

**Theory in Story: The Pedagogical  
Potentials of Tulsidas'  
Sri-Ramcharitmanas in  
Theory Classroom**

Maharshi Dayanand University  
Research Journal ARTS  
2019, Vol. 18 (1) pp.1-15  
ISSN 0972-706X  
© The Author(s) 2019  
<http://www.mdu.ac.in/Journals/about.html>

**Anup Singh Beniwal**

USHSS, GGS, IP University, New Delhi -110078

**Abstract**

The theory classes in English Departments in India are marked by a pedagogical dilemma. The teachers are often called to create a fit between the abstractions of theory and the concreteness of literary locations. This negotiation often demands establishment of a creative-critical interface between seemingly oppositional natures and pulls of the theory and the story. Within the Indian epistemological context the answer to this pedagogical enigma perhaps lies in treating a story as theory and turning theory into a story within the ambit of literary explorations. Tulsidas' *Sri-Ramcharitmanas*, a seminal cultural text, in its very conception, creation and transmission, seems to be embedded with the potentials for such a pedagogy engagement. Accordingly, this paper seeks to reflect on the pedagogical possibilities and efficacy of this hypothesis in the literary-theory classroom with Tulsidas' *Sri-Ramcharitmanas* as a case study.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, Theory, Literature, Civilization, Culture, *Doha*, *Chaupai*, Text, Catharsis, Narrative, Tradition, Individual Talent, Praxis, Interface, Intertext, *Bhakti*

---

**Corresponding author:**

Anup Singh Beniwal, USHSS, GGS, IP University, New Delhi -110078  
E-mail: [anupbeniwal@gmail.com](mailto:anupbeniwal@gmail.com)

**-I-**

The theory classes are one of the toughest pedagogical spaces that the teacher and the taught have to contend with in equal measure, especially in Literature Departments in India. Herein both are under pressure to negotiate the excruciating exigencies of 'fitting in' the abstractions of the alien 'thought frames' or theory with the contextual concreteness of the literary texts. This negotiation often demands establishment of a creative-critical interface between seemingly oppositional natures and pulls of the theory and the story. Within the Indian epistemological context the answer to this pedagogical enigma perhaps lies in treating a story as theory and turning theory into a story within the ambit of literary explorations. Tulsidas' *Sri-Ramcharitmanas*, a seminal cultural text, in its very conception, creation and transmission, seems to be embedded with the potentials for such a pedagogy engagement. The sage-author adroitly turns his narrative into the very site of theoretical reflections on literature and literariness. In the process the narrative-literary potentials of the *Manas* are transformed into critical/theoretical reflections not only on the 'art of literature' but on its interfaces with culture, and life. By focusing on the opening section of *Sri-Ramcharitmanas* in particular, this paper seeks to reflect on the pedagogical possibilities and efficacy of this hypothesis in the literary-theory classroom.

**-II-**

It is a truism that every 'epistemic-academic moment' demands a commensurate pedagogical re-innovation that is in sync with the sensibility of its 'man' and 'milieu'. The literature classes in India, especially in English Departments, are presently witnessing an intense crisis of 'identity' and 'knowledge dissemination'. This crisis critically bears on the literature-theory interface and its relational matrix. The very idea of creation, categorization and consumption of literature as a discipline is caught within this literature-theory hiatus. The pedagogical-epistemic debate hinges on the settlement of the issue of cognitive primacy - between the literary and the theoretical - in the production and dissemination of the idea of literature in the classroom. Joe Moran seems to hit at the heart of this dilemma when he says:

More than any other subject, English (read literature) has been at the centre of academic debates about shaping and division of knowledge.... it has often been torn between the institutional imperative to stake out its own territory, define its activities and justify its autonomy from other areas of study (read theory), and its reliance on the approaches and subject matter of other disciplines (Moran, 2007, p19).

This debate has particularly intensified with the advent of theory and its wholesale intrusion into the literary and consequently literature classrooms. This assault, the puritans seem to aver, has not only threatened to dissolve literature and its distinctive personality within an amorphous pool of theory/culture, but has, in the process, made literary sensibility hostage to the commoditizing manipulations of an overarching 'theory'. This has, they aver, led to the subordination of literature to extra-literary abstractions. To puritans, literature has become a 'free-for-all' domain up for grab by those who do everything but literature in the name of literature.

But the advocates of theory, on the other hand point out that to curb literariness within conventional boundaries is to suffocate its very possibilities and potentialities as a discipline *per se*. They perceive literature as something that is uniquely protean and an over-arching (un)discipline. The moment any discipline enters the 'literary field' and is subjected to its critical apparatus, it acquires literary possibilities.<sup>1</sup> As such, by its very ontology, literature is interdisciplinary - its expansive sweep straddles both creation and reflection. Its 'fictionality' necessarily draws from life which in itself is part reality, part imagination, part that should be and part that is. Since society is nothing but a contested cross-section of cognitive and communicative network of discourses and social practices, literature, even in its fictionality, cannot be otherwise. The 'subject matter' of literature, as a corollary, is thus constituted by a sensibility that precipitates itself at the cross-section of the lived and the imagined, the thought and the felt, the created and the theorized. Thus theory is and would always remain an aspect of literary and would in turn also judge the literariness of literature.

This debate, nevertheless, does open up the possibilities for a pedagogical-cognitive 'inter-space' or 'epistemological-pedagogical cusp' that once created could be utilized gainfully to negotiate the seemingly opposing pulls of literature and theory and, consequently reinvent the possibilities of 'literariness' and 'theorization' of literature co-existing within its own disciplinary dynamics. One of the possible ways this could be achieved is through a continuous yet critical re-envisioning of literature as an 'imaginative-reflective flux' at the cross-section of space, time and perspectives. Yet another possible way - in itself a function of the first - lies in turning the very story into theoretical re-engagement on its own creative dynamics and its generative contexts.

Tulsidas's *Sri Ramcharitmanas*, both as a 'revisiting' of Valmiki's Ramayana and as a text that has enthralled Indian 'cognitive and communicative sensibility' through times, if read closely in the light of above hypothesis, unfolds itself as a complex yet apt textual site where the story easily turns into its own theory and in turn gets transformed into a parallel narrative on art, artist, artistry and audience/reader. This story-theory interface is mainly

realized through dialogic creative-reflective ruminations, symbiotic inter and intra textual and cultural appropriations, and exploitation of the available relationships of cultural proximity. If these strategies are pursued with a sense of purpose, helps usher in transformative enrichment of pedagogical spaces and holistic integration of cognitive-cultural frames of/ for the teacher, the text and the taught. Taken as a whole, this strategy foregrounds the importance of creation/story as a critical imagination/theory where the creation and criticism converge into intra-disciplinary unity and where story complements the theory and theory completes the story and where neither replaces or usurps the other. Such a reading consequently emerges as an interface, not an appropriation and thus turns into an enabling pedagogical-cognitive possibility and praxis. This very idea seems to constitute and inform the narrative objective and structure of *Sri Ramcharitamanas*. In the following sections I shall try to demonstrate the efficacy of this pedagogical paradigm through a select reading of the first section of *Sri Ramcharitamanas*.

### -III-

As a cultural text, *Manas* engages itself with the problematic and poetics of literary creation through a well considered, though oft- repeated, theoretical-creative meanderings on:

- a. writer-text-reader pre-requisites and equations;
- b. form-content debate and language issues;
- c. the subject and object of poetry;
- d. poetics of re-writing or necessity of re-visiting a text across spatial-temporal matrix;  
and
- e. the idea of literature as art

Tulsidas, in the very process of grounding *Sri Ramcharitmanas* as a cultural-religious text, also foregrounds it as a creative-critical template for literature. While setting the tone for his spiritual narrative quest in this work, he at once engages himself with the idea of the being and becoming of a writer. According to him a writer is a sum-total of his/her inspirations; his critical receptivity and engagement with the tradition at hand and his ability for innovative intervention and continuity. She/he has to hone-up his/her talent with a certain sense of humility in order to restrain and 'retrain' his/her sight and insight. That Tulsidas puts his percepts to immediate practice is amply evident from his invocation to *Manas* in the *Baal-Kand*. He draws his creative inspirations from extant cultural and religious idols/ideals. Though apparently seeking blessings from the Gods, he in fact invokes specific creative-critical endowments vital for the being and becoming of a writer, namely *Vaani* or *Saraswati* (Speech), *Shraddha* or *Vishvaash* (Faith-Bhawani-Shanker), *Vishuddha Vigyan* (Purity of Wisdom- Sita/Ram) and his Guru-Guide (Tulsidas/Lutgendorf,

2016,pp2-3. Subsequent references are from this text).

Tulsidas makes it very clear that every writer is located at the intersection of extant creative heritage/corpus and the individual talent/creative urge, and has to negotiate this 'tradition-individual' dialectics and dynamics to both reinforce and further this continuum. A writer not merely draws from the textual tradition, but also adds to it through his 'writerly' volition in sync with demands of the times. He invokes this dialectical idea thus:

*Nana-puraan-nigam-aagam-sammatam-yad  
Ramayan-e-nig-ditam-Kvachi-danyato-api.  
svantaha-sukhaaya-Tulsi-Raghu-nath-gatha  
Bhaasha-nibandham-ati-manjul-maat-noti.*

In accordance with many *puranas*,  
Vedic texts and sacred treatise,  
and with what is accounted in the Ramayana  
and in other places, too,  
Tulsi, for his own inner joy,  
extends the saga of the lord of Raghus  
as a most delightful composition set in common speech (*ibid*, pp 4-5).

The tradition, in Tulsidas, is thus generally a function of *smriti*, *shruti*, *swanubhuti*, *sahanubhuti*, *samajh*, *saakshay* and the *shabda*. The individual innovativeness draws its rationale from the warp and weft of civilizational-cultural curves. As a writer, Tulsidas enters the narrative space bowing to its time independent and time dependent demands. He expounds on these aspects of the creative principle in some details in his prologue to *Manas*. He holds humility as the most important creative pre-requisite for a writer. He says:

*Karauun-pranaam-karam, man, baani  
Karahu-kripa-sut-sevakjaani.  
Jinhhi birchi bad bhayu bidhata  
Mahima avdhi Ram pitu mata.*

I pay homage indeed, thought, and word.  
be gracious, considering me as servant of your son,

You whose creation magnified the creator,  
paragons of glory ... .. (*ibid*, pp. 44-45).

This idea of humility as a 'creative must' informs the very creative, communicative and critical praxis of the *Manas* and is invoked at various levels and in different contexts through out the narrative, thus imparting it with a layered literary-theoretical intent and meaning. Tulsi seems to suggest that a writer is worth his/her trade only if s/he enters his/her creative endeavor within an all encompassing sense of humility - a humble supplication to all creative impulses, all shades and sources of creative inspiration, the very subject of creation and the creative tradition or the very creativity itself. This humility demands an inclusive understanding and dissemination of 'creation' as an unbiased 'communicative' means, medium and motivation that embraces all - *Dev*, *Manav* or *Daanav* - in its creative and receptive fold:

*Jad-chetan jag jeev jat sakal ram-mayey jaani  
bandau sab ke padkamal sadaa jori jug paani.*

*Dev danuj nar naag khag prait pitar gandharb  
Bandau kinnar rajnichar kripa karahu ab sarb.*

Knowing all souls in creation, inert or sentient,  
to be imbued with Ram,  
I forever bow at their blessed feet,  
my palms joined in reverence.

Gods, demons, human, snakes, and birds,  
ghosts, ancestors, and demigods,  
celestial singers and earthly monsters -  
I propitiate you all. Give your blessings (*ibid*, pp 22-23).

This gesture that demands an inclusive awareness, apart from pitching creation as a

complexly intricate empathizing act also amounts to emptying one out of a self-centric ego:

*karan-chahuun-raghupati-gun-gaahaa*  
*laghu-mati-mori-charitawgaahaa.*

I want to sing the saga of the Raghu lord  
but my wit is slight and his deeds unfathomable (*ibid*, pp. 22-23).

Conceived as an all-encompassing principle, humility as a creative trait foregrounds creativity as a perpetual journey of self-negation and hence improvement but never as an act of arrival. It is an insight premised on the idea of the writer as a finite being who is perpetually up against the possibilities of the infinite and the panoramic.

Sight and insight are key creative tropes in Tulsidas. Sight as insight emerges as a significant creative beacon in his narrative praxis and is premised on an intricate interplay and convergence of the "Eye and Inner Eye". *Manas* is replete with *dohas* and *chaupais* that foreground 'eyes' as essential tool of wisdom or authorial discrimination:

*Shri-guru-pad-nakh-mani-gan-joti*  
*Sumirat-divya-drishti-hiyanhoti.*  
*Dalan-moh-tam-so-sprakaasu*  
*Badey-bhaag-ura-aavyi-jaasu.*

His toenails are gemstones, whose radiance,  
but recalled, gives the heart divine sight.  
That effulgence cracks deluding darkness -  
how fortunate the one whose heart it fills! (*ibid*, pp. 6-7)

*Ughar-hin-bimal-bilochan-hee-ke*  
*mit-hin-dosh-dukh-bhav-rajni-ke.*  
*Soojh-hin-Ram-charit-mani-manik*  
*guput-pragat-jahan-jo-jehi-khaanik.*

The clear inner eyes are uncovered,  
erasing sin and sorrow of worldly night,

and glittering gems of Ram's deeds are seen,  
in whatever mine they lie, hidden or manifest (*ibid*, pp 6-9).

*sapt-prabandh-subhag-sopana*  
*gyan-nayan-nirkhat-man-maanaa.*

The seven books are its stairs,  
which, seen by wisdom's eye, please the heart (*ibid*, pp 84-85).

*As maanas maanas chakh chaahi*  
*bhai kabi buddhi bimal avgaahi*  
*bhayuu hirdayein aanad uchhahu*  
*umgeyuu prem pramod prabhahu*  
*chali subhag kabita sarita so*  
*raam bimal jas jal bharita so*

Seeking out that *Manas* with inner eyes,  
plunging in it, a poet's mind is cleansed,  
his heart is blissfully inspired,  
and a delightful spring of love wells up,  
to flow as the blessed river of poetry  
filled with the water of Ram's pure flame (*ibid*, pp 90-93).

The sight-insight creative dialectics in *Manas* revolves around the idea of 'rightdiscrimination' or what Tulsi calls as "bimal-bibek" or "eye of discernment" (8-9). It translates into a creative/ reflective mustthat enables and affects an organic association of sensibilities - of the head andthe heart, the felt and the thought - yet another must for a writer:

*Hirdaye-sindhu-mati-seep-samana*  
*swaati-ibidsaarda-kah-hin-sujaana.*  
*jaun barsai bar baari-bichaaru*  
*ho-hin-kabit-mukta-mani chaaru.*



In heart's ocean, intelligence is oyster  
 in which Sharda seeds inspiration, say the wise.  
 If watered with the shower of clear insight,  
 the lustrous pearl of poetry will appear. (*ibid*, pp. 32-33)

This association leads to what may be called as awareness of complexities and complexity of awareness that attend the subject matter and which in turn makes possible a relook at the past and enables a fresh gaze at the present thus putting the author at the intersection of times and mindsets/sensibilities.

The creative preparedness in Tulsi is thus geared towards the cleansing of heart/sight - "*nayan amiye drig dosh bibhanjan/tenhin kari bimal bibek bilochan*", i.e., elixir to the eyes, curing defects of sight./Cleansing with it my eye of discernment (*ibid*, pp8-9) - and helps unearth a creative agency that makes possible an all inclusive poetic experience/immersion (*sahitya*); helps dissolve what Tulsi calls as "*moh janit sansaye*" and dispel "*nij sandeh moh bhram*", i.e., dispels all doubts born of delusion (8-9). Taken together it erases impurities of the Kali-age and triggers a simultaneous transformation in the author and the potential reader:

*"Majjan-phal pekhiye-tatkaalaa  
 kaak ho-hin peek bakau marala."*

The effect of immersion is visible at once -  
 crow turns to cuckoo and heron to *hamsa* (*ibid*, pp. 10-11).

The writer thus relates to his writing through a complex process of longing, humility and wretchedness (*aarti, binay, deenta*) to affect a corresponding transformational or cathartic process in his readers via the destruction of sins and weariness of the Kali-age ("*harat-sakal-kali-kalush-galani*"):

*Kaam koh mad moh nasaavan  
 bimal-bibek-biraag badhavan*

*saadarmajjan paan kiye te  
mit-hin paap paritaap hiye tein.*

It destroys lust, anger, and delusion,  
promoting pure discrimination and detachment.  
Reverently bathing in it and drinking of it  
effaces the sins and sufferings of the heart (*ibid*, pp. 98-99).

As a literary-critical template, *Manas* not only triggers change in knowledge induced intelligence or *buddhi parivartan kaushal* which is essentially transient, but also ushers in a *budhhi samvardhanan prakriya* or enrichment of the intelligence that is essentially eternal, stable and required. It posits the *charit/text/story/literature* as creative immersion in "the wondrous water" that "works by hearing/quenching desire's thirst and cleansing the heart" thus satiating "satisfaction itself" and "promoting pure discrimination and detachment."

Tulsi in *Manas* also reflects on the nature and the quality of reader-writer interface. It is this creative conjunction of writer-reader interface through the medium and mediation of the text that emerges as a primary objective of/in the *Manas*. Herein the *Manas*, the text and the "*Manas*" of the writer and the readers become one - the writer's writing experience and reader's reading experience become a collective dip of faith and cognitive plunge and revelation. This symbiotic immersion or reciprocal convergence, however, can only be achieved through an arduous journey to reach the inaccessible but is nevertheless worth it: "That one [who] reverently bathes in the waters... extinguishes the three terrible fires." Here the "*tarya tapas*" or 'three meditative reflections' that straddle the psychological, the spiritual and the material turn into a converge to become a composite narrative ethos. What is required of the reader is also required of the poet/author. It is an interfacial bonding of *suyogyata* (right ability), *supatrata* (right receptivity) and *sahridaya* (right emotional and cognitive identification). It is an insightful co-bonding capability that simultaneously straddles *mansa* (conscience), *vaacha* (articulation) and *karmna* (conduct); *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundram* or the truth that is beautiful and hence eternal; and *kautuhal*, *jigyasa* and *mumuksha* or sense of wonder, curiosity and wisdom.

*Ramcharitmanas* also provides a template for the 'poetics for rewriting'. In the course of its narration, Tulsi foregrounds *Manas* as a text/story that is at once eternal and transitory. He very specifically points out that no story exists in a vacuum. All stories are circumscribed by a network of pre and post texts and contexts/stories; there is a story before a story and

after it. Stories don't die, they may fade away to reincarnate themselves. All stories - in the organization of the narrative and their semantic implications thereof - are the products of their times and as the time changes the story, even if of eternal significance, has to rediscover/reinvent itself.

Like any other tale *Manas* too shares in this peculiar existential-ontological truth of/about a story. Tulsidas engages himself with this idea - that a story is necessarily a palimpsest, a series of etchings over/on a foundational myth - through various vantage points and levels. For example, he conceives of his *Ramacharit* in/as the metaphor *Manas*, a shortened form of Lake Mansarovar - a holy reservoir into which the rivers flow and out of which they emerge. In the course of the narration of *Manas* this metaphor evolves into a thick creative-theoretical insight into literature and literariness. It helps conceive of a story as an eternal flow that nevertheless takes the transient into its strides and in the process transforms into a 'new' narrative:

*Jaagbalik jo katha suhayi*  
*Bhardvaj munibarhi sunayi.*  
*Kahihaun sai sambaad bakhani*  
*Sunhu sakal sajjan sukhu maani.*

The lovely tale that sage Yajnavalkya  
recounted to the great ascetic Bharadvaj,  
that dialogue I will relate in detail -  
let all good people listen joyfully.

*Sambhu-keenh: yeh-charit suhava*  
*bahuri-kripa-kari-uma-hinsunava.*  
*Soi-siv-kaag-bhusandihi-dihna*  
*Ram-bhakat-adhikari chinha.*

Shiva crafted this beautiful saga,  
Then in his grace told it to Uma.  
He also gave it to Bhushundi the crow,  
recognizing a deserving devotee of Ram.

*tehi san jaagbalik punhi pava  
tinh- puni-Bhardvaj-pratigava.*

From him, Yajnavalkya obtained it,  
And he sang to Bharadvaj.

*Te sarota bakta samseela  
Sanmavadarsi jaanhin harileela.  
Jaan-hin-tini-kaal-nij-gyana  
kartal-gat-aamlak samana.  
Aurau-jehari-bhagat-sujana  
kah-hin-sun-hin-samajhu-hin-bhidhi-nana.*

These listeners and tellers are equally worthy,  
all seeing knower's of Hari's cosmic play.  
Their insights surveys past, present, and future,  
like a little fruit held in the palm of the hand.  
And other wise worshipers of the Lord  
tell, hear, and ponder the tale in diverse ways (*ibid*, pp. 68-71).

As a creative idea and praxis *Manas* thus evolves through interplay of the immanent and the manifest, constant and the flux. It hints at the essential instability/flux that constitutes the existential ontological core of each story as a cognitive-imaginative entity. It also underlines the fact that every story embeds within itself a seed of potential rewriting; it is at once caught in the dynamics/dialectics of being, becoming and re-becoming. It pitches forks every retelling as a rebirth, a reincarnation necessitated by the *weltanschauung* of its narrative times.

In *Manas* Tulsi Das also weaves his narrative around tradition and individual talent dialectics. Within its narrative praxis the collective consciousness (symbolized by the lake Manasarovar) and the 'individual take' (the streams) merge into each other and yet retain

their distinctness in continuous interplay of identities. As a function of historical-cultural evolution and exigencies *Manas*, vis-a-vis the original *Ramayana*, gets rewritten as a consequence of shifting contexts and receptive locations:

*Nana-bhanti-Ram-avtara*  
*Ramayan-sat-koti-apara.*  
*Kalp-bhed-haricharit suhaye*  
*bhaanti-enek-muni-sanh-gaye.*

Ram has incarnated in countless ways  
and there are billions of boundless Ramayanas!  
In various aeons, the Lord's glorious deeds  
have been sung in diverse ways by the sages.

*"Ram-anat-anat-gun-amit-katha-vistara"*  
Ram is infinite, infinite his virtues,  
and their epic narrations limitless (*ibid*, pp. 78-79).

The changing connotations of its initial/eternal subject necessitate continual renegotiation with its generative contexts, and as a consequence, this retelling keeps on re-adjusting to these variables and resets its terms of seeing:

*"Kupath, kutark, kuchali, kali kapat, dambhn, paashand*  
*dahan Raam gun graam jimi indhan anal prachand."*

The false paths, doctrines, and the deeds of the dark age,  
its deceit, arrogance, and hearsay,  
are consumed like dry tinder in the mighty blaze  
of Ram's innumerable virtues (*ibid*, pp. 76-77).

If for Tulsi it was the changing value package of the Kali-Age that prompted him to re-write the tale of Ram, in the present scenario it is a peculiar ideological-epistemic shift in time that has spawned myriad visits of *Ramayana*.

-IV-

In this section I intend to theorize *Manas* for its pedagogical potentials for teaching theory. The operative word that conjoins *Manas* and the contemporary literary theory is the idea of "seeing". If eye as evocative metaphor in combination with other sense-traits is present in abundance in *Manas*, it constitutes the very etymological core of Theory - Latin *Theoria* (noun) and Greek *Theoria* (noun) and *Theorein* (verb). Both usually translate as "to look at, to observe, to see, or to contemplate" (Culler, 1997, p 3). Culling from the insights of Derrida and Barthe, Culler very rightly points out that as each 'seeing' has its own limits, every story is doomed to be a partial story, by the very fact that is invariably circumscribed by the limitations of the language, the very medium in which it manifests itself, and of human imagination and understanding and of very human-mind, its sights and insights. As such the very idea of a story is contingent on the relativity of its reception. These operative ideas of deconstruction are consciously and unconsciously available in *Manas*:

*Te sarota bakta samseela*  
*Sanmavadarsi jaanhin harileela.*  
*Jaan-hin-tini-kaal-nij-gyana*  
*kartal-gat-aamlak samana.*  
*Aurau-jehari-bhagat-sujana*  
*kah-hin-sun-hin-samajhu-hin-bhidhi-nana.*

These listeners and tellers are equally worthy,  
 all seeing knower's of Hari's cosmic play.

Their insights surveys past, present, and future,  
 like a little fruit held in the palm of the hand.

And other wise worshipers of the Lord

tell, hear, and ponder the tale in diverse ways (Tulsidas/Lutgendorf, 2016, pp 68-

71).

As such *Manas* can be gainfully employed to domesticate western theory through indigenous cultural insights. Tulsidas, through his reflections, not only pitchforks the narrative as a struggle to negotiate the incompleteness or partiality of the truth-description and comprehension but also turns it into an ontological truth of the story. This paradoxical truth imbues foundational stories (Valmiki's *Ramayana* in this case) with enigmatic halo that every age and writer tries to unveil. And every attempt at unveiling the truth/non-truth/untruth of the story is an attempt to re-possess the tale.

This theoretical meandering in *Manas* also works at the level of text as a spiritual/ *bhakti* quest. Seen from a *bhakti* vantage point of tradition, the *Manas*, in its re-engagement with Valmiki's *Ramayana*, becomes a bond of empathy and labour of love (in all its possible connotations) between the *sadhya*/text (here *Manas*) and its *sadhak*/author (here Tulsidas). This story of love between the two does neither complete itself nor does it vanquish the two; the personae change, so do the circumstances but the story remains. The *Story* does not die, like a phoenix it simply burns itself out to re-emerge as a re-innovated *story*, though invigorated by the energies and exigencies of its times, nevertheless, remains heir to 'the past-ness of its past and its present'. Yet it still remains incomplete, chasing its own becoming in words through continuous deferrals: "*Ik-sadi-chahiye-takmeel-e-muhabaat-ke-liye/ Mukhtsar-kitna-bhi-koi-ye-afsana-kar-le.*"

-V-

The preceding discussion and illustrations from Tulsidas' *Sri-Ramcharitmanas* make available a pedagogical possibility wherein the theory and the story fuse into seamless creative-reflective whole in a narrative, complement and echo each other as play of cognitive possibilities. It also illustrates how a story *per se* becomes a praxis for theory, or at least a means to expound on the theory against the backdrop of a duly contextualized and culturally grounded imaginative-narrative context.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For details on this debate see Joe Moran's *Interdisciplinarity*. Routledge, 2007

### Works Cited

- Culler, Jonathan. (1997). *Literary theory: A very short introduction*. Oxford: OUP.  
 Moran, Joe. (2007). *Interdisciplinarity*. London: Routledge.  
 Tulsidas. (2016). *The Epic of Ram*. Translated by Philip Lutgendorf, vol 1. Harvard: Harvard UP.