

The Quest.

Part I.

I.

T H E S I S

The Religious and Moral Teaching of

T U L S I D Ā S

in his poem

R ā m c h a r i t m ā n a s

by

Rev. J. M. Macfie, M.A. (Glas.)

Degree of Ph. D. conferred, 20th December, 1929.



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The Rāmcharit mānas of Tulsidās.

A brief ^{indication} ~~introduction~~ of the scope of the Thesis.

The doctrine of bhakti or devotion to God runs like a thread of gold through the web of Hindu religious literature. The speculations of her philosophers could not satisfy the heart of India. The teaching of monism which declared that there existed but One Spirit and that all else was an illusion (māyā) "left no room for the exercise of love and piety."

The earliest exposition of bhakti is to be found in the Bhagavadgītā, where alongside of other teaching with which it fails to harmonise, it is definitely proclaimed that devotion to a personal God is a path by which a worshipper can most surely escape from the burden of rebirth. The warmth with which this belief was held depended on the individual temperament. Sometimes the devotion in which men indulged was more of the nature of contemplation than of love. Sometimes it expressed itself in forms that were unhealthy and unclean. But nowhere has it reached a higher and purer level than in the writings of Tulsidās. Born 400 years ago, his influence continues to this day over the whole of Northern India where Hindi is spoken.

Writing in the vernacular and refusing to listen to pedants who wished him to employ Sanskrit, he proclaimed a gospel for low caste as well as high caste and bade men give their love and worship to

Rāma, an incarnation of Vishnu the preserver god, whom he also identified with the Supreme Spirit Brahm. When Tulsidās concentrated his faith on Rāma, to the exclusion of Krishna, another but very inferior incarnation of the same deity, he rendered a great service to the religious and moral well-being of his country, because he chose the purest manifestation of God, which India has known. In adopting this attitude, the poet was loyal to the reforms which his great predecessor Rāmānand had introduced. But it cannot be ignored that while he gives full scope to the love and devotion which he cherishes for Rāma, in other respects he remains an orthodox Hindu, combining his worship of Rāma with a belief in all his country's gods.

This is no disadvantage to the student of Hinduism, because there is probably no book in existence which gives such a complete and vivid picture of what the average Hindu, at his best, believes, as the Rāmcharit mānas of Tulsidās. The method of treatment adopted in this thesis keeps this central fact in view.

Prefaced by an account of the life and deeds of Rāma it shews first of all the poet's strange attitude to the lower gods of Hinduism; an unquestioning belief in their existence, a conviction that they were able to do a great deal of harm and a poor opinion of their character and conduct.

This is followed by an examination of the passages relating to Brahmā and Shiva. With reference to Brahmā whose formal worship has practically disappeared from India, one finds that the Creator has a position in the poem greater than the textbooks of Hinduism are

prepared to allot to him to-day. And it is suggested that despite the absence of temples in his honour, the human heart by some ineradicable instinct turns in moments of joy and sorrow to its maker. There is in this connection another chapter on Time, Karma and the Creator, a favourite phrase of the poet, as when it is said that the guilt of some sinner "rests on their heads;" though the final and more considered verdict is that a man reaps in this life what he has sown in a previous existence, which means that every one is responsible for his own Karma.

The chapter on Shiva gives special consideration to an aspect of the teaching of Tulsidās which cannot be ignored. That god is spoken of as the omnipresent all-pervading Brahm, while it is said that those who do not worship him will have no hope of happiness and no end to their pain either in this world or the next. Rāma himself is a consistent worshipper of Shiva. He says:

"There is no other I love like Shiva. If anyone hostile to " "Shiva desire to be my devotee, that man is a fool with very " "little sense and hell is his portion."

Shiva, it is to be noted, is the narrator of the poem. He tells the story of Rāma to his wife. Tulsidas is merely the god's mouth-piece.

Vishnu, who with Brahmā and Shiva compose the Hindu triad is next dealt with. ~~It has been thought advisable to give a brief account of his various descents.~~ Naturally the references to him are fewer, in view of the fact that he was incarnate in Rāma.

Apart from the grotesque story of his co-operation in securing Shiva's second marriage, we are limited to the three reasons given for Vishnu's appearance on the earth. In the second of these reasons it will be noted that the poet thinks almost entirely of Rāma as a manifestation not of Vishnu, but of the Supreme Spirit. The ^{relation} ~~selection~~ of the three members of the Hindu Triad is thereafter illustrated by a translation of practically all the passages, in which they are referred to in co-operation. Their inferiority to Rāma is emphasised over and over again, as in the statement;

"If Rāma is against you, you cannot escape, though you take
"refuge with Vishnu, Brahmā, and Shiva,"

while it is said that it is by his power that the three gods preserve, destroy and create the worlds.

This leads us to an exposition of the poet's perplexing attitude to the two conceptions of Brahm, held by Shankarāchārya and Rāmanuja. Is Brahm, devoid of qualities, all that is? Is he at best a personal God in a world of illusion? Or is he a God endowed with qualities, who loves men and whom men can love? Tulsidās believed with all his heart that Rāma was an incarnation of the Supreme Spirit. But he never ceased to worry over the problem of illusion. In the end he consoled himself with the thought that Rāma at least was real if all else was a dream.

The long chapter entitled Rāma as an incarnation of Vishnu and Brahm, enters into the details of Rāma's life on earth, and gives special place to those passages, which let us see the poet's mind.

The following are some of his most confident utterances:

"The religion of monism did not satisfy my heart. How can"
 "a soul in the grip of illusion be the same as God."
 "Let others worship the qualityless Brahm, the invisible of"
 "whom the Vedas sing. But my choice is the divine Rāma, "
 "Koshala's King, endowed with qualities and real: may he re-"
 "ceive me as his servant and give me devotion to himself."
 "The adorable Bhagwān is one passionless formless nameless "
 "unborn; **He** is existence, thought, joy, the supreme abode. "
 "He pervades all things. He exists in all forms. He assumes "
 "a body and performs many deeds, simply for the sake of those "
 "devoted to Him. He is supremely merciful and full of love to "
 "His servants; very affectionate to those who are His own, and "
 "in His compassion is not angry with them. He is the restorer "
 "of that which is past, the protector of the humble, the sin- "
 "cere powerful lord." (1)

In the two concluding chapters the writer endeavours to form an estimate of the poem's contribution to the moral and religious thought of India. In the introduction to his translation of Rām-charit'mānas, Growse observes with truth that the whole poem is a passionate protest against the virtual atheism of philosophical Hindu theology. But it has not always been sufficiently recognised

(1) The chapter entitled "The Crow's Philosophy" deals with Rāma from another aspect, and may be reckoned as a summary of the poet's own religious attitude.

that from time to time, the poet surrenders much of what his predecessors had achieved in the overthrow of the doctrine of illusion. It has been considered necessary to deal with this question at length, and the opinion is expressed that the poet's attitude to Māyā is one more illustration of the fact that he is an orthodox Hindu, profoundly influenced by the thoughts of those around him. He had none of the zeal which the earlier advocates of Bhakti had in confuting the doctrine of Māyā.

Despite this criticism the poet's central message stands absolutely clear. Rāma is Māyā's lord. However great her influence may be, whether we think of her as Rāma's primal energy, or as a mysterious agency that continues to deceive men, she must yield to something greater and that is Bhakti. And very probably it is just because the poet strove so hard to achieve in his own mind a compromise between theism and monism and found a place even for polytheism that he has been able to appeal to so wide an audience, to win and keep the ear of India.

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The Rāmāyana of Tulsidās

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(And other books quoted in the course of the thesis)

Note on abbreviations and spelling.

The seven books of the poem with the corresponding abbreviations are: Bāl-kāṇḍ (Bal); Ayodhyā Kāṇḍ (Ayodh); Aranya-kāṇḍ (Aranya); Kishkindhā Kāṇḍ (Kish); Sundar Kāṇḍ (Sundar); Lankā Kāṇḍ (Lanka); Uttar Kāṇḍ (Uttar).

The numbers are the numbers of the couplets or dohās, and indicate that the passages quoted are in those dohās or the lines following. When three numbers are given, e.g. 166(106)181, the first refers to the Bombay text, the third to the Allahabad-Benares text, while the second within brackets refers to Growse's translation. In the Ayodhyā book, the first and second and sometimes the third agree.

In Hindi the names of Rāma, Shiva^{Krishna} and Indra (ending in short a) are sounded as Rām, Shiv. etc. But it has been thought best to give the spelling to which the English reader is more accustomed. In the case of Brahm, the name for the Supreme Spirit, it has been decided to spell the word as it sounds, to avoid confusion with the name for the Creator, Brahmā. *The palatal sibilant ʃ has been transliterated as sh, in preference to ś or ṣ, as in Hindi there is no doubt as to the way in which this consonant is uttered.*

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INTRODUCTION: The Poem and its Author.

The name of Tulsidās is a household word among the Hindi-speaking populations of North^{ern} India. Born in the ^{sixteenth} ~~time of~~ ^{century} ~~Shakespeare~~, he took the story of Rāma, prince of Avadh, which he found in the Sanskrit poem of Vālmīki completed more than a thousand years before, and retold it in the language of his own day. But though he used the material which the much earlier work contains, his own poem was in no sense a Hindi translation, not even a version of the Sanskrit epic. He was too great a poet to be a mere imitator. And he had besides, a quite independent outlook. He wished to interpret his hero after his own fashion. He was, it is true, an orthodox Hindu, professing a sincere belief in the scriptures of Hinduism. But he was a Hindu whose thoughts had travelled beyond the thoughts of earlier days. And there were in his own heart and in the hearts of others, religious aspirations which he sought to satisfy. This is particularly manifest in the wonderful wealth of glowing love and personal ^(bhakti) devotion which he showers on Rāma, whom he identifies not only with Vishnu, one of the three great gods of Hinduism, but also with the Supreme Spirit. It is this remarkable quality, coupled to his unique gifts as a poet, which has made his work so popular, and which has done so much to

(1) In the Sanskrit invocation with which the poem begins there is a reference first to the god of poets (kavīshwar) i.e. Vālmīki, and then to what has been written in various Purānas, Vedas and traditional writings (nigamāgam) and in the Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmīki.

nourish all that is best in modern Hinduism. Because he has helped to make God real. In the eyes of Tulsidās God is not a remote passionless Being, devoid of all attributes and impossible to define, but a ~~God whom men can see and handle,~~ a God to whom they pray and who hears their prayers. He has appeared in human form as Rāma. He is full of sympathy. He loves those who worship Him. And He is pictured as no other god has ever been pictured in Hinduism, as one who loves righteousness and mercy. Best of all, He is not only pure Himself, He demands purity in those who are devoted, ^(bhakt) to Him.

In the pages that follow, it will be our task to shew how that is the central theme of the poem. But it will also be necessary to explain how Tulsidās's effort to make God real has been weakened by those other elements in Hinduism, which are also present in his teaching. The poet may be an innovator, but he very seldom professes to discard any of the old "truths". He not only holds fast to the central dogmas of Hinduism, Karma and Transmigration, but with certain aspects of his mind, he continues to be a polytheist. He has none of the iconoclastic zeal of his predecessor, Kabīr. He does not seek to dethrone any of the other gods. Some of them he continues to worship. Of others, he speaks with contempt, but he believes in their existence. His belief in them is rendered the more easy by the fact that he is also pantheistically inclined and can find room for all of them in his conception of the universe. This however requires to be set down that whatever is written by way of criticism is written with feelings of sincere respect and

admiration for the poet himself, and the work he achieved for his country and his religion.

It has been said that this poem is more popular and more honoured by the people of the United Provinces than the Bible (1) is by the corresponding classes in England. It is never possible to substantiate such assertions. But the statement is worth repeating to shew how the book's popularity has impressed Western observers. Few books are more widely known or have exercised a greater influence. We might speak of it with truth as the Bible of Northern India. A copy of it is to be found in almost every village. And the man who owns it earns the gratitude of his illiterate neighbours, when he consents to read aloud from its pages. The poet was wiser than he knew (2) when he insisted on writing his book in the vernacular. But he was rebuked for doing so. He was told that the only language worthy of such a theme was Sanskrit. Two of his replies are on record. To one who wrote erotic verse he said:-

(1) Griffith's Introduction to his translation of the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki, p. viii.

(2) Kabir had set the example an hundred years before in the composition of his Bijak. There must have been others also who did the same, because Tulsidās, after mentioning the great poets of ancient days, writes in Bāl kānd ^{18(18)23.} ~~18~~ of very eminent Prākṛit poets who had written the story of Rāma in the vernacular ~~near~~ his own time.

"If you find a jewelled casket full of poison and an earthen"

"cup full of nectar, which will you refuse and which accept?"

"To another he replied:

"Whether in the vernacular or in Sanskrit, true love is needed.

"When a woollen blanket is necessary why buy a silken vest?"⁽¹⁾

Vālmīki's poem is called the Rāmāyana, which means Rāma's goings or adventures. Tulsidās chose for his work another title, Rāmcharit^mānas, or the lake of the deeds of Rām. But in everyday use, this name is forgotten and it is called the Rāmāyan of Tulsidās. It has been subjected very naturally to a variety of interpolations, and additions have been made to it which are not the poet's own. One of the texts which have been employed is the Bombay edition of 1909, published by Hariprasād Bhagīrathji, with a modern Hindi interlinear version. It gives the interpolations specifying them as such, and adds an eighth kand which critics reject as spurious. The second text employed is that prepared with great care by the Kāshi Nāgarā prachārāṇi Sabhā (1903) with a commentary by Shām Sundardās and published by the Indian Press, Allahabad, 1922. The splendid English translation by F.C.Growse has also been used (the sixth edition, 1914, published by Rām Narāyan, Allahabad). Another

(1) In the opening stanzas of the poem, Tulsidās refers time after time to the fact that he is writing in the vernacular (bhāshā bhanit) "My language is the language of common speech, and my intelligence is small. If in this there is matter for laughter, let them laugh; there is no harm." Bal, 12. See also Dohas, 13, 13, 15, 18, 21 and opening invocation.⁽¹⁾ For his two replies, consult Grierson, Indian Antiquary, Oct. 1893. They appear in Dohāwali, 351 and 572.

(1) The corresponding numbers of the Dohas in the Allahabad Text are 17, 18, 18, 20, 23, 31.

admirer of the poet whose studies in the Indian Antiquary, 1893, and in the Indian Gazetteer are of much value, is Sir George Grierson who speaks of the Rāmcharitmānas as worthy of the greatest poet of any age.

We are fortunate in having given to us the exact date when Tulsidās began to write his poem. In the Bāl-Kānd, which deals with the hero's childhood, he says: "In the year 1631 Samvat, placing my head at the feet of Hari (Vishnu) I begin my story; on Tuesday, the ninth day of the month Chait, in the town of Avadh, the very day on which the books of revelation say that Rāma was born." 44 (42)54. This corresponds to 30th March, 1574, A.D.

The poem, however, was not completed in Avadh, but in Benares. A dispute with one of the religious sects drove him to choose a new place of residence. ⁽¹⁾ He had written the first three sections of his book when this transference took place. And one may note his change of abode in the fact that he begins the fourth section with a special outburst in praise of Benares.

"How is it possible not to render service to Kāshi knowing that it is the birth place of salvation (moksh) the mine of knowledge, the destroyer of sin, where Shiva and Bavāni dwell. When the company of the gods were in distress, he drank the deadly poison. Why do you not worship him, oh foolish soul? Who is so merciful as Shiva."

(1) Grierson says that the dispute was with the Vairāgi Vaishnava sect who ate together, seated in a row. The poet cooked his food and ate separately. He was himself a Smārta Vaishnava.

The Rāmcharitmānas was the poet's first and greatest achievement. As he was born in 1532, that means he had reached his 43rd year when he began to write. He is credited with being the author of not less than twenty other poems, all relating to the worship of Rāma or Sītā. One of these, the Satsai, teaches greater devotion to the wife of Rāma than Tulsidās manifests in his Rāmāyan, and it is therefore supposed unlikely that he wrote it. Another book, the Dohāwali, mainly consists of verses extracted from his other works and helps to cast some light on his career. The same is true of another book entitled Binaypatrikā. He had, however, a long life still before him, as he did not die till 1623 at the age of 91.

Any attempt to construct an authentic narrative of the poet's life is well nigh impossible. Legend has been busy, and the brief references which he or other early writers make to certain incidents in his career, have been broadened out into expansive prose. Even the place of his birth is uncertain. Growse names a number of places, but declines to dogmatise. In one biography written by a Hindu, it is said to have been the village of Rājāpur in the district of Bāndā, south of

(1) The author is Raghubansh Sharmā Shāstri, whose life of the poet (in Hindi) is given as a preface to the Bombay edition of the poem. Sir George Grierson's opinions appear in Indian Antiquary, 1893. Bābu Shyām Sundardās is also in favour of Rājāpur. See his biography of the poet in the Allahabad edition.

the river Jumna. Sir George Grierson thinks that Tārī in the Doāb has the best claim. He belonged to the Brāhmin or priestly caste. But misfortune shadowed his birth. The poet himself tells us in the Binaypatrikā,

"My father and mother brought me into life and then abandoned "me. The Creator (Vidhi) created me without good fortune and" "then forsook me."

This statement of the poet's is said to mean that he was born at an unlucky hour; so unlucky that according to the views of the astrologers a child born then was sure sometime or other, to destroy his father. In obedience to this belief, the child had to be destroyed. But the parents, probably unable to take so extreme a step, preferred to abandon him. And the assumption is that some wandering sadhu picked up the Brāhmin child and adopted him. He must have been fortunate in his foster father, for he tells us in the Rāncharitmānas how, when he was still a child, his teacher took pains to relate to him time after time, the story of Rāma, until he was able to grasp it, so far as his limited intelligence allowed. (Bal. 38(40)50.

It is sometimes said that the Bhakt-māl which was written by a contemporary, Nābhāji, gives us information about the poet's career, but when we turn to the book itself we find that seven lines of verse only, are allotted to Tulsidās. Growse gives us the Hindi text and an English translation. It is merely to the effect that Vālmiki, the author of the Sanskrit

Rāmāyaṇa, has been born again as Tulsidās, and by means of his new Rāmāyaṇ, has "supplied a boat for the easy passage of "the boundless ocean of existence." In this, he was repeating the service rendered by the earlier poet, a single letter of whose verse would save even the murderer of a Brāhmin. "Now "again, as a blessing to the faithful, he has taken birth and" "published the sportive actions of the god."⁽¹⁾

Here it will be seen there are no biographical facts at all. But in 1713, A.D., about one hundred years after the poet's death, a commentary on the Bhakt-Māl was written by Priyā-dās. This commentary devotes 88 lines of verse to Tulsidās. For these verses also, with an English translation, we are indebted to Growse. They mention seven separate events in the poet's life. The first refers to his wife. It is as follows:

"He had great love for his wife. Without asking his leave "
 "she went home to her father. He forgot all about himself"
 "and hastened there too. She was greatly ashamed and went "
 "away in anger, saying, 'Have you no love for Rāma? My "
 "body is but a framework of skin and bone.' When he heard "
 "these words, it was as it were the daybreak. He felt com-"
 "punction and left her and sped to the city of Kāshi (Benares)"

(1) Growse's introduction, p. v. See the edition of the Bhakt-māl published by Nawalkishor Press, Lucknow, 1926, page 7b2.

"There he made his abode, worshipping the Lord publicly, making" "a rigid vow, and thirsting exceedingly for a vision."

What later days have done to clothe this somewhat bald utterance will be realised if we compare it with the interesting narrative by Raghuvansh Sharmā Shāstri in his life of the poet. He tells us how after a son had been born to Tulsidās his father-in-law more than once sent asking that his daughter might pay a visit to her father's house. The request was always refused. But it so happened that on one occasion her brothers came and took her away in her husband's absence. When the poet returned, he learned from the neighbours where she had gone. He naturally followed, probably with some feelings of indignation. When he proposed however, that she should go back with him, she reproached him for his inordinate affection for her, saying that if he had been as devoted to Rāma as he was to her unworthy body, he would have secured ere then supreme felicity. These reproaches made such an impression on Tulsidās, that he took her at her word, and went off. This was a response which was apparently more than she expected. Because she followed him, begging ^{him} to wait and take some food, and saying that when he had eaten she would return with him. But Tulsidās was not to be persuaded. He said she must remain where she was. He would go back alone.

From that day forward he seems to have lived the life of an ascetic. He and his wife never lived together again. It

would appear that Avadh, the birthplace of Rāma was at first his principal haunt. Afterwards he lived in Benares. In addition, however, he made visits to the other holy places of Hindustan, Muttra, Brindāban, Kuruksh~~tr~~^{etr} and Prayāg. As years passed, his devotion to Rāma continued to grow. On one occasion his wife sent him a letter in which she said: "I do not fear that my heart will break. But I am afraid" "that your heart will be captured by some other woman." His answer was: "I am captured by Rāma alone. That is the flav-" "our of the love which I have tasted, taught by my own wife." There is very real pathos in the story that is told of how when Tulsidās was an old man he came one day in the course of his wanderings to his father-in-law's village, and to what had been his father-in-law's door. His wife, now also old, came to the door and asked him what he would eat. He replied that he would prepare his food with his own hands. She got ready an eating place for him and brought wood with some rice, vegetables and clarified butter (ghī). Something in his movements and gestures led the wife to realise that her husband was before her. But she said nothing. She offered him however, the use of certain condiments such as pepper and camphor. To each offer he answered "I have got it in my " "wallet." She also asked permission to bathe his feet. But

he refused. During the night, she lay awake, wondering how she could persuade him to let her go with him. "If he can " "carry about with him pepper and camphor, why may he not carry" "me?" Next morning when he was getting ready to start, she asked him to wait and eat. He refused. Then she said, "Do you not know who I am?" He answered, "No." "Do you know" "whose house this is? Do you know me? I am your wife. Let" "me go with you." To each of these questions and appeals, his reply was always No! The old woman, thus rebuffed, shewed that with the passing of the years she had not lost that pungency of speech which had bereft her of her husband so many years before, and she said, as is recorded in the Dohāwali.

"If there be in your wallet everything from chalk to " "camphor, you should not have left your wife. Either take " me in your wallet or else abandon it and give yourself entire- ly to God."

As on the earlier occasion, his wife's reproaches drove him to a deeper renunciation. He left her where she stood, and gave all that he had left to Brāhmins. (1)

(1) For this story of the poet's old age, we are indebted to the researches of Sir George Grierson. The life of the poet in the Allahabad edition should also be consulted.

One of the other events in the life of the poet, as recorded by Priyā Dās is to the effect that through the intervention of Hanumān the monkey god, he obtains a vision of Rāma, as he had so strongly desired. It is said that Rāma and his brother Lakshman one day appeared before him, riding on horses and clad in green raiment. It was only when they had disappeared that he realised that he had seen his Lord. The god's great interest in his worshipper is shown by another of the seven incidents. One night some thieves came to rob the poet's house. But try as they might to enter, they were always met by a mysterious youth, with a bow and arrows in his hand. They were so much perplexed that when morning came they went to Tulsidās and asked who the lad was who stayed with him. "On hearing this question, he remained silent and" "wept; then gave away all he had, knowing that Rāma himself " "had been the watchman." The thieves were greatly impressed. They became followers of Rāma and abandoned their sinful practices.

The power of working miracles is also attributed to Tulsidās, and Priyā Dās says that he even raised a dead man to life. This miracle created so much interest that the poet was summoned to Delhi, and told by the emperor to work a miracle. "It is noised throughout the world that you are " "master of everything." When Tulsidās refused and began to

speak in praise of Rāma, he was cast into prison. But the poet made appeal to Hanumān who sent thousands of monkeys to his aid. They wrought so great havoc that the emperor came and cast himself at the poet's feet and begged for mercy. His prayer was granted, but it was on one condition. The emperor had to abandon Delhi and build for himself a new citadel. The reason given was that the ground on which the existing town stood, was sacred to Rāma. The frequency with which the site of Delhi was changed would lend itself to the growth of this legend:

The poet died at Benares. A couplet is all that we have to tell us where and when.

"In the year 1680 Samvat, on the bank of the Ganges at the Asi-ghāt, In the month Shrāvan, on the seventh day of the lunar fortnight, Tulsi abandoned his body."

His last words were to the effect that he had spoken of the glory of Rāma's name and the time for silence had come.

I.

The Life and Deeds Of Rāma.

A ten-headed demon, named Rāvaṇ, as the result of prolonged and amazing austerities, was told by Brahmā the creator, to ask a boon. He replied, "May I never be conquered by either" "a god or a demon." In consequence of obtaining this boon, Rāvaṇ at once began to persecute both gods and Brahmins. The situation thus created by Brahmā's gift at length became so unbearable that the celestials made appeal to Vishnu, the preserver god. In response to their appeal Vishnu promised to take human form on the earth in the persons of four brothers⁽¹⁾ who would be born as sons of Dashrath, king of Koshal. By appearing as a man, the god would be able to slay Rāvaṇ and at the same time do nothing to render the Creator's promise vain.

The scene changes to Avadh, Dashrath's capital. The king has reached old age, and as yet no son has been born to any of his three queens.⁽²⁾ But when he speaks to his family

(1) Koshal is practically the modern province of Oudh. Its capital was Avadh, in Sanskrit, Ayodhyā. The modern Ayodhyā is on the river Gogrā in the district of Fyzābād. See Cambridge history of India. Vol. 1, p. 309.

(2) Vālmiki says he was 9000 years old at the time, and spurious additions to Tulsidās' poem repeat the assertion.

priest^{he} is told that he need not be anxious. He will become the father of four sons, who will be famous throughout the three worlds and remove the earth's burdens. A sacrifice was at once begun calculated to secure offspring. What the nature of the sacrifice was is not said. But Agni the god of fire, very soon appeared with the offering in his hand and told the king to divide it among his queens. To Kaushalyā, apparently the senior queen, was given half; to Kaikeyi was given a quarter and what remained was divided between them. But they each gave their share to Sumitrā, the third queen. The result was that in due course, all three became pregnant. Four boys were born. The son of Kaushalyā was Rāma; the son of Kaikeyi was Bharat; while Sumitrā was the mother of twins, Lakshman and Shatrughn. Though all four shared in the divine nature of the god, Rāma is the hero of the poem, and it is round him that the worship of men has gathered. This introductory chapter however, will confine itself to recording the story of his earthly life, as free from the marvellous and supernatural as possible.

When Rāma and Lakshman were in their sixteenth year, a holy man came and asked the king to allow the two boys to go with him to his hermitage and slay certain demons who were disturbing his prayers and sacrifices.⁽¹⁾ Dashrath was very

(1) Vālmiki says they were in their 16th year. Tulsidās would make one suppose they were even younger.

unwilling to let them go. He was especially reluctant to part with Rāma. "What can a pretty little boy do against so fierce and terrible a demon." But refusal to so great a saint was impossible. In any case, the king need not have been afraid, The demons were easily routed and their leaders slain. The poet wastes very little time in describing the engagement. He was more anxious to tell how the touch of Rāma's feet restored to life the wife of an ascetic, who for her sins had been changed into stone. But in particular, he was eager to relate how Rāma, at the invitation of the saint, went to witness the ordeal of bending the bow of Shiva. This bow was in the possession of the king of Videha, a country to the east of Koshal. And its king had proclaimed that he would give his daughter Sītā, in marriage to the prince who could bend Shiva's bow. Many thousand kings were present at the ordeal. They all tried and failed. They could not even move it from the ground. It seemed as if Sītā would die unwed. But when Rāma made the effort, he not only lifted up the bow, He drew it so tight that it snapped in two. This wonderful feat caused so much excitement in heaven, that the gods rained down flowers, and the nymphs of heaven began to dance and sing.

When Rāma's father had been informed, and his presence in Videha secured, the marriage of Rāma and Sītā took place.⁽¹⁾ The other brothers also found brides there. With the return

(1) Sītā was the incarnation of Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu.

to Avadh of Rāma and his young wife, the city was blessed with unprecedented happiness. The one desire of the people was that the king in his life time would make Rāma regent. So indeed Dashrath himself planned, and when he told his purpose to his religious teacher, he found him equally anxious to have the installation carried through without delay. But though Rāma was immediately informed and steps immediately taken, their plans were overthrown by the jealousy of heaven. Because the gods could not see how Rāma would ever have an opportunity of meeting and slaying their enemy, Rāvaṇ, should he continue to live and reign in Avadh. ^{It} ~~is~~ was necessary, in their opinion, that he should be driven to the forest. They accordingly applied to the wife of the creator. ^{She} ~~Though~~ the goddess ^{knew} ~~said~~ that her brother deities were plotting wickedness,—"they dwell on" 'high, but their acts are low",- she agreed to carry out their wishes. The plan she chose was to make use of a serving maid in the palace, a hunchback named Mantharā, whose mind she poisoned with envy and evil thoughts. When Mantharā saw the preparations for the installation of Rāma, she went to Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat, and tried to rouse her jealousy. At first she failed entirely. But gradually her words began to tell. And finally she persuaded the queen to demand that Rāma should be sent into exile, and her own son made regent. Some years before Kaikeyi had rendered a great service to her husband, and been told to ask two boons, boons which to that moment she had

never claimed. Tutored by the hunchback, however, she not only demanded that they be granted right away, but before saying what they were, she made the king pledge himself by a great oath, that he would assuredly give her what she asked. No part of the poem is more powerfully told than that which describes the cunning plotting of the hunchback, and the grief of the king when he found himself bound by a promise which he could not break.

And so, before another day had dawned, Rāma, to the unbounded sorrow of the citizens, had set out for the forest to live the life of a hermit for fourteen years. Ayodh. 52 (52)54. He was accompanied by his wife and his brother Lakshman who refused to remain behind. Not long after their departure the old king died of a broken heart.

During these events, Bharat had been absent. But when he heard of what had happened, he followed his brother to the forest and did everything he could to persuade him to return to Avadh. But Rāma was adamant, and he in turn, found it a difficult task to persuade his unselfish and large-hearted brother to assume the government. In the end Bharat only consented to ^{return}~~act~~ on the understanding that he was ^{to act as} his brother's deputy; in proof of which he took back to Avadh Rāma's sandals, and placed them on the vacant throne.

When Rāma settled in the forest, at a place called Chitrakut the celestials came and built for themselves huts made of grass

b.

and the branches of trees. They appeared in the guise of the wild inhabitants of the jungle, and bowing before the prince and gazing their fill, declared that they had found their lord. Such feelings of adoration however, did not lessen their fears when they heard that Bharat was following his brother to the forest, and once more they applied to the goddess who had helped them before. But she told them she was powerless to change the mind of Bharat. In their distress and selfishness they exercised their ^{own} powers of illusion (māyā) and strove to create in the hearts of all concerned, feelings of sorrow, distress and fear (Ayodh²⁸⁴ (284)296. Indra the king of the gods, in particular, employed all the craftiness for which he was noted. But they need not have been afraid. And when they saw their fears were groundless, their **anxiety** was changed into joy. In token of their divine approval, the drums of heaven began to beat, and flowers fell from the sky.

Very little is recorded of the life of the exiles in the forest. It was soon found necessary to change their dwelling place because of the number of ~~the~~ people who came to see them, and they journeyed further south. The little that is told is, for the most part, a record of their intercourse with various eminent sages, and the opinions these holy men expressed, with **Reference** to Rāma. They identified him, not only with Vishṇu,

but with Brahm, the Supreme spirit of the universe. In this fashion thirteen years passed away, and the last year of their exile was approaching, without any encounter between Rāma and the demon he was destined to destroy. But one day a female demon, a sister of Rāvaṇ, named Shurpanakhā, came to their neighbourhood. As soon as she saw Rāma she fell deeply in love. Changing herself into a very beautiful woman she made overtures to the prince. But Rāma, looking at Sītā who was standing near, said "My younger brother is the person you" should seek." When Lakshman finally rejected her with scorn the demoness assumed her real and ugly form. The sudden and horrid change filled Sītā with alarm, and out of regard for his wife, Rāma told Lakshman to mutilate the fiend and cut off her nose and ears.⁽¹⁾ The maltreatment of this woman was the beginning of the end, because she went at once to two of her brothers and cried for vengeance. Assembling their demon hosts they attacked the hermitage. In obedience to his brother's command, Lakshman took Sītā to a cave for safety, and remained with her there on guard. The prince thus faced his assailants alone. The demons numbered fourteen thousand. They were of

(1) Nāsik, which means nose, a town on the banks of the Godāvari, in Central India, is supposed to be the place where this incident took place.

immense size and power. But Rāma slew them all. In the hour of death, because they uttered his sacred name, every one of them attained nirvāna.⁽¹⁾ This victory afforded great relief to the gods, who were very anxious lest their champion should be slain, and to express their satisfaction the drums of heaven sounded and flowers fell from the sky.

Shurpanakhā, however, escaped the slaughter, and at once hastened to the presence of her other and much greater brother, Rāvaṇ. When the demon heard of the destruction of his followers and the death of his brothers, he was overwhelmed with fury, and promised full revenge. But strange to say, he had another thought in his mind. Among gods and men, demons and serpents, he said, there was no one the equal of his brothers who had been slain. The person who had killed them must be God himself, (Bhagwantā) If God (jagdish) had become incarnate (avatār) he would go and fight against him. In losing his life at the hand of the Lord (Prabhu) he would escape the burden of rebirth and cross the ocean of the world. But should it prove that Rāma was a man and nothing more, then he would kill both brothers and carry off Sītā. Aranya. 35(18)30.

Rāma, fully conscious of what was to happen, told Sītā that he was about to act a part, after the manner and fashion of men. And it was his wish that she should be absorbed in fire, until

¹⁾ nirvāna primarily means blown out, extinguished, and thus came to be used for individual extinction, as with the Buddhists. Here it conveys the idea of either final emancipation from rebirth, union with the Supreme Spirit or perhaps eternal bliss.

he had destroyed the demons. In obedience to her lord's desire, Sītā pressed his feet to her heart and entered into fire. But she left behind an exact image of herself, both in form and disposition. Lakshman, who was not present at the time this wonderful incident took place, was ignorant of the transformation.

In carrying out his plans, Rāvaṇ sought the help of another demon, called Mārīch. This demon at first urged Rāvaṇ not to offend Rāma further, but when he saw that his master would take no refusal, he changed himself into a beautiful deer and approached the hermitage. When Sītā saw it she asked her husband to kill the deer and bring her the skin. Rāma at once took up his bow and arrows and went in pursuit. He was not ignorant of the deception which the demon in his folly tried to practise on him. But he knew that the time had come when he must carry out the wishes of the gods. (Aranya, 40 (22) 34. The chase led both hunter and hunted far from the hermitage, until it fell, pierced to the heart with one of the prince's arrows. With its latest breath it called out, and in a loud voice, Lakshman! Lakshman! Far off in the hermitage, Sītā and Lakshman heard the cry. And thinking that her husband was in peril, Sītā appealed to her brother-in-law to go to the rescue. Lakshman at first refused. He had two reasons for doing so. He did not believe that any harm could come to Rāma, and he had been straitly charged by him not to leave Sītā's side. When Sītā

however, continued to taunt and reproach him, he reluctantly obeyed her. The princess was thus left alone. Rāvan's opportunity had come. Approaching Sītā in the guise of an ascetic, he spoke to her in language that suited his disguise. But soon changing his tone to words of endearment, he roused the anger and alarm of the pureminded princess. The demon, finding himself repulsed, assumed his real form, laid rude hands upon her, and placing her in his car, rose up into the air. Reproaching herself for the folly which had driven first Rāma and then Lakshman from her side, Sītā raised piteous cries for help. Her cry was heard by the king of the vultures who made a brave effort to arrest the demon. This bird, whose name was Jatāyūḥ, succeeded in tearing Rāvan out of his aeroplane and hurling him to the ground. For a time it seemed as if the bird would be victorious, but eventually Rāvan was able to cut off the vulture's wings. When he had rendered his opponent helpless, Rāvan once more placed Sītā in his car and resumed his flight. It so happened, as they journeyed south, that Sītā saw some monkeys sitting on a rock. She called out Rāma's name and dropped a garment. The demon carried her to his palace in the island of Lankā. There she was confined in a garden to which Rāvan came time after time, endeavouring to bend her to his will. But all his efforts were in vain. Mourning for her absent lord, her soul was possessed by one desire, and her courage sustained by thinking of his virtues and repeating his name.

When Rāma, having killed the demon, was returning to the hermitage, he met his brother on the way to help him. At once his heart was smitten with a sudden fear, and he asked, "Why have you left Sītā alone, contrary to my commands, exposed to the dangers of the forest?" And when he arrived and found the hermitage empty, the grief to which he yielded was, as the poet says, the grief of an ordinary man. He begged the birds and beasts, the trees and flowers, to tell him where she was. Searching on every side, he at last came to where the vulture was lying. The bird was able to tell him that it was Rāvan who had carried off Sītā, and after uttering a hymn in praise of Rāma, passed to heaven. When the two brothers had duly performed the funeral rites of their departed friend, they resumed their search. After a variety of adventures they arrived at a mountain where Sugriv, the monkey king, lived. When he saw them approaching, Sugriv became anxious and sent his friend Hanumān, the son of Vāyu, the wind god, to ask them who they were. When Vishnu undertook to appear on earth in the person of the four sons of Dashrath, the creator told the other deities that they must go down to earth in the form of monkeys, and assist Vishnu in his undertaking. Nothing is said at this stage that these monkeys were incarnations of the gods. But as the story proceeds, we shall see to what extent they and Hanumān in particular aided

Rāma in the overthrow of the demons. As soon as Rāma had declared his name and origin, Hanumān fell at his feet in adoration. The subsequent meeting with the monkey king led to pledges of mutual friendship, Rāma undertaking to help Sugrīv in a quarrel he had with his brother, Bāli, and the monkeys to assist in the recovery of Sītā. Fresh light on the rape of Sītā was secured by the fact that Sugrīv and his ministers proved to be the monkeys whom Sītā had seen seated on a rock. They had heard her pathetic cries, and they had recovered the garment she had dropped. When Rāma saw the garment, he pressed it to his bosom and gave way to a fresh outburst of grief.

Rāma almost immediately performed his part of the alliance by slaying Sugrīv's brother, Bāli. It is said that the two monkeys engaged in single combat, Rāma concealing himself behind a tree. When he saw his friend losing ground, he put an end to the battle by driving an arrow into Bāli's heart. As for the enterprise against Rāvaṇ, the approach of the monsoon made it necessary to wait till the rains were over, a period of waiting very trying to the heartbroken husband. Ignorant of where she was, not knowing whether she was alive or dead, he declared he would get news of her, even if he had to fight with the god of the lower world. And when the rains did cease, it seemed as if the monkeys had forgotten their pledge. Incited to action, however, by Lakshmaṇ and Hanumān, the monkey

king sent out great numbers of his followers to search the world in every direction for news of Sītā. Rāma entrusted Hanumān with a ring and told him that when he found the princess he was to assure her of speedy and certain deliverance. In course of time, Hanumān and his companions reached the shores of southern India. There they encountered a huge vulture, who was possessed of marvellous powers of vision. This vulture was the brother of the bird which had befriended Sītā, and as he stood by the shores of the sea, was able to look right across the intervening waters to Rāvan's palace in Ceylon. And there he said he could see Sītā quite plainly, a prisoner in the garden where the demon had placed her. The difficulty was how to get across, ^{a distance of 700 miles.} The vulture reminded Hanumān of the fact that by repeating Rāma's name, those who had faith in him were able to cross the ocean of existence, and it should therefore be no difficult task to overleap a much narrower sea. And so it fell ^{to} Hanumān to make the effort. Swelling out his body till it became as big as a mountain, he made the leap and landed safely on the other side. Arrived in Lankā, he contracted himself to much less than his usual size, and, after a number of adventures, reached the grove where Sītā was kept a prisoner. Shortly before she had been visited by Rāvan in one of his many attempts to break down

her resolve. And in a passion of grief, she was appealing, when Hanumān reached the garden, to one of her female guardians, to bring wood and fire, that she might attest her loyalty to Rāma by a voluntary death.

Even as she made this appeal, Hanumān, by this time concealed in the branches of a tree above her head, threw down the ring which he had received from Rāma. When he saw that the princess recognised the ring, he whispered that he had come as Rāma's messenger and told her not to be afraid. His presence was soon discovered, and after a long battle, in which he slew great numbers of demons, the monkey allowed himself to be overpowered. Brought into the presence of Rāvaṇ he was asked how he had dared to kill so many demons. But Hanumān in reply asked Rāvaṇ how he had dared to carry off Sītā. Did he not realise that it was by virtue of Rāma's power that Brahmā had created the world, that Vishṇu preserved it, and Shiva would destroy it. Did Rāvaṇ imagine that any one of these three great gods would be able to protect him in face of Rāma's opposition. Rāvaṇ's answer to these observations was to order his followers to tie rags dipped in oil to Hanumān's tail, set them on fire, and let him go. This was done on the theory that a monkey is prouder of his tail than of any other part of his body. It was, in any case, a very foolish thing to do, because when Hanumān was set free, he enlarged himself to an enormous size, and using his burning tail as a torch, he leaped from

house to house, and set their roofs on fire. Very soon the whole capital was in a blaze. Not a house escaped destruction. Having achieved his object, the monkey dipped his tail in the sea, paid another visit to Sītā, once more leaped across the straits, and hastened to Rāma with his news.

Immediate preparations for the invasion of Lankā were begun. Millions of monkeys and bears, of all sizes and colours, gathered from all quarters, and directed their course to the south. It was not possible for many of them to imitate Hanumān's method of transit. And arrangements were made for spanning the distance with a bridge, composed of mountains and trees. Some of the monkeys were so huge that they could handle hills as easily as others handle pebbles. The work was speedily accomplished, and Rāma shewed his gratification by fashioning and setting up a phallic emblem of the god Shiva, which he reverently worshipped. "There is no one," he said, "so dear to me as Shiva." Lanka,²(2) 4. Great and wonderful as the bridge was, it was no easy task for so many millions to get across, and not a few were compelled to fly over, while others made use of sea monsters which had left their ocean depths and come to gaze on Rāma's face.

Ever since his encounter with Hanumān, many of Rāvan's friends had urged him to restore Sītā. But the infatuated demon refused to listen. He boasted how, in former days, he

had fought with and overthrown a great variety of gods, and he was not afraid of men and monkeys. He also claimed to be a special devotee of Shiva, whom he had worshipped, not with an offering of flowers, as was the common practice, but with his ten heads, which he had cut off time after time, and cast into a fire, as Shiva himself was well aware. (Lanka,³⁴(24)39).

War was inevitable; and it is described at great length. Large numbers of demons were slain, but the mere fact that they uttered Rāma's name, though in the accents of hate, and with no thought of devotion, was sufficient to secure their entrance to heaven. The most exciting moment in the fight was when Lakshman was struck on the breast with such terrible force that he became unconscious. Rāma was in great distress, and asked why he had imperilled the life of his brother for the sake of a woman. A physician who was brought from Lanka to see the patient, prescribed the ^{use of} herbs which grew in a certain mountain in the north of India. Hanumān was sent to bring them. He found the mountain but he could not recognise the herbs. He therefore tore the mountain from its base and placing it on his shoulder set out on his return journey. As he passed over Avadh, Bharat saw what he thought was a great demon flying through the air, and discharging an arrow brought Hanumān and the mountain crashing to the ground. As he fell he called

out, "Oh! Rāma! Rāma! " These words wrought an immediate change in Bharat's breast, and ~~sucking~~^{pushing} forward he begged to be forgiven. It did not take long for the monkey to recover, and when he had told Bharat of the situation of affairs at Lankā, he once more addressed himself to his journey. Time was very precious. Hanumān therefore seated himself on Bharat's arrow; or, as we read in the text, "Mount my arrow along with the mountain, and I will send you to the All-merciful!"

The herbs effected the desired result. Lakshman's life, which had been despaired of, was saved.

Despite this, and other equally marvellous deeds, it was discovered that Rāvaṅ^{son} had begun a sacrifice which, if he had been able to complete it, would have made it impossible for any one to destroy him. The gods therefore appealed to Rāma not to trifle with Rāvan any longer. He had afflicted all of them quite enough already, and Sītā was in great distress. Thus appealed to, Rāma went forth to battle. It is a gruesome picture which the poet draws of the terrible slaughter. Rivers of blood, rivers on whose banks vultures sat, tearing at the entrails of the slain, as intent on their sport as any fisherman. So many of his followers were destroyed that Rāvan felt he was left alone. But he still fought on. When the two principal combatants were ~~at~~ last face to face, the demon discharged thousands of arrows and discs and spears. But Rāma

turned them all aside. The prince's arrows, on the other hand, were so impatient to get to work that they could not remain in the quiver. The stringing of his bow filled the universe with dread; the sea, the great tortoise, and the earth itself trembled. The elephants, which support the world, squealed with fright. But the gods laughed, well content. Rāma smote Rāvan's ten heads with ten arrows. He also cut off his twenty arms. But no sooner were they off, than they grew on again. This continued till the very sky was full of heads and arms; indeed there was no room for them in either earth or heaven. It was a source of great amusement to Rāma, to go on cutting off the demon's heads and arms. But such ignominious treatment naturally made Rāvan very angry, and he discharged so many arrows that Rāma and his chariot were completely hidden. The heads and arms too, as they went flying through the air, began to cry, "Victory! Victory! Where is Rāma? Where is Lakshman?" These shouts made ^{The} both monkeys and gods afraid. They began to think that ~~both~~ ^{the both} brothers had been overthrown. Indeed we are told that Rāma did swoon, when struck by the most powerful weapon which Rāvan had. But the swoon was not real. It was only a pretence on the hero's part. In any case, this incident caused great alarm, and the lesser gods became so frightened that they ran away and, declaring that all was over, hid themselves in ^{some} ~~certain~~ caves which were near at hand. Brahmā and

Shiva and a few very wise saints, alone were undeceived, and remained looking on. It was not to be wondered at that the gods should have become alarmed, because by his powers of magic and illusion Rāvaṇ multiplied himself into millions of Rāvans, and every bear and monkey saw before himself a fear-inspiring Rāvaṇ. The terror, however, did not last long. By the exercise of still greater power and with a single arrow, Rāma scattered the illusion, and there was only ^{one} Rāvaṇ as before. When the gods saw how they had been deceived, they came back to the scene of conflict, only to scatter screaming once more when Rāvaṇ sprang into their midst. The poet dwells at length on this wonderful scene. He tells us that the hero would have brought the combat to an end much sooner had it not been that he could not smite Rāvaṇ on the heart because Sita's image was imprinted there, and Rāma could not strike that part of the demon's body until the fear of death had driven from it all thought of Sītā. Another explanation, however, is given for this delay in killing Rāvaṇ. It was put forward by the demon's brother who had deserted to Rāma's side. He said that in Rāvaṇ's navel there was a certain quantity of amrit, the liquor which confers immortality, and until that amrit was dried up, Rāvaṇ could not die. Rāma with a smile acted on this information. He struck the demon on the place indicated, with an arrow. This seems to have dried up the amrit. With other arrows he then

struck off the heads and arms. And for the first time since the fight began, no fresh heads and arms took their place. Rāvan was dead at last. His headless, armless trunk fell lifeless to the ground. The arrows which Rāma had discharged returned to their quiver. The gods with Brahmā and Shiva at their head began a hymn of praise. And most wonderful of all, we are told that "The splendour of Rāvan entered the Lord's "mouth."⁽¹⁾ Lankā, 119 (99) 128.

Sītā had been delivered at last. She was overwhelmed with joy when Hanumān brought her word of Rāvan's death, and escorted her to her husband's presence. But her joy was changed into sorrow, when Rāma declared that she must submit to the ordeal of fire before he could receive her back as his wife. Fire alone could test her purity, and prove that she was unstained. This apparently harsh act on the part of Rāma caused great amazement. Sītā however, submitted without fear. She knew that she had never been disloyal to him in thought, word, or deed. And the fire did her no harm. "It was as cool as sandal wood." The image of Sītā which had been substituted for the real Sītā, that, and the stain of Rāvan's touch, alone were reduced to ashes.

(1) Growse translates it: "His soul entered the Lord's mouth." The Hindi word is tej. As other demons when they died at Rāma's hand went to heaven because they repeated Rāma's name in hatred, this end to Rāvan is not to be wondered at.

The real Sītā emerged from the flames more beautiful than before. She came escorted by Agni, the fire god, in person.

Before returning to his own country, Rāma requested Indra the king of heaven to restore to life the large number of bears and monkeys who had been killed in the course of the conflict. This Indra did by sending a shower of amrit over the field of battle. But it had no effect on the demons, because, as has been said, at the hour of death the image of Rāma was in ~~their~~ hearts and they had already achieved absorption in Brahm. The monkeys and bears were incarnations of the gods, and were restored to life because it was Rāma's will. Rāvan's aeroplane was used to convey the two princes and Sītā back to Avadh. It was large enough to carry ^{an immense} ~~a large~~ number of the bears and monkeys also. As they journeyed north, Rāma shewed to Sītā the bridge that they had built, and the phallus of Shiva which he had fashioned and worshipped. He shewed her the places they had stayed at together; he pointed out the spots where he and Lakshman had lived after she was carried away. When they reached the Ganges and especially when they saw Avadh, they bowed their heads in worship.

One day remained of the appointed years of exile. Rāma could not return till the full period had expired. He therefore sent Hanuman on in advance and himself waited in the

forest until Bharat could be informed. The monkey found Bharat in deep distress. He thought Rāma must be dead. Great was the joy of the citizens when they heard that Rāma was near at hand. The women thronged the roofs of ^{their} the houses to watch for the aeroplane in the sky. And when they did come, no words can describe the emotion that filled every heart. Rāma looked at each of the citizens, both men and women, with eyes of affection, and by assuming countless forms was able to embrace every one of them at the same moment, a mystery, says the poet, which no one can understand.

During the years of Rāma's reign, the days of the golden age returned. There was no sickness, no sorrow, no strife, no sin. Every one adhered to the religion of his own caste and ^{mode of life (varnashram)} ~~(ashram)~~ Rāma ruled over the whole earth, with its seven encircling seas. He offered millions of horse sacrifices and gave untold wealth to Brahmins. Sītā was in every respect an ideal wife and daughter. Though she had servants without number, she attended to the needs of her husband and mothers-in law, with her own hands. She became the mother of two sons, Their names were Lav and Kush. Uttar. 46(25)47.

II.

THE LESSER GODS.

Tulsidās makes frequent reference to the Vedas and their teaching. He tells us over and over again that it is thus that the Vedas sing. But, as Growse remarks, he had not the faintest idea of their contents, and the gulf that divides him from these ancient scriptures is nowhere more profound than in what they each believed about the heavenly powers. The gods with whose praises the Rig Veda, the oldest collection of the Aryan hymns, is concerned, were for the most part nature deities, the heaven and the earth, the sun, the wind, fire, rain and tempests. They were gods not difficult to appease, and their worshippers asked them *for health and happiness for children and cattle,* for long life and the forgiveness of sins. If precedence is to be judged by the number of hymns addressed to them, Indra, the god of the firmament, and Agni, the god of fire, held the foremost place; while Prajāpati, to whom at least one creation hymn belongs, (Rig Veda, X. 121) is definitely spoken of in the Brahmanas as the creator and his work described.

As the centuries passed, however, a great change took place. And by the time we reach the Epics of Hinduism, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, we find ourselves in a new world, where new gods are worshipped. Some of them, it is true, continue to bear the names of the ancient gods, and some of them fulfil more or less their old functions. But though they are still accepted and believed in, they have had to stand aside and make way for three new gods round whom the thoughts of men, very different from the old thoughts, had come to gather. So far back as the days before the Christian era, what we call Hinduism, in contrast to what is spoken of as Vedic Religion, had already begun to take shape, and the great gods of Hinduism are Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva. Brahmā is the creator, the successor of Prajāpati already referred to: Vishṇu's name appears in the Rig-Veda as a very secondary deity; and Shiva is reckoned as the Rudra of the earlier period, but in those days they were nature gods, associated with the sun and the tempests.

These three gods also gradually came to be spoken of together. Vishnu, the preserver god, and Shiva, the destroyer, are linked with Brahmā, the creator, in what is called the Hindu Triad. But they in turn are reckoned in the later speculations of Hinduism as the manifestations of the Supreme Spirit, the Eternal Brahm. What the relation of these three gods to one

another is, Tulsi^dās very seldom attempts to define, though he makes frequent reference to them in this linked relationship. As we shall see, his chief concern is to shew that Rāma, the hero of his poem, is not merely one of the many incarnations of the god Vishṇu, but, far more than that, the embodiment of the eternal and absolute God.

But though Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva have taken rank as the chief gods, and Rāma is identified with the Supreme, the others who may be spoken of as the lesser gods, are very much a reality, and have also their parts to play. (1) There are certain of them to whom the poet makes frequent appeal for help in the composition of his poem, the goddess of wisdom, for instance, generally supposed to be the wife of Brahmā, and Gaṇesh, the elephant-headed god, who is a son of Shiva. From time to time also, in the course of the narrative, different individuals are spoken of as bowing their heads and addressing prayers to their own favourite gods, or to the gods in general without specifying whose

(1) Though a 1000 years separate Tulsi^dās from the time when the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki was finally redacted, it is the Hinduism of that poem on which his own work is, to a large extent, based.

particular assistance is invited. Thus, confining ourselves to the first book of the poem, the Bāl kāṇḍ we read of the kings who tried in vain to bend the bow of Shiva that "they bowed their heads to their own special gods" (isht devan) 253²⁸² (259) but when Rāma addressed himself to the same task the people in their desire to see him succeed entreated the gods (sur) by their own past good deeds. (~~253~~)²⁶³⁽²⁶⁹⁾²⁹² In a somewhat earlier passage the people make a similar appeal; but they addressed themselves not only to the gods but to the spirits of their ancestors (pitri) and Gaṇesh. "Worshipping their ancestors" "and the gods, and remembering their past good actions, they" "said 'If our merit is of any use, may Gaṇesh grant that Rāma" will break Shiva's bow as if it were a lotus stalk,'" (~~253~~)²⁵⁸⁽²⁶⁴⁾²⁸⁴ 322(328)355. At the marriage of Rāma and Sītā we are told (~~322~~) that "The gurus caused the Brāhmins to worship Gauri and Gaṇesh", the wife and son of Shiva, and that these two deities appeared, accepted the worship and blessed them. Later on, in connection with the same ceremony, it is said that the gods were worshipped and that on the offering of the burnt sacrifice (homa), Agni, the god of fire, appeared in bodily form and in a very gracious fashion accepted it. (~~322~~) The function was brought ~~to~~ a conclusion by the bride's father, who, when he had offered a large number of gifts, bowed his head before the gods (dev) and entreated them with joined hands, saying, "The gods (sur) and the saints desire a good disposition. " "Can you satisfy the Ocean by offering it a few drops of water?"

But we feel the reality of these lesser gods, perhaps even more in the numerous pictures we receive of their meetings together for pleasure or business. They have become an organized society, with wives and children. They have their own palaces and gardens, sometimes their own particular heavens. They have their own special vehicles; Indra has an elephant, the others travel in ^{chariots and} aeroplanes. But Brahmā is their president, and we come across the phrase "Brahmā and the gods," over and over again. And in particular, Brahmā is their court of appeal. It is to him they flock when they are in any difficulty. It is he who expresses their feelings when they have anything to say. When mortals have done what pleases them they rain down flowers and cause the drums of heaven to beat. They are easily moved by both joy and sorrow. When the news of Shiva's second marriage reached them, it was not Brahmā only whose joy overflowed. Bāl 101 (99)¹¹⁴. The whole community of heaven got ready the cars in which they were accustomed to travel. "Vishṇu, Brahmā and all the gods" "got into their chariots and went to the wedding" Bāl. 102.(101)¹¹⁶. In similar fashion they came down to earth to be present at Rāma's wedding with Sītā. They had been attracted by the magnificence of the preparations, and as they looked on from afar, said that they had lived to no purpose, and when they reached the capital of the bridegroom's father, they declared that heaven was a poor place in comparison. Brahmā, in

particular was amazed to find that, though he was the Creator, "he saw nothing like it in his own handiwork." [Bal. 313 (319)^{34b}]. The beauty of the bride and bridegroom was equally astounding. Brahmā was sorry that he had only eight eyes to gaze with. Kārtikeya, the god of war, and Shiva's own son, boasted that he was better off than the creator, because he had no less than twelve eyes. But Indra was particularly proud, for he had no less than a thousand, and he thought that the curse which had inflicted him with so many, had proved a blessing in the end. At the wedding, Vishṇu and his wife were also present, looking with love at Rāma and Sītā, their own incarnations. In the account given of the meeting of the newly wedded pair, it would seem as if for the moment the celestials were looking down from heaven, but we are told later that Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva, with the other celestials, took part in the marriage festivities. They assumed the guise of learned Brahmins, and were ~~executed~~^{escorted} to seats of honour by the bride's father. The celestials were so delighted with all they saw and heard that they asked Brahmā to allow them to be born in Avadh.

Much of this may be set down to poetical license. But we cannot get away from the fact that Tulsidās is merely ~~flecting~~^{peating} what he found in the earlier Rāmāyana, and other sacred books, ideas which India has not been alone in entertaining, for we can find many parallels to them in the mythologies of other countries.

To understand more clearly Tulsidās's general conception of the gods, let us take another illustration. The power of demons was a great source of worry to the celestials. There was one demon in particular who conquered the lords of all the worlds, and made the gods miserable. Spoken of as the ageless and undying, he had defeated them times without number. At last they went to the creator, and ~~called~~ ^{asked} for his assistance. When he saw their distress, he promised them relief, saying that a son would be born to Shiva, who would overcome their oppressor. Bal. 94, (92)106. Their greatest enemy, however, was the demon Rāvaṇ. How he came to possess so great strength will be explained in a later chapter. Here it is enough to note that he also had subdued the whole universe, and caused an infinite amount of sorrow to gods and men. And here again, we find gods and saints crowding round the Creator's throne, and begging him to do something for their relief, and though Brahmā admits that he himself is helpless to do anything, he says that a deliverer is at hand. Vishṇu, ~~this time~~, will come to their assistance. ^{190(196).}
 And before they had separated, as the result of a prayer ad- ²¹⁴
 dressed to him by the Creator, the voice of Vishṇu was heard from heaven telling Indra, and the saints and sages, not to be afraid, because for their sakes, he would appear in human form, and bring them deliverance. After Vishṇu had spoken, Brahmā told the celestials that they must assume the form of

monkeys and render service to their deliverer. This instruction was at once obeyed, and we find that in his subsequent war with Rāvaṇ, Viṣṇu in his incarnation as Rāma, was greatly helped by innumerable hosts of monkeys.

Despite this transformation, the celestials were able to be present at all stages of Rāma's human career. They were present as we have seen, at his marriage. They were also present at his birth, filling the very heavens with their chariots, ~~and~~ singing his praises and raining down flowers. Indeed when Rāma and his brothers did anything ^{unusually} remarkable, the gods were sure to be at hand, giving manifest expression to their pleasure and admiration. On the occasion, for example, of Rāma breaking the bow of Shiva, the noise of it filled the universe, and made such a fearful sound, that the horses yoked to the Sun's chariot, left their course; the four elephants who uphold the earth, groaned; the earth ^{itself} shook, while gods, demons and saints had to put their hands to their ears. But when they recovered from the shock, the celestials were able to join with Brahmā in singing Rāma's praise, and to rain down flowers.

In view of such strong feelings of gratitude and admiration on the part of the celestials, in view of the fact that they appear later as Rāma's allies, and in the guise of monkeys, in his fight with Rāvaṇ and his demon followers, it is

strange to find the gods, at least the lesser gods, actuated by feelings of jealousy and envy towards him. This is specially true of Indra. In the Vedas, where he appears as god of the firmament, Indra occupies a foremost place. More hymns are addressed to him than to any of the other gods. In the days of the Epics he had been pushed aside by Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva. Nevertheless he was not very far behind them, and he is spoken of as king of swarga or heaven, where the celestials lived. It may have been that his character was against him, and certainly he was involved in a number of scandalous intrigues. In particular, Tulsidās does more than hint at the curse uttered against him by an outraged husband, for his body was covered by a thousand stains, emblematic of his sin, and afterwards changed into eyes. Manifestly the poet had no respect for this deity, and with a healthy freedom, he tells us over and over again what he thinks of him.

"The king of the gods is the limit for deceitfulness and " "evil conduct. Other's loss and his own gain, is what he de- " "lights in. His ways are the ways of a crow. Cunning, and " "of unclean mind, he puts his trust in nobody." . Ayodh²⁸⁹ (289)301. And Rāma himself is made to ^{add} say, "The conduct of Indra is " "like that of a dog." ⁽²⁸⁹⁾ Time after time, the selfishness of the gods is emphasised, and when they thought they had any

reason to fear that Rāma would not adhere to his purpose of slaying Rāvan, the bad side of their natures showed itself. Indeed no sooner was Rāma's wedding over than they began to exercise a malign influence. It was necessary that Rāma and Sitā should be driven into exile. Otherwise the demon king would not carry off Sitā, and provoke the wrath of her husband. If this did not happen they could not see how their enemy would be slain. And so they resolved to plot and plan to effect their purpose. It looked as if Rāma were so happy that the promise Vishnu made would never be fulfilled.

"The evil-minded gods hoped that some obstacles would intervene. To them the rejoicings of Avadh afforded no pleasure. They liked it as little as a thief likes a moon-light night." (Ayodh, 11.) They therefore begged Saraswati to come to their help. The goddess agreed, and did as they asked. But she did not conceal her opinion of their characters. "The desires of the gods are vile. Their dwelling place is lofty, their acts are low. They cannot bear to see the prosperity of another." Ayodh, 12.

On a later occasion, when Rāma had gone into exile, and his unselfish brother was seeking to persuade him to return and claim his rights, the gods once more appealed to the goddess to render Bharat's efforts vain, she said they were "both selfish and stupid."

"The delusive power (Māyā) of Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva"
 "is very great, nevertheless it cannot comprehend the under-"
 "standing of Bharat. Why then do you tell me to make it of "
 "no effect? Is the moonlight able to rob the moon?"
 Ayodh²⁸³ (283) 295.

It is indeed a humiliating picture which the poet draws of the lesser gods. So long as Rāma is doing what they wish, they are delighted. But even when he is face to face with their great enemy, they have not the courage to fight. The very sight of the demon makes them take to their heels in consternation and with loud cries. In extenuation of such cowardice, it is fair to add that they had good cause to be afraid, because "only the Creator, Shiva and learned saints who were" "acquainted with Rāma's power refused to run away."
 Lanka. 111 (92) 120.

In concluding this study of the lesser gods we shall refer to their reception of Rāma when he had rescued Sītā and put Rāvaṇ to death. "Among others the gods, selfish " "as they always were, came and spoke, as if they were in pur-" suit of the highest good. Lanka, 127 (106) 136.

When they had addressed Rāma as the Supreme Spirit, the Eternal, the all pervading Brahm, who had appeared on earth
 (1)
 in seven different incarnations, they confessed, "We gods

(1) As the fish, the tortoise, the boar, the man-lion, the dwarf; as Parashurāma, and now as Rāma. The poet does not refer to Buddha. The Krishna incarnation was later and Kalki is still to come.

"possess the highest rank, but in our selfishness we have
"forgotten to worship thee." Lanka, 127. (106)135.

When they had finished, Brahmā broke into a long hymn
of praise, in the course of which he said;

"A curse on the life we gods possess: without faith in "
"thee existence goes astray." Lanka, 128 (107)137.

Best of all, Indra is made to appear and confess his sin.

"I was very proud. I thought there was no one equal "
"to me. But now that I have seen the Lord's lotus feet, my "
"grief-causing pride has ceased."

And then he adds what is one of the finest passages in
the poem.

"Let others worship the invisible, the unembodied Brahm,
"of whom the Vedas sing. But my choice is Koshala's king, "
"the divine Rāma, embodied and real receive me as "
"thine own servant and give me ^{devotion (bhakti).} ~~faith~~." Lanka, 130 (109)139.

It is sometimes suggested that such detailed references
to these lesser gods. does not mean that ^{one} ~~the~~ author believed
in them. Some would seek to compare them and the demons to
the angels and devils in whom many Christians believe. Others
would argue that they are merely introduced as a foil to the
greater power and dignity of the greater God, or gods of the
poem. But it is quite impossible to accept any of these
suggestions. The Hindu mind, in matters of religion, con-
sists of a series of compartments, and the contents of one

do not require to be reconciled with the contents of the others. The Hindu never claims to be a monotheist. He is at best a henotheist; that is, he worships one god at a time. When a Hindu becomes a monotheist, he ceases to be a Hindu, and finds refuge in religious societies, like the Brāhma Samāj, or the Prārthnā Samāj of recent days. More frequently he turns for satisfaction to Christianity or *Islam*. ~~Mehermedanism.~~

But when he does not go that length, he can claim that he is not quite so inconsistent as superficial observers might suppose. For after all, what does the orthodox Hindu believe? He believes in a Supreme Spirit, all pervading and devoid of qualities, but who finds expression in three forms, Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva. His cosmogony also is able to account for the existence of gods and demons, men and beasts, by saying that Brahmā, the creator, had mind-born sons through whom the three worlds became inhabited. If he is more pantheistically inclined, he can offer what seems to him at least, a more thorough-going explanation of all apparent inconsistency, by saying that everything from Brahmā to a stone, is but a manifestation of Brahm, or, as we have it given to us even more drastically in the words of a speaker in the Vishṇu Purāna, "I am all things; all things are in "me. Brahm is my name." (I. 19).

We get an excellent illustration of the poet's own attitude in the opening stanzas of the poem. There is perhaps, no more beautiful expression of his faith in God and in Rāma as the incarnation of God, than in the following statement:-

"The Adorable(Bhagwān) is one, passionless, formless, nameless, unborn, existence, thought, joy (sachchidānand), the supreme abode. He pervades all things. He exists in all forms. He assumes a body and performs many deeds simply for the sake of those devoted to Him. He is supremely merciful and full of love to His servants, very affectionate to those who are His own, and in His compassion is not angry with them. He is the restorer of that which is past, the protector of the humble, the sincere and powerful lord." Bal, 17 (17) 22.

And yet a few pages earlier we read:-

"Knowing that everything in the universe, animate and inanimate, consists of Rāma, I ever worship with joined hands the lotus feet of all gods, demons, men, serpents, birds, ghosts, departed ancestors, Gandharvs. I worship kinnars and night-walkers. May ^{they} all be merciful to me. The 84 lakhs of births are of four kinds. They live in water, on dry land and in the sky. Knowing that the whole universe consists of Sītā and Rāma, I worship it with joined hands." Bal, 10 (10) 15.

Those who find it difficult to believe that Tulsidās and others should be as polytheistic as they seem, might look back, with advantage to the situation existing in Greece and Rome, 2000 years ago. There were some like Lucian who poured contempt on the gods. To use the words of Friedländer, "they regarded Greek and barbarian gods alike, "as equally unreal:..... But this was the feeling and judgment of unbelievers only, who, to all appearance, formed only "a minority, even among the educated." The same writer goes on to shew how little even the most highly educated were influenced by unbelief, and he gives us the example of Plutarch. He was a priest of Apollo. Nevertheless he was an equally sincere worshipper of Egyptian gods in addition to the Greek. And in one of his books, he says that "the gods are everywhere the same, ministering forces of a "supreme world-ruling power, known by different names, and "worshipped in different ways, by different peoples."⁽¹⁾

That is exactly the position of the Hindu to-day. And if this fact were realised more clearly, people would not be so perplexed when they find sincere devotees of Hinduism expressing their warm admiration for Christ. Nor on the other hand would others be tempted to imagine that such expressions of reverence are a proof that the day, when India will cast her idols to the moles and the bats, is near at hand.

(1) Friedländer. Roman Life and Manners under the early Empire. Vol.3. p. 109.

(15)

III.

BRAHMĀ, THE CREATOR.

As has been mentioned, Prajāpati, or the lord of creatures, became, in course of time, Brahmā, the Creator. There was indeed a day prior to the age of the Epics, when Brahmā was the highest god. This was his position, for example, in the Laws of Manu, where Vishnu and Shiva (Hara) are only once mentioned, while Brahmā or Prajāpati is referred to over and over again, always in subordination, of course, to the impersonal quality-less Soul of the Universe, Brahm.

In the more ancient part of the Epics it would appear as if Brahmā were continuing to hold his own. But in the later sections of those poems, we can see that Vishnu and Shiva are pushing him aside, and claiming more and more, the worship of men. How that process worked is shewn very clearly in the following illustration. The first three avatāras, or incarnations of Vishnu, those of the fish, the tortoise and the boar, were originally attributed to Brahmā. But the followers of Vishnu somehow managed to appropriate them to their own favourite deity. It has been suggested that the creator had no strong Brahmā sect to push his claims as Shiva and Vishnu had to push theirs, and certainly not a few passages could be quoted from the impartial pages of the Mahābhārata and ^{from} the sectarian Purānas, in which the followers of these two younger gods make the most extravagant claims for their own special object of worship, asserting that he

is the Supreme Spirit, and as such includes within himself every other god.

But there is another and deeper reason than the assertiveness of the sects, for the gradual weakening of Brahmā's power and influence. The assertiveness of the sects may have been responsible to some extent. But why were the followers of Vishnu and Shiva so confident and eager? It was because they believed their gods could do something that the creator could not do. Brahmā's work of creation, so far as the existing universe is concerned, is finished. His work, such as it is, good or bad, was completed long ago, and he can do nothing to alter it. A process was set in motion and actions have taken place, which must bear their inevitable fruit. What has been, has been, and what will be, will be. He is Pitāmaha, the grandfather. He has retired from active work. No great purpose is gained by worshipping him. Why should men erect temples in his honour? There are gods more potent, a god who may be appeased, or a god who will be gracious. If Brahmā created this world, that was an event which took place in the distant past. But it is Vishnu who preserves the world, and Shiva who destroys it. Is it not better to gain the favour of the one and to placate the other. This indeed, may be called the motive of the whole poem, to shew that there is a God who can save. However great Brahmā's

work of creation may have been despite the fact that gods and men make constant appeal for his assistance, Brahmā's own creation is often beyond his control. This is set forth very clearly in the opening pages of the poem. It is a very remarkable utterance, because it attributes everything that exists to the Creator; even the Supreme Spirit and Māyā are included. But other forces have since begun to operate and deprived Brahmā of at least much of his power.

"The good and the bad, Vidhi created both, the Vedas declare "
 "their many virtues and defects. The Vedas, histories and Pur-"
 "ānas say that what Vidhi has created (Vidhi prapanch) is a n "
 "mingling of good and evil. Pain and pleasure, sin and religious
 "merit, day and night, the religious and the wicked, good caste"
 "and low caste, demon and god; high and low, nectar and life, "
 "poison and death; Māyā and Brahm, the individual soul (jiv) "
 "and the lord of the world (jagdish); the seen and the unseen"
 "the beggar and the king; Kāshi and Magadh; the Ganges and the"
 "Karmnāshā; the land of death (Mārwar) and Mālwa⁽¹⁾; Brāhmin and "
 "outcaste; heaven and hell, sensual desire and asceticism; "
 "Veda and Tantra (nigam āgam); a distribution of good and evil¹;"

(1) Magadh was the home of Buddhism in contrast to Kashi, a centre of Hinduism; the Ganges washes away every sin; the Karmnāshā, a river between Kāshi and Behār, destroys all merit. Mārwar is in the desert of Rājputānā, Mālwa is famous for its fruitfulness. Prapanch, literally expansion, means "manifestation or form of phenomenal world," "the world as scene of manifold action;" "the visible world of universe." Monica Williams.

"sensate or insensate, whether full of virtue or defect, the
 "Creator (Kartār) has made all things. Good men are like the
 "swan, they keep the milk of goodness and reject the water of
 "evil. When Vidhātā gives such powers of discrimination to
 "them, they abandon what is wrong, and the mind falls in love
 "with virtue. But Time, their natural dispositions (svabhāv)"
 "and the fruit of what they did in their former lives (Karma)"
 "exercise violence upon them and even a good man, in the grip"
 "of things as they are, makes mistakes." Bal. ⁽⁷⁾ ~~(6)~~ 6(6)11. (1)

The Creator then has made all that is. He even gives to his creatures the power to discern between good and evil. But the influence of Time, their natural dispositions and the fruit of their past actions cause them to err. Time, Svabhāv and Karma are more powerful than the Creator. As the poem advances, the poet has many opportunities of enlarging on this theme. But that does not mean that the world has been utterly forsaken. Vishṇu comes to its relief. "Hari takes those who put their
 "trust in him and corrects their wanderings, removing their
 "sorrows and their sins." Bal. ⁷ (7)12.

And Brahmā himself is conscious of the fact that there are grave limits to his power. In the face of an evil for which he himself was responsible, he frankly admits, "There"
 "is nothing I can do." Bal, 190 (196) 216. Brahmā had conferred on the demon Rāvaṇ the invincibility which proved so great a scourge to both gods and men. What he

(1) The same idea appears in Ayodh, 222 (222) 232. "Vidhātā"
 "has created the world by mixing the milk of goodness (sagun
 "kshīr) and the water of evil ("avagun jal)!"

had conferred he could not, however, withdraw. But there was one who was more than equal to the situation, and so the creator says to his brother celestials who had invited him to interfere; "Keep courage in your hearts. I cannot help you. But Vishnu can help both you and me. He knows about our sufferings. The Lord (Prabhu) will remove our bitter afflictions." Bal. 190 (196) 214.

And yet despite all that has been written on the comparative position of the three great gods of Hinduism, one is struck not by the subordinate position which ~~we~~^{one} would expect Brahmā to occupy, especially in a poem so definitely devoted to the portrayal of Rāma as the incarnation both of Vishnu and the Supreme Spirit, but by the prominence he continues to secure. The same contradiction exists in India to-day. It is true that there are only two temples to Brahmā, in contrast to the many thousands and hundreds of thousands in honour of Vishnu and Shiva. ^(1.) Nevertheless the fact remains that in the speech of every day, when men speak of life and the deeper things of life, they speak ~~not perhaps of Brahmā by that particular name, but of God, Parameshwar~~^{of} and when they do so, they probably think neither of Vishnu nor of Shiva, but of God, their creator. This is a matter so important that it needs to be examined in detail. It would appear, despite the progress of these other gods, and the development of their worship, that the human heart, by some ineradicable

1) In The Museum of Archaeology, Ajmere, Rajputana, there is a large number of idols of Brahmā, ~~dated approximately 800-700 B.C.~~ They are quite as numerous as those of other deities. This would point to a time when there were ^{as} many temples to Brahmā, as to other gods.

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instinct, turns in moments of joy and sorrow, ~~instinctively~~ to its Maker in either praise or blame.

In the ^{Seven} ~~six~~ books of his poem Tulsidās refers to Brahmā under one name or another more than 350 times. On at least 240 occasions the names used are Vidhi, Viranchi, Vidhātā, (once as Dhātā) or Kartār, all words that specifically denote his function as maker or fashioner of the universe. He is referred to as Brahmā about 50 times, while in reference to the mythological stories connected with Brahmā, he is sometimes called "the four-faced," or "he who was born from the lotus."

When the name Brahmā is used it is as a rule in association with other gods, e.g. "Brahmā and the others," Bal, 77, (75) 89. "Brahmā and the other gods," Bal, 264, (270), 293. "Shiva, Brahmā and the others," Bal, 313 (319) 346. "All the gods, Brahmā, etc.," Bal, 343 (349) 377, or we read of Brahmā's weapons and Brahmā's dwelling-place. Occasionally we read of something Brahmā said or did; ~~he~~ "Brahmā said, *The desire of "Hari is very powerful." Kish, 11 (7) 9. "Shiva, Brahmā and the "other gods, reverence Rāma." Lanka, 130 (109) 139.

Other names are also used. Aj, which means the unborn, ~~one~~, is the most interesting, and is used at least 17 times; also as a rule in association with the other gods, most frequently with either Shiva or both Shiva and Vishnu. Ísh or Íshwar, which means either lord of god, appears at least

eighteen times, but it is to be noted that when Shiva is referred to in association with Brahmā and Vishnu, or with Brahmā alone, he is frequently called Ísh or Mahesh.⁽¹⁾ Another name, Daiv, meaning peculiar to, or belonging to, the gods, and derived from dev, a common name for the lesser gods, is also used.

The point on which one wishes to lay emphasis however, is that Tulsidās has the first member of the Hindu Triad very often in his thoughts, and in the large majority of cases, when he refers to him it is by names which directly signify his proper function, not Brahmā, not Ishwar, not Jagdish, not even Aj, but the words Vidhi, Viranchi, and Vidhātā, all of which by their derivation and meaning shew that he is the arranger, disposer and maker of the universe.⁽²⁾

(1) Viranchi, Hari, Íshā; Vishnu, Aj. Ísh; ~~Aj. Íshā~~; Aj. Mahesh; Vidhi, Mahesh.

(2) Vidhi occurs at least 160 times, Viranchi 50, Vidhātā about 30 times and Kartār thrice. Daiv occurs 16 times. In Bāl kānd 82 (81) 95, the father of Pārvati says to his wife,

"Remember Sri Bhagwān who has created Pārvati and will make her "happy." Here the work of creation is referred to Vishnu.

In one incident, Brahmā is mentioned four times and always by different names: Chaturānan (the four-faced), Viranchi, Vidhātā and Vidhi.

Brāhmā himself uses Ishwar when he tells his brother deities;

"Devise a plan by which Ishwar will come and help."
Bal. 94 (92) 106.

(1) In illustration let us take first a few references to Brahmā's work as creator.

"From the time Viranchi made the world, we have seen and "heard of many marriages." Bal 319, (325) 352.

"In all that Vidhi has made, I have not heard of, or seen "anyone like Bharat." Ayodh²²¹ (221) 231.

"Reckoning good qualities milk, and bad qualities water, even" "so has Vidhātā fashioned the world." Ayodh²²² (222) 232.

"Viranchi has created for the forest Kol and Kirat women who" "know nothing of the luxuries of life." Ayodh⁵⁸ (58) 60.

There are a number of passages, it should be noted, where the poet to enhance the grandeur of some human contrivance speaks slightingly of the Creator. After seeing the preparations at a wedding, "The cleverness of Viranchi appeared contemptible." Bal 103 (101) 117.

Of similar preparations at a later period it is said, "Their splendour caused dismay to Vidhi." Ayodh²⁰⁶ (206) 215.

In one passage the works of the Creator call forth complaint,

"What was the purpose of Viranchi when he made women?" Bal 333 (339) 366.

But with reference to Sītā there is no complaint,

"When Viranchi made and adorned Sītā, he made her after consideration, for the dark-coloured bridegroom." Bal 228 (234) 255

The elaborate passage which makes the Creator primarily responsible for everything whatever its nature or character has been already quoted. Bal ⁶(6) 11. Elsewhere we have the same idea, though in fewer words.

"The king's love and the queen's cruelty, - Vidhi made them" "both, the limit." Ayodh ³⁶(36) 37.

"The mandate of God (ish) is on all our heads, in creation," "preservation and destruction; whether it be poison or amrit." "The manifestations of Vidhi are thus immoveable and without" "beginning." Ayodh ²⁷⁰(270) 282.

Attention should also be called to the recurrence of the very primitive idea regarding creation in the statement: "By the" "power of penance Vidhātā creates all things." Bal 84 (82) 96

- (2) What is of more importance is the Creator's relation to the inhabitants of the universe. We have seen how the gods made frequent appeals for his help. He was sometimes also brought into very close relations with the demons. Brahmā had a most unfortunate facility for granting boons. It is true that he was not as a rule his own master. If saints or demons only practised asceticism long enough and vigorously enough, they could extract from the Creator almost any favour they liked, and Vishnu's incarnation as Rāma was rendered necessary by a boon which Brahmā had conferred on Rāvan. That evil creature had practised penance so long and so earnestly that the Creator just had to come and say, "My son, I am pleased," "ask a boon."

and the demon, bending before Brahmā and clasping his feet, said to the lord of the world (Jagdish):-

"Grant that I may not die except by the hand of a man "or a monkey." Bal. 182. (180) 206.

And the answer he received was:-

"Be it so; you have performed a great penance."

Ravāṇ, as a result of this promise, could not be killed by either gods or demons. In his pride he had not thought it possible that man or beast could slay him. To over-reach him it was therefore necessary for Vishṇu to be born as a man, and for the gods to become monkeys. Bal. 192 (198) 218.

What Brahmā could grant to demons, perhaps against his will, it was believed that in more natural fashion he would give men and women, and so, time after time, we find appeals addressed to him, sometimes more or less in the form of an oath, thus:-

"Oh Vidhi! What is going to happen." Ayodh⁶⁸ (68) 70

"Oh Vidhi! quickly remove the foolishness of Janak." Bal, 252 (258) 281.

But much more generally we read that prayers were addressed to him, or hopes expressed that he would hear his suppliants.

"Rāma, practise every continence to-day that Vidhi may give "to our affairs a happy settlement." Ayodh 10 (10) 10.

"If Vidhi give me another birth, may he do me this kindness, "that Rāma will be my son and Sītā my daughter-in-law."

Ayodh. 17 (17) 17.

"There is one plan, I may mention, which you can adopt if the
"god (daiv) grant his assistance." Bal. 80(78)92.

"In his heart, he was appealing to Vidhi that Rāma would not
"go to the forest." Ayodh, (43)44.

"Day and night they continued to pray to Vidhi, desiring
"devotion for Rāma's feet." Uttar, 46(25)47.

"In whatever births we may wander, in bondage to our former
"births, may God (Īsh) grant us this." Ayodh, 24.

The Creator's interest and readiness to help are manifest:-

"Seeing them, Vidhi was pleased in his mind." Ayodh, (271)283.

"God (Īsh) is our shield and the king of Mithilā is our helper."
Ayodh (273) 282.

"By God's grace (Īsh) and with your blessing, my sons and
"daughters are pure like Ganges water." Ayodh (271) 283.

"When Īsh is favourable every kind of benefit in the world is
"obtained by men." Bal. 349(346)374.

But he can also be angry and shew his power, while anxiety is
manifested as to his real intentions and character.

"If Vidhātā is hostile to anyone, then a grain of dust is equal
"to Mount Meru, a feather is like the King of Death, and a rope
"becomes a snake." Bal. 181(179)205.

"What Vidhi has written on the forehead, god (dev) demon, man,
"serpent, saint, no one is able to wipe out." Bal. 80(78)92.

"If Vidhātā is good and gives to all appropriate rewards, then
"the bridegroom for Janaki has been found. This is not a matter

"for doubt. If by the control of Vidhi, the wedding is thus
"arranged, then every one will be pleased. Bal. 227(233)254.

"Whom God (daiv) creates to be under the control of an enemy,

"he will not desire to live, death is better. Ayodh, 21.

*"Vidhi made me deformed in body, and made me a slave." Ayodh 16.

Indeed the poem shews that however willing people may be to credit Brahmā with good intentions, they often find it impossible to do so, and when they don't get what they would like, they grumble and that very vigorously, against God.

The poet himself may not be specially perplexed by the problems of sin and suffering, because his object is to shew that he has found an answer to men's perplexities in Rāma, the incarnation of the Supreme Spirit. But he is true to life and human experience when he makes his characters, the men and women of Avadh, cry out against their sufferings. They feel as if some lesser god had made the world. The Creator cannot finish the task he undertook, or if he meddles, things are only made
(1)
worse.

"Vidhi interfered and spoiled the matter when it was half done."
Ayodh. (153)160.

(1) Occasionally people realise that the fruit of their former lives is the cause of their sufferings.

"All this is the result of my sin. I can do nothing, Vidhi is against me." Ayodh. (35)36.

Just as conversely a ferryman tells Rāma that he has got compensation for all his past sorrow, in the sight of Rāma's face.

"To-day Vidhi has paid me all my wages." Ayodh (98)102.

"Vidhi arranged everything well, and has (now) spoiled it."

Bal. 271 (277) 293.

"What is Vidhi after now?" Bal. 268 (274) 299.

"When Vidhi is opposed, every one is opposed." Ayodh (174)182.

"The ways of Vidhi are all crooked. He is utterly beyond control, cruel and without pity. He made the moon pale, the tree of Indra's heaven into a common piece of wood, and the sea salt." Ayodh. (114)119.

"Vidhi's understanding is crooked. He uses a thunderbolt to break a milk bubble. We hear of amrit and see poison; all his doings are hard. On every hand there are crows, owls and cranes; the auspicious swan is only to be found in Mānas lake (and can't be reached)..... The ways of Vidhi are very contradictory and wonderful. He creates, he nourishes, and again destroys. It is like children at play. Vidhi's methods are those of a fool." Ayodh. (269)281.

"What a wicked thing Kartār has done." Ayodh. (236)246.

"The love I bore for Rāma, Vidhi was not able to endure and played this low trick by means of my mother." Ayodh (250)261.

"My bad luck, my mother's wickedness, the incomprehensible action of Vidhi, and the cruelty of Time, have all combined to obstruct and destroy me." Ayodh. (256)267.

In concluding this series of quotations, an observation made by Ravana may well be added. The penance which ultimately compelled Brahmā to grant him a boon, was the throwing of his ten heads, one after the other, into a sacrificial fire. On

one of these skulls, as it was burning, the demon read, written by the Creator, words to the effect that he would die at the hands of a man. But as he told the story, he merely laughed, not believing that the words of the Creator could be true.

"I considered there was no cause for fear: Viranchi wrote it "when he was old and his intelligence feeble." Lanka. 38(28)43.

The reference to what was written on the skull of Rāvaṇ naturally leads to another matter in connection with the Creator, the suggestion made over and over again, that people are not personally responsible when they do wrong. Such an assertion is all the more remarkable in view of the very vigorous and penetrating fashion in which Tulsidās exposes and condemns human frailty and sin. Thus we find Bharat saying that Vidhātā had made him to be a disgrace to

to his family, and lamenting that his mother had brought ruin to Rāma; but he is told not to worry.

" Rāma loves you, you love Rāma. Your mother is not to blame, " " the blame rests with the Creator (Vidhi) who is adverse. " Ayodh¹⁹³, (193), 201.

Rāma also speaks in similar fashion. In one of these many passages where his magnanimity is so beautifully revealed he goes out of his way to shew kindness to his foolish step-mother whose jealousy had procured his exile:

" Falling at her feet, he spoke words of comfort, placing the " " guilt on the head of Time, Karma (the fruit of actions) and " " the Creator (Viāhi). " Ayodh²³⁴, (234), 244

The language he uses to his brother in extenuation of the same offender, is even stronger:

" Do not be depressed. Know that man's life is in the control " " of God (Īsh). The people who blame your mother are fools, " " who have never served in the schools of the philosophers and " " the saints. " Ayodh²⁵², (252), 263.



IV.

KĀL, KARMA, VIDHI.

Time, the Fruit of Actions, and the Creator.

There is often a very real temptation to translate the various words for Creator by our English terms, Destiny and Fate. The Creator seems so helpless in his own universe. He seems to be nothing more than an impersonal force, which cannot be moved. This temptation is specially strong with phrases like Vidhi-bash, - in the grasp of the Creator, which Growse sometimes, but not always, translates as, in the grasp of Fate, and in such statements as:-

"You can do nothing against the acts of Vidhi." Ayodh¹⁹⁷_^ (197) 206.

"You cannot wipe out the writings of Vidhi." Bal, 107 (104) 120.

or when we come across two separate words for God in the same sentence, to translate at least one of them by Fate.

"They blamed Daiv, saying to each other, the doings of Vidhi"

"are all crooked." Ayodh¹¹⁴_^ (114) 119.

"What a wicked thing Kartar (the fashioner) has done. Looking "

"at her they were greatly distressed at all the things Daiv "

"had caused her to suffer." Ayodh²³⁶_^ (236) 246.

The inclination to use Destiny and Fate in our translations is even greater in relation to two other words which



appear with great frequency throughout the poem. I refer to the words Karma and Bhāvi. Nevertheless, if we ever speak of Fate or Destiny in reference to Hindu thought,⁽¹⁾ it cannot be said too often that we are importing into our discussions ideas which are foreign to Hinduism. Even when Tulsidās speaks of the handwriting of the Creator on Rāvan's skull, or elsewhere - a phrase he may have borrowed from Mohammedanism - he is not thinking of anything being predestined or foreordained by God irrespective of what a man has been or has done in his former lives. But he is thinking - indeed he is obsessed by the thought - of how the soul is born time after time in age after age, and that in those endless births the soul is accumulating a mass of actions, (karma) which cling to it all through its career. That is what the Indian calls Karma, and according to Tulsidās, Karma is more powerful than anything else; ~~or as we read in the Ayodhya-book, "People say"~~ ~~"truly that Karma is supreme."~~ ~~Ayodh, 88 (88) 91.~~

And the same is true of the other word which Tulsidās uses, and which is frequently rendered as fate; I refer to Bhāvi. Tulsidās often says of someone or other, He is in the grasp of Bhāvi, just as he says, He is in the grasp of Vidhi. But this word Bhāvi, means that which is in process of becoming; that which is bound to happen; the inevitable.

Now, when Tulsidās tells us that Karma is supreme, or

(1)

Necessity would be a better word than either of them. It takes things as they are and apportions no blame.

says men are in the grasp of the inevitable, he is thinking of what is the governing idea of Indian thought. It is not Brahmā or Vishnu or Shiva who is the ruler of the universe, It is Karma or Bhāvi, who is the real god of Hinduism. As we shall find, Tulsidās has reasons to give us for believing that both must bend before the all conquering might of Rāma, and that there is hope for both gods and men, if they take refuge in him. Never-the-less here is the central thought of Hinduism; the inevitableness of Karma, not a something that ^{has} been appointed in any arbitrary fashion by someone outside ourselves, God or another; but a something for which we are ourselves responsible. Because it is the accumulated total of our own past actions and character in a previous existences ^{and} which stands to our credit or to our debit, a blessing or a share. "The dread of continued rebirth is the "one haunting thought which colours the whole texture of "Indian philosophy," says Monier Williams, and it is the burden of the common man as well. Unfortunately, as we have seen, it tends to sap a man's moral strength also, for it makes it very easy to find an excuse for our sins by blaming a past of which we have no recollection. Is a man happy, his karma explains his happiness. Is a man unfortunate, then his karma is to blame even more completely and thoroughly than the creator can be. An idea very well brought out in

the following passage. "Is not Vidhi hostile to us? They"
"speak truly who say that Karma is supreme." Ayodh⁸⁸(88)91: 1100)
The Creator may or may not be hostile: there may be two
minds on that matter. But there is no doubt about the
other; Karma is supreme.

How that thought permeates the poem let us now proceed
to examine. It will enable us to realise how the Creator
came to be so helpless in his own universe.

Take ^{these} ~~this~~ illustrations of how the creator and Karma are
jointly involved.

"You cannot escape from what Vidhātā has fashioned. It is"
"written in my Karma that I should marry a madman. Then "
"why blame anyone! People like you can't wipe out the "
"writing of Vidhi." Bal. 106 (104) 120

"Bhāvi is overwhelming: loss and gain, life and death, honour "
"and dishonour are in the hands of Vidhi." Ayodh¹⁶⁵(165) 172.

Or less certainly, as we cannot tell who the fashioner is:
"Oh, fashioner of that which has to be! what is going to hap-"
"pen, and who will save us." Bal. 95 (93) 107.

We have the two ideas, battling even more confusedly ~~in~~
~~another woman's mind~~, when Rāma's mother says:

"Sorrow and joy, loss and gain, Karma is beyond our control."
"Blame no one, the ways of Karma are obscure. Vidhi knows."
"He is the giver of the fruit of good and bad Karma. The "

"mandate of God (Ish) is on all our heads.... The manifestations"
 "of Vidhi⁽¹⁾ are thus immoveable and without beginning." Ayodh^{270 282}(270)
 This was in reply to another queen who had said, that the methods of Vidhi were those of a fool, and that he acted with the fickleness of children at play. Probably there is no passage in the whole poem, which gives us more clearly the working of these two forces, the Creator and Karma, as they appeal to the poet's mind. Rāma's mother is shocked at the language of her sister queen; she thinks no one is to blame, not even the Creator. She claims for him a dignity and an authority which we have seen many others would deny to him. But after all is said, is not Karma greater than God, because at best it is our Karma, not God, which is responsible for our present, and will account for our future.

It is true that some passages speak of God giving people their karma, or awarding the fruit of their karma, as in the two following utterances, both made by Bharat.

"Their fathers and mothers are the source of the birth of all;"

"their good and bad Karma, Vidhātā gave." Ayodh²⁴⁴(244) 255

"After due consideration, God (Ish) awards the fruit in accord-

"ance with our good or bad Karma. According to the karma we "

"do, so do we find the fruit. That is what the Vedas, moral "

"systems, and everybody says." Ayodh⁷⁴(74) 77.

But it will be noted that even here, the Creator, despite his prominence, is an arbiter and nothing more. He merely

(1) Once more we have Vidhi prapanch.

awards the verdict in accordance with what we ourselves have done.

There are at least fifty references to Karma or Bhāvi, and in view of their importance it is desirable to give a few examples. It will be noted that the phrases applied to the Creator are frequently used. Karma is spoken of as cruel, and the purposes of Bhāvi are immovable; just as Vidhi was cruel, and nothing could be done to change what he had decreed.

"Do not think of your loss and vexation. The course"
 "of time and Karma cannot be altered. Do not blame "
 "anyone. Vidhātā is in every way hostile to me."
 Ayodh¹⁵⁸ (158) 165.

"Listen Bharat, Bhāvi is strong. Loss and gain, life"
 "and death, honour and dishonour are in the hands of "
 "Vidhi." Ayodh¹⁶⁵ (165) 172.

"It is Hari's wish, and Bhāvi is strong." Bal, 67, (65) 78.
 "Shiva admonished her in various ways, but Umā being "
 "under the control of Bhāvi, would not understand."
 Bal, 73 (71) 85.

"The king, being in the power of Bhāvi, thought it was"
 "one of Love's diversions."
 Ayodh, 25 (25) 25.

"Karm is cruel. I am not to blame." Ayodh,⁶⁷ (67) 69.

"The ways of Karm are cruel, nothing can be done."
 Ayodh⁹⁹ (99) 96.

"(The king's minister) was like some high born dame, vir-"
"tuous and wise, who in thought, word and deed, looks u "
"upon her husband as a god, nevertheless deserts him be- "
"cause she is in the grip of karma." Ayodh¹³⁹ (139) 145.

"Her mind turned round; as Bhāvi willed it." Ayodh, 17(17) 17.

"Although you have done no wrong, oh king, Bhāvi cannot"
"be wiped out." Bal, 180 (178) 204.

This is the unmistakable teaching of the earlier parts of the poem. Bhāvi cannot be wiped out, everyone is in the grasp of karma. And yet we are not allowed altogether to forget that if karma is supreme- (Ayodh⁸⁸ (88) 91) - it is by Rāma's appointment.⁽¹⁾

"Rāma has made karma lord of all things, and as we act, so "
"must we taste the fruit. Nevertheless he plays at odds "
"and evens, according as hearts are devoted or not devoted "
"to him." Ayodh²¹⁰ (210) 219.

As the work proceeds we shall find that by Rāma's grace, and through the devotion which men are able to shew for him, the power of karma is either weakened or destroyed.

There are also a number of references to the belief in transmigration, and the quality and character of these varying births are ascribed to Karma.

(1) Observe however, the reference to Shiva:

"If your daughter will practise penance, Tripurāri is "
"able to wipe out Bhāvi." Bal (79) 92. This is a stronger statement than anything we read at this stage about Rāma. It is in agreement with the clear fact that Rāma and others are invariably represented as praying to Shiva as the chief object of their worship.

"In whatever births we may wander, in the grip of karma, may"
 "God (Īsh) give us this, to be worshipers of Rāma." Ayodh 24^{24.} (24)
 The same thought is expressed in Kish 13 (9) 11, but the prayer
 is addressed to Rāma, and naturally there is no reference to
 the Creator.

In the sequel or Uttarkānd, again, an inspired crow
 tells us:-

"In my different births I did different kinds of Karma; but"
 "though I remember ~~em~~ them all, and they were very many, I "
 "was never so happy as in my present birth." 137 (93) 150.

The most interesting passages however, are those in
 which we do not read of Karma alone, but associated with Time.
 It is not to be wondered at that the Hindu should speak with
 an awed whisper when he refers to Time. There are few mat-
 ters in which his imagination has more expanded itself. There
 are eighty-four lakhs of lives through which each living
 creature has to pass, it may be as a god, or a demon, it may
 be as a man or as a beast. Between these 8,400,000 lives,
 the Mahābhārata and Purānas have placed long periods to be
 spent in either heaven or hell. No wonder the most searching
 appeal of the Hindu is to devise some method by which he will
 escape this endless process of rebirth, and cut, as he expresses
 himself in common speech, ~~em~~ the eightyefour. And so
 just as he is impressed by the thought of Karma and all it
 means to him, so is he impressed by the thought of

thought of Time, the field in which these actions are working out to their inevitable end.

And as he thinks of these twin forces and meditates on their power, the Creator of whom his less sophisticated fathers once thought so much, and reckoned the greatest of the gods, seems to be in the grasp of forces greater than He can control, Time and Karma, Rebirth and the fruit of our own past deeds.—
 "Life and death, all that we suffer and all that we enjoy,"
 "loss and gain, the society of friends and separation from "
 "them are all in the grasp of Time and Karma, in alien grasp,"
 "just like day and night. Fools rejoice in happiness and "
 "lament in sorrow. A resolute man treats both alike. Be "
 "brave and exercise judgement. Give up your grief. You are "
 "the well-wisher of all." Ayodh¹⁴⁴₁ (144) 150.

Further on we read:— "The ways of Time and Karma cannot"
 "be altered, as you know. Do not blame anyone. It is "
 "Vidhātā who in every way is hostile to me." Ayodh¹⁵⁸₁ (158) 165.

There are other passages again which refer, not only to these two potent forces, Time and Karma, but also to what they have produced; viz: our nature^{al}~~s~~, dispositions and qualities (swabhāv guṇ), thus making us what we are. And the wonderful power of Rāma to help and save is shown by the fact that during his long and glorious reign, all the creatures in the world suffered nothing from the deeds caused by Time(Kāl), Karma, natural dispositions and qualities. Uttarkāṇḍ, 43, (22) 44.
 A later passage says that the same four, Kāl, Karma, svabhāv and guṇ, were ill at ease. The night of ignorance passed

away, and Sin, like an owl, disappeared. 52. (31)53.

Once he gets hold of a new phrase, the poet likes to use it, and in a few stanzas further on, he speaks of how men have to live through the 84 lakhs of re-births, ever under the control of Illusion (Māyā) and surrounded by Time, Karma, Natural Dispositions and Qualities.

In a passage already quoted, we have seen how Rāma, wishing to set his stepmother at ease, told her that she was not to blame for driving him into exile.

"Time, Karma and the Creator, the guilt rests on their "heads." Ayodh, ~~(235)245~~. 235 (235)245. (1.)

In direct opposition to such a dangerous statement however, we find Rāma giving expression to a very different opinion in the last book of poem. It was after his return from exile and the rescue of Sītā. Speaking of those who by their foolishness and sin spoil their chances in the next world, he adds:-

"The sacred books say it is great good fortune to be born" "in the form of a man, a condition which the gods find it diffi-" "cult to reach. It is in that condition one can realise one-" "self. It is the gateway to salvation. And yet when they " "don't secure salvation and go to the other world and there " "suffer torment, beating their heads and repenting, men falsely" "lay the blame on Time, Karma and God (Īshwar)." Uttar, 64 (43)65.

(1) See also Ayodh, ¹⁹⁸ (198), ²⁰⁷ where a sage tells Bharat not to blame his mother.

This is a remarkable utterance. It cannot be reconciled with Rāma's words to his stepmother. And it is difficult to understand why Tulsidās should put into the mouth of his hero two statements which contradict one another so completely. But the second of the two may be reckoned with confidence as his more considered utterance. Indeed, it is the only logical position. Tulsidās may grumble at Karma, as he grumbled at the Creator. He may feel at times, the mystery of life and its frequent unreasonableness. But if we believe in Karma and Transmigration, believe that we are what we are in character and disposition in this present life, because of what we were, and what we did in our previous lives, we cannot possibly blame God for being what we have made ourselves. Nor can we blame our Karma, for our karma is just ourselves, the accumulated actions, the inevitable fruit of our own doings. Its other name as we have seen, is Bhāvi, that which inevitably happens, and has gone on happening in the spacious fields of Time. I have said that Karma is the real god of the Hindu, the god whom he fears. It might be called an idol more than a god, for it is the work of his own hands. It was he who fashioned it, and gave it shape. He who gave to it all that makes it what it is.

S H I V A

It has been already said that Shiva, the third member of the Hindu triad, occupies a very prominent position in the poem. And were Tulsidās a common sectarian poet like the character he pictures towards the close of his poem, one might be inclined to think that he dwells on the greatness of Shiva's power and wisdom, as a foil to the still greater power and wisdom of Rāma. But all such imaginings are erroneous. Tulsidās is an orthodox Hindu, who is able to find room in his heart for more than one god. It is true that we are told:

"The glory of Rāma's name cannot be measured. The Eternal
^{Shiva}
"Shiva, Shiva, the ^{adorable (~~blissful~~)} ~~Blessed~~, the very essence of wisdom and
"goodness, is always repeating it. Bal. 58 (56) 67.

On the other hand, it has to be remembered, that in quite a number of passages, we have Vishnu, in his original form, speaking as follows:

"Go and repeat Shiva's hundred names and your mind will at
"once secure comfort. There is no one so dear to me as Shiva."
"Never allow your self by foolishness to forsake this truth."
"The person on whom Shiva does not take pity, will never achieve"
^{devotion to}
"faith in me. Fix this in your mind and think about it, as
"you wander over the earth, and delusion will not come near you."
Bal. ¹⁴⁶ (144) 165.

And this statement is confirmed by one of the great sages.
I give it in the words of Growse.

"He who loves not Shiva's lotus feet, can never dream of "
"pleasing Rāma. A guileless love for Shiva's feet is the"
"surest sign of faith^(bhakti) in Rāma. For who is so faithful to"
"Rāma as Shiva..... And whom does Rāma hold more dear "
"than Shiva?" Bal, 113 (111) 127.

Nor is there any doubt as to the prevalence of Shiva's worship in Avadh. All classes of the people, including Rāma and his parents, made constant appeal to him. Indeed, apart from the devotion specially centred in Rāma himself it is Shiva who is worshipped in a more real and genuine fashion than any of the other gods. We read of the other gods receiving a general worship, and we have seen how Brahmā is regarded. But it is in relation to Shiva that we get the most of the illustrations of real prayer and worship, and see how those who sought his help addressed him. And this is conspicuously true of both Rāma and Sītā, in reference not only to Shiva, but also to his wife, under the name of Gauri, and their elephant-headed son, Gaṇesh.

Thus we find the people, in their desire to see Rāma chosen heir-apparent, begging Shiva's favour. Ayodh,²(2)2 At a later period they are shewn as worshipping Gaṇesh, Gauri, Shiva and the Sun, and then addressing this special prayer to Vishnu.⁽¹⁾

(1) As a Smārta, Tulsidās himself would worship these five.

"Sprinkle out hearts with this bliss-conferring ambrosia(amrit)"
"Oh God (dev) give to the world its life's desire." Ayodh²⁶² (262) 273.
Rāma's father is also referred to, as praying to Shiva, Gauri
and Ganesh. Bal. 302 (308).³³⁴ But it is to Shiva alone he says:
"Hear my prayer, undying Shiva, thou art quickly pleased and"
"a generous giver. Remove the affliction of your humble"
"suppliant." Ayodh⁴⁴ (44) 45.

Sītā also addresses a very definite appeal to Shiva, with
his wife and son. It was when she was anxious that Rāma
should be her husband. We are not told what she said to Shiva
and Ganesh, but as she stood before the shrine of the goddess
she said:

"There is no beginning, nor middle nor end of thee. Thy glory"
"is boundless. The Veda comprehends it not. Thou art the"
"cause of the existence, the continuance and the disappearance"
"of all things. You know well my heart's desire, because"
"you dwell for ever in all hearts. There is no need that I"
"should say that aloud to thee." Bal. 240 (246) 267.

In reply, the image smiled and dropped a garland. But
more than that, we are told that the goddess herself appeared
and said with a smile:

"Listen, Sītā, my blessing is certain. The desire of your"
"heart will be realised. The bridegroom you wish will be got."
Bal. 241 (247) 268.

Sītā again sought the help of the same three at the time
Rāma was called on to bend the bow of Shiva:

"Be pleased, oh, great god (Mahesh-Shiva) and Bhavāni (Gauri) " and make fruitful my worship of you. Be favourable to me " and make the bow light. Oh lord of hosts, (Gaṇesh) the god " who gives boons, I beg you to make the weight of the bow very " small." Bal. 268 (266.) 289.

As for Rāma and his brother, when they were boys, it is said that they lived in Shiva's heart. Bal. 249 (255) 277. When Rāma was married, the queen mother gave rich presents to the Brahmins and worshipped Gaṇesh and Shiva. Bal. 344 (350) 378. When the bridegroom returned to Avadh, he entered the city remembering Shiva, Gauri and Gaṇesh. Bal. 345 (351) 379. When any one, Rāma as well as others, wished to confirm a statement with an oath, they said: "Be Shiva my witness," Ayodh, 30. 247, 253

When Rāma went into exile he bowed in reverence before the feet of his religious teacher, and called on Gaṇesh, Gauri, and Shiva, and it is added that they gave him their blessing. Ayodh⁷⁸, (78) 81. When the exiles reached the Ganges, Sītā uttered a short prayer to that sacred river, praying that they might be granted a happy return; but of Rāma it is said that he gave adoration to Shiva. Ayodh⁹⁹, (99) 103. Having reached the further shore of the river, Rāma once more turned his thoughts to Gaṇesh and Shiva. At the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna, the exiles bathed at that specially sacred spot, and in addition to the local deity, the god of the place of pilgrimage, he worshipped Shiva. Ayodh¹⁰², (102) 106.

(1) The corresponding dohas in Allahabad text are 31. 252. 264.

One of the most genuine prayers in the poem is addressed to Shiva by Rāma's father:-

"Remembering Mahesh, he addressed him humbly: Hear my "
 "entreaty, eternal Shiv. You are quickly pleased, com-"
 "passionate to the lowly, and bountiful. Knowing me to "
 "be a man in need, put away my pain. You control all "
 "hearts. Give, then, to Rāma such understanding that he "
 "will ignore my words and remain at home, forgetting his "
 "natural disposition and love. May I be disgraced: may "
 "my good name perish from the earth: may I fall into "
 "hell rather than go to heaven. May I suffer every "
 "kind of insufferable pain. But let not Rāma be hid- "
 "den from my eyes." Ayodh, (43) 44.

When Bharat also was burdened by bad omens and before he heard of his brother's exile, it was to Shiva that he addressed his prayers. This passage is of particular interest, because it almost certainly refers to the worship of the phallus

"Bharat fed Brahmins daily and gave them gifts. "

"With various rites he poured water over Shiv. In "

"his mind he besought Mahesh for the happiness of "

"his father and mother, his relatives and brothers."

Ayodh, (157) 150.

Of Rāma himself we read that when the exiles reached the banks of the Ganges:-

"the lord of the house of Raghu bathed and worshipped"

"a clay image of Shiv (pārthiv), bowing his head."

Ayodh (99) 103.

There are two other passages both associated with Rama in which the linga or phallus is definitely spoken of. When the monkeys were helping Rāma to construct the bridge across to Ceylon, he said:-

"Here I shall set up a Shiva. My heart desires it greatly.",

"Having set up the linga (the phallic emblem) accord-

"ing to the proper rites, he worshipped it, saying, "

"There is no other I love like Shiva. If any one be "

"called my ^{devotee} ~~servant~~ and do violence to Shiva, that man "

"even in a dream, cannot be loved by me. If any one "

"hostile to Shiva desire~~ff~~ to be my devotee, that man "

"is a fool with very little sense, and hell is his "

"portion. The devotee of Shiva who does violence "

"to me, the devotee of mine who does violence to "

"Shiva, will both dwell in a deep hell for the per- "

"iod of a Kalpa." Lanka, 2 (2) 4.

Again on his return to Avadh after the rescue of Sītā Rāma pointed out the various places of interest, as they travelled through the air, in Kuver's aeroplane. And when

they saw the beautiful bridge that the monkeys had built, Rāma said: † "Here is the place where I set up a Shiva, the abode of" "Joy, and as he spoke, he who is the abode of mercy, and Sītā," "bowed their heads in worship." Lankā, 143 (116) 153.⁽¹⁾

When Tulsidās makes it so very clear that not only the people of all classes, but Rāma himself, the incarnation of the Supreme Spirit, gave such preference to the worship of Shiva, he is giving expression to his own feelings also, because he repeatedly appeals to Shiva and Ganesh for help in the composition of his poem, and says that if any man or woman will listen to the glories of Rāma, Shiva will cause all his hopes to be fulfilled. Kish, 35 (30) 33.

But best of all we have another passage which is a real confession of the poet's own faith, not only in Shiva and his consort but in the saving power of Benares, one of Shiva's special haunts. "Why should we not worship Benares (Kāshi) where Shiva and Bhavāni "(Gauri) dwell, knowing it to be the birthplace of salvation, the "treasury of knowledge, the destroyer of sin. When all the gods "were in perplexity he drank up the deadly poison. Why should you "not worship him, - you stupid person; who is merciful like Shiva." Kish, 1. ^{Kish, 1.} _^

Indeed the exhortation to worship Shiva is repeated over

(1) There is only one reference to the linga of Shiva in Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. Rāvan was its worshipper. After bathing on the banks of the Nerbudda ^(Narmadā), Rāvan set up a golden linga and worshipped it with flowers and sandal. He danced with uplifted hands and sang before it. See edition published by Ram Narayan Lal, Allahabad.

and over again in all parts of the poem. It is said that the Vedas declare him to be the religious teacher of the three worlds, Bal. 120 (118)^{134.}; that saints, ascetics, gods and sages and persons of piety, worship him as the source of happiness; Bal. 115 (113)^{129.}; that he is an ocean of mercy, a granter of boons, the remover of the distress of those who seek his protection and yet if he is not appeased no one will attain his purpose apart from Shiva, though he perform millions of penances and austerities. Bal. 82 (79) 93.

This enthusiasm for Shiva, in a poem devoted, as is often supposed to the almost exclusive praise of Rāma ~~(so exclusively one would imagine from some of Tulsidas' admirers, that his poem might be reckoned a monotheistic tract)~~, is carried still further, and in the Sanskrit invocation to the Ayodhyā book Shiva is spoken of as "the chief of divinities, the eternal" "lord of all, the complete, the omnipresent," while it is to be noted that the god's consort, it may be in a mood of wifely exaggeration, declares her husband to be: "the universal spirit;" "the great god; the father of the world, the friend of all." Bal. 75. (73) 81. But the poet himself goes further when he asserts that Shiva is pure intelligence and bliss, the abode of joy, entirely free from delusion, frenzy and lust. Bal. 87 (85) 99. And in saying so, especially when he uses the words pure intelligence and bliss,⁽¹⁾ he is using at least parts of a phrase, sat chit ānand, that can only be applied to the Supreme

(1) See page 104 where "intelligence and bliss (chidānand)" are applied to Brahm. Bal 150 (148) 141.

Spirit. Such indeed is the position assigned to him in the last book of the poem, by one who was a servant of Shiva, but who also worshipped Rāma.

We are told that "Shiva and Brahmā (Dhātā) worship Rāma" Uttar.154 (102)^{168.} nevertheless, in a prayer addressed to him Shiva is called "the omnipresent all-pervading Brahm, Supreme Spirit; the unborn, the unembodied; the unconditioned," and a great deal more, which reminds us, as has been said already of the Mahābhārata, which with wonderful impartiality devotes itself to praising at one time Vishṇu, and at another time, Shiva, in language which would seem to exclude, or to dethrone every other god in the universe. The prayer ends with the assertion that for those who fail to propitiate Shiva, there will be, neither in this world, nor in the next, any hope of happiness, or any end to their pain. Tulsidās seals the prayer with his approval by saying:

"The man who repeats this prayer, upon him Shiva will show"
"favour." Uttar. 157-8, (104-5) 172.3.

Shiva's wife again, is held in almost equally high honour. She is the mother of the world, the unborn, the faultless. And reference is made to the belief that along with Shiva their male and female energies are united. This is a recognition and acceptance by the poet, of one of the most unattractive aspects of Hindu religion, the worship of the liṅga and yoni, the reproductive organs of the two sexes. Bal 107 (105)

In ^{earlier} ~~another~~ passage of the same section we read that Shiva and his wife, once more referred to as the mother of the world, went to see a famous rishi. When they met, the rishi worshipped them, knowing that they were Akhilleshwar, which is another recognition of Shiva as the Supreme Spirit, Brahm. Bal. 60 (58) 69.

In the Rāmāyaṇa of Bālmiki, it is Indra, who of all the other gods, receives most attention; but with Tulsidās a great change has taken place. Indra is referred to often enough, though never almost without contempt. In this poem however, there is an altering of parts. Tulsidās no doubt reserves his highest panegyrics for Rāma, but his comprehensive theology has room for Shiva also, and it is the simple truth to say, explain it how we will, the great god Shiva has the next place in his affections.

No true understanding of the poet's theological and religious outlook can be secured without a careful study of those portions of the poem which are devoted to Shiva. To secure that let us examine them with some detail.

To begin with, let us see what Tulsidās has to tell us of Shiva's wife, and her ^{self} immolation in the burning fire. It was done out of devotion to her husband. She was the first to perform the rite of Sati, giving as is supposed her name and example to a cruel practice, which only the British government was able to suppress. The story of the goddess's

devotion is one of the oldest in Hindu literature. But it is told in a new fashion that it may link together the fortunes of Shiva and Rāma. One day as Shiva and his wife, at this stage in her career called Sati, were wandering in the forests of Central India, they saw Rāma. It was soon after he had lost his wife, carried off by the demon Rāvaṇ, and the distracted husband was searching for her everywhere. When Shiva saw Rāma he did not greet him. He merely passed on, giving utterance to his devotion in the words, "Hail, Sachchid-
 "ānand, Purifier of the world." This word, Sachchidānand is always applied to the Supreme Spirit, Brahm, of whom, according to orthodox Hinduism, the Triad, Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva, are manifestations. It means existence, intelligence and joy. (sat chit ānand). Sati recognized the import of such language, and her mind was filled with wonder and doubt, and she said to herself, "My husband is the lord of the world, and the whole "
 "world worships him. Gods, men, and saints, all bow their "
 "heads before him. And yet he has made obeisance to this "
 "king's son and called him the supreme abode of existence, in-"
 "telligence and joy." Bal.63 (60)72. If Rāma is really the Supreme God, why should he lose his wife, and even more especially, if he is all wise and knows everything, why should he not be able to find her." Shiva saw his wife's perplexity, and bade her go and stand in Rāma's path, disguised as Sita.

She did so, but as Rāma drew near, he was not deceived for a moment. He smiled when he saw her, and hailing her by her own name, said "Where is Shiva, and what is your reason for wandering alone in the forest." Bal 64 (62)75. The goddess was overwhelmed with confusion. But Rāma was very gracious for he revealed part of his divine glory; and in this wonderful manifestation she saw not only Rāma, but his lost wife and also his brother, repeated over and over again, surrounded by saints and sages. But most wonderful of all, she saw in presence of each of the reduplicated Rāmas, a Brahmā, a Vishṇu and a Shiva, each of them endowed with surpassing glory, but each of them bowing at Rāma's feet and worshipping him. She also saw the wives of those three gods in their divine forms, which means that she saw herself, and in addition she saw also the rest of the gods, accompanied by their wives, indeed the whole universe, both what moves and what cannot move.

? But however well intentioned Satī's action may have been, it had disastrous results. Shiva realised that having once taken the form of Sītā, it was impossible for him to recognise her any longer as his wife. He therefore gave himself up to meditation and passed into a trance which lasted for 87,000 years. ? Satī was heartbroken, but she prayed to Rāma in her perplexity. When the trance came to an end, Shiva found his wife seated at his side. He was as kind to her as before,

but realised it would be a sin to touch her. Now it so happened that just at that time Satī's father, Daksh, had resolved to celebrate a great sacrifice. A large number of gods and their wives were invited. But much to Satī's indignation, owing to an old quarrel between the god and his father-in-law, Shiva had not received an invitation. Indeed the first news Satī had of the approaching function was seeing the sky filled with the air chariots of celestials and their wives, hastening to the ceremony. As she listened to the music of the heavenly nymphs, enough to make a saint forget his vows, Satī declared that, invited or not, she was determined to be there also. Her husband advised her strongly not to go. "You will get," he said, "the welcome given to the uninvited." Daksh had asked all his other daughters to be there, and she had been purposely ignored. But Satī would not listen. And so she went. Everyone was afraid to speak to her. Her father looked at her with anger, though her mother and sisters ventured to smile. Satī boldly approached the sacrifice. She wished to see if her father had really dared to insult her husband and set apart nothing for him. When she saw that her fears were realised, her anger burst forth.

"Listen," she said to the assembled multitudes, "you have
 "all heard and talked about this insult to Shiva, and very soon
 "you will reap the fruit of it; in many ways. ^{My} ~~my~~ father will

"repent it..... The universal Spirit (jagat ātmā) the great
"god, the father of the world, the friend of all. It is he "
"whom my fool of a father has reviled." Bal 75 (73) 87.

And so, scorning to retain a body which owed its life
to such an unworthy sire, she cast herself into a sacrificial
fire.

When he heard of his wife's death, Shiva in his anger
came and scattered the sacrifice. He also gave to the gods
the punishment they deserved. (1)

(1) Tulsidās says: "This story all the world knows, and so I "
"have only told it in brief." The story of Daksh's sacrifice
seems to have made a profound impression. It appears in
both the Epics. According to the Mahābhārata, the punishment
the gods deserved, included the plucking out of the god Bhaga's
eyes, and the knocking out of Pushan's teeth. In another
version of the story, when a certain sage asked why Shiva had
not been invited, Daksh said that he knew nothing about Shiva,
and that Vishnu was the god he worshipped. According to the
Mahābhārata, Daksh was born from the right toe of Brahmā, and
his wife from the left toe. They had 60 daughters. One
was married to Shiva, and thirteen to Kashyap. These latter
became the mothers of gods and demons, men, beasts and birds.

In her next birth Satī was born as the daughter of the mountain king, Himālaya. Her name was now Pārvati. Her parents were shocked when a rishi told them that their daughter was destined to marry a person who had nothing to recommend him, a jogi with matted hair, a recluse caring for nobody, naked and hideously adorned.⁽¹⁾ Bal, 79 (77) 90. As Pārvati listened to this description of her future husband, she was delighted. With her dying breath she has prayed that she might be devoted to Shiva in all her future lives. And the Rishi was manifestly setting forth the characteristics of Shiva. And so it proved to be, because when the horrified parents asked the saint what they were to do in such a distressing situation, they were

Brahmā had a number of mind-born sons, called Prajāpatis or lords of creatures, and Kashyap was the son of one of them. According to other legends, it was these mind-born sons of Brahmā, and not merely Kashyap, to whom creatures of all kinds owe their origin. They are supposed, some of them at least, to be the seven rishis or sages referred to in the poem.

(1) There is one reference to Shiva's consort under her more terrifying form as Kālī, in Lanka, 109 (89) 117.

"As though the goddess Kālī with a rosary of skulls in her hand and accompanied by all her attendants, had bathed in "the river Blood and come to worship at the shrine of "Battle." Growse's translation.

told they could do nothing. But for their consolation, he added:- " If God (daiv) will help you, there is one scheme you " "may adopt. All the faults I have mentioned are to be found " "in Shiva. If a marriage can be arranged with him, everyone " "will say that his vices are virtues." Bal, 70 (78) 92.

It was accordingly resolved that Pārvati should begin to practise penance as the best means to approach Shiva. These penances eventually lasted for many thousand years. For 10,000 years her food consisted of dry leaves. At a later stage she ate nothing at all. Such rigid penance brought Brahmā to her side, saying:-

"Listen, oh daughter of the mountain king, your efforts will " "bear fruit. Abandon your intolerable pains. You will " "secure Shiva for a husband." Bal, 86 (84) 98.

All this time, Shiva continued to live the life of an ascetic, meditating upon Vishṇu. ⁽¹⁾ Eventually Vishṇu appeared and told him that he was to marry Pārvati. Shiva reluctantly consented to act on this advice. But before taking any definite

(1) "Continually repeating the name of Raghunāyak and listen-" "ing to the accounts of Rāma's virtues, Shiva who is Chid-" "ānand, the dwelling-place of peace, free from delusion, " "frenzy and lust, wanders over the earth, his heart fixed " "on Hari, the joy of all the worlds." Bal, 86 (84) 98.

action, he sent the seven sages to make trial of Pārvati's love. In the testing which they applied, the sages asked the maiden to tell them what she wanted. She frankly replied that she wished to marry Shiva. At which the sages laughed and said,- "You wish to marry a husband who is nothing but a home-" "less wanderer, a worthless, shameless, ragged wretch, a wearer" "of skulls and snakes, without kindred and without a home. Tell" "us what pleasure can you find in such a bridegroom. It was " "on the advice of others he married Sati, and afterwards left " "her and caused her death." Bal, 90 (88) 102.

They told her she would be much better off if she married Vishnu, but she would not listen. She admitted that Vishnu was faultless, and that Shiva had a great many defects; however her mind was made up, and it was too late to change. When they saw their arguments were of no avail, the rishis departed, saying as they went,-

"Victory, Victory, Victory to Bhavāni, the mother of the world." "You who are Māyā (illusion) and Shiva, the blessed, are the " "father and mother of the whole universe." Bal. 93 (91) 105.

Later on, the maiden's parents are told that their daughter is the mother of the world, the unborn, without beginning, the indestructable Shakti, the everlasting abode of Shambhu Ardhang; they add that she is the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of the world and assumes what forms it pleases her.

Bal, 107 (105) 121.

Despite the intervention of Vishnu and the report of the rishis, further persuasion was required to get Shiva to yield. In response to a deputation of the gods to the Creator, the god of Love was sent to wound Shiva with his darts. As the result of driving five arrows into Shiva's heart, he awoke. Opening one of his three eyes, he gazed at his assailant with the immediate result that the god of love was reduced to ashes. Once more the gods assembled with Vishnu and Brahmā at their head, and went to Shiva singing his praises one by one. When asked to speak, Brahmā said, "It is manifest that you are in love, and we wish to "see your marriage with our own eyes," Bal. 99 (97)¹¹² and with Pārvati of course, who had indulged in so long a penance to secure that end. When Shiva finally yielded to ~~such~~ ^{their} ~~agust~~ persuasion, Brahmā sent the seven sages to tell Pārvati's father. Himālaya was delighted and after fixing an auspicious planet, day and hour, he wrote a letter to the Creator with the necessary information:

"When the Creator got the letter and read it, he could not "contain himself for joy." Bal. 101 (99) 114.

The poet next describes the preparation^S for the marriage, "The followers of Shiva adorned their lord, with his hair "matted together on the top of his head as a crown, and a "serpent for his chaplet. They put serpents in his ears for "

" ear-rings, and serpents for bracelets on his wrists. His
" body they covered with the ashes of cow dung. A tiger's
" skin was his garment. The moon was on his brow, the Ganges
" on his head; he had three eyes; a serpent was his Brahmini-
" cal cord; his throat (was black with) poison; on his breast
" hung a rosary made of dead men's skulls. In such inauspic-
" ious fashion Shiva the merciful was arrayed. He carried a
" trident and was seated on a bull..... Vishnu and the Creator
" with all the other gods, mounted each their carriages and set
" off for the wedding." Bal. 102-(100)¹¹⁵ (~~100-102~~)~~116~~ As he watch-
ed the procession, Vishnu observed with a smile, "The celes-
" tials look well in every way, but the guests are not worthy
" of the bridegroom."

He therefore proposed by way of joke-a joke which Shiva did not seem to realise - that each god should go separately attended by his own particular retinue. The result was that Shiva's own followers fell into line and marching by themselves, were appreciated at their full value:

" Some of them had no heads; some had very big heads; some had
" neither feet nor hands; the feet and hands of some were very
" large; some had very big eyes, some had none at all; some
" were very thin, others were very fat. But whether stout or
" thin, whether they were clean or dirty; in their hands they
" carried skulls full of blood. They had the faces of dogs,
" asses and pigs, an innumerable host that could not be num-
" bered, ghosts, evil spirits, witches, of all kinds, dancing

"and singing, twisting about in an amazing fashion."

It is needless to enter into the details of the marriage ceremony, to describe the amazement of the inhabitants of Hīmalāya's capital, or the horror of the queen when she saw the bridegroom and his followers. Eventually the minds of the parents were set at rest by the double assurance that the bridegroom was the great god Shiva, and their daughter the eternal mother of the world. This description of Shiva and his followers may seem very fantastic and very wonderful, but it is a description that can be found over and over again in the literature of Hinduism. And if we did not record it we would be shutting the door on one of the many compartments which compose the poet's mind.

And yet as we read the text of the poem we feel that Tulsidās is somewhat perturbed. As we have already seen, the ideal he sets before us in Rāma is very high indeed, and the moral teaching of the poem is also worthy of admiration. When he deals with the lives and characters of the lesser gods, he is frankness itself. Consequently when he writes of Shiva, he cannot help feeling that there is something wrong. The reader will remember the passage already quoted when the rishi assured Pārṣati's parents that once their daughter was married to Shiva, his vices would be reckoned as virtues. He thereafter proceeded to develop the dangerous but common apologies employed for the gods.

"No blame attaches to the powerful; they are like the Sun,"
"like fire and the Ganges." And then he adds the very necessary
but somewhat illogical warning.

"But the fool who says that a man can do what a god does, will"
"fall into hell, and remain there for many millions of years."

Bal. ~~80-81~~. (~~78-79~~). 80(78)92.

In offering this apology Tulsidās is practically repeat-
ing the claim made by the author of the Bhāgavata Purāna,
(X.33) on behalf of Krishna, that the gods are to be judged
by a standard different to that applied to men. "Revere "
"the actions of Krishna, but do not give your mind to the "
"doing of them."

It will be observed that Shiva and his wife are repres-
ented as living under more or less human conditions. They
are together in the forests of India when they see Rāma, and
Pārvati is spoken of as the daughter of Himālaya the mountain
king. But there is no suggestion of any process of incarna-
tion or descent, such as is very distinctly stated as happen-
ing in the case of Rāma, and the other descents of Vishṇu.
And yet as we have seen, very high language is employed in
describing the attributes of both Shiva and his wife.

When the wedding was over the newly married pair re-
turned to Kailās, where Shiva had his peculiar home. And
there Pārvati, recalling the foolishness of which she had
been guilty many thousands of years before, in her previous

existence, but with her mind not yet set at rest, once more asked her husband to explain the mystery of Rāma:

"If he was a king's son, and in distress for the loss of his wife, how could he be the Supreme God, Brahm." Bal. 118 (116) 132.

Shiva thereupon set himself to tell the whole story of Rāma. And we are to understand that the rest of the poem is the narrative of the god, a conceit however, which Tulsidās sometimes forgets as he warms to his theme.

Shiva was originally Rudra of the Vedas, a god of the tempests. Rudra means "the Howler." But as tempests belong to the destructive side of nature, Rudra became more and more thought of as a god who destroyed. He was therefore a god who required to be appeased. If he was to be appeased it was scarcely wise to call him the Howler, and so his worshippers called him Shiva, or Shankar or Shambhu, all words signifying the gracious, the benign. He was also called Mahādev or great god; and by all these names and only occasionally by Rudra does Tulsidās refer to him.

In conclusion one would like to quote a passage from Sir R.G. Bhāndārkar's book, Vaishnavism, Shaivism, etc. Speaking of a period in the history of Hinduism, he says, "It will thus be seen that Rudra was still a terrible god who had to be appeased. He was the god that held sway over regions away from home; over fields, wildernesses, cemeteries, mountains old trees and rivers. Whenever a man came to "

"anything which inspired awe and terror, Rudra was the god "
 "thought of and prayed to, to protect. Herein lies the reason"
 "which rendered him in later times, the omnipresent, supreme "
 "lord of the universe to the exclusion of all other Vedic gods,"
 "except Vishnu. Many are the occasions in the life of man "
 "which excite fear; there are epidemics and other diseases, "
 "poison, serpents, storms, thunderbolts, and wild and awful "
 "scenes; and consequently the god who brings on these occasions"
 "and protects when appeased, will be thought of oftener than "
 "other gods. The loveliness of the works of God, his great-"
 "ness and majesty and his mysterious nature are also matters "
 "which strike the mind of man. And these appear to have op-"
 "erated in bringing Vishnu into prominence. What contributed"
 "to the formation of Vaishnavism were the appearances and "
 "occurrences which excited love, admiration and a spirit of "
 "worship; while in Rudra-Shaivism the sentiment of fear is at "
 "the bottom, however concealed it may have become in certain "
 "developments of it ... In the monotheistic religions of "
 "other countries the same god is feared and loved: in India "
 "the god that is loved is Vishnu Nārāyaṇa Vāsudeva Krishna, "
 "while the god that is feared is Rudra-Shiva."⁽¹⁾

(1) See page 106. In the Bal kāṇḍ 110 (108) 124, we read how Shiva and his wife worshipped their own son Gaṇesh:

"Shambhu and Bhavāni worshipped Gaṇesh. Let no one who"
 "hears this entertain doubts, but understand that they "
 "are (all) eternal gods."

V I S H N U

Vishṇu, one of the aspects under which the Sun was worshipped in the days of the Rig Veda, had come to be reckoned as one of the prominent gods by the time the Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa was put together. In that book (I.25) we are told how the gods and demons, both sprung from Prajāpati; (Brahmā), engaged in war. At first the demons were successful and boasted that the world was theirs. They resolved to divide it among themselves. But the gods, when they heard of what was about to happen, "placing at their head Vishṇu the sacrifice," went and claimed a share. To this demand the demons replied, "We give you as much as this Vishṇu can lie upon. Now Vishṇu was a dwarf." The result was that when the prostrate Vishṇu had been surrounded by sacred texts and by fire, the gods gained possession of the whole earth. ⁽¹⁾ Here we have one of the earliest stories which bring Vishṇu to the front as the god who in a pre-eminent fashion, comes to the help of his brother

(1) See Muir's O.S.T. Vol. 4. p.123.

celestials and rescues them in their troubles. And by the time the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata were compiled, he ranks with Brahmā and Shiva as one of the three great gods of Hinduism. He is essentially the preserver god, the god for whom men are able to entertain feelings of confidence and affection. And in particular he makes descents (avatāra) to the world, and renders it a service. These descents are usually reckoned as ten in number. Vishṇu's incarnation as Rāma was the seventh of these descents and accordingly we find the gods saying to him, "When the gods were in trouble oh Lord, you assumed various forms, as a fish, a tortoise, a boar, as a man-lion, a dwarf, as Parashu Rāma, and destroyed what troubled them." Lanka. 127 (106)135.

Tulsidās himself refers to these incarnations throughout the poem, though never in detail. But the reason he gives for such action on the part of Vishṇu, is put more worthily:

"When religion suffers, and demons in their pride do wicked things which cannot be borne, to the injury of Brahmins, cows, gods and the earth, then the Lord (Prabhu) assumes various forms of body in his compassion and removes the sufferings of the good." Bal. 129(127)144.

For Vishṇu's appearance in the person of Rāma, the poet gives three separate reasons which have no connection with one another.

The first reason is associated with a rishi of the name of Nārada, a bit of a gossip, who, according to the literature of India, was always travelling between earth and heaven. It was he who negotiated Shiva's second marriage. He was a devoted worshipper of Vishnu. His piety and asceticism, however, had become so powerful that Indra, the god of heaven, feared that the holy man would rob him of his throne. The god of love and a number of celestial nymphs were therefore sent to try and tempt him from the paths of virtue. Their efforts were unsuccessful, and Nārada was very proud of himself for so completely resisting the assaults of love; he even went to Shiva and boasted of his victory. Shiva listened, but advised him never to speak of his experiences to Hari.⁽¹⁾ This advice, however, was unwelcome, and the saint after paying a visit to Brahmā's heaven, went off to the Sea of Milk to tell the object of his special worship how successful he had been. When ^{the husband of Lakshmi} (Vishnu) saw him approach:

"He rose with joy to meet him and caused the rishi to sit"
 "down beside him. The lord of all that moves and does not"
 "move, smiled and said: 'It is a long time, holy one, since'
 "you conferred such mercy upon me.'" Bal. 136 (134-155).

When the god had heard Nārada's story, he decided it was

(1) Hari is one of the names of Vishnu.

necessary to humble his votary's pride. He therefore created by the power of illusion, ^{(Māyā),} a wonderful city more beautiful than anything in heaven, with a king to rule over it whose daughter's charms surpassed those of Lakshmi, Vishnu's own spouse. In accordance with the custom of ancient days, this princess was to choose a husband for herself. Kings and princes came from all parts of the world to win her favour. Curiosity brought Nārada to be a witness of so wonderful a gathering. But when he saw the incomparable princess, all his vows of chastity were forgotten, and when the day of the maiden's choice arrived, the man who had resisted all the efforts of Indra, was seated among the candidates. Before doing so he had asked Vishnu to endow him with the gift of beauty. The god gave him an ambiguous answer. He said he would do what was best for Nārada, a reply which the saint chose to interpret as the realisation of his own desires. In any case he was convinced that Vishnu had made him beautiful, a delusion which was confirmed by two of Shiva's impish followers. In the guise of Brahmins, and seating themselves beside Nārada, they passed the time of waiting by telling one another that they had never seen anyone so handsome; they were confident that the princess would choose the saint for her husband. But when the princess came in front of Nārada what she saw was a

horrid, ugly, deformed, old man with a face like a monkey's. While the maiden was moving here and there among the candidates, Vishnu himself appeared and without further hesitation she placed the garland round his neck! Nārād was very much distressed. But his distress was changed to anger when Shiva's two followers told him to look at himself. When the saint saw what he was really like, his wrath could not be controlled, and he cursed Shiva's followers to be born again as demons. He then went forth in search of the husband of Lakshmi (Vishnu), saying:

"Shall I curse him or shall I kill myself?" He has made me "a laughing stock to the world." On the way he met the enemy "of the demons (Vishnu) with Lakshmi and the princess. (The "god) addressed him with a smile and in gentle words. 'Where "is the holy man going like one distracted?' As he heard "these words, great wrath sprang up in Nārād's soul, and being "in the power of Māyā he lost all control of himself and said " "You cannot endure to see another's prosperity. Your envy "and deceit are well known. At the churning of the ocean " "you made Rudra mad: you incited the gods and made them to " "drink poison. The demons' share was intoxicating liquor;

"Shankar's share was poison; your share was Lakshmi and the
"beautiful jewel. You are always selfish, cunning and de-
"ceitful. Always doing what you like, with no one over you,
"you do whatever comes into your mind. You make the godd
"bad, and the bad good Now you will reap the
"fruit of what you have done (to me). You have given me
"a body born from the womb. You also shall have such a
"body. This is my curse. You have made me like a monkey;
monkeys will be your helpers. You did me a grievous wrong;
"you will be distressed by the loss of your wife." Bal. 144.165.
(142)163!

"The Lord accepted the curse with joy, thus achieving the
"purpose of the gods. He who is the Treasury of Compassion
"recalled the power of his Māyā."

"When Hari had withdrawn his Māyā, both Lakshmi and the prin-
"cess disappeared." Bal. 146. (144)165.

The recall of Vishṇu's delusive power at once wrought a
great change in Nārada's mind. Falling at Hari's feet, he
begged that his curse might be annulled. Vishṇu, however,
said that such was not his will. It was then that Nārada
when asking how his great sin could be removed was told to go
and repeat Shankar's hundred names and he would find comfort.

With such words of consolation Nārada set out for heaven, singing Rāma's praises as he went. He was met in the way by the followers of Shiva, whom he had cursed to be born again as demons. Their hope was that Nārada would recall his words. But the saint declined to do so. Indeed, he promised them *that* great profit would ultimately accrue to both. They would be born as demons of very great power.

"When by the strength of your arms, you will conquer all " "things, Vishnu will assume a body. You will die by the " "hand of Hari in battle. Thus you will obtain salvation " "(Mukti), and not be born again." Bal, 147, (145) 166. (1)

In the description of Nārada's curse and what it entailed, it is plain that Tulsidās is thinking of the second member of the Triad, and not attempting to identify him with the Supreme God. This fact is brought out even more clearly when we examine the names employed for Vishnu in the Hindi text. It is true that the term Vishnu, only appears thrice, but Hari, its equivalent, appears at least eight times. And though Prabhu (lord) and Bhagwān (blessed) might be applied to the Supreme, they can equally well be used for lesser deities by their worshippers. What is most noteworthy, however, is the way in which the god is, time after time, called the husband of

(1) "Among gods, men and sages, whom has Māyā not deceived?"

"Reflect on this in your mind and worship the great lord"

"of Māyā," is Shiva's comment on this story. 148 (145)167

Lakshmi, or the husband of Shri, or the husband of Rāma, or the husband of Kamala, all names of Vishnu's consort. And this is rendered still more emphatic by Nārada's reference to the belief that Lakshmi was one of the products which Vishnu secured at the churning of the Ocean. It is also worth noting that in this particular narrative, the poet projects himself into the future, and speaks of Vishnu as Rāma or as Raghupati and Raghunāth,⁽¹⁾ thus closely identifying the god with the life he was eventually to live on earth.

All this is specially remarkable because when we turn to examine the second reason for Vishnu's incarnation, we find that the poet is almost entirely thinking of Rāma as a manifestation of the Supreme Spirit. It is true that at the outset, he calls him now Prabhu, then Hari, and finally Vāsudev, a name associated with the worship of Krishna, a later incarnation of Vishnu. But in contrast to that, read what Shiva is made to say to Pārvati before he has begun to tell his story at all.

"Hear another reason, oh, daughter of the mountain king,"

"why the uncreated, the qualityless, the incomparable "

"Brahm became king of Koshal" Bal, 148 (146) 167.

(1) Rāma was a member of the family of Raghu; he was thus the nāth or pati (the lord) of Raghu.

It is associated with Manu, the survivor of the flood, and his wife. The whole narrative is so remarkable that it requires to be told with some detail. Though Manu had kept the commands of the Lord (Prabhu) in every way, it was only in his old age that he realised his life had been spent without devotion (bhakti) to Hari. He and his wife therefore resolved to surrender their kingdom and retire to the forest. "Repeating with fervour the twelve-lettered charm, ^(1.) husband" and wife turned their thoughts to the lotus feet of Vāsudev." "They lived on leaves, fruits and roots, remembering Brahm," "Sach-chid-ānand. Again for the sake of Hari, they did pen-
"ance. Abandoning roots and fruits, water was their only
"nourishment. The endless desire of their hearts was: May
"we see with our own eyes, the chief object of love: Him who
"is devoid of qualities and parts, without beginning and with-
"out end; whom those who speak of the supreme object of life
"contemplate; Him whom the Vedas call Neti, neti, intelligence
"and bliss, (chid-ānand), without form, without attributes, the
"incomparable one, from whom Shambhu, Viranchi and Vishnu in
"various forms arise." Bal 150-(146)171.

(1) The twelve lettered charm, as Browce points out, is Om Namō
Bhagavate Vāsudevāya

Manu and his wife spent at least 100,000 years in this fashion, and the Triad finally intervened:

"Vidhi, Hari, Hara, seeing their amazing penance, came near "

"Manu many times and tempted him, saying, 'Ask a boon.' But "

"he was steadfast. They could do nothing." Bal. 151 (149) 172.

Eventually a voice was heard. It was the voice of the omniscient Lord (Prabhu), telling Manu to ask a boon. Falling on his knees Manu said:

"Listen, oh Thou, the dust of whose feet Vidhi, Hari and Hara "

"worship. If you are pleased grant me this boon. May we "

"see the form which dwells in Shiva's heart ... the total of "

all qualities and the negation of all qualities (sagun, ~~sagun~~) "

"which revelation declares."

The blessed Lord, the treasury of mercy, thereupon revealed himself, but the description of his appearance is more like that of Vishnu than of the Supreme Spirit. Because, with much else, we read of red lips, shining teeth, eyes like the lotus, the sectarial marks (tilak) on the forehead, and the Srivatsa jewel on his breast. He wore too, the Brahminical cord (Janeu). He had a waist like a lion, and arms as long as an elephant's trunk. He had a quiver at his side, and a

Manu and his wife are spoken of ^{as} Kashyap and Aditi. so in Bal. 131 (129) 149.

"Rama's father and mother, Kashyap and Aditi were known as, Dashrath and "
"Kausalya" and in Bal. 192 (198) 218. "Kashyap and Aditi performed "
"great penance."

bow and arrow in his hands. One feels that this manifestation does not correspond with what the devotees had desired. But the text goes on to tell us that on the left side of the god was seated,-

"the primal energy (param shakti), ^{the treasury of beauty} the mother of the world,"
 "from whose parts arise innumerable Umās, Lakshmis and "
 "Sarasvatis." Bal, 154 (152) 175.

These are the wives of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahmā, and then looking into the future, the poet adds:-

"Even thus was Sītā seated at Rāma's side."

With a fresh access of gratitude the devotees clasped the god's feet. The Lord was very gracious and placing his hand on their heads, he raised them up, saying once more, "Ask a boon." And Manu said, "Oh, gracious lord, treasury of mercy," "giver of beautiful gifts, I wish a son like you." When the wife was asked what she wanted, she said, "That also is my " "desire," and then she added:-

"You are the father of Brahmā and the other gods, the lord of" "the world (jagdish), you are Brahm, who knows the secrets of" "all hearts."

The devotees received a gracious response. They were told to go and live in Indra's heaven.

"Enjoy yourselves there; after some time has elapsed you will" "be born king of Avadh, and I shall be your son. (1) Assum- "
 "ing a form of my own accord, I ~~shall~~ ^{shall} be manifest in your

"house, and ^{assuming a body with all my parts, shall} ~~with every element of my divinity incarnate will~~"
 "perform deeds affording joy to those devoted to me.... and "
 "this my Māyā, the Primal energy ^(ādi-shakti) by whom the world is created,"
 "will also descend (avatār). Bal, 157 (155) 179. (1)

The third reason given by Shiva for Vishnu's incarnation as Rāma is the reason given by Vālmīki in his Rāmāyana, and is practically the only reason which Tulsidās thinks of in the rest of his poem. The language used in reference to Vishnu is very varied. He is called Hari, and he is called Prabhu. He is also spoken of as the beloved of Ocean's daughter - i.e. as Lakshmi's spouse. But in a hymn of praise addressed to him, Brahmā says he is Sachchidānand, and is the sole cause of creation. The voice that gave an answer to this prayer is called Brahm-bāni - the voice of Brahm.

The story is as follows: A very pious and powerful king was, by the cunning stratagem of one of his enemies, made to offend grievously a vast company of Brahmins whom he had invited to a great feast. Not less than one hundred thousand of these holy men were present. In one of the dishes this enemy had been able to place along with other kinds of meat, some pieces of Brahmin's flesh. But just as they were about to eat, a voice from heaven was heard telling the Brahmins to

(1) Here Māyā is called Ādi shakti. In Bal, 192 (198) 218 Rāma says he will descend with his Param shakti. Sītā is thus identified not only with Rāma's shakti, but with Māyā. See also Bal, 154 (152) 175.

refrain, or they would be eating a Brahmin's flesh. The guests got up in great dismay, but not unnaturally they were very angry, and they cursed the king to be born a demon with all the members of his house. Again however, the heavenly voice was heard, saying the king was not to blame. And when enquiry was made, the wickedness of the king's enemy was laid bare. But it was too late to do anything, for, as is often ~~repeated~~ ^{declared}, so here also, a Brahmin's curse once it is uttered, cannot be recalled.

In due time the monarch with all the members of his family were born as demons; the king himself was the mighty Rāvaṇ with ten heads and twenty arms. The monarch and his brothers, though in the guise of demons, were as remarkable for piety as they had been in their previous existence. Their acts of penance were so compelling - Rāvaṇ, for example, cast his ten heads one after the other into a sacrificial fire - that the Creator had to come and tell him to ask a boon.

The ten-headed clasped the feet of the god and said: "Hear, oh lord of the world, may I not be slain except by a "monkey or a man." Bal, 182 (180)206.

At this point Shiva who tells the story, interjects the observation, "I and Brahmā jointly conferred the boon, saying, "So be it, you have done great penance."

From the time they were born as demons the sons and servants of Rāvaṇ practised every kind of wickedness. But it was only after he had obtained this boon from Brahmā⁽¹⁾ that Rāvaṇ in his pride decided to interfere with religious ceremonies of all kinds; the feeding of Brahmins, sacrifice, offerings and funeral rites. By so doing he hoped to make the gods hungry and weak. For fear of Rāvaṇ they had to hide in the caves of Mt. Meru. They fled before his approach. His very footsteps shook the earth, and at the sound of his voice the wives of the gods were seized with the pains of labour before their time. In the greatness of their terror, the celestials could neither sleep by night nor eat by day. If the demon by any chance caught a wandering god or Brahmin he held him to ransom.

"By the power of his arm he had brought everything under" "his control. No one had any kind of independence. Rāvaṇ ruled" "the world in accordance with his own will." Bal, 189(195)213.

At last the Earth, in the form of a cow, went to the gods and asked them to come to her relief. They said they could do nothing. But they took the suppliant with them to the Creator. Brahmā said he was equally helpless. He added

(1) Rāvaṇ had two other brothers, who also secured boons; Vibhishan asked for a perfect devotion to the feet of Bhagwān. Kumbhkarn was so huge and terrible, that when Brahmā saw him, he said; "If this low creature is always eating he will lay" "the world waste." He therefore caused Sarasvati to pervert his mind, and he asked as a boon that he might sleep for six months at a time.

however that there was one who could deliver them:

"Take courage, oh Earth, and remember Vishnu's feet." ~~(110)~~.

"The Lord knows the sufferings of his people. He will break"
"these grievous afflictions." Bal. 190 (196)214.

"But where can we find him," one of the gods asked. "We must go to his heaven." "We must go to the Sea of Milk," said others in reply. "I was present in the company," said Shiva, "and seizing the opportunity, I observed, Hari is present," "everywhere and always the same. I know he reveals himself"
(prem).
"by love, Tell me in what country, time or place he is not."

When Shiva had thus spoken, Brahmā, crying out, "That is true," began a hymn of praise addressed to Vishnu. It was in a voice from heaven that the fear of the gods was removed: "Don't be afraid, oh sages, saints and Indra. For your sake"
"I am about to assume a human form with every element of my"
"divinity incarnate,⁽¹⁾ in the glorious solar race. Kashyap and "

~~(1) See Wilson's translation of Vishnu Purana V. 1. and Muir's O. S. P. iv. p. 255.~~

"Aditi did a great penance, and I formerly promised them a
"boon. They will appear as Dashrath and Kaushalyā in the
"town of Koshal. In their house I shall descend (avatār)
"four brothers, the crown of the family of Rāghu. I shall
"make true all that Nārād said. I shall descend with my
"supreme energy (param shakti) and will remove the whole of
"the earth's burdens." Bal. 192 (198) 218.

These promises Brahmā helped still further to fulfil by
telling his brother deities to go down to the earth and wor-
ship Vishṇu's feet as monkeys.

(3) The words underlined, with every element of my divinity
incarnate, are Growse's translation of Anshani sahit manuj
avatār. In Sanskrit anshāvatāra means a partial descent,
or the descent of a part. See the Vishṇu Purāna, where we
read of Krishna, another incarnation of Vishṇu, that he is
anshānshāvatāra, the descent of a part of a part.⁽¹⁾ Tulsidās
has the plural with parts: Growse concludes not unreasonably
that that means all his parts, or a complete incarnation.
And certainly the poem does not suggest that Rāma is only a
partial incarnation. Nevertheless, the phrase may mean, as
has been suggested, that Vishṇu was to divide himself in parts
among the four sons of Dashrath as is promised here.

(1) See Wilson's Translation of Vishṇu Purāna. V. 1. and Muir's. O. S. T.
iv. p. 255.

It is to be observed in connection with this important passage that Vishṇu declared that he would be accompanied by his supreme energy (param shakti). This refers to the idea so common in Hinduism where the energy or active power of a god is personified as his wife. We have already seen how Lakshmi is spoken of as the consort of Vishṇu, just as Sarasvati is the wife of Brahmā, and Pārvati is the wife of Shiva. The poet, however, shews no sympathy with the unhealthy conceptions which such speculations often involved.

A later chapter will describe what was the manner of Vishṇu's appearing when he was born in the house of the king of Avadh. For the rest of the poem he is naturally merged in Rāma, though it is worth noticing that both he and Lakshmi were present at the wedding of Rāma and Sītā who were their own incarnations.

VII.

THE HINDU TRIAD.

Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva.

We have now to give some consideration to what Tulsidās says of the three great gods of Hinduism, in their relationship to one another. But before dealing with those passages which bring them all together let us take the references where we find any two of them.

1. Brahmā and Vishnu are thus combined with regard to one matter only; that was when in association with the lesser gods they persuaded Shiva to marry, and later on, took a prominent part in the marriage festivities.^(1.) Bal. 98. 103. 105. What they did and said in connection therewith has been described already in the chapter dealing with Shiva. Here it is enough to note that the words used are Vishnu and Viranchi.

11. Vishnu and Shiva are spoken of together on ten occasions and strange to say, in nine of these their names are always the same, not Vishnu and Shiva, but Hari and Hara. When the poet so consistently writes of them under these names one feels that he is recalling a form of worship in which these two gods were thus associated in the minds of worshippers, probably to the exclusion of Brahmā; it may be before any formal conception of the Hindu triad was thought of. In any

⁽¹⁾ See Bal Kand. 98 (96) 111; 102 (100) 112; 106 (106) 122.

case, we know that there has been such a more or less exclusive worship of Hari-Hara in India and images erected in which they were physically conjoined. Illustration has already been given of how Shiva speaks in the highest terms of Vishnu or of his incarnation in Rāma. And it is equally true that Vishnu has the same lofty conception of Shiva, saying as he does, that unless they are worshipped together no blessing can accrue. It will be remembered how Vishnu told the penitent Nārada, a fervent devotee of his own, to go and repeat Shiva's hundred names and his mind would at once secure comfort.

"There is no one so dear to me as Shiva; never allow
 "yourself by foolishness to forsake this truth. The person
 "on whom Shiva does not take pity will never achieve ^{devotion to} ~~faith in~~
 "me ^(bhakti hamāni) Bal. (144) 165.
 146.

One feels that this language is more than an echo of what Vishnu says of Shiva in the Mahābhārata. XII.342.

"I am the soul of all the worlds, ^{of all the universe} Rudra again is my
 "soul. It is for this ^{that} I always worship him. If I did not
 "worship the auspicious and boon-giving Shiva, no one would
 "worship myself..... He who knows Rudra knows me, and he
 "who knows me, knows Rudra. He who follows Rudra follows me."
 "Rudra is Narāyaṇa (Vishnu). Both are one; and one is shewn in ⁽¹⁾ two
 "different forms."

(1) See ^{M.N.} Dutt's translation of Mahābhārata. Vol III p.556. of the Shānti Parva.

To what extent this earlier idea has influenced Thlsidās it is impossible to say. Indeed it is impossible to say to what extent this idea really influenced the author of the passage we have quoted from the epic, because in an earlier verse of the same chapter, Vishnu, whom we find identifying himself so closely with Rudra, tells us that Brahmā and Rudra are the foremost of the gods, and are responsible for the creation and destruction of the worlds.

The references to Hari-Hara are none of them specially remarkable. But most of them do have a suggestion of the exclusive worship in which they have shared. They are worth recording. In Bal. (4)9 among the sins of which wicked people are guilty, it is said they seek to eclipse the glories of Hari-Hara. In Bal. (12)17 it is said that those who love the feet of Hari-Hara will find the story of Rāma to be sweet as honey. Again it is recorded of Nārād, that he was as dear to Hari-Hara, as Hari (Vishnu or Rāma) is to the world. Bal. (29)41. In a long statement in praise of the attractiveness of the story of Rāma, it is said it is like Hari-Hara, easy of approach and gracious to their servants. Bal. (39)51. The same book says that no enemy of Hari-Hara can reach Kailās, the heaven of Shiva, even in a dream. Bal. ~~113~~¹¹³ (129). And as a proof of the great courtesy with which he received certain nobles it is recorded that Rāma acted towards them as if they

(1) ~~The numbers of the dohas here given are as in Grawae. The corresponding numbers in Allahabad edition are Bal (4)9; (12)17; (29)41; (39)51; (113)129;~~

were Hari and Hara. Ayodh. (306)319. While the enormity of killing a cow is brought home to us by the statement that those who listen to blasphemous words against Hari-Hara are as guilty as if they had killed that animal. Lanka^{41.} (31)46.

The two remaining passages occur close together and in the Ayodhyā Kānd. (~~161~~)¹⁶¹ Bharat is the speaker on both occasions. Anxious to clear himself of any complicity in the plot to secure his brother's exile he says:

" May the Creator (Vidhi) give to me the lot he gives " "to those who forsake the feet of Hari-Hara, and worship horrible demons, if I knew of this plan." Ayodh (161)168.

And again in similar language he asks not the Creator, but Shiva to treat him in the same way.

"Those wretches who do not love the society of the good, " "who turn away their faces from the supreme object of life, " "who do not worship Hari (Vishnu) in his incarnations and find " "no joy in the glories of Hari-Hara, who abandon the ways of " "the books of revelation and go a contrary road, may Shiva " "give to me their lot if I knew of this plan." Ayodh (161)168.

So far as noticed, there is only one occasion where the poet links these same gods together by any other name than Hari and Hara, and it is in the Bāl-kānd, (~~75-78~~)^{75(73)87.} There it is said that when any one speaks blasphemy against the saints and against Shambhu (Shiva) and Śri-Pati (the lord of Lakshmi, i.e. Vishnu) his tongue ought to be cut out, but if that is not possible those who hear should close their ears and go away.

III.

When we come to deal with passages referring to Brahmā and Shiva, we find that there are a large number of them. This is only natural in view of the fact that their colleague in the Triad has left the heavenly sphere and become incarnate in Rāma. Their first appearance together was when Shiva made himself jointly responsible with Brahmā in granting the boon to Rāvan, a boon whose consequences rendered necessary Vishnu's incarnation. "I and Brahmā," he told his wife, "jointly conferred the boon." Bal. 182(180)206. And the asceticism which secured this boon would seem to have been specially directed to these two deities, for we find Hanumān saying to Rāman that it was by worshipping Viranchi and Shiva in every way he had achieved his purpose. Lanka. 23(19)^{28.} These two gods were also present with the other celestials at Rāma's marriage with Sītā, setting out from heaven in their respective vehicles, and sitting at the feast in the guise of Brahmins. Bal. 313.⁽³¹⁹⁾³⁴⁶ ~~(314)~~ 320.

But what concerns us chiefly is the very frequent reference to the fact that Brahmā and Shiva were constantly worshipping Rāma, or discovering that their power was as nothing compared with his. The language is more or less stereotyped. We are told that Viranchi and Shankar, or Shiv and Aj worship Rāma's lotus feet; or that they adore him, either alone or in association with the sages and other gods. The

following passages have been noted. (1) Aranya, 1.2. Kish, ²⁵30(25)28.

1) The numbers are as in Growse. In Allahabad text. They are. Aranya 3.9. Kish 28. Sundar. invoc. 48. Lanka. 30.68.64.129.130.139.155. Uttar: invoc. 12.26.27.33. 57.168.208.214.

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Sundar, ^{invocat} 47. Lanka, 21, 47, 59, 100, 101, 109, 117
 Uttar, ^{invocat} 5, 12, 13, 15, 35, 102, 118, 120.

Rāma's brother, Bharat, it will be remembered, is also an incarnation of Vishnu. And of him it is said in Ayodh, (276) 288, that Vidhi and Shiva, as well as other celestials, could not say enough of his virtues, while Rāma himself is told that Aj and Shiva are constantly seeking his favour. Aranya (2) 7.

Again we are made to realise Rāma's greatness by such statements as these. Rāvan is told that Shambhu and Aj could not help him unless he surrendered Sītā. Sundar (35) 35. And in the next book, Rāvan is similarly assured that should he continue to oppose Rāma, Brahmā and Rudra would not be able to protect him. Lankā, 36 (26) 41. While Rāma himself declared that Bāli would not escape, even though he took refuge with Brahmā and Rudra. Kish, 8 (6) 8.

Similar to these quotations, but in language that is even stronger in its effect, we read that the delusive power - ^{Māyā} ~~Māyā~~ or moh - of Rāma subdues Shiva, Viranchi and all others, both great and small. (Lankā, 64 (50) 72.), that it fascinates them Uttar 85 (63) 87), that it blinds them, (Uttar, 96 (69) 99) that they see it and are afraid (Uttar, 98 (70) 100).

There should also be noted the curious attempt to describe Rāma in the terminology of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, where it is said that Shiva is his consciousness (aṅkār) and Aj his intelligence (buddhi). Lanka, 19 (16) 21.

In all the quotations given so far, it may be reasonably supposed that Brahmā and Shiva are being made to sing the praises, or to acknowledge the power of the god whom they persuaded to become incarnate. But alongside of these utterances, there are others where we find Brahmā and Shiva recognising that Rāma is something more than one of the many incarnations of Vishnu. Indeed they recognise and acclaim him as the Supreme Spirit. Thus in the opening pages of the poem we are told,

(1)

"Sarasvatī, the serpent king, Shiva and the Creator, the Vedas and the Purānas are constantly singing Rama's praises, saying, 'Neti, Neti.'" Bal, (17)22.

These two words, "Neti Neti," ^{Not thus, Not thus.} "~~It is not so~~," are the words used in the Upanishads with reference to the Supreme Spirit, to shew that any attempt to define him must fail. And naturally in the next stanza, as in many other parts of the poem, Tulsidās goes on to tell us that Rāma is the unborn, the all-pervading, the passionless, that he is Sachchidanand, (existence, intelligence, bliss) who has become incarnate. When the poet entertained such thoughts of Rāma, it was not unnatural that he should describe how even as a child he

(1) In Hindi, Mahesh (great god) and Vidhi.

revealed his divine form to his mother. "He manifested
 "before her his marvellous undivided form, in every hair of
 "which there were a million worlds, with suns and moons,
 "Shivas and Brahmās without number." Bal. 207(213)233.

The same thought is expressed in a less attractive way
 in the Uttar-Kāṇḍ where the inspired crow tells how he jumped
 down Rāma's throat when he was laughing, and in Rāma's belly,
 he saw in addition to numberless worlds, with mountains, rivers,
 oceans, and forests, gods, and saints, and men, millions of
Brahmās and Shivas. Uttar. 114(79)118.

In concluding this series of extracts there remains to be
 added, though it has no reference to Rāma, the statement that
 without the assistance of a religious teacher it is not possible
 for any one to cross the ocean of existence, even were he the
 equal of Viranchi and Shankar. Uttar. 133(90)142.

It now remains to review the passages where Brahmā, Vishnu
and Shiva are spoken of together. There are close on thirty
 such references. A selection only is possible. To begin with
 let us take those which place the gods together in a general
 way. It will be noticed how frequently the names Hari and Hara
 for Vishnu and Shiva appear.

"Vidhi, Hari, Hara, the poet Vālmīki, Brihaspati and
 "Sarasvati, in speaking of the glory of a saint are ashamed.
 Bal. 2.

"With the exception of Vishnu, Viranchi and Mahesh, all
 "the gods got ready their chariots and went (to the sacrifice

"of Daksh)" Bal: 72(70)84.

"If you can bring Brahmins under your control, then
"Vidhi, Vishnu and Mahesh will be in your power. Bal:170(168)194.

"A charm is a very little thing, but Vidhi, Hari, Hara,
 "and all the gods are in its power, just as a little goad con-
 "trols a great and furious elephant." Bal. 260(266)289.

"Vidhi, Hari, Hara, the guardians of the eight quarters of
 "the world, and the god of day who knew the greatness of Rāma,
 "having assumed the guise of Brahmins (went to the wedding) and
 "gazed at the festivities with delight." Bal. 320(326)358.

"Vidhi, Hari, Hara, Indra, and the guardians of the world,
 "all sing the praises of Dashrath, the father of Rāma," Ayodh:
 (166)173.

"Were Bharat to acquire the rank of Vidhi, Hari, and Hara,
 "he would not feel the intoxication of kingly power." Ayodh (222)
 232.

"The boundless love that Bharat and Rāma had for one another
 "is more than the understanding of Vidhi, Hari, and Hara can
 "fathom." Ayodh, (231)241.

"The Maya of Vidhi, Hari, and Hara is very powerful, but it
 "cannot comprehend the mind of Bharat." Ayodh, (283) 295.

"The man (says Rāma) who abandons hypocrisy and serves
 "Brahmins in thought, deed, and word, brings Me, Viranchi, Shiva
 "and all the gods into his power." Aranya, 56(28)42.

"As for Vishnu with his four arms, Vidhi with his four

"heads, and Purāri (Shiva) with his strange attire and his five
"faces, and all the other gods, there is not one of them whose
"beauty can be compared to theirs." Bal. 225, (231) 252.

"If Rāma is against you, you cannot escape, though you
"took refuge with Vishnu, Aj and Īsh (Shiva)." Sundar 59 (56)158.

It has been already stated that when the crow jumped into
Rāma's mouth, he saw there millions of worlds and millions of
Brahmās and Shivas, but somehow that statement did not satisfy
him; and after declaring how he stayed a hundred years in each
of the many worlds, he said,-

"Each of these worlds had its own Vidhātā, its own Vishnu
"and Shiva." Uttar 117 (80) 120.

In the two last quotations Rāma is recognised as being not
merely an incarnation of Vishnu; he possesses more power than
any of the Triad; he is also identified with the Supreme Spirit
of the universe. A later chapter will shew how that claim is
made in every section of the poem. Here we shall merely give
those passages where this claim is made in reference to the Triad
itself. Tulsidās himself tells us,

"I adore the name of Rāma, the source of Agni, the sun and
the moon, the substance of Vidhi, Hari, and Hara." Bal.24(22)34.

Again when Rāma revealed his divine form to Sati,

"She saw many Shivas, Vidhis and Vishnus, each excelling
"the other in glory, bowing and worshipping at the feet of the
"Lord. She saw all the gods in their divers forms." Bal.65(63)

In this vision she also saw herself as well as the wives of Brahmā and Vishnu repeated without number. Bal. 66(64)77.

Mention has already been made of the penance of Manu and his wife.

"Their ceaseless desire was to see Him who is without attributes and without parts, without beginning and without end, whom the Vedas say cannot be defined, from whom Shambhu Viranchi and Vishnu arise in various forms." Bal. 150(148)171.

When after a hundred thousand years, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva approached them and told them to ask a boon, the devotees paid no attention. It was the Supreme God they were resolved to see.

"Vidhi, Hari and Hara seeing their amazing penance came near Manu many times and tempted him, saying, Ask a boon. But he was steadfast. They could do nothing." Bal. 151(149)172.

At long last, when the Supreme Spirit did shew Himself and promised that He would become incarnate as Rāma, Manu in a hymn of praise, says,

"Vidhi, Hari and Hara worship the dust of Thy feet." ~~He~~
The completeness of the identification of Rāma, not with Vishnu but with the Supreme God, is made even more emphatic by the statement that when the God revealed himself,

"On his left side shone the Primal Energy, the treasury of beauty, the mother of the world, from whose parts, a very mine of qualities, spring countless Umās, Lakshmis and

"Sarasvatis..... even thus was Sītā seated at the left side
"of Rāma." Bal. 154 (152) 175.

Again when Rāma arrived at the hermitage of Vālmīki the sage
addressing him as the Supreme God, said,

"You are the guardian of the bridge of revelation; the lord
"of the universe (Jagdish) and Sītā is Māyā (illusion) who in
"accordance with your gracious will creates, preserves and
"destroys the world..... The world is a drama, and you are look-
"ing on. You make Vidhi, Hari and Hara to dance. Even they do
"not comprehend your mystery. Who then can know you?" Ayodh
(121) 127.

To which there follows a claim equally lofty, uttered by another
of the great sages;

"Vidhi, Hari, Hara, the sun, the moon, the guardians of the
"spheres, Illusion (Māyā) Life, Karma....are all obedient to
"Rama." Ayodh (243) 254.

It now remains to give the four passages which refer to the
work of the Triad, as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the
worlds. In two out of the four it will be noted how the poet
seeks to enhance the superiority of Rāma.

"Rama is as skilful in creation as 100 millions of Vidhis,
"as able to save as 100 million Vishṇus, as able to destroy as
"100 million Rudras." Uttar. 131 (89) 140.

"It is by his power that Viranchi, Hari, and Ísha (Shiva)
"preserve, destroy, and create the worlds." Sundar, 20.

The other two refer to the power of penance and occur in the Bāl Kāṇḍ, 84 (82) 96, and 169 (167) 192.

"By the power of Penance Vidhātā creates the world;

"by the power of penance Vishṇu preserves it; by the
(1)

"power of penance Shambhu destroys it."

(1) There are also a variety of passages which ascribe the creation, preservation, and destruction of the world to Rāma, as in Lankā (7) 9. "Worship him who is the creator, preserver, and destroyer."

VIII.

Brahm, the Supreme Spirit

However numerous the gods whom India has worshipped, she has always recognised the One behind the many. This Supreme Spirit is called Brahm. It is Brahm who is the theme of the Upanishads, and it is with Brahm that the philosophy of Hinduism is chiefly concerned. Brahm is pure being. He is the highest self. But He cannot be defined. Every attempt to do so always breaks down. And few phrases appear more frequently on the pages of Tulsidās, than the phrase he has borrowed from the Upanishads. In response to the efforts made to explain this primal entity, these scriptures answered, Neti, Neti, It is not this; It is not that. And so when Tulsidās speaks of Brahm, he does not tell us what He is. He tells us what He is not. He is beyond speech and understanding. He is without qualities and attributes. He is without passion and without desire. He is not touched by virtue or defect; by sin or merit. He is without form and without name. He is beyond measure and beyond change. Phrases such as these constantly occur in every part of the poem. The poet seems to exercise all his ingenuity to find a new one. But the one he employs most is the term, Nirgun Brahm. that is - Brahm without qualities.

There is yet another phrase which is employed very often. We are told that Brahm is Sachchidānand. That means He is existence (sat), thought (chit), and joy (ānand). But these terms are only of negative import. The existence, thought and joy, which belong to a passionless, partless, quality-less Brahm, must be very cold indeed. And Monier Williams is justified in saying that such existence as is attributed to Him can only be the negation of non-existence, just as the thought is the negation of non-thought, and the joy is the negation of non-joy.

This is the doctrine of monism. Based on the Creation hymn of the Rig-Veda (10, 90) which says that Purusha himself is this whole (universe), whatever has been and whatever shall be, ⁽¹⁾ it is expressed with greater distinctness in the well known phrase from the ^{Ch}Chāndogya Upanishad, 6, 2; there is but one being without a second, ^{(advaita).} The quality-less Brahm is all that is. Nevertheless there is a world around us. But this world which we see around us, and we who see it, or who think we see it, are all the products of illusion. The illusion is called Māyā. Tulsidās has a great deal to say about Māyā. It is Māyā, he tells us who creates, preserves, and destroys the world.

So long as Brahm remains Nirgun Brahm, that is, Brahm without qualities, nothing happens or can happen, because nothing exists ~~except~~ this solitary, impersonal Spirit. But

(1) Muir, O.S.T. I. p.9.

the balance is sometimes disturbed. When the Impersonal God is associated with Māyā (and strange to say, Māyā is said to be eternal) He becomes a personal God and is spoken of as Sagun Brahm, i.e. Brahm endowed with qualities. These qualities are three in number; goodness (sattva), activity or passion (rajas), and darkness or ignorance (tamas).⁽¹⁾ But when Nirgun Brahm becomes Sagun Brahm as a result of His association with Māyā, the Universe which has resulted is only apparent. If He is a Personal God, He is only a Personal God in a world of illusion. Brahm alone is real, even when we allow, as the Vedāntists do, a practical existence to external things, to gods and men. In face of such a situation the wise man is he who by the way of knowledge (gyān mārg) is able to recognise that his soul is one with the Supreme Spirit.

By the time of Shaṅkarāchārya, born in 788, A.D. these monistic speculations had hardened into a system which secured increasing favour in many quarters. But side by side with

(1) The character of each soul depends on which of these three qualities predominates. (Laws of Manu, 12, 24). Dominated by activity (rajas) the One Universal Spirit is Brahmā the Creator; by goodness (sattva) it is Vishṇu the Preserver; by indifference (tamas) it is Rudra the Destroyer. Monier Williams, Brahminism and Hinduism, p 26.

the way of knowledge there had always run another path, the way of faith or devotion, bhakti mārg, of which we have an early and impressive illustration in the Bhagavadgītā. And those who wished to travel by that more satisfying path had come to realise that the doctrine of bhakti could not be permanently maintained if the theory of monism or advaita were allowed to prevail. In Southern India in particular there were among the followers of Vāsudeva, (Vishnu) not only poets who wrote hymns in adoration of the special object of their worship, but philosophers who declined to accept the interpretation which Shaṅkara and his school had put upon the Upanishads. They refused to believe in a God destitute of all qualities and for ever shrouded in Māyā.

Among these protestants the most outstanding name is that of Rāmanuja who was born in 1017 A.D. In opposition to Shaṅkara, he condemned the doctrine of Māyā and asserted his belief in a personal God. At the same time he acknowledged that God contains within himself everything that exists. But he held this belief with a difference, and in consequence his system is called Vishishtādvaita. He taught that within the Unity of God there are three distinct eternal principles, the individual soul (chit), matter in all its forms (achit), and the Supreme soul (Īshvar); that chit and

achit are attributes of the Supreme and constitute his body. In his own words, as given in his commentary upon the Vedānta Sūtras, Rāmanuja taught that:-

"The highest Brahm is essentially free from all imper-"
 "fection whatsoever, comprises within itself all aus-"
 "picious qualities and finds its pastime in originating,"
 "preserving, re-absorbing, pervading and ruling the uni-"
 "verse; that the entire complex of intelligent and non-"
 "intelligent beings (souls and matter), in all their "
 "different estates, is real, and constitutes the form,"
 "i.e. the body of the highest Brahm." (1)

These doctrines, as well as others, all of them modifica-
 tions of the advaita school, spread to Northern India, and
 exercised a wide influence among the worshippers of Vishnu.
 Bhāndārkar is careful to insist over and over again that the
 great object of these Vaishṇava teachers was to confute the
 theory of Māyā, and to establish the doctrine of Bhakti. (2)
 The only name which concerns us here is that of Rāmānanda,
 who died in 1411, A.D. A disciple of the school of Rāmanuja,
 he broke away and founded a sect of his own, called the

(1) Vedānta Sūtras with Rāmanuja's commentary, translated
 by Thibaut, S.B.D. Vol. XLVIII, p. 88.

See also Berriedale Keith's article on Rāmanuja. E.R.E.
~~and~~ Monier Williams' Brahmanism and Hinduism pp. 119-124.
 and Dr. Banerjea's Dialogues on The Hindu Philosophy, Dialogue IX.

(2) See next page.

Rāmāvats or worshippers of Rāma. By identifying Rāma and not Krishna with the Supreme God, he rendered an inestimable service to the people of Northern India, a service which was made the more permanent by the fact that he and his followers used the vernaculars in propagating their views, and admitted not only Brahmins but outcastes to their fellowship.

Tulsidās (born 1532) belongs to this great succession. He also believed in a personal God, very different from the Sagun Brahm of an earlier day, and he was devoted to this personal God in a very real fashion. But the fact remains that Tulsidās' thought continues to be coloured by the very conceptions from which his school had been expected to deliver him. He believes, as Rāmanuja believed, that the God he worships is all knowing and all merciful; that He is antagonistic to all evil. Nay, more, he believes that He is a real Saviour of mankind. He also passionately believes in the personal immortality which Rāma grants to all his devotees. And time after time, he says that he has no wish to hear or to sing the praises of Nirgun Brahm. Indeed his

(2) Bhandārkar, Vaisnavism, Saivism, pp. 51, 52, 54, 57, 58, 62, 67.

e.g. A strong feeling of Bhakti or love, and a fear of the dangerous consequences of Māyā or illusion, were the guiding principles of the new development. p.62.

poem, as Crowse says, is a passionate protest against the virtual atheism of philosophical Hindu theology. Nevertheless, he frequently uses the language of that philosophy. Māyā is seldom absent from his thoughts. He seems to be haunted by it. It has enveloped the world. It is always perplexing and deceiving men. He has personified it in Sītā. He looks on it as eternal. His one consolation is that Rāma is greater than Māyā. He is Māyā's lord. He sends it forth. Controlled by Him, it can make even Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva to dance like puppets. But he who sends it forth, can also recall it, and not only recall it, but save his worshippers from its power. ^{Devotion to} ~~Faith in~~ Rāma is able to set its victims free. When Tulsidās writes in that manner, it is impossible to avoid the belief that he has surrendered much that his predecessors had gained. It cannot be said of him as was said of them that his great object is to confute the theory of Māyā. He can only tell us how to evade its power. On the other hand, we have to recognise that Tulsidās did not claim to be a philosopher. When he attempts to philosophise, he is often uninteresting and sometimes absurd. But he believes that the Supreme Spirit has become incarnate in Rāma, that the Nirguṇ has become Saguṇ, and that Rāma at least is real, if all else is a dream. ⁽¹⁾ He believes also that

(1) In Aranya, 64 (33)⁴⁹ Shiva says to Umā: "The worship of " Hari is real; the world is a dream."

those who worship Rāma will not be absorbed in the god-head, but will pass to Rāma's own heaven. For the rest, he is content to know that "the actions of Sagun Rāma are not to be comprehended by thought or human strength of speech."

Lanka, 85 (70)95. And then he adds what looks like a taunt at somebody's expense, "That is the reason why the wisest ascetics discard theological speculations and simply adore." (1)

And it is because he did that with so much devotion and wrote of it with such power and beauty, that his poem has exercised so great and healthy an influence among the Hindi speaking population of Northern India. (2)

(1) Growse's translation.

(2) Farquhar remarks; "It has been frequently assumed that Rāmānanda taught the Vishishtādvaita system of Rāmanuja. This is one of the many points with regard to the leader on which no direct evidence is available; but the indirect evidence which does exist, scarcely points to that conclusion. One of the characteristics of the whole movement that springs from him is a constant use of advaita phrases, a clinging to advaita concepts, while holding hard by the personality of Rāma. The teaching is usually a sort of compromise between theism and strict monism."

Outlines of the Religions Literature of India, p. 326.

Note 2, contd.

Bhāndārkar in his summary of Tulsidās' teaching, says, "It
 "is based upon a dualistic philosophy with a leaning towards"
 "monism of the Advaita system." Vaishāⁿvism Saivism, etc. p.75.

In his Dialogues Dr Banerjea, at the close of a part of his ex-
 position, says:- (at page 330.)

"Here the Rāmānandis and Rāmanujas stand on common ground"
 "But they soon part company. The Rāmānandis assert that"
 "God is both saguna and nirguna. Tulsidās, one of their"
 "own popular poets, strongly inveighs against those who "
 "like the Rāmanujas, reject the theory of nirguna or void"
 "of qualities. And he ^{thus} ~~then~~ explains how saguna and "
 "aguna are reconcileable:- "There is no difference between"
 "the saguna and aguna. Thus do the Munis, Purānas, sages?"
 "and Vedas say. He who is void of quality and shape, "
 "who is invisible and uncreated, the same becomes joined"
 "with qualities out of love for His devotees. But how"
 "can one who is without qualities become joined with "
 "qualities? Even as water and ice and hailstones are "
 "not different substances." Bāl. 124 (122) 138.

The passage quoted by Dr Banerjea is in The Bāl-kānd 124 (122) 138.

IX .

R Ā M A,

the Incarnation of Vishṇu and ^{of} Brahm,
the Supreme God.

In our examination of the various religious ideas of the poem, we have been, all along, leading up to what is its very heart and centre - the birth of Rāma and the work he achieves in the world. The poet's claim is that he is not only an incarnation of Vishnu, the second member of the Triad, but of Brahm, the uncreated, the invisible, all pervading Brahm, the Supreme Spirit of the universe, who has taken on himself a visible form. When Tulsidās makes this double claim, he is merely following the example set him by other writers. It has been argued that the original kernel of Vālmīki's Rāmāyana did not contain any reference to Rāma as an incarnation, even of Vishṇu; and it is true that in certain sections of the poem, Rāma is spoken of as if he were merely a human hero. On the other hand, in the Epic as men have read it for many centuries

there are passages where Rāma is spoken of not merely as an incarnation of Vishṇu, but is identified with the Supreme Spirit. Thus in the sixth book of that poem we read that the gods appeared and protested against Rāma's treatment of Sītā in putting her to the test of fire.

"How dost thou not perceive thyself to be the chief of the " "gods. Thou art the primal maker of the three worlds, the " "self-dependent lord. Thou art seen in the end and at the " "beginning of created things. And yet thou disregardest " "Sītā like a common man." Rāma replied:

"I regard myself as a man, Rāma son of Dasharatha; do you, " "divine being, tell me who and whence I am."

The appeal was addressed to Brahmā, and in his answer the Creator told Rāma who he was. Among other things he said, "Thou art the true, imperishable Brahm. Thou art the source " "of being and the cause of destruction. I am thy heart; the " "goddess Sarasvati is thy tongue. The gods have been made " "by Brahmā the hairs on thy limbs. The night is called the " "closing, and the day the opening, of thine eyes. The "

"Vedas are thy thoughts. Thou art called the highest soul.
"Sītā is Lakshmi, and thou art Vishṇu." (1)

The Bhagavadgītā makes the same claim for Krishna. He also was an incarnation of Vishṇu. And he is reported as saying of himself;

"I am the producer and the destroyer of the whole universe. "
"There is nothing else higher than myself; all this is woven "
"upon me like pearls upon a thread. I am the taste in water."
"I am the light of the sun and moon Know me to be "
"the eternal seed of all beings." (2)

And the same is true of books like the Vishṇu Purāṇa. In that **book** a great deal is said of the Hindu Triad and of their work as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the worlds. But its main purpose is to shew that Vishṇu includes within himself not only all the other deities but that he is

(1) Muir, O.S.T. Vol. iv. p. 180.

(2) Bhagavadgītā, c. vii, Telang's translation. S.B.E.

himself the Supreme all pervading Spirit and soul of the universe. (1)

Tulsidās, then, is merely following the example of others before him when he identifies his hero not only with Vishṇu, but with the Supreme Spirit. How he relates them to one another we must now ~~endeavour~~ endeavour to examine. And in doing so it will be desirable that we should take the various periods of Rāma's life in turn, on the lines which the poet himself has laid down; his birth and childhood; his life in Avadh; his exile in the forest; his alliance with the monkeys; his attack on Lanḳā with the defeat of Rāvaṇ and the rescue of Sītā; and the return to Avadh. In following this method we shall be able the more easily to watch the movements of the author's mind, and to discover a different outlook and atmosphere in more than one section of the poem.

Prior to that, however, we have to examine the first section of the first book, which may be reckoned as the prelude to the whole poem. Here we have a very important series of

(1) See my Vishṇu Purāṇā, a Summary, p. 25.

passages. Because Tulsidās is undoubtedly trying to meet in advance those who are disposed to doubt the claims he puts forward on behalf of his hero; or to satisfy those who find that they need to have their difficulties explained.

PRELUDE

It will be remembered that in the earlier part of the Bāl-Kāṇḍ or book of childhood, there is a long passage relating to Shiva. There we read that Shiva and Umā one day saw Rāma searching everywhere in the forest for his lost wife. It is not without a purpose that the poet makes the goddess cross-examine her husband with regard to the mystery of Rāma. "Is Rāma the son of the king of Avadh, or is he some uncreated " "qualityless (nirguṇ) invisible being? If he is a king's son, " "and in distress for the loss of his wife, how can he be Brahm? " "Tell me, my lord, and cause me to understand with regard to " "him who is passionless, all pervading and omnipresent. Do " "not be angry at my ignorance. But act in a way that will re- " "move it. In the forest I saw the majesty of Rāma. I was " "so amazed that I did not tell you. My stupid mind " "could not grasp it then, and I got the reward I deserved." (1)

(1) The reward was separation from her husband. This question was put thousands of years after, when in a later birth Umā was reunited to Shiva under the name of Pārvati.

"Today again, there is some doubt in my mind. Have mercy on
me, I beg of you, with joined hands. You have indeed told
me already, and in a variety of ways. But do not be angry.
At that time, I was in a sort of infatuation from which I am
now free. And first of all, after due thought, tell me the
reason why the qualityless Brahm (nirgun) assumed a body with
qualities (sa-gun)." Bal. 116,119 (115-117) 131.132

We have here a frank recognition on the part of the poet
that the common man at least feels the mystery connected with
such an incarnation, and that he is entitled to some explana-
tion. And it is interesting to observe that when he sets
himself to remove his wife's doubts and answers her questions
Shiva manifests a certain amount of diffidence.

"Seeing you are so eager, I shall tell you in accordance with
what is taught in the books of revelation (shruti) and as far
as my intelligence permits. Your questions are natural and
proper, pleasing both to the saints and to me." Bal. 123 (121) 137.

But there was one question which Shiva was sorry to hear. He
had no doubt his wife had spoken under the power of delusion
(moh-bash) It was when she asked.

"Is there some other Rāma of whom the books of revelation
sing, and on whom holy men meditate."

The god thereupon proceeded to denounce all those who enter-
tained such thoughts, as "Heretics and enemies of Rāma's feet,"
"who do not know falsehood from truth, ignorant, undeserving, "

"blind and reprobate; people on the mirror of whose minds no-
 "thing remains, lustful, deceitful and very perverse, who have"
 "not, even in a dream, seen an assembly of the saints. They "
 "teach doctrines contrary to the Veda. They understand neither"
 "gain nor loss. They cannot discern between agun and sagun."
 "They babble words of their own invention and at great length;"
 "under the influence of Hari's illusion (Māyā) they go astray "
 "in the world. In speaking of them you cannot use language "
 "that is improper. They are full of wind, possessed by devils"
 "and drunken. They never say anything of value. They have "
 "drunk of the liquor of strong delusion (moh). No one should"
 "listen to anything they say." Bal, 124 (122) 138.

The thought at once occurs, to what extent did Tulsidās find that his feelings for Rāma were not shared. Whatever the answer may be to that question, Shiva proceeded to give his own views on the matter, and in the statement he makes, we probably have the poet's beliefs better expressed than anywhere else in the poem.

"There is no difference between sagun and agun, so the saints,"
 "Purānas and wise men say. The qualityless (agun), the in- "
 "visible, the formless, the uncreated, for the love he had for"
 "those devoted to Him, became sagun (endowed with qualities). "
 "How can that which is without qualities (agun) become endowed"
 "with qualities (sagun)? even as there is no difference between
 "water and ice, (though their form is changed). How can He, whose

"name is the sun that dispels the darkness of ignorance, be as- "
 "sociated with sensual delusion? Rama who is Sachchidānand "
 "(existence, intelligence, joy) and the Sun (the lord of day), "
 "in Him there is not an atom of the night's delusion. The "
 "very embodiment of light, the Blessed, in him there is no dawn "
 "of understanding. Joy and sorrow, knowledge and ignorance, "
 "conceit and pride, which belong to life, are not to be found "
 "in Him. The world knows that Rāma is the all pervading Brahm "
 "the supreme bliss, the supreme god (paresh) the primeval. He "
 "is Purush, the ocean of glorious light, the lord of the uni- "
 "verse revealed, the jewel of the house of Raghu, my Lord."

And having said this Shiva bowed his head. Bal 124 (122) 138.

These long quotations from the prelude of the poem show that while Vishnu continues to be remembered, were it only by his name of Hari, he is very much a vanishing quantity. It is Rāma who is thought of as wholly and entirely God. And the rest of the poem does not fail to substantiate that idea, though from time to time, especially in the portions dealing with his childhood, his relation to the lesser god is recalled.

Rāma's Birth and Childhood.

In the chapter dealing with Vishṇu, we have seen how the voice from heaven declared,

"Fear not ye saints, sages and Indra, for your sakes I" "shall assume a human form and descend as a man with every " "element of my divinity incarnate." Bal 192 (198) 218.

And with unusual abruptness, after mentioning that the gods took birth as monkeys ^{and} ~~where~~, in vast troops ~~they~~ awaited the coming of Hari, we are introduced to Dashrath, king of Avadh. Of him it is said that, "He was well acquainted with the " "Vedas, an upholder of religion, a very mine of virtue, wise," "and a devout follower of the holder of the lotus (Vishṇu). " Bal 193 (199) 219.

Nothing is said of his being an incarnation of Manu, nor of that sage's wife and the promise made to her. Three queens are spoken of, however, obedient wives, devoted to their husband and earnest worshippers of Hari. Unfortunately they were childless. But when the king spoke to his family priest⁽¹⁾ of his regret that he had no son, he was told not to be anxious.

"You will have four sons, who will be famous throughout the "world and will remove the fears of the faithful." Bal 194 (200) ²²⁰

(1) His name was Vas~~i~~sh~~t~~h. He was for sixty generations family priest to the royal house of Avadh. According to the Laws of Manu, he was one of the seven Rishis, and one of the ten Prajāpatis. He was thus a mind-born son of Brahmā. Tulsidās accepts but does always enlarge on the legends of Hinduism.

In accordance with the holy man's instructions a sacrifice was performed with the object of procuring a son. When the oblation (ahuti) had been offered, Agni the god of fire, appeared in person, holding the offering ^(charu) in his hand, and said to the king, "Go and divide this offering as you think proper." Bal. 194 (200) ~~200~~ 220

The king did as he was commanded; and calling the queens he gave to Kaushalyā half the oblation, to Kaikeyi a quarter of it. What was over he divided between these two, but they gave it to the third queen, Sumitrā. As a result, the three queens became pregnant.

"From the day Hari was conceived in the womb, all the worlds" "were filled with happiness and prosperity." Bal. 195 (201) 221.

Though the promise was to the effect that in the house of Dashrath will become incarnate, four brothers, we find three of them already forgotten, for it is said that it was under an auspicious star and in an auspicious month, and on an auspicious day, that Rāma the root of joy was born. The gods were present at his birth; seated in their cars, the celestial minstrels sang his praise, the drums of heaven began to beat, and flowers fell from the sky. And it is Rāma's mother alone, and not the mothers of the other children, who like Mary the mother of Jesus, gives voice to her gratitude in a hymn of praise. As she looks at the child in her arms and is amazed at his wonderful

form, his beautiful eyes, his body dark like a cloud, his own peculiar weapons and his four arms, his ornaments and garland, she recognised him to be the enemy of the demons and calls him the husband of Lakshmi. She addressed him as immortal, and says he is beyond the understanding of men. In particular she tells her child that in every hair of his body there is a multitude of worlds, fashioned by Māyā. Bal, 198 (204) 224.

A few pages further on, we have another account of the child's beauty, and there again he is identified for the moment with Vishnu, because mention is made of the imprint of a holy man's feet on the body of that god. But this statement is preceded and followed by these two declarations:-

"The all-pervading Brahm, void of emotion, without attributes "
 "without sensations of pleasure, the uncreated ... lay in "
 "Kaushalyā's arms." Bal, 206 (210) 230.

"Rāma, the father and mother of the world, the giver of joy"
 "to the people of Koshal, though his enemies try without end"
 "they will never escape from the bonds of existence. Māyā "
 "who has brought under her power all souls, both what moves "
 "and what does not move, trembles before the Lord who makes "
 "her dance to the playing of his eyebrows. Bal, 205 (211) 231

Still more wonderful is another story recorded of Rāma's infancy.

"Once when his mother had washed and dressed him, she put him "

"in his cradle. She then prepared an offering to present to "
"Bhagwān her own family god. When she had worshipped the god "
"and made the offering, she went to the place where she had pre- "
"pared the food. But on returning to where she had made the "
"offering, she saw there Rāma eating the offering. Overcome "
"with fear, she went to (where she had left) her child, and "
"there found him asleep. Again she came and saw her son eat- "
"ing. She trembled in her heart and courage departed. Here "
"she saw a child; there she saw a child. 'My mind is in a maze,' "
"she said, 'What has happened?' When Rāma saw his mother's per- "
"plexity, he laughed and showed to her his entire marvellous "
"form, with hundreds of millions of worlds in every single hair, "
"with innumerable suns and moons, Shivas and Brahmās, with many "
"mountains, rivers, oceans, lands and forests, with Time, Karma, "
"attributes, demerits, natural dispositions (svabhāv). She saw "
"even what had never been heard of. As she looked at this Māyā, "
"very incomprehensible in every way, she stood with joined hands "
"and very afraid. She saw that which causes life to dance; she "
"saw the ^{devotion} ~~faith~~ (bhakti) that sets it free. Her body trembling, "
"and with not a word from her mouth, she closed her eyes and "
"bowed her head at his feet. Seeing his mother in a state of "
"amazement, Rāma again took the form of a child. She sang his "
"praises but her terror did not leave her. "

" 'The father of the world! I thought he was my son,' she said. "
" In many ways Hari exhorted her. 'Listen, mother, do not speak "
"of this to any one,' And over and over again Kāshalyā besought "
"her son with joined hands, 'And do you never again, oh, Lord, per- "
"vade me with your Māyā.'" Bal. 206, ~~208~~, (212, ~~214~~) 232.

And yet he was a very human child. He and his brothers
played at every kind of children's game. But the poet cannot
fail to wonder that it should be so.

"The lord whose thoughts, actions and words are beyond comprehen- "
"sion, played in Dashrath's courtyard. When the king was eating "
"he would call for him. But he would not come and leave his "
"play. He came running, however, when Kaushalyā went to bring "
"him. Him, whom the scriptures (nigam) call Neti, and whose "
"mystery Shiva cannot solve, his mother ran and laid hold of, in "
"his peevishness. He came, his body covered with dust. The "
"king smiled and seated him in his lap." Bal. 208 (214) 234.

The passage just quoted is the final incident recorded of
Rāma's early childhood. And we next hear of his school days,
but only in the very briefest way.

"Rāma went to his teacher's house to read. In a very short time "
"he had acquired all knowledge. It was very much a joke for "
"Hari to study, seeing the four Vedas are nothing but his breath."
Bal 209 (215) 235.

In other matters we read that Rāma was obedient to his parents, a source of joy to the citizens of Avadh, and went hunting with one of his brothers. The interesting statement is added that every beast that died by his hand, on leaving its body went to heaven (sur Lok). But despite the brevity of the poet's account of this period of Rāma's life, he gives vent to his feelings thus:

"The all pervading, the indivisible, the passionless, the un-
"created Nirgun, with neither name nor form, did many wonders "
"for the sake of those devoted to him." Bal 211 (217) 237.

In strange contrast to the brief and somewhat chastened paragraph dealing with Rāma's school days, the poet, or rather Shiva, thereafter begins a long story of how Vishvāmitra⁽¹⁾ the royal sage, came to the palace and asked the king to allow Rāma and Lakshman to go with him to his hermitage and slay certain demons who were disturbing his prayers and sacrifices. The sage had said to himself:

"Without the help of Hari, these wicked demons cannot be killed."
"Then the saint reflected in his mind, 'The Lord has descended "
"(āvataram) to remove the earth's burden.'" Bal. 211 (217) 237.
And as he approached the palace he cried,
"I shall gaze my fill at the Lord, the abode of all virtues, "
"knowledge and absence of desire."

It was the help of both Rāma and Lakshman that he asked for. And it is in connection with this request that the poet

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for the first time since the brothers were born, remembers that Rāma was not the only son of Dashrath, who was an avatār of God. Because, as the two boys went forth to fight against the demons we read:

"The two lion-hearted heroes set out, glad to remove the alarm
"of the sage. Oceans of compassion, firm of purpose, the pri-
"mary and secondary cause of the whole universe (akhil vishva
" karan karan)" Bal. 214 (220)240.

It was on this expedition that they came to the abandoned hermitage of the sage whose wife had committed adultery with the god Indra. Her husband's curse had changed her into a stone. But whenever the feet of Rāma touched the stone the curse was broken, and the woman restored to life. Her first act was a hymn of praise in which she called him Prabhu, Hari, and Raghu pati, the protector of the world, the fount of knowledge, the giver of joy to all, and the enemy of Rāvaṇ. In particular she said it was from his feet that the Ganges arose, when the waters of that river poured down from heaven on Shiva's head, and asked that his feet might rest for ever on hers. Tulsidās points the moral by an interjection of his own:

"Thus you see the Lord Hari is merciful and a friend of the
"poor, without regard to their deserts. Worship him and abandon
"all hypocrisy and strife." Bal. 217;(223)244.

The defeat of the demons did not take long, Rāma slew their two leaders. So mighty was the blow with which he smote them, that the head of one of them fell to the ground at a place on the other side of the ocean, 700 miles distant. Lakshman is credited with the overthrow of the rank and file. It was when they were on this expedition that the two lads heard from the sage about the bow of Shiva, and how, on an appointed day, the person who was able to bend it, would gain the hand of Sītā, the daughter of Janak, king of Videha.

As Sītā was not only Rāma's future wife, but his supreme energy (param Shakti) and his Māyā (illusion), this is the place to tell of her wonderful birth. When Rāvaṇ was oppressing gods and Brahmins, he remembered that he had never made any of the forest dwellers pay him tribute. Accordingly he sent four of his followers to a certain hermitage. In response to the demand for tribute, the hermit filled a jar with his own blood, and said, "Go and tell Rāvaṇ when this jar is opened, destruction will fall upon you and your family." Bal, 188 (194). To avoid such a catastrophe, Rāvaṇ told those who brought the jar to take it to the capital of Janak and bury it in a field. Some time after, when Janak was ploughing the field as part of a religious ceremony, Sītā emerged.⁽¹⁾ She was adopted by the king, and though it was intended at first to call her by another

(1) This incident is not given in the Allahabad edition.

Growse ~~but recognises it~~ and the Bombay edition records it ~~as an interpolation~~ but recognises that it is an interpolation.

name, she was eventually spoken of as Sītā, which means a furrow. She is frequently referred to as the earth-born, or daughter of the earth, because of her strange origin.

The two brothers when they reached the capital of Videha, made a great impression. The king, taking the sage apart, said, "Tell me, oh, holy one, who are these two boys? Are they the " "glory of a saint's home or are they the support of a royal " "house? Or is it that Brahm, whom the scriptures say is Neti," "has taken a twofold disguise and come hither." Bal, 221(227)248.

The common people were equally enthralled, and declared, "As for Vishṇu with his four arms, Brahmā with his four heads," "Shiva with his strange attire and five faces, and all the " "other gods, there is not one of them whose beauty can be com- " "pared to theirs." Bal, 225 (231) 252.

Great numbers of people had gathered to witness the contest, and many preparations made for seating the spectators. Rāma shewed a boyish interest in all he saw. But Tulsidās' comment on this action of his, is,-

"He by whose command Māyā created the worlds in a moment, in " "the twinkling of an eye, shewed amazement at the sight of the" "arena, for the sake of those devoted to him." Bal, 230 (236)257

When the great day arrived, kings and princes, one after the other, tried to raise the bow, but they could not even move it as it lay on the ground. Indeed, not less than 10,000 kings, when they applied their united strength, found themselves

helpless. But when Rāma's turn came, he not only lifted it from the ground. He raised it above his head and drew it with such force that it snapped in two. The crash was so tremendous that the sound of it re-echoed round the world. The great serpent and the tortoise, on whom the earth rests, trembled; the horses of the sun went out of their course, while gods, saints and demons had to put their hands to their ears.

It was at this stage that Rāma of the Axe appeared. This is one of the incarnations of the god Vishṇu, and in the Lankā Book, 126 (106)¹³⁵, when the celestials were expressing their gratitude to Rāma for all he had achieved, they included Parashurām, or Rāma of the Axe among his avatars. When Rāma of the Axe appears on this occasion however, the poet makes no reference to the fact that he also is an incarnation of Vishṇu. And he follows Vālmiki in his omission. Certainly it would be difficult to explain the presence of two incarnations on the earth at the same time.⁽¹⁾ Apart from that, the whole story is very remarkable, because both brothers indulged in a type of badinage somewhat incongruous with the character of the hero. Rāma of the Axe was very angry when he found that Shiva's bow had been broken. But Rāma suggested that it had perhaps been broken by one of Parashurām's own servants, while Lakshman added fuel to the fire by asking why he made such a fuss about

⁽¹⁾ According to Hindu chronology, a period of a million years divides their descents.

the breaking of a bow. What was the difference between this one and any other. The situation became even more acute when the prince refused to fight the angry visitor on the ground that he was a Brahmin. But such a suggestion was scornfully repelled. He was no ordinary Brahmin, He had slaughtered many thousands of the warrior caste. He was no common ascetic. He was the enemy of the whole Kshatriya race. Time after time he had robbed the earth of its rulers and given it to Brahmins. Eventually Rāma was invited to try and bend the bow of Vishnu which Parashurām had brought with him. As soon as the boy had taken the bow into his hand it became ^{taut} ~~bent~~ of its own accord. This wonderful miracle filled Rāma of the Axe with amazement. His pride was at once humbled, and he began a hymn of praise in which he sought pardon for his foolish arrogance. He called the brothers temples of forgiveness. He said that Rāma, whom he had formerly spoken of as an enemy of Shiva, was the swan that dwelt in the lake of Shiva's soul; the friend of the gods, of cows and of Brahmins. He called him the ocean of all the virtues. But he did not address him in the lofty terms which others so frequently employ. He never says that he was an incarnation of either Vishnu or the Supreme God. As has been said the whole narrative is very mysterious. Nevertheless one point is made plain, that Rāma

prince of Avadh was very much the superior of Rāma of the Axe who was born in a Brahmin's house. And one feels that we have here some attempt at atonement for the grievous slur which inevitably attaches to the warrior caste from the legends recorded in the Mahābhārata.

The result of bending Shiva's bow, was that Sītā placed the garland round Rāma's neck, and arrangements were made for their marriage. When speaking of Sītā, the poet refers to her on several occasions as the mother of the world; and says of Videha that it was the city where the goddess Lakshmi lived in the false guise of a woman. Bal, 291 (297) 322. Dashrath is referred to as "the king whose son is sagun Brahm." 304 (310) 336

But the father of the bride says of his son-in-law,-

"Rāma, How can I sing thy praise? Thou art the swan of the "
 "Mānas lake of the souls of saints and Mahādev, for whose sake "
 "yogis practise yoga, abandoning anger, delusion (moh), selfish- "
 "and pride. Thou art the all-pervading Brahm, the invisible, "
 "the imperishable, Sachchidānand, devoid of qualities (nirgun) "
 "and endowed with qualities (sagun) whom neither thought nor "
 "speech can understand, whom philosophers are unable to explain "
 "regarding whose glory the scriptures can only say neti,⁽¹⁾ and "
 "who remains the same in the past, the present and the future."

Bal, 339 (345) 373.

(1) "That Soul (Ātma) is not this, it is not that (neti, neti)."
Brihad Āranyaka Upanishad, 3, 9, 26. See Hume's translation p.125.

Rāma's Life in Avadh.

The second book of the poem describes Rāma's life in Avadh up to the time when, in obedience to his father's reluctant command, he went into exile in the forest. ⁽¹⁾ In atmosphere and outlook it is very different from the earlier book, and has a much wider appeal. Its greater attractiveness lies in the fact that it is so much more human. The supernatural in its cruder forms is not in evidence. From time to time no doubt, the narrative is broken by Tulsidās' characteristic declarations, similar to those we have already quoted, that Rāma is the Supreme God, or that he is Vishnu incarnate. But apart from such assertions we feel that we are face to face with a real man, whose words and doings are essentially human. But it is his very humanity which shews him most divine. There are no marvellous revelations of his god-head, such as he shewed to his mother in his infancy, no amazing slaughter of demons performed by a boy in his sixteenth year; no bending and breaking of a bow which a great multitude of kings combined could not raise from the ground. But in contrast to that, we have a very beautiful and attractive picture of an obedient son, a loving husband and a large-hearted brother. Rāma displays a wonderful patience, an amazing magnanimity, and Sītā, in her wifely devotion, is not a whit behind. And the story of two

¹⁾ It also deals with the first months of his exile here. It is named the *Āyodhya-kāṇḍ*.

such noble and unselfish lives, recorded first by Vālmīki in his Sanskrit Rāmāyana, and in later centuries by Tulsidās, has been a great influence for good on the moral and spiritual life of Northern India. The critic may think that Rāma should have satisfied the desires of his father's subjects rather than yield to the intrigues of a wicked woman. But all criticism is silenced in presence of Rāma's simple confidence that there was only one path he could tread; the determination not to render void his father's promise, however foolish, coupled to the modesty of his conviction that the brother who would supplant him was as capable of ruling Avadh as himself.

In studying this part of the poem, it is necessary to remember the main points of the story as recorded in the introductory chapter. Here it is our purpose to present some of the passages which help best to illustrate the character of Rāma. Two will be sufficient to shew his conception of filial obedience. When told by his step-mother that he was to go into exile, that very day, and be displaced by his brother he replied;

"Listen, mother, that son is fortunate who obeys the command
"of his father and mother. A son who cherishes his parents is
"not easily found in this world. It will be good for me in
"every way to live with the hermits in the forest. There is
"my father's command that I should do so; and it has your

"approval. And Bharat, whom I love as I love my own life, will" "obtain the kingdom. The Creator in every way is favouring me" "today." Ayodh,⁴⁰ (40) 41.

When reflecting on what he had done, the old king was in a strait betwixt two. He knew the disgrace that would attach to him should his son refuse to obey his orders. And yet he prayed to Shiva,↓

"You direct the hearts of all. Give to Rāma such understanding" "that he will ignore my commands and stay at home, forgetting" "his natural disposition and love." Ayodh,⁴⁴ (44) 45.

But there was not a moment's hesitation on the part of Rāma. He told Dashrath when they met, not to be distressed.

"The man who loves his father and mother as he loves his own" "soul, holds in the palm of his hand the four objects of life" "By obeying your commands, I achieve the purpose of my exist-" "ence." Ayodh (45) 46.

Rāma, in his unselfishness, wished to go into exile alone, but he was met by a pertinacity greater than his own. Sītā and Lakshman accompanied him. In urging Sītā to remain in Avadh, he was thinking of his wife's comfort; in desiring that Lakshman should stay behind, he was thinking of the situation in Avadh, his father old and heart-broken; the other two brothers absent from the capital. Rāma's treatment of the citizens deserves to be noted: his kindness to those he met on the road, his treatment of the ferryman who rowed them across the

Ganges, and of the low castes and their chieftain in the forest. A prince of royal blood in India to-day would not make an outcaste sit down beside him. But the finest trait in his character is his treatment of Bharat. When Bharat followed the exiles to the forest, Lakshman was afraid that he had come for sinister ends. Sītā also was anxious.

"If there were no deceit and evil purpose in his heart, why " "does he come with carriages and horses and elephants. And " "why should we blame him? The world goes mad when it secures" "dominion." Ayodh, (218) 228.

But Rāma refused to believe it.

"Lakshman, listen. In all that the creator has made, I have" "never heard of or seen as good a man as Bharat. He would " "not be intoxicated with kingly power were he to attain the " "dignity of Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva." (222) 232.

It is less easy to admire the way in which Rāma assured his brother when they met, and Kaikeyi herself,⁽¹⁾ somewhat earlier that she was not to blame.

"Rāma first greeted Kaikeyi and softened her heart by his sweet" "disposition and piety. Falling at her feet, he comforted her" "again, saying, 'The guilt rests on the heads of Time, Karma '" "and the Creator.' Raghubar met all the mothers and comforted" "them, saying, The world is under the control of God (Īsh);" "blame nobody." (234) 244.

(1) Kaikeyi and the other queens also went to see Rāma in the forest.

To Bharat he said,†

"Brother, do not grieve in your heart. Know that the ways of
"life are under the control of God (Ísh). In my opinion those
"of good reputation in the three worlds, whether in the past,
"the present or the future, are all inferior to you. (in your
"hand) Whoever accuses you of evil he will perish both in
"this world and in the next. The people who blame your mother
"are fools, who have never studied in the schools of the learned
"or of the saints." (252)263.

The mental attitude which such utterances reveals has been referred to already in chapter IV, as inconsistent with the healthy moral teaching which is given elsewhere in the poem. And Rāma's exhortation to his brother is not more easy to understand when he goes on to say-

(prabanch)
"All sin and delusion[†] and the burden of every grief are wiped
"out; glory in this world and joy in the next are gained by
"remembering your name. I speak the truth, brother, be Shiva
"my witness, the earth depends on your support." (253)264.

The chapters dealing with Brahmā and Shiva have shewn how large a place both Brahmā and Shiva occupied in the minds of the people of Avadh. And in that respect Rāma shared the feelings and sentiments of his fellow-countrymen. He does not forget the Creator, but he is a specially earnest devotee of Shiva. When he sets out for the forest, he calls upon Ganesh, Gauri and Shiva, and he obtains their blessing (78)81.

(152). 160.

When Sītā, Lakshman and he got into the carriage which was to carry them away, they bowed before Shiva. (83) 8b. At the Ganges Rāma bathes and makes obeisance to Shiva and his son Gaṇesh, (99) 10B. He does the same when he reaches its junction with the Jumna at Prayāg, (102) 10b. Of that specially sacred place the poet says -

"Who is able to describe the glory of Prayāg, the lion which
 "destroys the elephant mass of sin. On beholding so beautiful
 "a place of pilgrimage (tirath) Raghubar who is the ocean of
 "joy was filled with joy."

Again when he came to Tribenī, the remembrance of which confers every kind of happiness, he bathed and worshipped Shiva. He also worshipped the god of the place of pilgrimage (tīrath dev)

Like his contemporaries, Rāma also paid great reverence to Brahmins. In the first book which tells of how the brothers went to help the sage in his difficulties with the demons, it is said that when the holy man lay down to rest the two lads massaged his feet, but the poet feels some explanation, if not apology requires to be given for such actions, and he says;-
 "The two brothers for the sake of whose lotus feet holy men
 "practice penance and asceticism, out of love for the sage,
 "massaged his feet." Bal. 231 (237) 258. But when Rāma met the forestdweller, Vālmiki, he humbles himself before the sage and

No excuse of any kind seems to be called for. And then he says, "In seeing your feet, all my good deeds have obtained their reward. Those kings burn without a fire to consume them, from whom anchorites and ascetics receive trouble. To give satisfaction to a Brahmin is the root of happiness. The wrath of a Brahmin blazes for ten million generations."

N.P. We have then, this very human and often very attractive Rāma presented to us. But it must not be forgotten that the other Rāma, the Rāma who is a manifestation of Brahm, is never absent from the poet's thoughts. Indeed he brings the two sometimes very close together, and in such a fashion that it is difficult to reconcile them. And more than once he realises that he has attributed to his hero mortal weaknesses and limitations for which he must offer some explanation.

The principal passages in this section which emphasise the conviction that Rāma is God, are as follows:

When the prince was bidding farewell to his father before going into exile, Dashrath said;

"Listen, my son, saints say regarding you, 'Rāma is the lord of creation, both what moves and what does not move: they say that God (īsh) after due consideration, gives the fruit according to good or bad Karma. According to what one does, so does one find the fruit. Such is the teaching of

"Scripture and the verdict of mankind. But for one to sin, "
 "and another to find the fruit! The ways of God (bhagwant)"
 "are very wonderful! Who is there on earth who can compre- "
 "hend them?" (74)77.

Again, when Rāma came with Sītā and Lakshman to the Ganges we are told how they bathed in the sacred waters, and were refreshed.

"They bathed in the stream, and the weariness of the journey"
 "disappeared. They drank the holy water, and their spirits"
 "were made glad. But how can you say of him, by the remem-"
 "brance of whom the world's burden is wiped out, that he was"
 "tired? It is a mere play of words. Rāma, the banner of "
 "the Solar race, is the holy Sachchidānand, the bridge over "
 "the sea of transmigrations, though he acts after the fashion"
 "of a man." (85)88.

When Rāma and Sītā were lying asleep on the bare ground Lakshman explained to the forest chieftain who Rāma really was. Guha was perplexed by the seeming cruelties of life, and he talked at length of the luxury with which they had been surrounded in Avadh, and the amazing contrast afforded by the condition in which they now were. This caused him to cry out-
 "To whom is the Creator not hostile? People say with truth "
 "that karma is supreme." (88)91.

To this lament, Lakshman replied "in sweet and gentle " "words, full of the essence of knowledge, restraint and devo- " "tion (bhakti); Who is the cause of another's pain or glad- " "ness? All men, my brother, experience the fruit of their " "own doings (nij krit karm bhog). Union, separation, pleas- " "ure, good and evil, friendship, enmity and indifference, are " "all snares of error's weaving. Birth and death, in which " "the world entangles us, prosperity and adversity, karm and " "Time, land, houses and wealth, city and kindred, heaven and " "hell, whatever the interests in which men are involved, what " "they see, what they hear, what enters into their minds, delu- " "sion(moh) is their root. The supreme reality (paramārth) is " "not there. In a dream a beggar becomes a king, the god of " "heaven becomes poor, they awake, and there has not been " "either gain or loss to anyone. In like fashion you should " "look upon the world around you (prapañch). Reflecting thus, " "be not angry, and make no false accusation against anyone. " "All are sleepers in the night of delusion(moh) and see many " "kinds of dreams. In this world of night, they who keep awake " "are those who engage in abstract meditation on supreme reality, " "in a state of detachment from the world (prapañch). (1)

(1) Prapañch is a favourite word with Tulsidās. It means literally spreading out, expansion, then the expanse of the universe. It is used also for phenomena, manifestation,

"Reckon that soul to be awake where there is absence "
 "of desire for every sensuous enjoyment. From this "
 "results discernment and escape from the errors of "
 "delusion; then love for the feet of Raghubir. Ah, "
 "my friend, the height of supreme reality is this, - "
 "in mind, deed and word to love Rāma's feet. Rāma "
 "is Brahm, supreme reality embodied,⁽¹⁾ all-pervading, "
 "invisible, without beginning, beyond compare, de- "
 "void of all change, indivisible. The Veda invest- "
 "igates, but it ever says, Neti. For the sake of "
 "those devoted to him, the earth, Brahmins, cows, "

Note contd.) deceit, delusion, error, trick. Here we have undoubtedly the sense of the illusion of the world. But see p. 39.

(1) In this passage, the word paramārth is used four times. I have translated it supreme reality. Dictionaries define it as the highest truth, real truth, reality, spiritual knowledge. Here, it indicates man's chief end, viz., to love Rāma, but it also means reality in contrast to illusion, reality which Rāma alone can secure. Growse translates it in this passage as (1) real, (2) the Supreme, (3) man's highest good, (4) the totality of good.

"and gods, the merciful assumed a body, and performs actions."

"The hearing of his deeds destroys the snares of the world."

२०, २१. (89) 92.

Rāma's kindness to the primitive people of the forest calls forth the poet's wonder:

"The lord, whom the Veda cannot express in words, nor the "

"mind of saints understand, in his compassion listens to the "

"words of the Kirāts, as a father to the voice of his child."

(131) 137.

When the gods were alarmed lest Bharat would persuade # Rāma to return to Avadh and render impossible his encounter with Rāvan, Indra said to the priest of the celestials.

"Do something to prevent this meeting of Rama and Bharat."

But the priest smiled to think that the "god with the thousand "

"eyes was without eyes," and replied "You distress yourself "

"to no purpose; leave tricks alone. On this occasion decep- "

"tion would be ridiculous. Illusion (Māyā) practised on a "

"servant of the lord of illusion (māyā pati) recoils on those "

"who attempt it. I once formerly attempted something of the "

"kind, knowing that it was in accordance with Rāma's desire. "

"To do anything crafty now would be disastrous. It is Rāma's "

"nature not to be angry at any offence against himself, but "

"those who offend his devotees are consumed in the fire of "

"his anger. Tradition, the Veda and history prove it. Durvās
 "knows this to be characteristic of him. Who is there like
 "Bharat in his devotion to Rāma? The world repeats Rāma's
 "name; Rāma repeats Bharat's. Do not think to do harm, oh
 "lord of the immortals, to a devotee of Rāma; if you do, dis-
 "grace in this world and suffering in the next will be your
 "portion, with sorrow that grows from day to day. . . .
 "Although Rāma is always alike, without passion, and without
 "desire, and is not touched by sin or merit, by virtue or
 "defect; and though he has made Karma lord of all that is,
 "(vishva), and as we act, so must we taste the fruit, never-
 "theless, he plays at odds and evens, according as hearts are
 "devoted or hostile. Without qualities (agun), without form,
 "beyond measure, and unchangeable, Rāma, conquered by the love
 "of his devotees, has become endowed with qualities (sagun).
 "The Veda, Purāṇas, saints and gods, testify to the fact that
 "Rāma has always given heed to the wishes of his servants.
 "So knowing that such is the case, abandon guile." (209)218.

When Bharat reached his brother's presence, accompanied
 by many of the citizens and the widows of the late king, he
 was reminded by one of the great sages who Rāma was, and of
 the obedience to which he was entitled;

"The upholder of religion, the sun of the solar race, king
 "Rāma, the self-controlled Bhagwān, the sea of truth, the
 "protector, the bridge of revelation, Rāma has taken birth

"for the happiness of the world; obedient to the word of his"
 "religious teachers, his father and mother, the destroyer of"
 "the armies of the wicked, the well-wisher of the gods,....."
 "Brahmā, Vishṇu, Shiva, the sun, the moon, the guardians of "
 "the spheres, Māyā, life, karma, and all the ages; the lord "
 "of serpents, the lord of the earth, and whatever lords there"
 "be, the spells and magic of the Vedas and Tantras,- consider"
 "it well in your minds and understand - they are all obedient"
 "to Rāma." Ayoḍh, (243) 254.

The most striking passage, however, is from the lips of
 Vālmiki. Reference has already been made to the fact that
 Rāma humbled himself before the sage, and then proceeded to
 express himself in extravagant praise of Brahmins. The sage
 at once replies,-

"Rāma! you are the guardian of the bridge of revelation (sruti)"
 "you are the lord of the world. Sītā is Māyā, who, in accord-"
 "ance with your will, creates, preserves and destroys the "
 "world, and Lakshman is the lord of serpents with a thousand "
 "heads who upholds the world with all that moves and all that"
 "does not move; for the sake of the gods, and assuming a regal"
 "human form, you have come to destroy the hosts of the wicked."
 "Rāma! your form is beyond speech and understanding: it per- "
 "vades all things: it cannot be described; it is boundless; "
 "the scriptures say, Neti, Neti. Life is a play, and you are its'

"beholder; you make Brahmā, Vishṇu and Shiva to dance, even " "they do not know your secret. Who then can know you? " " . . . For the sake of holy men and gods, you have taken a human " "body, and speak and act like an ordinary king." (121) 126.

There at once follows this declaration, one of those utterances which constitute a peculiarly valuable contribution to the spiritual development of India, because it links religion and morals together in a fashion not so common as one could wish, shewing^{how} clearly the poet realised that a clean heart was needed to be the dwelling place of God. It is true that portions of this utterance strike a somewhat ambiguous note. But for that very reason it is desirable to give it in full, that we may appreciate the better both its light and shade. The very fact that Tulsidās puts this statement in the mouth of Vālmiki, whose earlier Rāmāyaṇa had inspired him to write his own, makes it the more valuable. Rāma had asked the sage to tell him what place he should choose^o as their dwelling during their exile in the forest, and Vālmiki replies.

"You ask me 'Where shall I dwell?' With awe I answer 'Shew " "me the place where you are not present' (1.) Hearing the words " "of the holy man so full of love, Rāma was abashed and smiled " "in his heart. Then Vālmiki, laughing said in loving accents,

(1) You dwell within all hearts and know their dispositions, good and bad. *Agadhr.* (247) 258.

"Listen, Rāma, I will tell you the home where you with Sītā
and Lakshman dwell. They, whose ears are like the ocean
and the story of your doings are like the rivers that flow in-
to it. They are for ever filling it, but it is never full;
their hearts are always your home. They, whose eyes are
like the chātak bird, full of desire for the rain clouds;
holding in scorn, ocean, river and lake, when they obtain
the raindrops of your presence, they are content. In their
hearts make your home, oh, giver of happiness, with Lakshman
and Sītā. He whose tongue is like the swan, which gathers
the pearls in the lake of your virtues, make his heart your
home. They whose nostrils always reverently are breathing
in the beautiful and blessed offerings of the Lord, who feed
on what is offered to you, who wear the garments and ornaments
offered to you, who when they see religious teachers, gods, and
Brahmins, bow their heads before them, and treat them with
special love and honour; whose hands ever worship Rāma's feet;
whose hearts have no other hope than hope in Rāma; whose feet
go to Rāma as their place of pilgrimage; dwell in their hearts,
Oh, Rāma. They who ever repeat your name as their mantra,
and with their family adore you; who offer oblations and sacri-
fices of various kinds; who feast Brahmins and give them many
gifts; who in their thoughts pay more regard to their religious

"teachers than to you, and serve them with all love and honour;"
 "who ask of all one fruit that they may be lovers of Rāma's feet"
 "dwell in their hearts as your temple, oh Sītā, and you two sons"
 "of Raghu. In whom there is no lust, anger, passion, pride, "
 "delusion (moh), covetousness, excitement, envy, violence, "
 "deceit, arrogance, Māyā, in their hearts dwell, oh Raghunāyaka"
 "They who are beloved of all and are the wellwishers of all; "
 "to whom pain and pleasure, praise and abuse, are all one; who"
 "are careful to say what is both loving and true; who waking "
 "and sleeping make you their shelter: (believing that) apart "
 "from you there is no salvation, in their hearts, oh Rāma, make"
 "your dwelling. They who look on another man's wife as their "
 "mother, and another man's wealth as more poisonous than poison;"
 "who are glad at another's prosperity and sad at another's mis-"
 "fortune; to whom you are dearer than life, may their hearts be"
 "your auspicious abode. Those to whom you are everything, mas-"
 "ter, companion, father, mother and religious teacher, dwell in"
 "their hearts as your temple with Sītā, you brothers two. Those"
 "who, overlooking men's bad qualities, choose out the good; who"
 "for the sake of Brahmins and cows endure suffering; for whom "
 "perfect behaviour is their path in the world; their hearts are"
 "your natural home. They who know your virtues and their "
 "own faults; whose trust is in you, in every way, and who love "
 "all who are devoted to you (bhakt) dwell in their hearts "
 "with Sītā. They who, abandoning "

"everything, caste, sect, wealth, their familiar beliefs, hon-"
 "our among men, friends and relatives, houses and all, continue
 "with constant craving for you; in their hearts dwell, oh Ragh
 "urāyā. They to whom heaven and hell, and emancipation from
 "rebirth are all the same, if they can see the bearer of the
 "bow and arrows, and who in deed, word and thought are your
 "disciples, in their hearts raise your tent. They to whom
 "nothing is ever necessary, except sincere love for you, dwell"
 "in their hearts always, for there is indeed your home."

Ayodh,¹²² (122) 128. (1)

This statement from the lips of Vālmiki gives expression in unmistakable fashion to the belief that faith in or devotion to Rāma will bring about great changes in a man's heart and life. And it is supported by others in all parts of the poem, sometimes at great length, but often in brief phrases. The gods, for example were told by their priest,- "The man devoted to Rāma " (Rām Bhakt) is eager for the good of others. He suffers pain " "when others suffer pain, and is full of sympathy." (211)220. While somewhat later a sage says to Bharat:
 "Rāma is mercy itself; without Rāma there is no happiness even " "in a dream." (245) 256. It is, however by no means easy to re- cognise any ethical significance in the repeating of Rāma's name. "The all-merciful, the single remembrance of whose name takes "

(1) See also the fine passage in the Vishṇu Purāṇa, iii, 7, where we read: "He who lives pure in thought, free from malice, contented, leading a holy life, feeling tenderness for all crea- tures, speaking wisely and kindly, humble and sincere, has Vāsudeva ever present in his heart."

"a man across the boundless ocean of existence, makes a humble
"request to a ferryman; he who crossed the universe in less
"than three steps! At the sight of his toe nails, the river
"Ganges rejoiced." (97)100.

"Even an ordinary person finds the highest objects in life
"easy to get if he repeats Rāma's name when he yawns." (299)312.

"The man who says 'Rām, Rām', when he yawns will find that his
"many sins will not confront him. The world knows
"that Vālmiki became equal to Brahmā because he repeated Rāma's
"name backwards. A dog-eater, a Shavar, a Khaṣ, a ~~stupid~~ fool, a
"foreigner (Yavan), an outcaste, a Kol, a Kirāt, by repeating
"Rāma's name, become altogether pure and famous in the world." (1)
(186)194.

But there is a preface to the last quotation which deserves to
be set down, to let us see how wisdom and what we reckon fool-
ishness can go together. The great forest chieftain who
befriended Rāma, also befriended Bharat, when he came in search
of his brother. The prince was so delighted to see one who
had seen Rāma so recently and helped him, that he clasped the
outcaste to his breast. This demonstration of affection call-
ed forth the admiration of the gods. Raining down flowers
and shouting their approval, they said:-

"According to the world's ideas and the teaching of the Veda,
"this man is an outcaste in every way, If his shadow touches"

(1) In The Bhagavadgītā. IX. 32. Krishna says "They who take refuge with Me"
"though of the womb of sin, women, Vaishyas, even Shudras, they also"
" tread the highest path." Vaishyas and Shudras are the third and
fourth castes. Yavan is originally a Greek (Jonian) hence a foreigner!

"anyone it is necessary to bathe. Nevertheless Rāma's young"
 "brother has embraced him and thrilled all over with joy at "
 "meeting him." (1)

In conclusion reference requires to be made to the position which Lakshman acquires in this section. As we have seen, he is linked with Rāma and Sītā in Vālmiki's speech. No mention is made of his relationship to Vishnu, but he is spoken of as "the lord of serpents with a thousand heads, the earth holder." (2) This is a reference to the old idea that the world rests on the head of a serpent called Anant. In pictures this serpent is represented as Vishnu's couch on which he rests in the intervals between one creation and another, while from the god's navel a lotus springs, out of which Brahmā is born. Lakshman is referred to by this name, Anant, in other parts of the poem, especially in the Lankā book. As it will be unnecessary to make further mention of this conception of Lakshman as the great serpent, the most remarkable statements in that book may be given here. In the fight with Rāma we are told that the demon struck Lakshman with a bolt given him by the god Brahmā.

"The very powerful arrow, the gift of Brahmā, struck Anant on "

(1) When Rāma returned from exile, he also embraced the out-caste chieftain. Lankā, 146 (117) 133.

(2) Lakshman is addressed in Bāl Kāṇḍ, 23 (21) 31, as an avatār, who descended for the sake of the world, to remove the fears of the world, in the form of a serpent with a thousand heads.

"the breast. The hero fell in a faint. The ten-headed one "
"tried to raise him, but the unparalleled weight did not move."
"The foolish Rāvaṇ tried to raise the lord of the three worlds,"
"on one of whose heads, rests the whole created universe, as "
"if it were a grain of sand." Lanka⁹⁸(79)107.

Somewhat earlier in the battle, Lakshmaṇ, once more
spoken of as Anant, had an encounter with Rāvaṇ's son. On
that occasion also, as the result of a blow, he became un-
conscious. But when the enemy tried to lift him from the
ground, they found they could not.

"An hundred million soldiers, the equal of Ravaṇ's son, attempt- "
"ed to raise him. But they could not raise Anant, the world's "
"upholder. 'Listen, Gauri,(says Shiva to his wife),'who can "
"conquer in battle him, the fire of whose anger burns up the "
"fourteen spheres of creation, whom gods and men, things that "
"do not move, and things that do move (ag jag) worship. This "
"mystery only that man knows on whom Rama has mercy." Lanka 67.
(53)75.

Strange to say, the same idea of linking an incarnation
of Vishṇu with the great serpent Anant, occurs in connection
with Kṛishṇa, another of Vishṇu's avatārs. Kṛishṇa and his
brother Balarāma, it will be remembered, were incarnations of
a black and white hair of Vishṇu. But while Kṛishṇa came to
be identified with the Supreme Spirit, Balarāma, like Lakshman,

was identified with the great serpent, a belief emphasised in the Mahābhārata and in the Purānas. Tulsidās makes a less obvious reference to this conception when he says,-

"Sītā, Rāma and Lakshman, leaving the Sea of Milk and forsaking Avadh, came to live in the forest." Ayodh, (133) 139.

Some of Rāma's complimentary references to Bharat, have been already recorded; one passage in particular deserves special attention where the prince says,-

"All sin, delusion (prapanch), and the burden of every misfortune are wiped out: glory in this world and happiness in the next are obtained by remembering your name. Be Shiva my witness, I speak the truth, brother; the earth exists by your support." Ayodh, (253) 264.

The gods were also conscious of Bharat's power, and were told by their priest that devotion to his feet was the root of all happiness. [Ayodh (255) 266], and by the wife of Brahmā that though the Māyā of Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva was very great, it could not comprehend Bharat's purpose. Ayodh, (283) 295. There is another passage also, where it is possible that the poet is comparing Bharat to Purush, the primeval man, or it may be, the Soul of the Universe. But it is equally possible that Tulsidās is merely expressing the opinion that Bharat is a man (purush) without a peer. Ayodh, (277) 289.

The fourth brother, Shatrughn, who was Lakshman's twin, and who would possess an equal portion of the godhead, is practically ignored throughout the poem.