

The Glory of Rama-Nama.

Goswami Tulasidas has left nothing unsaid about the glory of the Divine Name. There is not the least doubt that all sacred formulas such as the *Dwādaśākṣara* (that consisting of twelve letters) and *Aṣṭākṣara* (that consisting of eight letters) mantras bring solace to those entangled in the meshes of worldly attachment. Let every individual depend on the *mantra* which may have given him peace. For those, however, who have known no peace, and who are in search of it, the Name of Rāma can certainly work wonders. God is said to possess a thousand Names; it means His Names are infinite, His glory is infinite. That is how God transcends both His Name and Glory. The support of the Name, however, is absolutely necessary for people so long as they are tied to their bodies. In the present age even ignorant and unlettered people can take shelter under the monosyllabic *mantra*. When pronounced the word 'Rām' makes a single sound, and truly speaking there is no difference between the sacred syllable OM and the word 'Rām'. The glory of the Divine Name cannot be established through reasoning and intellect. It can be experienced only through reverence and faith (श्रद्धा).

—Mahatma Gandhi.

The Supreme Glory of the Divine Name.

BY MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA.

नामसङ्कीर्तनं यस्य सर्वपापप्रणाशनम् ।
प्रणामो दुःखशमनस्तं नमामि हरिं परम् ॥*

—Srimad Bhagavata.

You have heard the glory of the Divine Name on numerous occasions in the past and shall hear it also in the future. Some people say there is no need of uttering the Name repeatedly, as it has been stated in the scriptures that he who utters the Name of God only once, even by mistake, is emancipated from the bondage of worldly existence. What, then, is the use of repeating It so often ? They who say so are perfectly right. Even one Name is sufficient to lead one across the ocean of worldly existence and land

him safely on the other shore. But the saints have declared that our mind is even more fickle than quicksilver. In order to keep it under restraint, it is necessary to recite the Name repeatedly. When the mind becomes perfectly steady through this process, even one Name would be sufficient for our purpose; 'but so long as it is unsteady and changeable it is necessary to utter the Name again and again. The Vedas and the Śāstras have all sung the glory of the Name of God. The whole chapter of the *Sukla Yajurveda* commencing from "Namaste Rudra Manyava," etc., teems with the glory of the Name. In the Purānas, the glory of the Name is sung at numerous places.

There is a commentary on the *Manusmṛti* by Kullūka Bhaṭṭa. It gives the following definition of *Tapas* (penance):—

* I bow to Hari, the Supreme Divine, the chanting of whose Name destroys all sins and salutation to whom rids one of all suffering.

ब्रह्मचर्यं जपो होमः काले शुद्धात्पभोजनम् ।
अरागद्वेषलोभाश्च तप उक्तं स्वयम्भुवा ॥

"Practising continence, muttering sacred formulas, offering oblations to gods, taking a limited quantity of pure food at regular intervals, keeping oneself free from desire, hatred and greed— all this has been declared as penance by Brahmā."

By following this course of discipline it is possible to know the great significance of Name.

We have our sense of respect for the Name from the earliest times of the Vedic Ṛṣis and the composition of the Purāṇas. Saints of the medieval period and also of the modern times have sung the glory of the Name profusely. Goswami Tulasidas has said a lot on this subject. He says:—

बरषा रितु रघुपतिभगति, तुलसी सालि सुदास ।
रामनाम वर बरन जुग सावन भादव मास ॥

"Devotion to Śrī Rāma is like the rainy season; the faithful devotee is like a crop of paddy, and the two syllables constituting His Name are like the two months of the rainy season, Śrāvāṇa and Bhādra."

He further says:—

आखर मधुर मनोहर दोऊ । बरन-बिलोचन जन-जिय जाऊ ॥
सुमिरत सुलभ सुखद सब काहू । लोक लडु परलोक निवाहू ॥

"The two sweet and fascinating letters 'रा' and 'म' are like the two eyes of the alphabets and the very life-breath of the devotees. They are easy to remember and delightful to all. They are beneficial in this world and sustain us in the other world."

The poet, again, says:—

कहत सुनत सुमिरत सुठि नीके । राम-लषन सम प्रिय तुलसीके ॥
... ..

नर-नारायन सरिस सुभ्राता । जगपालक बिसेषि जनत्राता ॥
नाम सप्रेम जपत अनयासा । भगत होई मुद-मंगल-वासा ॥

"The syllables 'Rā' and 'ma' are extremely delightful to utter, equally pleasing to hear and agreeable to remember. They are as lovable to Tulasī as Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa themselves. They are like the twins— Nara and Nārāyaṇa, protectors of the world and specially helpful to the devotees. By repeating the Name with love, the devotees easily become embodiments of joy and bliss."

Here Tulasidas has likened the Name to Rāma Himself, but he goes a step further and says:—

राम एक तापसतिय तारी । नाम कोटि खल कुमति सुधारी ॥
... ..
सबरी गोष सुसेवकन्हि सुगति दीन्हि रघुनाथ ।
नाम उधारे अमित खल, वेदबिदित गुनगाथ ॥

Here he raises the Name higher than Rāma Himself. He says, "Rāma delivered a single hermit lady (Ahalyā), whereas the Name has purified the evil thoughts of crores of wicked men (and thus saved them all)Rāma gave salvation to two of his faithful servants, Śabarī and Jaṭāyu, but the Name has been the saviour of innumerable wicked souls. The reputation of the Name is well-known even to the Vedas (the oldest of our scriptures). [In other words, our respect for the Name is not of modern growth; it has its origin in the remotest antiquity.]"

Again, he says:—

नाम लेत भवसिंधु सुखाही । करहु बिचार सुजन मन माहीं ॥
... ..
सेवक सुमिरत नाम सप्रीती । विनु श्रम प्रबल मोहदल जीती ॥
... ..

ब्रह्म रामते नाम बड़, बरदायक बरदानि ।
रामचरित सतकोटि महँ, लिय महिस जियँ जानि ॥

"The ocean of worldly existence (the cause of misery) dries up with

the very utterance of the Name. This fact should be clearly understood by all good men.....A faithful devotee who remembers the Name with love conquers the formidable forces of Ignorance without the least exertionThe Name, which is the great giver of blessings even to those who are in a position to grant boons to others, is greater than *Brahma* (the Absolute) and *Rāma* (the Personal God) both. The great Lord Śiva, recognizing this supreme glory of the Name, has extracted this Name (*Rāma*) out of the countless stories of Śri *Rāma*."

Thus Tulasidas has proved by force of arguments that the Name is even greater than Him whom It signifies. He is never tired of singing the glory of the Name and further says:—

नाम जपत प्रभु कीन्ह प्रसाद ।
भगतसिरोमनि मे प्रह्लाद ॥
ध्रुव सगलानि जपेउ हरिनाऊ ।
पायउ अचल अनूपम ठाऊ ॥

नाम रामको कल्पतरु, कलि कल्याननिवास ।
जो सुमिरत भयो भौगते, तुलसी तुलसीदास ॥

"By repeating the Name, Prahlāda won the favour of Śri Hari and attained the foremost rank among the devotees. Even Dhruva, who repeated the Name through resentment, attained an immortal and unequalled place in the heavens. The blessed Name of *Rāma* is a veritable wish-yielding tree in this Kali age, by remembering which even Tulasidas, who was heretofore like a poisonous drug, has now become sacred like the *Tulasi* plant."

Similarly, Guru Nānak has composed many charming verses in praise of the Name. He says:—

नानक रामनाम बिस्तारा कंचन भरा मनूरा ।
... ..

कह नानक सोई नर सुखिया, राम-नाम-गुन गावै ।
और सकल जग माइया, निरभै पद नहि पावै ॥
... ..
नाम न जपहु, अभाग तुम्हार ।
जुग दाता प्रभु राम हमारा ॥

"The Name of *Rāma* is like a casket of jewels... ..He alone is happy who sings the glory of '*Rāma-Nāma*': the whole world is deluded by *Māyā* and hence it does not attain the fearless state. It is unfortunate of you if you do not recite the Name. My Lord *Rāma* is the most beneficent donor who gives sustenance to the whole world."

Kabir also says:—

तजि अभिमान लेहु मन माल ।
रामनाम हिरदै महँ तोल ॥
... ..
कोई गावै, कोइ सुनै हरीनाम चित लाय ।
कह कबीर संसय नहीं, अंत परमगति पाय ॥
राम जपहु जिय ऐसे ऐसे ।
ध्रुव प्रह्लाद जपा जिय जैसे ॥
राम राम जपि निरमल भये ।
जनम-जनमके किलबिष गये ॥

"Cast off pride, O my mind, and purchase the Name of *Rāma*. Weigh It in (the balance of) your heart (and realize Its immense value)..... Whosoever chants or hears the Name of Hari with a concentrated mind shall without doubt attain the Supreme State on leaving this body. Mutter the Name of *Rāma* in the same way as Dhruva and Prahlāda did....."

There is no end to the glory of the Name. You must have often heard the story of Ajāmila before. He was a prodigious sinner. His youngest son was called by the name '*Nārāyaṇa*'. When Ajāmila was about to die, the messengers of Yama (the god of death) came and made ready to take away the subtle body (सूक्ष्मशरीर) of Ajāmila. He was very much terrified and shouted out for his youngest son, *Nārāyaṇa*. Because he had uttered the Name of

God at the time of death, even though with the intention of calling his son, the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu appeared and snatched the (subtle) body of Ajāmila from the hands of the messengers of Death. Thereupon the latter went to their master and related to him the whole incident. Yama said to them, "We cannot lay our hands upon one who has (in his last moments) uttered the Name of God even by mistake." There is reason for this. Our minds take up the form of the thing whose name we utter (यत्तस्मिन्निवृत्त्या मतिः). When we utter the name of a butcher, the form of a butcher appears before our mind's eye. When we utter the name of a pure woman who has dedicated her life to the service of her husband, the ideal of a pure woman is pictured before our mind. When we speak out the word *Sādhu* (a holy man), our mind is directed towards a holy man. When we take the name of a confectioner, we at once recall the various articles of food which he sells. When the name of an astrologer is mentioned, a figure seems to appear before our eyes with a horoscope in his hands, telling future events. Similarly, by uttering the Name of God our thoughts would be diverted from all other objects and focussed on God. When we call out the name of Śiva, bliss itself bodies itself forth before us as it were. The word 'Śiva' means bliss, the feast of *Ananda* (purest joy). When we pronounce the *mantra* 'OM NAMAḤ ŚIVĀYA' the temple of Lord Śiva comes before our mental vision. When I recite the *Mṛtyuñjaya Mantra*, my mind at once goes and stands at the portals of Lord Viśwanātha (at Kashi). Bodily I may be anywhere but mentally I find myself there. At that time I forget everything else, no other impression is roused in my mind. When I utter the Name of Nārāyaṇa, I am reminded of that Supreme Reality which is benevolent to the poor, which fills all space, which

is eternally true and which is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe—

एक अनंत त्रिकाल सच, व्यापक सक्ति दिखाय ।
तिरजत पालत हरत जग, महिमा बरनि न जाय ॥

This Great Power regulates the whole universe, keeps the whole solar system going. Further, It is the purifier even of the purest. Nothing impure can cross our minds in Its presence, because It is the purest of the pure. By the very mention of Its name all the sinful propensities of our mind disappear. Just as thieves fly away at the sight of a lamp, even so our sinful propensities cannot stand the light of the Divine Name. Is it possible for any one to transgress the moral laws in the presence of his father? The very idea of his presence removes all evil thoughts from the mind. God is the father of the whole universe; He is the father of our fathers and is present everywhere. Can any sinful propensity stand in the presence of His thoughts?

We may form some idea of the greatness of God from the above description. How great would be the Name of Him who is so great, we may now judge to some extent. The followers of other religions, too, repeat the Name of God. The Muslims and the Christians as well have reverence for the Name. The rosary of 99 beads of the Mussalmans is well-known. But none has understood the great significance of the Name so well as the Ṛṣis of the Sanātana Dharma.

While Bhiṣma was lying wounded on a bed of shafts after a strenuous fight of several days, Yudhiṣṭhira approached him and asked him what was the easiest means of obtaining release from the trammels of worldly existence. In reply to this, Bhiṣma gave a long sermon expatiating on the glory of God and His Name. The very utterance of the Divine Name cures us

of all evil influences. I once asked my mother to grant me a boon which might protect me as an armour against all evil influences and counteract the evil effects of undertaking journeys on inauspicious days, as I had to do so every now and then. Thereupon my mother said to me, "Only utter the name of Nārāyaṇa before you start upon a journey and no harm will come to you." Since then I have made it a rule to utter the name of Nārāyaṇa on such occasions and no harm has ever come to me in a journey through the blessings of my mother.

In conclusion, let me once more revert to the question with which I began, and which I have already answered, viz., What is the use of repeating the Name again and again? In this connection let me add a word more. All that we claim as our own during the twenty-four hours, we owe to His grace. We are nowhere without Him. Goswami Tulasidas has said in his *Vinayapatrikā*: "My Lord, it has been extremely kind of You to have bestowed on me this human form which it is difficult even for the gods to attain.....Your debts on me are so numerous that they cannot be described in words even though I possessed crores of tongues,"*

But we human beings are so ungrateful that we do not remember such a merciful Lord even for a second.

Let the mind have its own way for full twenty-three hours and a half: keep it under restraint only for half an hour. If we practise remembrance of the Name at least twice a day for a period of ten or fifteen minutes at each sitting, the practice would help us a good deal in controlling the mind. When I recite the *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, my thoughts are withdrawn from all other directions and are concentrated on God. Man becomes free from all fears by the very remembrance of God. In the *Durgā-Saptasati*, the devotee addresses Mother Durgā thus:—

‘दुर्गे स्मृता हरसि भीतिमशेषजन्तोः’

It is sufficient to utter the words "O Durgā, protect us." That very moment we feel armed with strength and are inspired to do our duty. All of us should, therefore, mutter the Name of God regularly every day. By the recital of the Name all our sins are washed away just as the impurities of sugar are removed when it is boiled with milk. The effect of the Name completely encompasses the mind just as a drop of oil thrown in water spreads throughout and covers the entire surface of the water. Even a little muttering of the Name with concentration on its meaning destroys all the impurities of the mind. There is not the least doubt that the recital of the Name destroys our sins and brings us peace and prosperity.



* हरि तुम बहुत अनुग्रह कीन्हा ।

साधनधाम विदुध दुरलभ तनु मोहि कृपा करि दीन्हा ॥

कोटिहुँ मुख कहि जात न प्रसुके एक एक उपकार ।.....