

**THE RĀMĀYANA
OF TULSI DĀS**

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The Rámáyana of Tulsi Dás by F. S. Growse

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F. S. GROWSE

**THE RĀMĀYANA
OF TULSI DĀS**

THE
RÁMÁYANA OF TULSI DÁS.

TRANSLATED BY
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BOOK II.
AYODHYÁ.

"The works of the celebrated Tulsi Dás exercise more influence upon the great body of the
Hinda population than the whole voluminous series of Sanskrit compositions."

WILSON.

ALLAHABAD:
N.-W. PROVINCES AND OUDH GOVERNMENT PRESS.
1878.

TO THE READER.

THE second book of the "Rámáyana" is more generally read than any other part of the poem, and is the most admired by Hindu critics. The description of king Dasarath's death and the different leave-takings are quoted as models of the pathetic, and in a public recital there is scarcely one in the audience who will not be moved to tears. The sentiments that the poet depicts, and the figures that he employs to illustrate them, appeal with irresistible force to the Hindu imagination; and, if for no other reason than this, they would be interesting to the English student for the insight they afford into the traditional sympathies and antipathies of the people. The constant repetition of a few stereotyped phrases, such as 'lotus feet,' 'streaming eyes,' and 'quivering¹ frames,' though they find a parallel in the stock epithets of the Homeric poems, are irritating to modern European taste; while the curiously artificial similes derived from the frequently fabulous habits of different birds and plants, which like the oft-repeated refrain of a popular song never fail to elicit the applause of an appreciative audience, only repel a foreigner as frigid and unmeaning conventionalities. Such are the allusions to the lotus, that expands in the day and closes at evening; the lily, that blossoms in the night and fades at sunrise; the rice crop, that luxuriates in the rain, and the *javáca* plant that is killed by it; the *chakudá*, that mourns its mate all through the hours of darkness; the *chakor*, that is never happy, except when gazing upon the moon; the *chdtak*, that patiently endures all the buffeting of the storm in the confident expectation that the cloud will at last let fall the one auspicious drop for which it thirsts; the swan, that knows how to separate milk from the water with which it has been mixed; and the snake, that carries a precious jewel in

¹The word *palak*, which I generally translate by 'quivering' or 'throbbing,' means strictly the bristling of the hair upon the body, which is a sign of violent mental agitation. The Munshi with whom I read in Calcutta some seventeen years ago always, I remember, rendered it by 'horrigilation,' a frightful word, which would destroy all the poetic effect of the most impressive passage, but which he greatly admired on account of its six syllables.

its head, of which it is always afraid of being robbed. In spite of these drawbacks, there are many passages instinct with a genuine poetic feeling, which appeals to universal humanity, and which it is hoped will be dimly recognized even through the ineffectual medium of a prose translation.

The characters also of the principal actors in the drama are clearly and consistently drawn; and all may admire, though they refuse to worship, the piety and unselfishness of Bharat, the enthusiasm and high courage of Lakshman, the affectionate devotion of Sita, that paragon of all wife-like virtues, and the magnanimity of Rāma, the model son, husband, and brother, 'the guileless king, high, self-contained, and passionless,' the Arthur of Indian chivalry.

At the outset I was under the impression that in this Book, as also in the First, there was no one in the field before me; but before I had made any very great progress, I discovered that I was in error, and that there was already in existence an English version, published in 1871, by Adalat Khān, a Muhammadan Munshi of the College of Fort William in Calcutta. I at once procured a copy of it, and it is only proper to acknowledge that it has been of considerable assistance to me. It does not, however, encroach very largely upon the ground that I had intended to occupy. The Munshi appears to have written solely with a view to lighten the labours of his own pupils and of others who like them were preparing for a special examination. Despite not a few misapprehensions of the sense, such persons will probably find it quite as useful for their purpose as my translation, if not more so. But in the attempt to secure literal accuracy, and also no doubt from the fact that English was not the mother-tongue of the translator, the language employed is throughout so curiously unidiomatic that in many places it is absolutely unintelligible without a reference to the original, and this the general reader would not be in a position to make. As a specimen I give the *chaupdi* following *dohā* 224 :—

"If he leaves me, knowing my mind wicked, and receives me, considering his servant, my sheltering-place then will be in the shoes of Rāma: he is my good master, but the fault is in this servant. The *chātik* and the fish deserve

the praise of the world ; they are sincere in their usual vow and love. Thus having reflected in his mind, he went along the road, ashamed and overpowered with love. The sin committed by his mother was as if keeping him back ; but the Bull of patience was walking by the power of his faith, and when he knew the nature of Râma, his feet fell on the ground hurriedly. The state of Bharat at that time was such as that of the bee in a current of water. Seeing the grief and love of Bharat, the pilot became stupefied at that moment."

As may be readily imagined, such a translation as that, of which the above passage is a fair specimen, though useful in allowing me to take a rapid view of the context, was not a very trustworthy guide on any point of real difficulty, though the translator states that he consulted not a few Pandits. I have, however, been able to rely with much confidence upon the explanations given in the Hindi commentary published under the auspices of the Mahârâjâ of Benares, who has himself an unequalled knowledge of the poem and has made it a special and life-long study. I very much regret that it has not been carried beyond the second book ; for here in Bulandshahr there is no Pandit to whom I can make an oral reference from time to time as the occasion arises. Consequently I see no immediate prospect of being able to complete my translation ; for it would be very unwise of any Englishman, however familiar with the general characteristics of Hindi poetry and Tulsî Dâs's own peculiarities of style, to undertake so difficult and important a task in absolute dependence on his own unaided resources. The two first books, which together make up more than half the entire poem, have now been presented to the English public ; the second half of the work must be indefinitely postponed.

F. S. GROWSE.

BULANDSHAHR :

July 25, 1878.

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NOTICES OF BOOK I.

"This is undoubtedly a valuable addition to Anglo-Indian literature. It opens a new mine of riches to European scholars. The translation is very faithful, literal, and animated. Mr. Growse, unlike other translators, has to a great extent preserved the spirit of the original. His prose sometimes reads like poetry. His command of the English language is so great that he expresses in simple language all shades of Indian thought, paying particular attention at the same time to English idiom. We would strongly recommend the replacement of some of the books now fixed for the high proficiency examination in Hindi by the *Rámáyana* of Tulai Dás, Book I. Mr. Growse deserves the more credit for his work as the greater part of it was written in camp without any books of reference. He has thoroughly entered into the spirit of Tulai Dás, and has very agreeably succeeded in painting him in a foreign language to the best advantage that we could have wished. He has very rarely left out phrases, or introduced others of his own. We have carefully gone through the first half, the most difficult part of the translation, and with the exception of a few solitary passages we have not met but faithful translation. . . . If space allowed, we could give extracts to show the scholarlike manner in which Mr. Growse has rendered some of the most abstruse religious thoughts of the Hindus into idiomatic and simple English."—*Indian Tribune*.

"We heartily welcome this translation. So far as we have been able to compare passages of it with the original, we have found them to be very faithful and accurate renderings. Though the style adopted by the translator is prose, which affords facility for a closer adherence to the original than verse would have done, yet it has a graceful rhythmical flow. Its idiom moreover is pure English. It seems impossible for the reader to help feeling himself transported into the fairy land of oriental poetry. The chief value of the work, however, is that it will assist Englishmen to become acquainted with the popular epic of the vast mass of Hindus, and thus enter into their loftiest feelings. Mr. Growse has in a well written introduction enhanced the value of the translation by tracing the history of the poem and of its author. We trust the public will show such an appreciation of this first instalment of the epic in an English dress as to encourage Mr. Growse in the task of completing the remainder."—*The Aryan*.

"We gladly welcome this first instalment of an excellent version of the most popular of Hindi poems . . . Of Tulai Dás himself little is known, but what information is available has been collected by Mr. Growse in his introduction The translation appears to be executed in a scholarly style, and is carefully edited throughout with footnotes explanatory of the mythological allusions. While thanking the translator for this instalment of so important a work, we trust he will be encouraged to hasten the completion of it."—*Indian Antiquary*.

"That the poem itself has been well and worthily translated is sufficiently vouched for by Mr. Growse's high reputation as a Sanskrit and Hindi scholar ; while his devout enthusiasm as an antiquarian makes him enter into his work with a zest which redeems it from much of the dryness which one ordinarily finds in philological labours. He has done all that could be done, consistently with a conscientious adherence to the text, to leaven the inert mass of Tulsî Dâs's verses. He even tries to ennoble the silly legends of Hindu mythology by the occasional use of that Christian phraseology which throws so great a charm over the mediæval sacred lore of Europe We cannot understand how any man can live in this country and not be touched by what he sees among the natives, especially the Hindus. To single out whatever seems to us grotesque and unreasonable in their religious system, and to ignore the deep religious feeling that underlies these flaws, is surely ungenerous and prejudiced. The Hindu desire of eternal life ; the acknowledgment of man's sinfulness ; the efficacy of atonement for sin ; their inveterate idea of a divine incarnation ; the merits of sacrifice should not be ignored, while all that is ludicrous and hideous in the religion of the Hindu people is put forward as its unredeeming feature Now we should consider it a libel on Mr. Growse to say that he aims at reconciling Hinduism with Christianity ; we should moreover speak against our convictions did we say so. What we find fault with him for is that he *appears* to place Christianity and the Hindu religious system on an equal footing The term 'saint' is so identified in our mind with canonization that we must confess it makes us wince when we hear it applied to persons whom, rightly or wrongly, we suppose to be myths. It has never, we believe, been applied to the deities of Western mythology."—*Indo-European Correspondence*.

The editor of the *Indo-European* was kind enough to admit into his columns my reply to his criticisms, as follows :—“As Tulsî Dâs believed Râma to be the incarnate God, the invocation of his name appears to me as reasonable as the similar invocation by a Christian. Hindus are not great historical critics. He had never examined the documentary evidences of Râma's divinity, but accepted it as a fact, in the same way as most Catholics accept the facts of the Gospels. Never having heard of Christ, and yet believing in the doctrine of the Incarnation, he worshipped with the worship due to Christ the most perfect ideal of humanity that India has ever seen ; and with St. Thomas Aquinas I would fain believe of him that he was a Christian by the baptism of desire, *viz.*, the grace to will to obtain salvation by fulfilling the commandments of God, even though from invincible ignorance he knew not the true church. As for the term 'saint,' you say it has never been applied to the deities of Western mythology : to which I will add, nor to the *deities* of Indian mythology. But there is not the slightest reason to doubt that Râma was a real character, and that Visvamitra was a great sage, a philosopher, or a man of high reputed sanctity, by whatever name you may prefer to designate him, who was Râma's contemporary. It is to him that the word *muni*, which I translate 'saint,' is