the Lord, but when she invoked the Lord at a later date to help her father who was facing some misfortune, the Lord immediately answered her prayers irrespective of her failing to keep her vows of marrying no one else but the Lord. [This is because Lord Vishnu realised that she was innocent and not at fault as she was tricked into marrying the wicked carpenter who disguised himself as Lord Vishnu. She had married this deceitful man in the belief that she was marrying the Lord. So the Lord forgave her, and when she invoked him once when her father was in distress, the Lord lost no time to hear her prayers and fulfill her wishes.]

[<sup>1</sup>The lady was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. A wicked carpenter knew of her devotion for the Lord and her determination to marry the Lord if she would ever marry. So this sinful man made two wooden hands and disguised himself as Lord Vishnu who has four hands. The innocent princess was tricked into believing that she was actually marrying Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu knew of her devotion, sincerity, innocence and truthfulness, so he not only forgave her but also paid attention to all her prayers as if she had not committed any sin of adultery.

Once it so happened that her father, the king, was in some great distress, and so the princess prayed to Lord Vishnu to save him. The Lord immediately answered her prayers and relieved her father of the problem he was facing.

Tulsidas cites this story to prove his point that though the princess had to live with a lowly carpenter as his wife, something totally unbecoming of a princess, and appeared to have broken her vow of marrying no one else but Lord Vishnu by marrying the carpenter, she was still provided with the same respect and care by the Lord as if nothing had gone wrong. This is because she was internally innocent as well as eternally pious and faithful to the Lord.] (536)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>This story is narrated in ‘Bhakta Maal’—a collection of stories of devotees of the Lord God.]

#### The dominance of evil in Kaliyug (the present age)

537. कलि कुचालि सुभ मति हरनि सरलै दंडै चक्र ।  
तुलसी यह निहचय भई बाढ़ि लेति नव बक्र ॥

537. kali kucāli subha mati harani saralai daṇḍai cakra.  
tulasī yaha nihacaya bhaī bāḍhi lēti nava bakra..

The conspiratorial, corrupt and evil nature of Kaliyug (the present era or time or age) is very harmful for all the creatures as it eclipses wisdom and taints the intellect.

As a result, the kings (rulers) forget about morality, mercy and other noble virtues such as judicious implementation of laws that are based on the principles of Dharma (righteousness, propriety, probity, ethics etc.). The effect of this is that those who are innocent and pious (‘Sadhus’) are subjected to harsh punishment (because they are easy targets and do not, or can’t, resist).

Tulsidas says that it is obvious that during Kaliyug, corruption, wickedness and evil are ascendant and expand in dimension. [And therefore, goodness and righteousness get eclipsed in the same proportion.] (537)

[Note—Tulsidas implies that the current age is such that those who are righteous and humble are the ones who suffer the most, while those who are corrupt and evil have a fine time. This fact is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 281 where it is emphasized that “everyone bows before those who are wicked, cunning and powerful (for fear of punishment and to escape their wrath) just like the case of the case of the crescent moon that is not devoured by Rahu (because the latter fears that the curved edge of the moon and its sharply pointed ends will stick in his throat and suffocate him to death)”.

Rahu was a demon whose head was severed by Lord Vishnu when he disguised himself as a god and attempted to drink Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity. But a drop of the liquid had entered Rahu’s mouth, so he could not be killed. Rahu got the blessing that once in a while he would be able to devour the Sun God and the Moon to satisfy his hunger and to take revenge against them for betraying his presence to Lord Vishnu. According to mythology, this devouring of the Sun and the Moon by Rahu is the cause of the solar and the lunar eclipses. But Rahu is terrified of eating the sickle-shaped moon as it might get stuck in his throat.

The evil nature of Kaliyug is described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand/Canto 7, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Chanda no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102.

In spite of all its shortcomings, Kaliyug has one great advantage, and it is highlighted in Doha no. 102 of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, which says—“The importance and glory as well as the effectiveness of the mystical powers of Lord Ram’s holy and divine name as being the infallible formula that provides liberation and deliverance to the soul in an easy way is most evident in Kaliyug. The spiritual rewards that one got by worship of the Lord God, and by performance of elaborate fire sacrifices as well as doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation) during the earlier three Yugs known as the Sata-Yug, the Treta-Yug and the Dwapar-Yug, the same benefits are got by him very easily and conveniently by merely relying on the holy name of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Lord God, the Supreme Being).”

An exactly the same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 26—to Doha no. 27

Therefore, though the age of Kali-yug is evil and corrupt, it has its own goodness as it is the only era when the importance of the holy name of the Lord God is exceptionally marked. A devotee needs no other means to find liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation except repeating the holy name of the Lord, and having full faith in its powers. He can repeat this name in any way he likes and in any way that is convenient to him. There are no rigid restrictions to be followed.

The immense powers and glories of Lord Ram’s holy name are enumerated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28.

Refer also to (i) Kavita-wali, Uttar Kand, from verse nos. 83—110 that describe Kali-Yug, and the glory and effectiveness of Lord Ram’s holy name during this period; and (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 43-46 which deal with the holy name of Lord Ram.]

It is always good to be of a friendly nature

538. गो खग खे खग बारि खग तीनों माहिं बिसेक ।

तुलसी पीवैं फिरि चलैं रहैं फिरैं सँग एक ॥

538. gō khaga khē khaga bāri khaga tīnōm māhir̄m bisēka.  
tulasī pīvaim̄ phiri calaim̄ rahaim̄ phiraim̄ sam̄ga ēka..

Tulsidas says that the birds of all kinds, those who live on the land, in the water, or in the sky, have a natural tendency to live amicably with their peers and compatriots. They stick together and fly in a formation. They drink water, move about and stay together in the company of similar birds (thereby giving rise to the saying that ‘birds of the same feather stick together’).

[Tulsidas uses this example to advise us to learn from these birds who never fight with each other, and live amicably together. This ensures their safety, and helps them fight predators should anyone attack one of the birds unawares. When the birds fly long distances, by staying together and flying in formation it helps the flock to follow the leading bird who is deemed to be wise and well-versed with the topography of the land below which helps the flock to reach its destination without the fear of getting lost.

Hence, Tulsidas says that there is great merit in staying together, helping each other and sharing one’s experiences, instead of being selfish and attempting to live and enjoy everything in the world alone.] (538)

[Note—There is another way of interpreting this Doha. The ‘birds of the land’ can be compared to the inhabitants of the world who live an ordinary life, being grounded to the surface of the earth, and worship the Lord God by looking upto the heaven and offering their oblations by raising their hands.

The ‘birds of the sky’ can be likened to the Gyanis or the enlightened ones who have risen above the mundane existence in this world and have attained an exalted spiritual stature which is symbolized by those birds who live high in the sky and can go long distances without the obstacles one faces while living on the ground.

And the ‘birds of the water’ are like those people who remain submerged in the water of formalities and observation of rituals, and like these birds who survive by eating fish and other aquatic creatures such people also live by exploiting others. Irrespective of this fact, all these birds live peacefully with each other. The birds of one sort never fight with the bird of the other category.

Similarly, this world also consists of a variety of people; some lowly, some mediocre, and others who are wise and exalted. Tulsidas says that in the broader scheme of the Lord God, each creature, every single living being in this world has his place. So it is advisable to live peacefully with each other like the birds described above.]

Those who practice equanimity are always happy

539. साधन समय सुसिद्धि लहि उभय मूल अनुकूल ।  
तुलसी तीनिउ समय सम ते महि मंगल मूल ॥

539. sādhana samaya susid'dhi lahi ubhaya mūla anukūla.  
tulasī tīni'u samaya sama tē mahi maṅgala mūla..

Those people who remain equanimous and are able to maintain their calm and poise under all circumstances, even when the goings are good for them—i.e. when they find all circumstances and situations are favourable to them, when the time is on their side, and when they have access to the best of means to achieve their goals (which would normally make others excited and lose their mental equilibrium), Tulsidas says that such people find auspiciousness, happiness and peace of mind wherever they live on this earth. (539)

The basic principles of leading a happy life  
(One must obey one's parents, Guru and Lord)

540. मातु पिता गुरु स्वामि सिख सिर धरि करहिं सुभायँ ।  
लहेउ लाभु तिन्ह जनम कर नतरु जनमु जग जायँ ॥

540. mātu pitā guru svāmi sikha sira dhari karahim̐ subhāyam̐ .  
lahē'u lābhu tinha janama kara nataru janamu jaga jāyam̐ ..

Those who diligently and faithfully obey, without doubting and questioning, the advice given to them by their mother, father (parents), Guru (moral preceptor, teacher, advisor) and Master (boss; superior authority) are deemed to reap the fruits of taking birth in this world. Those who do not follow this advice are deemed to have taken birth in futility (because they will always remain unhappy and on the edge).

[A person who listens to the advice of his parents, teachers and seniors always rises in the world, is carefree and happy because they are his best friends, and putting one self in their care ensures that one is protected from vagaries of uncertainties in life. These persons are older than him, and they have a better experience of the world. So if a man follows the instructions given by them he is sure to tread a well-advised path where the chances of failure are minimal.

On the other hand, those who are arrogant enough to neglect their parents, teachers and seniors are prone to committing grave errors in life for the simple reason that they do not any experience of this world, and their chances of living peacefully and happily are remote.] (540)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, as Doha no. 70. Here, Lord Ram is advising his younger brother Laxman, at the time of the Lord's departure to the forest, to listen to his advice and stay at Ayodhya instead of accompanying him to the forest.

A similar idea is expressed at two other places in Ram Charit Manas—viz. (i) in Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 63 which says “he who does not accept cheerfully and with due respect the advice given to him by his teacher and a senior person who are naturally his well-wishers—such a man regrets immensely, and his interests suffer”; and (ii) in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 77 where Lord Shiva assured Lord Ram that he will obey whatever the latter told him to do because “it is my most important duty and obligation on my part to obey the orders of my Lord, for one must do without arguments anything ordered by one's mother, father (parents), Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) and Prabhu (Lord)”.

See Doha no. 541 also.]

One must obey one's father

541. अनुचित उचित बिचारु तजि जे पालहिं पितु बैन ।  
ते भाजन सुख सुजस के बसहिं अमरपति ऐन ॥

541. anucita ucita bicāru taji jē pālahim̐ pitu baina.  
tē bhājana sukha sujasa kē basahim̐ amarapati aina..

Those who respectfully obey the words (orders, instructions, advice, request) of their father without questioning its legality, fairness, propriety or probity, they become eligible for happiness and good fame (i.e. they enjoy these) in this world, and after death they go heaven to lead an immortal life.

[In the earlier Doha no. 540 it is said that one must obey one's mother, father, teacher and lord. Now, out of them, more importance is given to the father—because he is most concerned about the well-being of his son than anybody else. The mother is also equally concerned, but she being a housewife has no practical first-hand experience of the roughness of the outside world and its tumble, toil and harsh realities as much as the father has. The father is better equipped to prepare the son to face these harsh realities of the real world where the son will have to earn his livelihood and cope with all sorts of contingencies far away from the protected walls of the home.

A Guru can advise him on spiritual matters and the correct way of living a life according to the established principles of Dharma, the principles of morality and righteousness, but if the man's future is financially ruined or he develops some bad habits then his father and his family suffers the most, and not so much the Guru or the man's boss.] (541)

[Note--This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, as Doha no. 174. Here, sage Vashistha tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown of Ayodhya because his father wished so.

The fact that the orders of one's father must take precedence over all other things, and one should treat such orders as the best Dharma (law) to be followed is endorsed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.]

For a wife, service rendered to the husband is the best deed

542. सहज अपावनि नारि पति सेवत सुभ गति लहइ ।  
जसु गावत श्रुति चारि अजहुँ तुलसिका हरिहि प्रिय ॥

542. sahaja apāvani nāri pati sēvata subha gati laha'i.  
jasu gāvata śruti cāri ajahum̐ tulasikā harihi priya..

A woman who might have become impure (due to her sinful deeds done under any situation) can attain salvation without much effort by diligently, faithfully and devotedly serving her husband.

The fame of a faithful and loyal wife such as Brinda (wife of demon Jalandhar) is sung by the Vedas, and even today she is dear to Sri Hari (Lord Vishnu) in the form of Tulsi (leaves of the Basil plant).

[Lord Vishnu had to play tricks with Brinda because her husband Jalandhar, who was a cruel demon, could not be killed because of Brinda's chastity and loyalty towards her husband that acted as an impenetrable shield around him. So, inspite of her losing her vows of faithfulness towards her husband Jalandhar, falling prey to deceit of Vishnu who had assumed the physical form of Jalandhar, she was forgiven because she was innocent and unaware of the reality at the time of accepting Vishnu as her husband.

Tulsidas cites this example to advise women to serve their husbands faithfully as a matter of practice in their daily lives because it will act as a protective shield around them, and in the eventuality of their committing some mistakes in life, they would be forgiven from punishment for such misdemeanours as their meritorious deed of serving their husbands faithfully would far out weigh the negative effects of such isolated misdeeds.] (542)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 188 and 395 also. The story of Brinda is narrated in a note appended to Doha no. 188 of this book.

This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, as Doha no. 5 where Anusuiya, the wife of sage Agastya, teaches Sita the qualities of a good woman.]

One must not refuse shelter to someone who seeks it during times of distress

543. सरनागत कहूँ जे तजहिं निज अनहित अनुमानि ।  
ते नर पावँर पापमय तिन्हहि बिलोकत हानि ॥

543. saranāgata kahum̐ jē tajahir̐ nija anahita anumāni.  
tē nara pāvam̐ra pāpamaya tinhahi bilōkata hāni..

Those who abandon someone (i.e. refuse to give shelter to someone) who has come to seek refuge in times of distress, out of fear for their own security, welfare or interests—such persons are regarded as lowly, selfish and sinful so much so that it is harmful (improper) to even see their faces.

[That is, a man must be willing to help others when they come seeking help in times of distress and misfortunes. To turn such refuge-seekers away is not the right thing to do. This edict has a practical implication—for a time may come when the tables turn around, and the man who refuses to help and provide succour to the needy may himself need it some day. So, one must keep this thing in mind when someone comes to seek refuge with him.

Again, he must remember that the actual protector is the Lord God, and that it is the Lord God who had inspired the distressed man to come to seek refuge with him. Naturally, the Lord God had something in his mind, and therefore the man has no right to refuse to give shelter to those who come seeking it.] (543)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, as Doha no. 43. The context here is Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, coming to seek refuge with Lord Ram after he was kicked and insulted by his brother at Lanka. When Lord Ram's advisors

were skeptical of Vibhishan's intentions and doubted if it was wise to accept him in their camp, the Lord told them that it would be wrong and highly unwise to refuse Vibhishan who has come with great hope to meet the Lord and surrender before him.]

544. तुलसी तृन जलकूल को निरबल निपट निकाज ।  
कै राखै कै सँग चलै बाँह गहे की लाज ॥

544. tulasī tr̥ṇa jalakūla kō nirabala nipaṭa nikāja.  
kai rākhai kai saṁga calai bām̥ha gahē kī lāja..

Tulsidas says that the reeds that grow on the banks of a river are very humble, weak, and of no practical use. [They are worthless because they bear neither any fruit nor flowers, and can't be of any use for grazing cattle either; and they are so weak that they can be easily swept away by the swift currents of the river when it is in spate. They get totally submerged when the water level rises, and are unable to keep their heads out of the water like tall trees away from the river.]

But in spite of these shortcomings and an inconsequential existence, they find their use for a drowning man who grabs these reeds to save himself. The reed would then try its best to give protection to the distressed man seeking its urgent help to save himself from drowning by actually holding fast to the ground and giving him an anchor. In case the poor reed is unable to save the man and act as his anchor to keep him buoyed, it would prefer to get uprooted itself in this noble endeavour and get drowned alongside the man instead of living with the ignominy of not giving refuge and succour to a person who had extended his arms in distress to seek the reed's help.

[Tulsidas uses this metaphor to explain how one must protect those who come to seek help in times of distress. If the humble reed is so particular about doing its might to help give anchor and save a drowning man, wouldn't such attitude be expected from a man who stands the highest in the ladder of evolution?] (544)

The nature and characteristic features of Kali-yug

545. रामायन अनुहरत सिख जग भयो भारत रीति ।  
तुलसी सठ की को सुनै कलि कुचालि पर प्रीति ॥

545. rāmāyana anuharata sikha jaga bhayō bhārata rīti.  
tulasī saṭha kī kō sunai kali kucāli para prīti..

Tulsidas laments that during Kaliyug (the present era/period of time), the people are naturally inclined towards vices, evil, misdemeanours and unrighteousness. Who bothers to listen to fools like me (Tulsidas) who tries to warn them to be careful and avoid the trap?

It is such a great irony that during this age of Kali-yug, while people are taught to follow the example of the story of Ramayana (teaching high standards of brotherhood and exemplary levels of selflessness) they actually practice the way things happened in

the Mahabharat (where brothers first quarreled with each other over inconsequential petty things that finally blew up into full-fledged hostility, which culminated in a ruinous war).

[In the story of the Ramayana, Lord Ram willingly gave up his rights to the throne of Ayodhya so that his younger brother Bharat could be made the king. On his part, Bharat refused to accept the crown because it rightfully belonged to Lord Ram. Laxman had accompanied Lord Ram to the forest and served him like a selfless servant. The youngest of the four brothers, Shatrughan, managed the affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya for fourteen long years while Lord Ram was undergoing the period of his forest exile, but he never hogged the limelight and never claimed any credit for an excellent administration of such a vast and extended kingdom.

On the other hand we have the story of the Mahabharat where two clans of the same dynasty, the Kurus and the Pandavas fought over their rights to the respective shares of kingdom, and mercilessly fought the annihilating epic war known as the Mahabharat. This latter story is an example of utter lack of reasoning and compromise, of exceptional selfishness and jealousy, as well as of evil, vices, perversions, wickedness, scheming and lies of the highest order. (545)

[Note—In the context of this Doha, refer also to Doha nos. 418-421.

The nature of Kali-yug has been extensively described by Tulsidas in the following places: (i) Doha nos. 545-562 of this book Dohawali; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 104; (iii) Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 83-110.]

546. पात पात कै सींचिबो बरी बरी कै लोन ।  
तुलसी खोटें चतुरपन कलि डहके कहु को न ॥

546. pāta pāta kai sīñcibō barī barī kai lōna.  
tulasī khōṭēr̄m caturapana kali ḍahakē kahu kō na..

[Describing how foolish the people are in the present age of Kali-yug, Tulsidas says that—]

People are so stupid and dumb-witted (during the era of Kali-yug) that they water each individual leaf of the tree instead of watering the root, and add salt to each individual piece of 'Bari' (small rounded balls made from a paste of powdered pulse that are dried in the sun and used to prepare curry) instead of sprinkling the salt on the whole gravy of the curry.

[That is, the people do not have even the basic common sense that it is nonsense and futile to water individual leaves of a tree instead of watering the roots so that the whole tree gets water. Similarly, people are so foolish that instead of adding salt to the entire curry, they pick up each individual piece of the Bari that is floating in the gravy and add salt to it.]

Tulsidas wonders who has not been cheated and made to look like a fool with this misplaced sense of wisdom that is more often than not nothing short of the ridiculous and the absurd. Such attitude of treating nonsense as wisdom is a dominant characteristic of Kali-yug.

[Those who are fools pretend to be wise and all-knowing, professing ideas that are absurd, incredulous and bordering upon madness, but they are so clever and pretentious

that they manage to prevail upon their friends and compatriots to believe in the nonsense that they hawk as wisdom, thereby transforming even the wise ones who fall in their trap to become fools themselves.] (546)

547. प्रीति सगाई सकल बिधि बनिज उपायँ अनेक ।  
कल बल छल कलि मल मलिन डहकत एकहि एक ॥

547. prīti sagā'ī sakala bidhi banija upāyam' anēka.  
kala bala chala kali mala malina ḍahakata ēkahi ēka..

In Kali-yug, people whose mind and heart have been tainted by sins and corrupted by selfishness (referring to everything which is the opposite of the eclectic principles of 'Dharma'—the principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, nobility, brotherhood and compassion) make friendships, establish relations and proclaim alliances only to do business with each other and to serve their own interests. While doing so they have no regrets or compunctions in employing any crooked means they can think of in order to meet their objective of serving their vested interests and fulfilling their desires. They do not think twice before using deceit, fraud, pretension, lies, falsehood, threats, misuse of strength, power, position, status and contacts etc. to cheat each other and cut throats. (547)

[Note—In this Doha, Tulsidas emphasizes the dominance of cheating, fraud and crookedness in the present age known as Kali-yug. He says that people are driven by selfishness, and nothing else matters to them as long as their interests are served. They will have no regrets and repentance while cheating even their parents, their Guru and their seniors. They worship so many gods and goddesses just because they are not confident about the ability of one particular deity to fulfill their needs and desires, and hence wish to keep their options open by trying to appease a host of them and keep all in good humour so that if one fails the other deity will help them. In other words, the overriding concern in Kali-yug is not loyalty and devotion but selfishness and personal interests.]

548. दंभ सहित कलि धरम सब छल समेत ब्यवहार ।  
स्वारथ सहित सनेह सब रुचि अनुहरत अचार ॥

548. dambha sahita kali dharama saba chala samēta byavahāra.  
svāratha sahita sanēha saba ruci anuharata acāra..

In Kali-yug, all Dharmas (laws of conduct and relationships) are corrupted or tainted by the negative virtues of vanity, hypocrisy, pretensions, boasts and wickedness; the behaviour of people is rash and irresponsible; they are full of deceit, conceit, fraud, cunning, treachery and felony; and all relationships are not based on affection and love but are driven by selfishness and vested interests.

There is utter lack of sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness and truthfulness in all matters of life. People do whatever suits their selfish interests, without giving any thought to the probity and propriety of their actions and deeds. (548)

549. चोर चतुर बटमार नट प्रभु प्रिय भँडुआ भंड ।  
सब भच्छक परमारथी कलि सुपंथ पाषंड ॥

549. cōra catura baṭamāra naṭa prabhu priya bhamṛḍu'ā bhaṇḍa.  
saba bhacchaka paramārathī kali supantha pāṣaṇḍa..

In Kali-yug, thieves are considered as clever and smart people (i.e. those who cunningly steal others are called smart); robbers are counted as expert players and acrobats (i.e. those who rob others by attacking them from behind, by using any kind of violent means such as beating, stabbing, kicking or even killing them in order to rob, are regarded as experts in physical manoeuvring); sycophants, yes-men, appeasers and flatterers are dear to their masters (i.e. those who can flatter and sing false praises of bosses and superiors become their favourite, while those who dare to be frank and tell the truth are scolded and shunted out of the organization); and those who have no control over their taste-buds, eating and drinking without paying attention to the kind of food or drink they are imbibing (i.e. people who live to eat and not eat to live; people who make merry eating and drinking without paying any attention to either their health or to whether the thing eaten or drunk is suitable for the purpose of eating or drinking) are regarded or recognised as 'Mahatmas' (great souls).

Similarly, pretensions, boastfulness, deceit and conceit are regarded as the correct path to be followed to get respect and success in the world during the age of Kali-yug.

In short everything is opposite to what it should have been; all characters and virtues go against the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety during the corrupt age of Kali-yug. (549)

550. असुभ बेष भूषन धरें भच्छाभच्छ जे खाहिं ।  
तेइ जोगी तेइ सिद्ध नर पूज्य ते कलिजुग माहिं ॥

550. asubha bēṣa bhūṣana dharēm bhacchābhaccha jē khāhim.  
tē'i jōgī tē'i sid'dha nara pūjya tē kalijuga māhim..

Those who wear ostentious, flamboyant and garish clothes, sport external marks to advertise their high birth and stature, wear flashy and gaudy ornaments, and eat everything and anything without paying attention to whether it is worthy of eating or not—such people get great respect in Kali-yug as being Yogis (ascetics and mendicants) and Siddhas (mystics); they are the ones who are honoured and feted in this world; they are known as 'monks' and given high titles such as 'reverend' and 'honourable'. (550)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 98 Ka.]

551. जे अपकारी चार तिन्ह कर गौरव मान्य तेइ ।  
मन क्रम बचन लबार ते बकता कलिकाल महुँ ॥

551. jē apakārī cāra tinha kara gaurava mān'ya tē'i.

mana krama bacana labāra tē bakatā kalikāla mahum̃ ..

In Kali-yug, those who cause harm to others due to their behaviour, actions and nature have honour and esteem; and those who are liars and adopt falsehood by their mind, speech and actions are regarded as great orators and learned preachers in the world. (551)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 98 Kha.]

552. ब्रह्मग्यान बिनु नारि नर कहहिं न दूसरि बात ।  
कौड़ी लागि लोभ बस करहिं बिप्र गुर घात ॥

552. brahmagyāna binu nāri nara kahahim̃ na dūsari bāta.  
kauṛī lāgi lōbha basa karahim̃ bipra gura ghāta..

In this era of Kali-yug, people pretend to be highly educated and enlightened, boasting of their superior knowledge of Brahm, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness. They proclaim that they want to speak of nothing else but the knowledge of Brahm—i.e. they speak loudly espousing the principles of righteousness, piety, holiness, ethics and morality. [This refers to modern-day so-called pious men who raise their hands and shout their lungs out proclaiming to be upholders of Dharma and give long discourses on the scriptures, preaching the laws of Dharma enshrined in them, the principles of truth, auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, nobility and morality. But when one examines their personal lives one discovers that they live a life that is just the opposite of what they preach openly.]

But ironically, (inspite of publicly proclaiming to be upholders of Dharma) they kill their elders and Brahmins out of greed for a little money ('Kauri' or penny). [They are highly rapacious and greedy, and the garb of holiness and piety that they so ostentatiously wear is done merely to cheat the world. They talk of charity, magnanimity, benevolence, detachment, equanimity, love and compassion towards all living beings etc., as well as about the futility of material wealth and the virtues of renunciation, but when it comes to their own lives they will not think twice in committing such a heinous crime as killing their elders for money.] (552)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 99 Ka.]

553. बादहिं सूद्र द्विजन्ह सन हम तुम्ह ते कछु घाटि ।  
जानइ ब्रह्म सो बिप्रबर आँखि देखावहिं डाटि ॥

553. bādahim̃ sūdra dvijanha sana hama tumha tē kachu ghāṭi.  
jāna'i brahma sō biprabara ām̃khi dēkhāvahim̃ ḍāṭi..

In Kali-yug, the Shudras (who belong to the lower section of society and are not much learned and knowledgable) behave arrogantly and think that they are wise and experts. They enter into debates with the Brahmins (who are highly placed in the social hierarchy and are supposed to be learned), and haughtily challenge them, saying, 'Are we in anyway inferior to you? Who is a true Brahmin? A person who understands, realises or

attains the knowledge of Brahma is a true Brahmin, but you fellows know nothing of the sort; you only pretend and boast of such knowledge!’

[When we read this Doha alongside Doha no. 552, the meaning becomes clear. When those who are supposed to be learned and speak of Brahm act in a way that is contrary to their teachings, they face rebuke and scorn from even those who are lowly themselves. Normally, such insulting behaviour of speaking on the face of learned people and challenging them is against the norms of good conduct, but these so-called learned Brahmins have created such a piquant situation where they cannot defend themselves from being denigrated and insulted because they have fallen from their exalted position in the society, thereby inviting scorn and ridicule.] (553)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 99 Kha.]

554. साखी सबदी दोहरा कहि कहनी उपखान ।  
भगति निरुपहिं भगत कलि निंदहिं बेद पुरान ॥

554. sākhī sabadī dōharā kahi kahanī upakhāna.  
bhagati nirupahim bhagata kali nindahim bēda purāna..

In Kali-yug, false devotees (i.e. those who pretend to be devotees of the Lord God, but are quite the contrary in practice) try to espouse the virtues of having devotion for the Lord and spread this message of devotion and love for God by various compositions (such as verses, couplets, stanzas in the form of poetry, prose, stories, anecdotes, drama, etc.), but they have no reservations in criticising established time-tested doctrines and principles espoused by the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Purans, etc.<sup>1</sup>

[This refers to many cults that have sprung up during Kali-you that claim to preach about God by way of musical compositions and poetical verses, but ridicule ancient scriptures written by learned sages and seers who had spent their entire lives meditating and contemplating upon God. Each of these cults proclaims that it is the real thing, it is the one which is speaking truly of God, and the rest of them are heretics and atheists.

While it is alright to sing the glories of the Lord God in anyway one prefers and in any language of one’s choice, but it is certainly uncalled-for to ridicule and undermine the value of the ancient scriptures which were the ones that were pioneers in first bringing the light of knowledge of the unknown entity known as God within the reach and understanding of the world. Doesn’t the world owe some respect to them; don’t these scriptures and ancient wise ones deserve some credit for their efforts and wisdom that they have so selflessly passed down to our generation?

But well, this is exactly what Tulsidas is hinting at. The modern age of Kali-yug is so mean, selfish and deprecated mentally that it never feels obliged and thankful to anyone.] (554)

[Note—Doha no. 554 should be read alongside Doha nos. 555-556.

<sup>1</sup>In Doha no. 556 it is said that the holy scriptures have hidden themselves in the seclusion of mountain caves—it is to escape such false scriptures as mentioned in the present Doha no. 554.]

555. श्रुति संमत हरिभगति पथ संजुत बिरति बिबेक ।  
तेहि परिहरिहिं बिमोह बस कल्पहिं पंथ अनेक ॥

555. śruti sammata haribhagati patha sañjuta birati bibēka.  
tēhi pariharihiṁ bimōha basa kalpahim pantha anēka..

People abandon the truthful path of devotion to the Lord God, which is steeped in renunciation ('Virati') and wisdom ('Vivek') as expounded in and espoused by the Vedas.

Instead, people of Kali-yug, reeling under the influence of ignorance and delusions, create and propagate different new paths according to their whims and fancies, paths that are misleading and wayward, paths that are devoid of the truth and lack any sanctity, paths that create an illusion of religiosity and holiness (but are in fact as untrustworthy and ruinous as rushing behind a mirage seen in a hot desert in search of the illusive water there). (555)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 100.

Doha no. 555 should be read alongside Doha no. 554.

In Ram Charit Manas, the auspicious path of spiritual wisdom that advocates having devotion for God and practicing renunciation for the material world has been espoused in Uttar Kand, Doha no. 20 that says—“During the reign of Lord Ram, people followed the path shown by the Vedas and other scriptures; they adhered to the laws of Dharma that applied to the section of the society they belonged to, i.e. they did their assigned duties with diligence and faithfulness, keeping an eye to avoid doing anything that was unrighteous and unholy. The result was that they were universally happy and contented, and there was no trace of sorrow and (mental and spiritual) diseases.”

In fact, the entire section of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—right upto Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24, describe what a proper way of life is.]

556. सकल धरम बिपरीत कलि कल्पित कोटि कुपंथ ।  
पुन्य पराय पहार बन दुरे पुरान सुग्रन्थ ॥

556. sakala dharama bipolarita kali kalpita kōṭi kupantha.  
pun'ya parāya pahāra bana durē purāna sugrantha..

In Kali-yug, everything has become unfavourable and opposed to Dharma (the eclectic general principles that govern a pious, righteous, noble and holy way of life as described in the ancient scriptures). [That is, it has become extremely difficult to follow the principles of Dharma because the situation that prevails in today's world is not conducive to such practice.]

Numerous new misleading paths purported to be 'Dharma' have been created at random, and all of them are hawked as the true 'Dharma' (but none of them have any validity and sanctity in the eyes of the scriptures).

As a result, the grand old virtues of 'Punya' (the principles that define goodness and auspicious virtues that are collectively called 'Dharma') have run away voluntarily to

the mountains, and the scriptures have hidden themselves in caves (to escape torment from persecution, proscription and ridicule, and from being annihilated altogether).

[In other words, when those who practice Dharma, those who are wise, learned, pious and holy, find that the laws of right conduct cannot be followed due to the situation on the ground which is not conducive to practicing them, when they find that the tide of time is viciously against them, they wisely decide to withdraw from such an environment that is vicious, cruel, suffocating and polluted. What is the wise idea in trying to teach mercy to the sword and getting killed in the process?

So, those who are wise and learned and peace-loving decide to retire to the serene environment of the mountains to escape being tormented, persecuted and publicly ridiculed. Instead of getting the ancient scriptures prohibited, proscribed and getting burnt by fanatics and bigots, they decide to take this spiritual heritage with them and prevent it from complete annihilation. The heat of moral and spiritual degradation and depravation forces them to move away from such an environment to a place that would not annihilate the scripture and force it to extinction. There they wait patiently for the tide to turn in the favour of Dharma. They know that every night is followed by the day, and therefore they bid their time and wait for the evil times to pass away and good times to come.] (556)

[Note—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 97 reiterates the same facts as mentioned in our present Doha. It says—“Kali-yug has eclipsed all good literature#, and the holy scriptures have vanished. Those who are deceitful and wicked pretend to be holy men, and they have created numerous false paths that they loudly proclaim as ‘Dharma’. The people are overcome by Moha (delusions), and greed has devoured all good deeds and selfless action.”

#See Doha no. 557 below.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 184 mentions how all the laws of proper conduct were trounced during the evil reign of the demons.

The escaping of the scriptures and wisdom to the mountains to hide there in caves to escape from persecution and proscription is also mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 84. Here, the ‘escaping of the scriptures and wisdom to the mountains’ is a symbolic way of saying that wise and learned people fled terror and persecution unleashed during the evil period during the reign of the demons which is another metaphoric way of visualizing life in the evil era of Kali-yug.

In the context of the scriptures preferring to lie low, see Doha no. 554 of this book Dohawali. ]

557. धातुबाद निरुपाधि बर सद्गुरु लाभ सुमीत ।  
देव दरस कलिकाल में पोथिन दुरे सभीत ॥

557. dhātubāda nirupādhi bara sadguru lābha sumīta.  
dēva darasa kalikāla mēm pōthina durē sabhīta..

In Kali-yug, the following five traditional noble things have become obscure and relegated to the oblivion, and their knowledge has become limited to the pages of books because these good things are scared of Kali-yug (and they dare not come out in the open

due to the fear of being ridiculed and scorned at as heresy and witchcraft)—(i) Chemistry (alchemy and the ancient art of meticulously creating alloys and medicines by mixing different chemicals and rare elements manually by individuals who were experts in their fields), (ii) the ability to grant boons that could not be neutralized (i.e. possessing mystical powers), (iii) a wise and learned Guru (moral preceptor, spiritual advisor, guide and teacher who is also selfless and compassionate)<sup>1</sup>, (iv) true and loyal friends (who will never betray, and who always think of the good and welfare of the person)<sup>2</sup>, and (v) the actual vision of the Lord God (as was witnessed by ancient saints, sages, seers and mystics)<sup>3</sup>.

[Ancient knowledge of herbal medicines and chemical concoctions that dealt with specific diseases and individuals, have been forgotten. It is replaced by mass-produced patent medicines that do more harm than good in the long run. Neither the doctor nor the patient has the time for the ancient procedures that were patient and disease specific. We must remember that in olden days when wars were fought face to face, even grave and mortal wounds were handled deftly by medicine men who tended to the wounded soldiers and made them fit for the next day's battle. Today, even small wounds require long treatment and hospitalization.

No one now has the mystical powers possessed by ancient sages and seers by which they could grant boons and give blessings.

Selfless, wise, self-realised and enlightened teachers who were dedicated to the spiritual welfare of the disciple are nowhere to be found. They are replaced by commercial teaching enterprises and pseudo Gurus who are more concerned with making money and building commercial empires than bothering about such irrelevant and waste-of-time issues as the welfare of an individual and salvation of his soul. Who bothers!

Similarly, friendships are made for commercial gains and fulfilling desires. All the people are driven by selfish goals, and if the so-called friend serves no selfish interest then he is not worthy to be a friend at all. In this context, see Doha nos. 547—548.

Since the people have aligned themselves to false scriptures and false Gurus, they get the wrong type of knowledge about the Lord God. It is like the case of an incompetent teacher giving wrong education to his students. Say for example, if a child is taught by his teacher that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east, and this wrong information is affirmatively written in text books that the child regards as standard references, then say what can one expect from such a boy or girl when they grow up to become mature individuals.

In this scenario of wrong and incompetent spiritual education in Kali-yug, accompanied with the lack of right teachers and correct knowledge about meditation and other eclectic practices that make it possible for an individual to rise high above mundane life and attain a level of transcendental existence where he attains self-realisation and enlightenment about the individual soul and the supreme Soul, it is impossible to have a vision of the Lord God who is a personified form of the Supreme Self and the Supreme Cosmic Consciousness.] (557)

[Note—<sup>1</sup>It is the teacher who is responsible to educate an individual in any field of knowledge. When good spiritual and moral teachers are absent in Kali-yug, how can the children be expected to have the wherewithal to have the divine vision of the Lord God? It is a wise teacher who removes all doubts and confusions in the mind of his student and shows him the right path—refer: Ram Charit Manas, line no. 2 of Doha no. 17.

<sup>2</sup>The characteristics of a good friend have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 7. Basically it is stressed here that a true friend is one who fully empathises with his friend, and treats the latter's sorrows and grief and problems as his own. He does everything within his means to help his dear friend when he needs his help. Even when not specifically asked to do so, a true friend is one who volunteers to help his distressed friend.

In Kali-yug there are only selfish friends—see Doha no. 547-548.

<sup>3</sup>As far as the Gods appearing personally before the devotee, there are ample references in the Ram Charit Manas where Gods did appear to accept offerings made by worshippers. But it is possible only when the proper process is followed diligently, and when the worshippers have the right power of vision to see such divine Beings. The 'proper process' has become unknown in Kali-yug because the scriptures which describe them have been neglected and ridiculed by the creation of false scriptures, as well as the fact that teachers who could teach the secret art whereby one acquired the mystical power to have the vision of divine Beings are nowhere to be found. See Doha nos. 552—556, and 558.

One cannot have an auspicious and divine vision of the Lord God without developing auspicious and divine qualities. Say, how can one expect a modern-day rocket to leave the gravitational pull of the earth and enter space if the fuel is not right or the components of the rocket are not to the correct standard.

In ancient times when the scriptures were properly read and taught, this was possible—i.e. the Gods did appear personally to accept offerings—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; (ii) line no. 2 of Chanda no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323; and (iii) Doha no. 323 itself.]

558. सुर सदननि तीरथ पुरिन निपट कुचालि कुसाज ।  
मनहुँ मवा से मारि कलि राजत सहित समाज ॥

558. sura sadanani tīratha purina nipaṭa kucāli kusāja.  
manahum̐ mavā sē māri kali rājata sahita samāja..

Corruption and malpractices and vices in religious places and shrines (i.e. in temples, pilgrim places and holy sites) have become deep-rooted and firmly entrenched.

For all practical purposes it appears that Kali-yug, along with all its kith and kin, has made these places as its permanent abode

[These kith and kin of Kali-yug are the countless negative qualities and vices that have become prevalent in today's world. They include such negative traits as Kaam—lust and passions, Krodh—anger, Lobha—greed, Moha—delusions and attachments, Mada—arrogance and hypocrisy, Dambha/Kapat—deceit, conceit, wickedness, lies and pretensions, etc.

In this Doha, Tulsidas laments on the high level of corruption and degradation that are eating into the spiritual fabric of religious places like worms and insects destroying everything where they manage to find a foothold.] (558)

559. गोंडु गवाँर नृपाल महि जमन महा महिपाल ।  
साम न दान न भेद कलि केवल दंड कराल ॥

559. gōṅṛa gavām̐ra nṛpāla mahi jamana mahā mahipāla.  
sāma na dāna na bhēda kali kēvala daṇḍa karāla..

In Kali-yug, the backward people (tribals; the ‘Gaur’s’) and idiots (‘Ganwaars’) have become kings, while Yavans (cruel followers of non-vedic religion; the Muslims) and fallen people (heretics; non-believers; the impure ones) have become emperors.

These incompetent rulers employ punishment (daṇḍa) as the only instrument of state policy, while other instruments that were practiced by ancient noble kings and rulers, such as equality (sāma), charity (dāna) and spying upon adversaries (bhēda) (which are the other three essential elements of political science) are neglected and forgotten.

[Tulsidas means that in Kali-yug, the rulers are extremely harsh and cruel. They use coercive means to ruthlessly force their subjects and dependants to obey them. Traditionally other methods have been prescribed and practiced to control kingdoms and make the subjects loyal to their rulers, such as employing the principles of ‘Saam’—treating all the subjects equally so that even the poor and lowly feel obliged to be loyal to the king as he is shown the same respect as his richer and higher compatriot, ‘Daan’—giving liberal donations and largesse so that the have-nots become obliged and their allegiance can be easily ensured, and ‘Bhed’—to spy upon trouble makers and use dissention amongst them to tame the more rogue elements of the group). These three methods do not cause repression and are not oppressive. Harsh punishment may force the people to obey their rulers, but this causes suppressed anger in the population which might explode when an opportune time comes.] (559)

The unworthy and unscrupulous generation of Kali-yug

560. फोरहिं सिल लोढ़ा सदन लागें अढुक पहार ।  
कायर कूर कुपूत कलि घर घर सहस डहार ॥

560. phōrahiṁ sila lōṛhā sadana lāgēm̐ aḍhuka pahāra.  
kāyara kūra kupūta kali ghara ghara sahasa ḍahāra..

When a stupid man gets hurt by (say, falling or stumbling from) a mountain, he can’t take revenge on the mighty mountain, so he comes back home angry and frustrated, kicking and pounding the grinding stone or the muller or the stone pestle whichever he finds lying in the kitchen to vent his anger on them, thereby breaking them and feeling contented that he has taken revenge for being hurt by the ‘stone’ (i.e. the mountain).

In a similar way, thousands of unworthy stupid sons who are unscrupulous, coward, cruel and wicked are born in every household during the time of Kali-yug. These foolish and ungrateful sons torment their own family members, creating misery and grief for them, venting the ire of their own failures on their kith and kin by accusing them for all their misfortunes and incompetence, and the frustrations that arise out of it. (560)

The importance of giving charities in Kali-yug

561. प्रगट चारि पद धर्म के कलि महुँ एक प्रधान ।  
जेन केन बिधि दीन्हें दान करइ कल्यान ॥

561. *pragaṭa cāri pada dharma kē kali mahum'ēka pradhāna.*  
*jēna kēna bidhi dīnhēm dāna kara'i kalyāna..*

Dharma (the auspicious principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, nobility and goodness) stands on four noble virtues that are known as the 'Pad' or the legs of Dharma. [These four 'legs' of Dharma are the following—(i) 'Satya' or truthfulness, (ii) 'Ahinsa' or non-violence, (iii) 'Sauch' or purity of mind, body, speech and deeds, and (iv) 'Daan' or making charity.]

Out of these, only Daan or making charity has survived in Kali-yug. Charity done in any manner is always beneficial, auspicious and a provider of welfare to the living being. [While the rest of the means of attaining auspiciousness becomes difficult in Kali-yug, making charity requires no great effort. A man can give as little as he can afford to get the spiritual rewards of making charity. Even a penny suffices. This era of Kali-yug is so notorious for sins and vices that permeate the atmosphere everywhere in this world that a man may find it impractical to practice the other three noble aspects of Dharma. But he can very easily give a single penny from whatever little he has.] (561)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 103 Ka.]

The credit and the greatest virtue of Kali-yug

562. कलिजुग सम जुग आन नहिं जौं नर कर बिस्वास ।  
गाइ राम गुन गन बिमल भव तर बिनहिं प्रयास ॥

562. *kalijuga sama juga āna nahim jaurm nara kara bisvāsa.*  
*gā'i rāma guna gana bimala bhava tara binahim prayāsa..*

If a man has faith and belief, then there is no other Kaal (or period, era, time) which can be compared to the greatness of Kali-yug. It is because in Kali-yug a person can easily and effortlessly get liberation and deliverance for his soul from this ocean-like world of delusions and entrapments by merely singing the auspicious, divine and holy glories of Lord Sri Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. (562)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, as Doha no. 103 Kha.

The greatness of Kali-yug in its ability to provide an easy access to emancipation and salvation to a creature by merely singing the holy glories and divine name of the Lord is emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103. These have been described by the crow saint Kaagbhusund to the king of birds, Garud. Now, let us read in brief what these lines say:

“Oh the enemy of serpents, Lord Garud! Listen carefully. {I shall now tell you one goodness of Kali-yog that all other ages lack.} Kali-yug is an abode (full) of sins, vices, misdeeds and all other sorts of evils and negative qualities. But it has one grand spiritual virtue—and it is this: a creature can find liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this delusory and entrapping world most easily and with the least of effort. (Doha 102 Ka).

The spiritual destiny that one attains by adopting other arduous paths of worshipping the Lord God, doing various sacrifices and other religious deeds, as well as practicing meditation and contemplation in the other three eras of Sata-yug, Treta-yug and Dwapar-yug, the same rewards or fruits are obtained very easily by merely relying on the holy and divine name of the Lord God. (Doha no. 102 Kha).

In the first era known as Sata-yug, all the people used to be highly wise, enlightened and righteous, as well as practitioners of renunciation and meditation—i.e. they were all self-realised like ascetics even though they lived a normal life in the household. All living beings used to cross this vast ocean-like deluding world by meditating on and remembering the holy name of Lord God. (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103).

In the next era, viz. the Treta-yug, people perform many types of fire sacrifices and observe many religious sacraments, and they cross over this ocean-like world by offering all their auspicious deeds to the Lord God (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 103).

In Dwapar, a living being worships the holy feet of Lord Ram and crosses this ocean-like world. In this era, there is no other way (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 103).

In Kali-yug, however, one can measure the breadth of this vast ocean-like world (i.e. go across the stretch of the vast ocean-like world which is otherwise uncrossable and immeasurable) by merely singing the holy and divine name of Lord Ram (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103).

Come to think of it—in Kali-yug there is no wherewithal or opportunity or inclination to do fire sacrifices, meditation, practice renunciation or other auspicious aspects of religion, and there is no spiritual wisdom and enlightenment either. The only medium that is available to a living being seeking emancipation and salvation is the path of singing the glories of the holy and divine name of Lord Ram (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 103).

Therefore, anyone who abandons all other hopes and mediums of attaining liberation and deliverance from this world, and instead sings the glories of Lord Ram with great affection and devotion—only then can he cross the vast ocean-like world very easily. There is no doubt about it. It is in Kali-yug that the great mystical powers and effectiveness of the holy and divine name of the Lord (as a single-window solution for all spiritual needs of a creature, and as the easiest and sure-shot medium for attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for the soul) is most evident and profound (Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 103).

There is one other great credit of Kali-yug. And it that during this era, one derives merit for all mental thoughts that are auspicious, righteous and noble, but no demerit accumulates if one merely thinks of doing some mischief and committing a sin without actually doing them. In other words, if one silently thinks of the Lord God by remembering the Lord all times of the day, he gets the same spiritual reward as got by actually doing religious deeds such as pilgrimage, fire sacrifices, repeating holy Mantras, reading scriptures or doing any other kind of noble deed without having to physically do them. On the other hand, suppose someone gets angry at another person and mentally hits him with a stick, then no injury is actually caused to the other person, and therefore the world does not know that the first person wishes to harm the other person, or is angry in the first place. So when the man calms down and his anger subsides, he takes a deep breath and relaxes as no bitterness has been created around him, and he can then maintain earlier formal relations necessary for business which might have suffered had he actually hit the other man with a stick. The other man never comes to know what transpired in the mind of the first person whom he had annoyed. But the Lord God is pleased even if

someone offers mental prayers to him. In fact, mental prayers are heard better by the Lord because they come straight from the heart and mind of the devotee as compared to formal prayers printed in mass-produced books as these are not personal talk with the Lord, but mere perfunctory formalities (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103).]

Devotion and love for Lord God must not be diminished under any circumstance

563. श्रवन घटहुँ पुनि दृग घटहुँ घटउ सकल बल देह ।  
इते घटे घटिहै कहा जौं न घटै हरिनेह ॥

563. śravana ghaṭahum' puni drga ghaṭahum' ghaṭa'u sakala bala dēha.  
itē ghaṭēm ghaṭihai kahā jaur̄ṅ na ghaṭai harinēha..

[Tulsidas asserts--] The hearing power of the ears may decrease, the seeing faculty of the eyes may be diminished, and the strength of the body might weaken and the body itself might decay. But none of these handicaps matter at all (for the spiritual well-being and an exalted destination of the soul) if one's love and devotion for Lord Sri Ram (the incarnate Supreme Being) remains robust and firm, and it does not suffer (decrease or decline) despite all other adverse situations. (563)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 205, Bharat seeks sage Bharadwaj's blessings by praying and hoping as follows—“Let my devotion and love for the holy feet of Lord Ram and Sita (the Lord's divine consort) increase day by day as a result of your (sage Bharadwaj's) blessings. Even if the cloud forgets about the Chatak for the entire duration of the latter's life and does not give the drop of rain this poor bird so earnestly requests the cloud for to quench its thirst, and may it be so that the cloud become so cruel and hostile that when the Chatak asks for a drop of rain the clouds angrily showers it with hail-stones and hits it with the thunderbolt (Vajra), the humble Chatak still longs for the single drop of rain that it expects the cloud to give it. The Chatak never thinks of breaking its vows of accepting no other drop of water except the one which is directly provided by the cloud, because if it does so its immaculate reputation as a lover of the cloud and a steadfast upholder of vows would suffer, and the Chatak does not want this ignominy to taint its wonderful reputation as a devoted lover of the cloud. Just like gold becoming purer when it is heated in the fire, the glory of a servant (devotee) of the Lord shines and acquires fame when he is able to maintain his love, devotion and submission for the Lord under all situations and eventualities.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 Bharat declares “I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward I want is that I may have unwavering, undiluted and unstunted love and devotion for holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and for all my future births.”]

Wise men prefer to keep quiet when the times are bad

564. तुलसी पापस के समय धरी कोकिलन मौन ।

अब तो दादुर बोलिहैं हमें पूछिहै कौन ॥

564. tulasī pāpasa kē samaya dharī kōkilana mauna.  
aba tō dādura bōlihaiṁ hamēm pūchihai kauna..

When the rainy season comes, the cuckoo stops calling because she thinks that the time has come for the frogs and toads to croak loudly, and no one would hear her.

[Tulsidas means that during adverse times and unfavourable circumstances, wise gentlemen prefer to become silent because it is the turn of the rascals, the scoundrels, the pretentious and the wicked ones to talk themselves hoarse and boast loudly. If the wise men attempt to speak, they are shouted down. So it is prudent to keep quiet.] (564)

Lord Ram's glorious virtues are perfect antidotes for the ills of Kaliyug

565. कुपथ कुतरक कुचालि कलि कपट दंभ पाषंड ।  
दहन राम गुन ग्राम जिमि ईधन अनल प्रचंड ॥

565. kupatha kutaraka kucāli kali kapaṭa dambha pāṣaṇḍa.  
dahana rāma guna grāma jimi īndhana anala pracaṇḍa..

In order to burn (i.e. destroy, negate and overcome the bad effects of) the numerous evils and vices prevalent dominantly in Kali-yug, such as 'Kupath' (wrong or evil ways), 'Kutarka' (illogical, irrelevant and impertinent arguments), 'Kuchaal, Kapat and Dhambha' (cunning, deceit, conceit, evil conduct, wickedness, fraud, trickery, pretension, haughtiness, vanity, boasting etc.), the singing of the glories of Lord Sri Ram has the same effect as a fierce fire has on the fuel.

[A raging fire would destroy a huge stock of fuel quickly. Similarly, remembering and narrating the divine glories of Lord Ram has the powerful effect that destroys all negative consequences of sins, vices and evils that are dominant in the corrupt and decadent age of Kali-yug.] (565)

The two effective ways to overcome the bad effects of Kali-yug

566. कलि पाषंड प्रचार प्रबल पाप पावँर पतित ।  
तुलसी उभय अधार राम नाम सुरसरि सलिल ॥

566. kali pāṣaṇḍa pracāra prabala pāpa pāvam̐ra patita.  
tulasī ubhaya adhāra rāma nāma surasari salila..

In Kali-yug, pretensions, haughtiness, boasts and deceit are very widespread. Everywhere one sees sinful, evil and lowly persons who have abandoned their rightful path and fallen from their principles.

Tulsidas says that in this fearful moral situation, there are only two practical means or ways to overcome all (spiritual) hurdles and find liberation—one is the holy

name of Lord Ram (who is an incarnate Supreme Being), and the other is the holy water of river Ganges (which is said to have originated from the toe of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, and therefore possesses mystical powers of purification). (566)

[Note—Refer Doha nos. 57-63, 126-129, 140-143, 156-157, 171-177, 567-569 also.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 27 it is said “in Kali-yug, there is no right deed, no devotion for Lord God, and no wisdom and enlightenment; the only hope of succour is Lord Ram’s holy name”.

The same idea is expressed in Tulsidas’ Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 48 that says “In Kali-yug, there is no Gyan (wisdom and enlightenment), no Viraag (renunciation and detachment from falsehood and materialism), no Yoga and Samadhi (meditation and its higher state of transcendental existence). Oh Tulsidas! Don’t get confused. Do Japa (repetition) of the holy name of Lord Ram without any doubts and interruption.”

The holiness of the water of river Ganges is praised in Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 17-20, and in Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 145-147. Both these books have been published in English by this author separately.]

The most auspicious moment in a man’s life

567. रामचंद्र मुख चंद्रमा चित चकोर जब होइ ।  
राम राज सब काज सुभ समय सुहावन सोइ ॥

567. rāmacandra mukha candramā cita cakōra jaba hō'i.  
rāma rāja saba kāja subha samaya suhāvana sō'i..

That moment when the mind and heart of a person becomes like that of the bird known as Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge) which fixes its gaze at the full moon without looking anywhere else, i.e. when the devotee’s mind and heart constantly remembers the divine form of Lord Ram with great devotion and affection just like the Chakor that constantly looks at the beautiful face of the full moon—then wise ones say that such a moment should be regarded as the most auspicious and fruitful in a person’s life. This moment is as fruitful and auspicious as the time when Lord Ram actually ruled over his kingdom on earth, and its citizens had the good fortune of daily getting a divine glimpse of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram who lived in their midst. Those times were exceptionally auspicious, happy and fruitful for the devotees.

[In other words, though the Lord is not physically present now, but if one constantly and sincerely remembers the Lord mentally, and has heart-felt deep love and devotion for the Lord, then the spiritual benefits that such a devotee gets in the present is the same as the one got during the actual reign of Lord Ram on earth during the age of Treta-yug.

For all practical purposes, the Lord is actually present before a devotee at all times of existence if the latter has firm devotion and deep affection for him.

The central idea of this Doha is that the moment in a man’s life when he remembers the Lord God is the best and the most auspicious one. Therefore, if a person is able to remember the Lord in all moments of his mundane life then his entire life becomes one seamless form of meditation, and this enables the Lord to be close to him each and every moment throughout life.

This closeness with the Lord can take many forms, such as serving the Lord God by offering all deeds to him, seeing the Lord God in each unit and aspect of this creation, remembering the Lord God's holy name and constantly repeating it silently inside one's Mana (mind and heart), having complete faith and devotion for the Lord God, and so on.

One of the many ways that this particular Doha advocates is to remember the Lord's divine form and his glories during each moment of a man's life.] (567)

[Note—This Doha belongs to Ram Agya Prashnawali, and appears in it as no. 6/4/4.

Lord Ram's face was so beautiful to look at that he has repeatedly been addressed as 'Ram Chandra'—Ram who is like the full moon. For instance, when the Lord had gone to the forest, the people who lived in the villages and hamlets falling on the way gathered to have a divine glimpse of the Lord. They were so much mesmerized by the bewitching beauty of the Lord's face which resembled a full moon that they looked at it fixedly, and this sight gave them immense happiness and joy—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 115.

In another instance we find that when the sages and hermits of the forest gathered around the Lord in his hermitage, he sat in their midst facing them, and all of them watched the Lord's stunningly beautiful full moon-like face just like the Chakor gazes at the full moon—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 12 and its preceding C13.]

How to develop the best form of love and devotion for Lord Ram

568. बीज राम गुन गन नयन जल अंकुर पुलकालि ।  
सुकृती सुतन सुखेत बर बिलसत तुलसी सालि ॥

568. bīja rāma guna gana nayana jala añkura pulakāli.  
sukṛtī sutana sukhēta bara bilasata tulasī sāli..

[Tulsidas uses the example of the farmer's field and the process of getting an excellent harvest to describe how one can develop the best form of love and devotion for Lord Ram.]

When the auspicious 'seeds' symbolizing Lord Ram's glories and virtues that are divine and holy by their inherent nature are sown in a fertile soil of an excellent 'field' representing a person's body that is free from sins and vices (i.e. the person has voluntarily abstained from any unrighteous and impure deeds), and then these seeds are 'watered' with tears of pure devotion and love for the Lord (i.e. when the person's eyes well-up with tears of exhilaration and joy as soon as he remembers the Lord), and when he feels so ecstatic that tears begin to roll down from his eyes as soon as he remembers the Lord and his divine form, holy name, auspicious deeds etc.—according to Tulsidas it is only then that a new 'sprout' representing ecstasy and exhilaration accompanied by bliss and joy of success in realizing Lord Ram's love and devotion comes to the surface.

In due course of time, this effort produces a rich 'harvest' (that symbolizes an excellent, the most vibrant and the best quality of 'Bhakti' for the Lord God that translates into the purest form of devotion, love and affection for the Lord, as well as complete submission before the Lord that leads the person's soul to merge with its primary source, the cosmic Soul, when the 'crop' is finally harvested and gives the 'farmer', the devotee, his due reward). (568)

[Note—One reaps what one sows. If one sows good seeds, one gets a good harvest. If one sows faulty seeds, the harvest is ruined, and then there is no use blaming the rains, or the soil or the climate for a bad harvest.

If a man spends his time remaining indulgent in the affairs of the gross world of material sense objects, and then blames his bad luck for his miseries and mental restlessness, then no one is to be blamed for the person's misfortunes than he himself. Such a man who has distanced himself from the Lord's grace, and the bliss that automatically comes with the remembrance of the Lord and his holy name, and then seeks happiness in the world which is inherently characterized by unhappiness, torments and miseries, is never expected to find true peace and happiness in his life.

On the other hand, a man whose mind and heart remain close to a source that is an eternal fount of spiritual bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity, i.e. the remembrance of Lord Ram who personifies these grand spiritual qualities, is bound to be affected by them. It is like the case of getting the effects of one's company. If one keeps the company of the world, he is certain to be affected by the latter's qualities—i.e. he cannot remain peaceful and contented. On the contrary, if one keeps the company of Lord Ram, he is definitely going to enjoy peace and bliss that characterize the Lord.

Now, let us examine the role of the body. If a farmer sows the best quality of seed in a bad soil, then no matter how hard he tries, no matter how much he waters the field and how good the rains are and the favourite the climate is, the crop will be ruined. Similar is the case with the man. His body is the habitat of the mind and the heart. It is the mind that remembers the Lord and guides a man in all his intellectual pursuits. It is the heart where devotion, affection, love and a desire to surrender before the Supreme Lord sprout. If the body is involved in wrong-doings, the mind and the heart cannot escape the negative influence. For instance, if a man stands for a whole day in blazing sun, he cannot escape the negative effects of the sun's heat inspite of his drinking a lot of water to keep hydrated. The proper intake of water may prevent him from dying due to dehydration, but this is not the only problem that the heat of the sun causes on the health of the person.

When the body is kept pure by observing the laws of Dharma, for instance it does not do anything that is unrighteous and improper, it helps others instead of being a cause of pain to them, it worships the Lord God and does everything in this world as a means of selfless service to the Lord, it repeats the holy name of the Lord instead of indulging in loose worldly banter, it sees, touches, smells and eats proper things as advised by the scriptures instead of things that sort of pollute the inner self of the person, then natural positive vibes and a dynamic spiritual energy field are generated from such actions that would have corresponding positive and constructive effects on the mind and the heart.

A clean and refreshed body helps the man to keep his mind and heart fresh, clean and pure. Just like diseases can be avoided by practicing proper hygiene for the body, the purity and holiness of the mind and the heart can be maintained and enhanced by ensuring purity and holiness of the physical body where these two vital components (mind and heart) reside.

The mind and the heart are like the two legs that help a person in his spiritual pursuit. While the mind helps a spiritual aspirant to analyse the world and decide for himself the goal that he wants to reach, the heart helps him to actually move in this direction, because if a man does anything 'half-heartedly' then success eludes him. The mind helps him to determine convincingly what is true and what is false in this world, what will give him peace and what will heap him with misery, what will lead to his remaining bound and gagged in fetters of delusions and spiritual bondages that would lead to his ruin, and what will give him liberation and deliverance for all times to come, the heart on the other hand helps him to nurture such emotions as love, devotion, faith, submission, loyalty, honesty

etc. towards his chosen goal which will ultimately help him to realise or attain that goal which the mind has helped him to set for himself.

It must be remembered here that the Atma, the pure consciousness of the individual which is his true 'self' and a personified microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma that is the Lord of the entire creation, lives in the heart. The mind is the habitat of the intellect, the sub-conscious and the faculties of reasoning and analysis. The mind diverts the efforts of a man to any goal, and therefore if the mind decides that this goal is to be Lord Ram because that is the truthful destiny for the soul, the Atma, it is only then that the man will make efforts by his body in this direction. He will divert all his activities and deeds in the realisation of this noble and holy goal.

Then his mind would advise him the various options open to him—such as doing meditation and contemplation, practicing renunciation and dispassion, remembering the Lord and his glorious deeds, reading the scriptures and understanding the 'truth' explained by them instead of reading books that pull the mind towards the world and its delusions that churn the soul in a vortex of illusionary charms and transient happiness.

Like the wise farmer who ensure his future happiness by being careful in the very beginning when he selects the proper seeds that would suit the type of soil available and also tests if the soil is fertile or not, then spends a lot of time and energy to properly prepare the field by ploughing and tilling it, and once the seeds are sown he ensures that proper arrangement is made for irrigation, then when new sprouts appear he carefully tends them against weeds and worms, and later on against birds and insects when the crop is in full bloom, a wise and intelligent man ensures his spiritual well-being and happiness by cultivating devotion and love for Lord God. For this desire to bear fruits, he prepares the ground by first keeping his body pure and clean from the corruptions of the material world. Then he sows the seed of love and devotion in his heart, and uses the instrument of the mind to enable him to achieve this goal intelligently and fruitfully, without getting distracted and committing any mistakes. When the crop ripens, then just like the happy farmer who exhilarates at the sight of a blooming harvest, the spiritual seeker enjoys a surge of natural ecstasy that erupts spontaneously in his inner-self at the very thought of Lord Ram.]

569. तुलसी सहित सनेह नित सुमिरहु सीता राम ।  
सगुन सुमंगल सुभ सदा आदि मध्य परिनाम ॥

569. tulasī sahita sanēha nita sumirahu sītā rāma.  
saguna sumaṅgala subha sadā ādi madhya parināma..

Tulsidas advises that one should constantly remember the beautiful and auspicious divine form of Lord Sri Ram with full love and devotion. By doing so it would be auspicious and highly beneficial for a spiritual aspirant as it would ensure his all-round well-being and welfare in all the three phases of time in this world—i.e. his past, his present and his future will be well taken care of. (569)

[Note—This Doha appears in Ram Prashnawali, as no. 3/3/7.

Refer Doha nos. 566-567, 570 also of this book Dohawali in this context.

A slight variation of this idea is expressed by Tulsidas in Vinati Patrika, verse no. 228, stanza no. 1 that says—“For a person for whom the holy name of Lord Ram is dearer than the Lord himself—everything is auspicious for him in this age of Kali-yug.

His past, present and future that represent the three phases of life in Kali-yug, all of them become auspicious and holy for him”.]

570. पुरुषारथ स्वारथ सकल परमारथ परिनाम ।  
सुलभ सिद्धि सब साहिबी सुमिरत सीता राम ॥

570. puruṣāratha svāratha sakala paramāratha parināma.  
sulabha sid'dhi saba sāhibī sumirata sītā rāma..

As soon as a person remembers Lord Sita-Ram (i.e. Lord Ram along with his divine consort Sita) it becomes possible for him to have access to all the Siddhis (successes, achievements and powers, both the temporal as well as the spiritual) alongside establishment of lordship, authority and control over everything else in this world.

All his desires are fulfilled and his efforts rewarded, whether they are related to this material world or pertain to the spiritual world. Finally, as an added bonus, such a lucky man attains liberation and deliverance for his soul. (570)

The glory and importance of this book ‘Dohawali’

571. मनिमय दोहा दीप जहँ उर घर प्रगट प्रकास ।  
तहँ न मोह तम भय तमी कलि कज्जली बिलास ॥

571. manimaya dōhā dīpa jaham̃ ura ghara pragaṭa prakāsa.  
taham̃ na mōha tama bhaya tamī kali kajjalī bilāsa..

Those in whose household represented by their heart, the light of this gem-studded lamp of Dohas (the collection of the verses of Dohawali) shines (i.e. the meaning of the Dohas is fully understood so much so that the person is motivated to practice the ideas taught in these Dohas), it is certain that there would be no darkness of Moha (delusions; attachments with the world of falsehoods) in such a household. There would neither be any fear from the darkness of the night (i.e. from imaginary fears of misery, grief, torment and such other sufferings that are like the horrifying ghosts of the night, ghosts that do not actually exist but nevertheless terrify an ignorant man out of his wits), nor would there be any increase or expansion of the darkened soot representing the countless negativities, evils and sins of Kali-yug, along with their equally dark and foreboding consequences, that have got accumulated till now.

[In other words, if a man is wise enough he will practice what has been taught in this book known as Dohawali, and if this comes to happen his inner-self will be illuminated with the light of spiritual wisdom. He will be ‘enlightened’ and his inner-being will be free from the ‘darkness’ of spiritual delusions and the imaginary ghosts that terrify an ignorant man who does not know the truth that there is no such thing as a ‘ghost’.] (571)

572. का भाषा का संस्कृत प्रेम चाहिए साँच ।

काम जु आवै कामरी का लै करिअ कुमाच ॥

572. kā bhāṣā kā sansakṛṭa prēma cāhi'ai sām̐ca.  
kāma ju āvai kāmarī kā lai kari'a kumāca..

What language, what grammar? Only true love and true affection (along with true devotion, true faith and true dedication) is the only language that is required by a person to sing the divine glories of the Lord.

If one can do with an ordinary blanket, then say, what is the use of taking a costly shawl (because if the main objective is to overcome the cold, and an ordinary blanket would serve the purpose, why should one waste money on a costly shawl)?

[In other words, if it is so easy to please the Lord God by simply having love and devotion for him, and if this simple formula can solve all spiritual problems for a man, what is the wisdom and the great idea of wasting precious time and energy in delving deep into huge scriptural tomes which are so difficult to understand and consume a lot of time and energy.] (572)

573. मनि मानिक महँगे किए सहँगे तृन जल नाज ।  
तुलसी एते जानिए राम गरीब नेवाज ॥

573. mani mānika maham̐gē ki'ē saham̐gē tr̥na jala nāja.  
tulasī ētē jāni'ai rāma garība nēvāja..

Tulsidas sums up saying that one should just remember the fact that Lord Sri Ram is a great friend and a compassionate benefactor of the poor (i.e. the meek, the distressed, the hapless, the helpless and the lowly).

That is why he has made gems and jewels so rare and costly in this world (because we can live without them, and these are luxury items not necessary for existence and peace of mind), but things of daily use and sustenance, such as water, food and grass (needed by the cattle to graze), are made very cheap and easily available throughout the world.

[The knowledge enshrined in the Vedas, Upanishads, Purans etc. are the costly and rarefied gems and jewels which are not accessible readily to all. But these verses of Dohawali as well as other spiritual works of Tulsidas that present the essence of these scriptures in an easy to understand format using an easy language, represent the cheap and easily available spiritual nourishment that is made available to the lay person.] (573)

THE END

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

# DŌHĀVALĪ

## Of Goswami Tulsidas

### Brief Index of Key Words/Metaphors/Similes/Parables

- Ahankaar— Doha nos. = 243, 390  
 Ahilya— Doha nos. = 174-175, 189  
 Air, stars, medicines, water, clothes— Doha no. = 364  
 Ajaamil— Doha no. = 531  
 Animals— Doha no. = 345  
 Angad— Doha no. = 167  
 Amrit (nectar, elixir) and Poison— Doha no. = 347  
 Arjun— Doha no. = 440
- Bali (the monkey chief) — Doha nos. = 415, 441  
 Banyan Tree— Doha no. = 529  
 Bat— Doha no. = 387  
 Bhagwan— Doha nos. = 115, 135  
 Bharat— Doha nos. = 205-209  
 Black-bee, tribals— Doha no. = 343  
 Brinda and Tulsi— Doha nos. = 188, 395, 542  
 Businessman— Doha no. = 398  
 Boat— Doha no. = 520  
 Body—hand, leg— Doha no. = 523  
 Body—stomach, tongue, teeth— Doha no. = 525  
 Body—fingers— Doha no. = 527
- Carpenter— Doha no. = 536  
 Canon— Doha no. = 515  
 Cuckoo— Doha nos. = 331, 564, 436, 564  
 Chakor— Doha nos. = 193-194, 567  
 Chakva— Doha nos. = 194, 206  
 Chatak— Doha nos. = 277-321  
 Chitrakoot— Doha no. = 180  
 Clothes, stars, medicines, water, air— Doha no. = 364  
 Clothes with a fast colour— Doha no. = 469  
 Crane/stork— Doha nos. = 331, 333, 398  
 Crow— Doha no. = 436  
 Crow's droppings— Doha no. = 384  
 Cotton, sugarcane, hammer, axe, chisel— Doha no. = 342  
 Cloud— Doha nos. = 346, 376-378  
 Contentedness— Doha no. = 275

- Dandak forest— Doha no. = 172  
 Dambha, Lobha— Doha nos. = 264-266, 270-271  
 Dasrath— Doha nos. = 218-221  
 Deer— Doha no. = 314  
 Demons Hiranyakashipu, Hrinyaaksha, Madhu and Kaitav— Doha no. = 115  
 Demon Vrikaasur— Doha no. = 472  
 Dharma— Doha no. = 466  
 Dog and Elephant— Doha no. = 380  
 Dog, jackal and lion— Doha no. = 381  
 Dropdi/attempt to disrobe her— Doha nos. = 168-169
- Elephant and Dog— Doha no. = 380  
 Eye, hand— Doha no. = 325
- Farmer's field— Doha no. = 568  
 Fish— Doha nos. = 56-57, 317-318, 320, 404  
 Fire and water— Doha no. = 335  
 Fire and mercury— Doha no. = 339  
 Fire, sun, moon, stars— Doha no. = 386  
 Fire and a poor man's hut— Doha no. = 426  
 Fingers— Doha no. = 527  
 Frog— Doha nos. = 398, 564  
 Fruit trees—banana, plum, jackfruit, mango— Doha no. = 354  
 Fruit-ripe— Doha nos. = 510-511
- Gajmukta, Gunja— Doha no. = 385  
 Garlic— Doha no. = 355  
 Ganges (river) — Doha nos. = 363, 383  
 Gaya— Doha no. = 362  
 Grains— Doha no. = 453  
 Gunas— Doha no. = 200  
 Guru— Doha no. = 27
- Hand, leg— Doha no. = 523  
 Hanuman— Doha nos. = 34, 229-234, 236  
 Hermit and Householder—Doha nos. = 61-63  
 House-fly, crow, owl, crane, toad, parrot, cuckoo, peacock— Doha no. = 331
- Iron— Doha no. = 358
- Jatau— Doha nos. = 32, 34, 222-227, 341  
 Jayant (the crow) and Bali (the monkey chief) — Doha no. = 415  
 Jackal, dog, lion— Doha no. = 381  
 Jiva— Doha no. = 244

Kaal, sun, king, subjects, wise men— Doha no. = 504  
 Kaikeyi, Manthra— Doha no. = 399  
 Kali-yug—Doha nos. 537, 545-570  
 Kalpa Tree— Doha nos. = 1, 11, 28, 76, 183, 215, 218  
 Kamdhenu cow— Doha nos. = 27, 183  
 Kamdeo— Doha no. = 425  
 Kashi/Varanasi— Doha no. = 237  
 Kaushalya— Doha no. = 212  
 Kauravs and Pandavas— Doha no. = 428  
 Kewat, the boatman— Doha no. = 49  
 Kings and God— Doha no. = 348  
 King—Baali, Harishchandra, Karna, Didichi— Doha no. = 382  
 King Nahush, Ven— Doha no. = 472  
 King's court— Doha no. = 393  
 King and his subjects— Doha no. = 504  
 King— Doha nos. = 505-519, 521-527

Laxman— Doha no. = 210  
 Lion, dog, jackal— Doha no. = 381  
 Lotus— Doha nos. = 193, 316  
 Lunar cycle— Doha no. = 372

Mahabharat— Doha no. = 545  
 Manthra, Kaikeyi— Doha no. = 399  
 Marich— Doha no. = 341  
 Master and his servant— Doha nos. = 500-501  
 Maya (delusions) — Doha nos. = 69, 200, 245, 263, 276  
 Medicines, stars, water, air, clothes— Doha no. = 364  
 Moha— Doha no. = 259  
 Mukti— Doha no. = 225  
 Mayur-Shikha— Doha no. = 319  
 Monkey— Doha no. = 398  
 Moon, Trishanku, Kaikeyi— Doha no. = 324  
 Moon and Barwaanal— Doha no. = 374  
 Moon and lensglass— Doha no. = 375  
 Moon, sun, stars, fire— Doha no. = 386  
 Moon-when its sightings are inauspicious— Doha no. = 499  
 Mouth— Doha nos. = 522-523

Nakshatras— Doha nos. = 456-457  
 Narsingh— Doha no. = 26

Ocean— Doha no. = 376  
 Oil lamp and its soot— Doha no. = 106  
 Opium— Doha no. = 502

- Pandavas— Doha nos. = 419, 428  
 Parmatma— Doha no. = 18  
 Parashuram— Doha nos. = 433, 472  
 Peacock— Doha nos. = 107, 331, 332, 535  
 Pestle, grinding stone, muller— Doha no. = 560  
 Pot/vessel—gem-studded and earthen— Doha no. = 351  
 Prahalad—Doha nos. = 26, 299
- Rahu— Doha nos. = 336, 397  
 Ramayan— Doha no. = 545  
 Ravana (the demon king) — Doha nos. = 416, 441  
 Reeds (on the banks of a river) — Doha no. = 544  
 Religious places/pilgrim sites/shrines— Doha no. = 558  
 Rivers, lakes— Doha no. = 449
- Sabari, Jatau— Doha nos. = 32, 156  
 Saguna-Nirguna— Doha nos. = 251-252  
 Serpent— Doha nos. = 313, 315, 334, 502  
 Seed— Doha no. = 568  
 Shaligram, stone— Doha no. = 392  
 Shatrughan— Doha no. = 211  
 Shiva— Doha nos. = 101, 239-240  
 Silk-worm— Doha no. = 370  
 Sita— Doha no. = 214  
 Siddhi— Doha nos. = 28, 229, 570  
 Spoon-wooden, metal— Doha no. = 526  
 Stars, medicines, water, air, clothes— Doha no. = 364  
 Star, sun, moon, fire— Doha no. = 386  
 Stomach, tongue, teeth— Doha no. = 525  
 Sita, Laxman, Bharat— Doha nos. = 202-204  
 Stone, Shaligram— Doha no. = 392  
 Sugriv—Doha no. = 34  
 Sun and Moon— Doha nos. = 322, 386  
 Sun— Doha nos. = 504, 508  
 Sumitra— Doha no. = 213  
 Swan— Doha no. = 122  
 Swati Nakshatra— Doha nos. = 285, 306-312
- Tulsi-bhallav/story of Bindra— Doha nos. = 188, 395, 542  
 Teeth— Doha no. = 330  
 Trees— Doha nos. = 452, 529, 546
- Vaaman and Baali— Doha nos. = 312, 394-396  
 Vaaman and his mendicant's staff— Doha no. = 532  
 Vajra— Doha nos. = 373, 503  
 Vedas— Doha nos. = 464-465

Vibhishan, Sugriv, Hanuman, Jatau— Doha nos. = 34, 215

Vibhishan— Doha no. = 34, 160-167

Vikaars (faults, shortcomings) — Doha nos. = 94

Water, and how it is dried by sun, fire, earth and wind— Doha no. = 346

Water, sand and stone— Doha no. = 352

Water, stars, medicines, air, clothes— Doha no. = 364

Wise men— Doha no. = 504

Woman— Doha nos. = 265-269

Yadavs— Doha no. = 425

Yam, Vajra— Doha no. = 373

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

## DŌHĀVALĪ

Of Goswami Tulsidas

### Other Books by Goswami Tulsidas

Tulsidas spent his life preaching, teaching and writing about his beloved Lord Ram. The following books are universally regarded as being written by him. The list is according to the year and period of his life when he wrote them.

1. Vairaagya Sandipani—it was written roughly between Samvat 1626 and 1627 (A.D. 1569-70).
2. Ram-agma-prashna—it was written roughly between Samvat 1627 and 1628 (A.D. 1570-71).
3. Ram-lalaa Nahachhu—it was written roughly between Samvat 1628 and 1629 (A.D. 1571-72).
4. Janki Mangal—it was written roughly between Samvat 1629 and 1630 (A.D. 1572-73).
5. Ram Charit Manas—the writing of this great epic was started in Samvat 1631 (A.D. 1574)---but the date of conclusion is not determined.
6. Parvati Mangal—again, it was started in Samvat 1643 (A.D. 1586)---the date of conclusion is not determined.
7. Geetawali (Ram Geetawali)—it was written roughly between Samvat 1630 and 1670 (A.D. 1573-1613).
8. Vinai Patrika—it was written roughly between Samvat 1631 and 1679 (A.D. 1574-1622).
9. Dohawali—it was written roughly between Samvat 1626 and 1680 (A.D. 1569-1623).
10. Varvai Ramayan—it was written roughly between Samvat 1630 and 1680 (A.D. 1573-1623).
11. Kavitalawali—it was written roughly between Samvat 1631 and 1680 (A.D. 1574-1623).
12. Hanuman Baahuk—it was written roughly between Samvat 1631 and 1680 (A.D. 1574-1623).
13. Krishna Geetawali—it was written roughly between Samvat 1643 and 1660 (A.D. 1586-1603).

Now, let us very briefly glance at what these thirteen books are about. Tulsidas' magnum opus is unquestionably the Ram Charit Manas. It is the most revered and sacred text, known universally as the Ramayana, which is the narrative of the divine story of the life and times of Lord Ram who was the incarnate Supreme Being on earth. It is universally regarded as the bench-mark for the narrative of the holy story of Lord Ram.

The Geetawali and Kavitalawali are variations of the Ramayana as they also describe the divine story of Lord Ram but use the different Raagas (notes, metres and tones) of classical music of India to narrate the different events in Lord Ram's life.

The Barvai Ramayan is also another such book which narrates the story of Lord Ram, but it is shorter than the above two books. It uses two-line verses called Barvai Chand instead of the Raagas.

The Dohawali is a compilation of two-line couplets dealing with a host of topics covering ethics, morality, proper ways of conduct and behaviour, matters concerning society and politics, daily problems of life and how to cope with them, and of course the theme of having reliance on the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram for being assured of all-round wellbeing and welfare.

The Vairagya Sandipani is a short work like the Barvai Ramayan, and it highlights the characters and virtuousness of those who have renounced all attractions of the material world and have completely surrendered themselves to Lord Ram, thereby developing the virtues that make a man a true saint and holy.

The Janki Mangal and Parvati Mangal are two books that describe the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita and Lord Shiva with Parvati in a poetic style laced with devotion and affection for the respective Lord. The verses of these two books were traditionally recited during marriage ceremonies in Indian homes as auspicious charms that brought happiness and wellbeing to the newly wed couples.

In this genre falls the other short book called Ram Lalaa Nachu. It pertains to a ceremony that is part of the overall marriage rituals in Indian homes. During this, the head and the beard of the groom are shaved and his nails cut before the actual marriage begins. It is usually done just before the marriage party starts for the venue of the marriage rituals. The book describes this ceremony for Lord Ram prior to his marriage with Sita. It is meant to complement Janki Mangal.

The Hanuman Baahuk was written by Tulsidas towards the end of his life when he suffered from severe attack of pain in his arms ('Baahu'). He prays to Lord Hanuman to relieve him of this agony. It is believed that Tulsidas was cured of this disease after he prayed to Hanuman using the hymns of this book.

And finally we have the Krishna Geetawali. It so happened that another great saint named Surdas, who was his contemporary, had a friendly exchange with Tulsidas, saying that he did not know that Ram and Krishna were the same Divinity in two forms. Surdas was perhaps referring to incident when Tulsidas didn't bow before the image of Lord Krishna when he visited Vrindavan till the Lord held a bow and an arrow.

To prove that it was not so, that he only loved the image of the Lord with the bow and arrow though he knew that there is no difference between Ram and Krishna, Tulsidas wrote Krishna Geetawali that describes the holy story of Lord Krishna. Not to be outdone, Surdas did the same in the reverse order—that is, though he was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna, he wrote a book titled 'Ram Charitawali' that describes the story of Lord Ram just like Tulsidas' Krishna Charitawali that describes the story of Lord Krishna.

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

## DŌHĀVALĪ

### Of Goswami Tulsidas

#### A life-sketch of Goswami Tulsidas

One of the greatest saints, poets, philosophers and blessed souls known to us is Goswami Tulsidas. This saint, born in India in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was a great devotee of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. Tulsidas was not an ordinary poet or saint; he was an apostle of the Lord sent especially on this earth to spread the message of love, devotion and faith for the Supreme Being in the form of Sri Ram, a form that the common man could easily relate to and understand. Tulsidas propagated the divine story of Lord Ram and made the Lord's holy Name a household name through his writings, thereby making spiritual liberation and deliverance easily available to the common man, and bringing the Supreme Being nearer to him and his heart than ever before.

His message of having love, devotion, faith and submission for Lord Ram as a way to find eternal liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death, as a means of finding freedom from the formidable shackle of miseries and torments that constantly harass a creature in this deluding world in which all the living beings find themselves trapped, and to obtain emancipation and salvation for their souls which would lead to their ultimate and final peace, tranquility and blissful rest, was heartily accepted and welcomed by the masses for its simplicity of approach, and for the freedom that it provided them from elaborate rituals and formalities as ordained in the ancient scriptures which the common man found extremely difficult, impractical and cumbersome to follow.

While the original scriptures were written in the classical language of India, known as Sanskrit, that was limited to the higher and learned classes, therefore making these scriptures beyond the reach of the common man, Tulsidas wrote in the local dialect known as Avadhi, which is a branch of the main language known as Hindi that is spoken throughout the central planes of India. It was the language of the masses, and therefore the writings of Tulsidas became instantly understandable, accessible and dear to the populace.

He wrote about the divine story of Lord Ram in a poetical style that fluently employed the various Raagas (tones, metres and notes) of Indian classical music as well as folk music. This immediately was acceptable by the people as compared to the chanting of the hymns in a staccato manner, or discourses that were dry and boring for the masses. After a hard day's toil, a common man found rejuvenation and refreshment when he sang a part

of Tulsidas' verses rather than hear or read some long-winding discourse telling him about some distant and unknown God.

So we come to the next important contribution of Tulsidas in the field of spiritualism and religion. Through his writings he spread the message that having love, devotion, faith and submission for Lord Ram, who is no one else but incarnate Supreme Being known as Parmeshwar, the Supreme Ishwar, and the Lord God, is the easiest and most convenient method for finding Mukti (liberation and deliverance), Shanti (peace and tranquility), Shukha (happiness and joy) and Anand (bliss).

For achieving this aim the individual needed only to inculcate the habit of constantly remembering the Lord and focusing his mind on him and his holy Name, a method which the scriptures defined as Yoga. While Yoga was complicated, cumbersome, time consuming and aimed at an abstract form of God, the philosophy of Bhakti (love, devotion, dedication for the Supreme Being) as propagated by Tulsidas centered on Lord Ram as the Divinity personified, the Lord whose divine form and mystical deeds were easily documented and readable, making them understandable and within reach of the common man. This methodology brought this same hitherto abstract God extremely near to the common man, and made the God dear to him. The method of story-telling and singing the Lord's glories through melodious verses and hymns instantly struck an emotional and lovable common cord with the individual who now felt that Mukti and spiritual Shanti was not only limited to the high and the mighty as their exclusive prerogative, but he has also the same right over them.

It is obvious that any person can easily relate to an event or a personality which is common to his own experience and knowledge of the world he is acquainted with, rather than some divine Being who is intractable, unknown, invisible and living in a world beyond the wildest of one's imagination. So the net effect was that the Supreme Being was made accessible, approachable and available to the common man by saint Tulsidas through his writings, and the philosophy of Bhakti (devotion, dedication, love, faith, submission, constant remembrance etc.) that they preached.

The books and philosophy of Tulsidas dedicated to having 'Bhakti' for Lord Ram as an infallible remedy for all spiritual and worldly ills and misfortunes have spread like wild-fire amongst the masses, making him more popular than any other single poet or author of the land. This singular fact that the acclaim and respect that Tulsidas has generated down the centuries, which no one else has managed to match, vouches for the greatness of his writings, the deep import of the message of spiritualism and love for the Supreme God that they contain, the correctness and the truthfulness of his approach and preaching, and the especial blessedness of his soul.

There was one more big benefit and reward to humanity from the books of Tulsidas. The society was presented with the noble and ideal character of a king known as 'Ram' whose exemplary life and highly correct conduct set a bench-mark for others to emulate themselves and teach others to follow. It showed man that when the Supreme Being became a human being, he himself had to undergo all the throes of pain and sufferings as

well as bouts of joys and happiness that all of them have experienced in their own lives to a lesser or greater degree. But inspite of all these ups and downs of life, Lord Ram maintained the highest level of moral and emotional standards as prescribed by the scriptures. This is therefore possible for them—all members of the society—to do.

After all, there have been hundreds and thousands of great kings, emperors, conquerors and rulers in this world, and all had faithful bards lauding their achievements in glorious and colourful terms—but all faded away on the sand of time; none of them are called 'God'. It is only Lord Ram who is eternally remembered as the saviour and the redeemer, so obviously there must be a difference between him and the rest. So by following the path walked by Lord Ram himself as narrated by Tulsidas, the individual man can be sure that he is following the best path that can be followed in his life. In other words, the common man had a practical and handy guide to show him the correct and the righteous way during the course of his routine life and his dealings with this mundane and humdrum world—this is another great contribution of Tulsidas and his writings.

So we see how the Supreme Lord of this creation has used this great apostle and messenger of his, i.e. saint Goswami Tulsidas, to help the creatures of this creation, the subjects of the loving God's vast realm, come closer to their dear Lord and find their ultimate redemption by the easiest path that can be made available to them in this world of fast-paced life, contradictory and confusing doctrines, lack of proper spiritual guidance, and moral degradation.

The books of Tulsidas are like pitchers full of ambrosia for finding eternal peace of the mind and the heart. Just like fish feels refreshed when submerged in water, the soul of the individual person would feel refreshed and rejuvenated by keeping its self submerged in the nectar of Lord's love and devotion by way of singing and remembering the divine deeds and stories associated with Lord Ram who is a known and a visible incarnation of the Supreme Being as narrated and sung by the great Tulsidas.

Now, let us read about Goswami Tulsidas' life and works:-

Since great saints and sages did not wish themselves to be praised but preferred that their Lord be praised and worshipped instead, so therefore Tulsidas wrote next to nothing about himself. All accounts of his life are available from contemporary accounts and circumstantial evidences as well as analysis of his writings by modern scholars and researchers. Thus, certain controversies and distractions are bound to exist, but here we shall read the most accepted version of this saint's life and works.

Goswami Tulsidas was born in the Hindu year Samvat 1589, corresponding to 1532 A.D. His birth place is known as Rajapur (pronounced as *Raajaapur*). This is a small hamlet in the central part of India, and it is located in the district of Banda near the city of Allahabad in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

The day of the birth was the Hindu day of Sraawan Shukla Saptami which corresponds roughly to the seventh day of the bright lunar fortnight in the fifth Hindu month known as Sraawan that falls in late July to mid August.

The time of his birth is believed to be very inauspicious—it was an asterism known as Mula that was on the ascent at that time. This period is called ‘Abhuktamula’, and it is said that a child born under this asterism brings death to its parents.

The child himself was very odd—he was born after full twelve month in the mother’s womb, and at the time of his birth he had the full complement of teeth.

This frightened the parents out of their wits. The only way was to either abandon the child or not look at his face for eight long years.

His parents were extremely poor Brahmins. His father was Atma-ram Dubey, and his mother was Hulsi. [According to some accounts, the surname of his father was ‘Shukla’ instead of ‘Dubey’.] As destined, his mother Hulsi died on the fifth day of his birth. The father was heart-broken and overcome with superstition. He abandoned the child.

The midwife who had delivered the child was named Muniya. Her mother-in-law was named Chuniya. It was this kind lady who took care of the abandoned child and fed him. As ill fate would have it, Chuniya too died when the child was six years old. His father refused to accept him and so the child was made an orphan!

The mother was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and used to worship the sacred Tulsi plant regularly. So, the family guru or the family priest called the child ‘Tulsi’. This was his first name.

There is another version which says that the family priest of the child was himself known as Tulsidas, and he gave the child the name of ‘Tularam’ (pronounced as *Tulaaraam*). It was abbreviated to ‘Tulsi’.

Anyhow, when the child was forced to fend for himself at the age of six years as outlined above, he went from door to door begging for food, and as his signal call to announce his coming and request the household to give him alms he used to say aloud ‘Ram’. So the people began to call him ‘Ram-bola’—literally meaning someone who says or calls out Ram.

The Supreme Lord of the world has his own mysterious ways, and when he selects someone to fulfill his divine mandate and become his apostle, the Lord takes full charge of his life. All great souls are born like ordinary human beings—no one drops from air like rain—and it is what they do later on in life, what they give to the society, what mankind learns from them and how it benefits from their teachings, their message and their legacy is what that really matters, and it is what that makes them stand out as a colossus and a tall landmark on the landscape of humanity.

And so it happened that a saint named Narhari-das, a descendant of the great seer and sage named Ramanand, had a vision (dream) that he must pick up a helpless child who was orphaned and abandoned by the world, and instruct him about the divine story of

Lord Ram. Narhari-das spotted the poor boy and took him under his wings, developing a special affinity with him because of the divine order.

Narhari-das took the boy called Ram-bola to Ayodhya and performed his sacred thread ceremony. It was on this occasion that Ram-bola was rechristened as 'Tulsi-ram'. The two—Narhari-das and Tulsiram—lived for about ten months at Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram and the capital of his kingdom during the Lord's sojourn on earth. Even during this short stay, the boy was completely enthralled by the immortal story of the Lord which he used to hear in rapt attention at a number of places where it was traditionally said and repeated in this holy town. The hidden spark of divinity and holiness as well as the fire of love for his beloved Lord Ram that lay hidden in his bosom and concealed in his heart got its first puff of rejuvenation here, and this hitherto concealed fire was later on to become a raging all-engulfing fire of total submission for his beloved Lord Ram, a fire of unquestioned and undiluted love and devotion as well as the unstoppable longing for attaining Lord Ram that not only overtook the entire being of Tulsidas alone but it also swept across the length and breadth of the land.

Narhari-das took Tulsiram to a place called 'Sukar-kshetra' that is near Ayodhya at the confluence of the rivers Saryu and Ghagra. Here they lived for the next five years.

Another learned man named Shesha Sanaatan came visiting, and he took Tulsiram with him to Varanasi, a holy city traditionally held as the center of learning and education in the classics and languages from ancient times. It was here that Tulsiram was re-named 'Tulsidas' by his new guru Sanaatan.

At Varanasi Tulsidas learnt Sanskrit language and its grammar. He was introduced to literature devoted to the theme closest to his heart—the theme of Lord Ram. He read the versions of the Lord's story as narrated by sages Valmiki and Veda Vyas, as well as the various Purans and other ancient texts. Tulsidas literally gulped down these texts like a hungry man partaking of delicious food for the first time in his life. He was extremely bright and mastered the finer nuances of the language and the ancient texts.

Gradually his name and fame spread as an eligible bachelor who was an expert teacher and a scholar par-excellence. He used to teach and preach the Purans and the versions of the Ramayana, and earned his livelihood as well as renown. A Brahmin family of the Bharadwaj lineage lived in a village known as Taarpita which was across the river Yamuna from Tulsidas' ancestral village of Rajapur. The head of the family was a Brahmin named Deen Bandhu Paathak. He had a beautiful daughter named Ratnawali (Ratnaawali). When he heard about the great name and fame of Tulsidas he married his daughter Ratnawali to him.

Tulsidas and Rathawali had a son named 'Tarapati' (Taaraapati). But unfortunately the child died early in infancy. Besides this single tragedy, Tulsidas' married life was otherwise happily spent for fifteen years. Tulsidas loved his wife passionately and he could not think of ever living without her even for a day.

Now let us see how the remarkable change came into his life—a change that turned this scholarly household man who used to spend his days like an ordinary scholarly person giving discourses and preaching the scriptures and earning his livelihood into a legend even during his lifetime, someone who left us a legacy of Bhakti and Mukti that are easily accessible, as well as a rich heritage of devotional literature of exceptional beauty and charm like the world has never seen before.

There are two versions of the incident that was the turning point in his life, and which made this hitherto passionate man renounce the world completely along with all its attractions, and instead devote the rest of his life in total submission to his beloved Lord Ram, a life of total submersion in the ocean of love and devotion for Lord Ram who was the beloved of his soul.

The first version is as follows. It happened that once his brother-in-law came visiting the household of Tulsidas. Tulsidas had to go out on some assignment to preach the Purans for eleven days. So his wife Ratnawali took his permission and went with her brother to her parent's home, promising to come back before Tulsidas returns. But when he came back from his assignment he found that she hadn't come. So enamoured was Tulsidas with his wife that he could not wait for her arrival, and he set out forthwith to his in-law's place. It was night and the river Yamuna was in spate, but Tulsidas didn't have patience left in him. So he caught hold of a floating corpse and crossed over to the other side. When he reached his in-law's place, he got due respect, but Ratnawali was shocked and dismayed at his behaviour; she felt embarrassed at his conduct and thought that people in her village would start passing lurid and lascivious comments when they come to hear the developments the next morning. Besides this, she wished good for her husband's spiritual welfare because she was no ordinary woman. She thought to her self that her husband had been teaching and preaching the scriptures for so long a time but had not understood any tiny bit of their meaning. So she scolded him when they were alone. The essence of what she said is this—'Look. The amount of love and passion that you have for me and my body made of bones and flesh, how wonderful would it have been if you had even half of it for Lord Ram whom you preach about, who has taken care of you when no one else bothered, and who fills your stomach even now.'

Tulsidas' eyes of wisdom opened instantly. He got up and retraced his steps immediately. Ratnawali was again shocked. She did not mean that her husband would abandon her. Her scolding was supposed to be a normal tiff between a wife and a husband, and was nothing as serious as it turned out to be.

Anyway, Tulsidas turned away from this humdrum life once and for all. Broken and devastated, Ratnawali lived thereafter like a hermitress, spending some time in her maternal village and sometime in the village of her brother-in-law named Nanda-das. It is believed that she composed 201 Dohas, two-line verses having devotional and spiritual tone. She died in Samvat 1651 (A.D. 1594).

According to the other version, when Tulsidas reached his in-law's house, all were asleep. He caught hold a serpent to climb the boundary wall, thinking the serpent to be a

rope, and called out the people inside to open the gates. All woke up, but Ratnawali was extremely peeved and she scolded Tulsidas in the manner described above.

Moving out for ever, Tulsidas went on a pilgrimage to all the sacred places, and finally settled down in Varanasi. He was already well-known here as a scholar and a great devotee of the Lord. Tulsidas began spending his time preaching the texts of the Sanskrit versions of the Ramayana but thought to himself that he better write the divine story of Lord Ram in the local dialect for the benefit of the masses. Again, he decided that it was the best form of meditation and contemplation for him which will have a two-pronged benefit—one was that his days and time would be spent constructively in remaining submerged in the thoughts of his beloved Lord Ram, and second he would leave behind a legacy that would generate devotion, dedication and love for the Lord in the heart of the coming generations down the ages. He realised that the story of Lord Ram was till that time in Sanskrit, a language of the scholars and not of the common man, so there was the great need of speaking and writing in the common man's language so that the Lord's story became easily readable and understandable by him. Thus, by his writings Tulsidas brought Lord Ram and his divine name closer home and nearer to every ordinary household, every single individual on the land.

It is said that the local people of Varanasi recognized his scholarship and he was made an Abbott of a monastery, known as a Mattha. It was this appointment that bestowed the title 'Goswami' upon him because it is a title of honour. The word also means someone who has learnt to exercise control over the sense organs. This Mattha came to be known as the 'Tulsidas Mattha', but by Samvat 1848 (A.D. 1791) it was renamed as 'Sthaan Tulsidas'.

Tulsidas wrote for approximately 50-60 years of his life. Amongst his contemporary poets and saints with whom he came in contact are the following—Surdas, Nanda-das, Mirabai and Keshav-das. It is also known that a Muslim chieftain named Abdur-rahim Khaan-khaana, who was a governor and administrator of Varanasi, and a rich Hindu landlord named Todarmal were greatly influenced by Tulsidas and had great respect for him.

There is a popular legend associated with Tulsidas. We shall cite some of the well known ones here.

There was a criminal who would call out 'in the name of Ram, give alms to this murderer'. Tulsidas was so delighted and overwhelmed when he would hear the name of this beloved Ram being called out that he would take this criminal to his austere place and share whatever food he had with him. This of course led to great scorn and anger amongst the orthodox Brahmins who demanded an explanation from Tulsidas. He told them that once this man has said 'Ram' all his sins were wiped away. Infuriated further, the Brahmins said that if he had this much faith in the Lord and if what he said is the truth then he must prove it. The test was that if the stone bull placed in a Shiva temple would eat from the hands of the criminal it would be proved that what Tulsidas said was correct, otherwise they would castrate him from the society. On the designated day, to the wonder

of all assembled to watch the spectacle, the stone bull actually ate from the hands of the criminal!

This made his tormentors more jealous of him. They hired a professional thief and told him to enter his house in the night and steal his manuscripts. When the thief came in he found Tulsidas sleeping blissfully but two young boys, with bow and arrow in hand, were guarding his house. They were Lord Ram and Laxman themselves. The thief beat a hasty retreat out of fear for his life, and then become Tulsidas' great admirer.

The continued harassment of Tulsidas made him appeal to Lord Hanuman, the most beloved devotee of Lord Ram and himself a manifestation of Lord Shiva, to help him. Hanuman asked Tulsidas in a dream to write a prayerful petition to Lord Ram seeking the Lord's intervention. It is believed that these prayers turned out to be the text of the book 'Vinai Patrika' that Tulsidas wrote.

There is another fascinating legend related to his life. It says that everyday after his morning ablutions Tulsidas would pour some water at the base of the holy banyan tree. A spirit that lived on that tree and suffered due to some mistakes of the past evil deeds was able to quench its thirst and heard the divine name of Ram which Tulsidas would utter while pouring water. The spirit was absolved of its sins and found liberation. So it blessed Tulsidas and told him that he can have a wish fulfilled. Tulsidas wanted a Darshan (holy sight) of his beloved Ram, and so he asked for this boon. The spirit told him that an old beggar-like man attends his discourses everyday; he comes first, sits at the back of the congregation, and is the last to leave. He would help Tulsidas to meet Ram. Next day, Tulsidas found him out and caught hold of his legs—beseeking him to make him see Ram. This old man was no one else but Lord Hanuman in disguise.

He advised Tulsidas that he should go to Chitrakoot, a place amongst the mountains where Lord Ram had spent the earlier part of his forest exile, and there he will have a Darshan of the Lord. Tulsidas went to Chitrakoot and made it his habit to first take a bath in the river there and then prepare a paste of sandalwood that he would apply to his own forehead and to those devotees who came to take a bath in the river, saying the name of Ram each time. Shortly after his coming, one day Lord Ram appeared before him and asked him to give some sandalwood paste and apply it on the Lord's forehead. Not only this, the Lord applied the paste to Tulsidas' forehead with his own hands. What more would Tulsidas want! He got the fruit of his life. He became ecstatic and immediately went into a trance-like state of extreme bliss known as Samadhi that is said to have lasted for the next three days.

There is a verse commemorating this event. It is as follows—

चित्रकूट के घाट पर भई संतन की भीड़ ।  
तुलसीदास चंदन घिसें तिलक देत रघुवीर ॥

“*Chitrakoot Ke Ghaat Para Bhai Santan Ki Bhira; Tulsidas Chandan Ghishe Tilak Deta Raghubeer*”.

It means ‘On the banks of a river in Chitrakoot, there is a crowd of saints and holy people. Tulsidas is rubbing sandalwood to make a paste, and Raghubir (Lord Ram) uses this paste to make the mark of the Tilak on their foreheads.’ [The Tilak is a sign consisting of three parallel horizontal lines that are made on the forehead of devotees of Lord Vishnu using paste of sandalwood.]

Once he had gone to Vrindavan to visit the holy sites associated with Lord Krishna. In the main temple there he addressed the presiding deity and sang that he would bow his head only if the Lord holds a bow and arrow (like Lord Ram). It is said that immediately, to the amazement of all present, the idol of Lord Krishna was seen holding a bow and arrow. Tulsidas fell down like a rod to pay his obeisance to his beloved Lord Ram who had revealed there and then on the altar. There is a subtle message in this incident—that all forms of the Lord are the same, whether it is the form known as Lord Krishna or the form known as Lord Ram. What one needs to see his beloved Lord everywhere in this creation is love, devotion, dedication, conviction, faith and sincerity that are deep and truthful—if these qualities are there, the Lord is also there.

There is one more episode of historical authenticity that is worth recounting here. It is believed that the Mughal Emperor Jahangir had heard of the mystical powers of Tulsidas. When he met Tulsidas once, he asked him to show some miracle. Tulsidas refused, saying that he knew no black magic, and the only thing he knew was the name of ‘Ram’. This obviously angered the emperor, who was not accustomed to such blunt replies, so he ordered that Tulsidas be imprisoned. ‘Let me see how your Ram saves you now,’ rebuked Jahangir. It is believed that a fierce bunch of monkeys attacked the fort and the prison, wreaking havoc all around. Jahangir realised that Tulsidas was not an ordinary man, and he relented. He not only released Tulsidas from prison but gave him gifts in the form of gold and silver coins. It is a belief that Tulsidas used that money to build Hanuman’s temple at Varanasi with moulded the Lord’s image his own hands.

Tulsidas left his mortal coil (body) in Varanasi on the banks of the holy river Ganges at the Assi Ghat. The day was Sraavan Shukla Saptami of Samvat 1680 (A.D. 1623). According to another account, the day was Sraavan Badi Teej, and this day is regarded as more authentic because it is followed as the death anniversary of Tulsidas by the descendants of Todarmal who regard Tulsidas as their Guru. [Shukla Saptami is the seventh day of the bright half of the lunar month, while Badi Teej is the third day of the dark half. Sraawan is the fifth Hindu month falling roughly between end of July and mid of August.]

Tulsidas was exceptional and unique because he was an enlightened soul especially empowered by the Holy Spirit of the Lord himself to spread the message of love and devotion for the Lord as a means of attaining spiritual purity, peace and bliss alongside the opportunity of attaining emancipation and salvation for the individual’s soul, known as the Atma. Tulsidas adopted the simplified method of remembering the Lord through the medium of the Lord’s deeds in this world. This helped Tulsidas to ever remain submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and to keep his mind focused on the Divinity

and away from this deluding world and its entangling spiritual mess. This is what the essence of Yoga is—to remain focused on the ‘Truth’ and exclude all that is the ‘untruth’.

This was a form of meditation and contemplation for Tulsidas; it helped him to divert his mind from the affairs of the mundane world around him and focus it instead on the Divine Being who lived in this external world as Lord Ram and as the Atma, the pure conscious soul, in his inner self. This is also the focus of Yoga, the established and scripturally sanctified way of establishing a union between the individual’s soul known as the Atma, and the Supreme Soul of this creation known as the Parmatma. A profound resonance is created when the vibrations of the individual soul begin to correspond with the cosmic vibrations generated by the Supreme Soul, and this leads to what the scriptures recognize as the state of bliss and Samadhi, the state of perpetual ecstasy and bliss.

The reason for his continuously writing so many versions of the same story of Lord Ram in so many different ways—e.g. Ram Charit Manas, Kavitawali, Geetawali, Barvai Ramayan, Vinai Patrika, Dohawali—is that he used this method as a means of meditation on the Supreme Being in his visible form as Lord Ram, and repeating the Lord’s holy name as much as possible by continuously writing on this theme as a means of contemplation and fixing his mind on the Divinity instead of anything related to the physical world of material objects. This was a profound form of Yoga for him as it helped him to establish a communion of his soul with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

This is what Tulsidas subtly taught us—to become eternally blissful by remaining engrossed in the thoughts of the Divinity that is bliss personified, and enjoy the happiness that comes with the realisation that the Supreme Lord, our protector and redeemer, is not only always with us but also exceptionally easy to access without any hassle and formality. And the tool for this achievement is to keep the Lord eternally in our mind and heart by keeping them submerged in his thoughts. This is easily done by reading, hearing, telling and discussing about the Lord’s divine story in all its myriad variations and colourful versions.

In order to achieve this end, Tulsidas wrote prolifically on the theme of Lord Ram as an incarnation of Divinity, as the Supreme Being living himself in our midst in the form of Lord Ram’s holy story!

One great benefit of this approach was that his entire life and time was spent in the form of one huge Yoga, done continuously and unbroken. He did not remain satisfied by writing one book, say the Ram Charit Manas, but wrote three other books to narrate the same story—these are the Kavitawali and the Geetawali. These two books supplemented and complimented the epic story which was narrated in the Ram Charit Manas. There were certain events in the epic life of Lord Ram that the great soul Tulsidas wished to add more colour and vibrancy to, so he decided to mould them in the form of music and song. A song that is sung melodiously is more heart warming and heart touching than mere narration of events no matter how beautifully they have been narrated. So he wrote the

Kavitawali and the Geetawali—both these narrate the same story of Lord Ram’s life and deeds but in a pattern that is set to different ‘Raagas’ which are musical notes, metres and tones of classical Indian music. It is practically observed in our day to day life that one can easily recall some song, sing it comfortably and hum its musical tune more easily as compared to reciting some regular text of a classical book.

-----\*\*\*\*\*-----

## About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) [www.pothi.com](http://www.pothi.com) (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) [www.draft2digital.com](http://www.draft2digital.com) (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) Kobo, (iv) Page Foundry, (v) Scribd, (vi) Tolino etc.:-

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1

and 2; (17) “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” or the “Aadi Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(B) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

1. Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.]

2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (C):

Chaukhamba Publishing House, Delhi. [Sri Neeraj Gupta.]

Email < [chaukhambapublishinghouse@gmail.com](mailto:chaukhambapublishinghouse@gmail.com) >

< [chaukhamba\\_neerj@yahoo.com](mailto:chaukhamba_neerj@yahoo.com) >

Postal Address: 4697/2, Street no. 21-A, (HDFC Bank wali Gali),  
Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

(C) Book under preparation:

A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many

thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

Contact details of Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia—

Postal address:-36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg, P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123, Distt. Ayodhya (Faizabad), U.P. India.

Phone:—(India) +919451290400; +919935613060.

Website: < [www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com](http://www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com) >

Email of Author: (i) < [ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com](mailto:ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com) >

(ii) < [ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com](mailto:ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com) >

Archive.org: < [https://archive.org/details/@ajai\\_kumar\\_chhawchharia](https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia) >

Facebook ID < [www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8](https://www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8) >

Linkedin: < [www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia](https://www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia) >

Goodreads:

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai\\_Kumar\\_Chhawchharia](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia)