

Commentary on Thesis

ACHARYA TULSI : AN INCARNATION

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Achary Tulsi was born at *Ladnun* in *Nagaur* district in a *khater* (*oswal-Jain*) family in the year 1914. At the tender age of eleven he became a monk and took to the difficult path of renunciation. He accepted the leadership of a vast religious order at the age of 22. At the age of 33, he started *Anuvrata* Movement to restore the dignity of moral values and the values of character. With his great and impressive personality, he opened new vistas of development as starting *Anuvrata* movement, *Nayā moda* editing Jain canons, initiating monks and nuns, propagating the principle of non-violence, introducing *prekshā* meditation and science of living. For sixty years he made leadership in the field of spiritual practices and in an age, when every one is hankering after post and power, he set an example by voluntarily quitting his post.

According to *kanupriyā*, the famous literary figure, *Acharya Tulsi* is not only a personality to reckon with, but also a gigantic cultural institution. His grand and towering personality has now developed into a dignified and prestigious establishment.¹ *Gurudev Tulsi* was a *Brahmarisi* in the true sense of the word as he made new experiments in the field of spiritual practices. He was a *Devariṣi* as he gave the light of knowledge to all. He was a *Rajariṣi* as he was the disciplinarian of a vast religious order. And he was a *Mahariṣi* as he was constantly in search of what is great and true in life. *Acharya Tulsi* had a unique and super worldly personality. To quote Dr. *Nijamuddin*, "His hair was gray and his complexion was very fair. His big eyes shone with the light of truth and tejus. His broad forehead and agile body inspired both respect and admiration. He had close affinity for each and every body and he was a devotee of equanimity. He was simplicity personified. He was a great scholar and the *masīhā* of humanity. He was the

watchman of national consciousness and the founder of *Anuvrata* Movement; He was extremely soft-spoken. He was a man deeply absorbed in discipline. His entire personality gave out the light of spirituality. This is the impression that he created on first sight.²

According to *Shiv Raj Patil*, the ex-speaker of Lok-sabha, "Whatever is there with the entirety (totality) of the world, *Gurudev Tulsi* is one of those selected few persons, it is my belief. *Acharya Shri Tulsi* was a top figure in the field of spirituality.³ During his journey to the south, *Acharya Shri Tulsi* visited the *āsrama* of *maharshi Ramaṇa*. There he came across a devotee who was a learned astronomer. When he saw the picture of *Shri Tulsi*, he was very much impressed and came to him. Expressing his opinion about his grand personality, he said, "Your big ears are divine. Such ears are to be seen nowhere. Their shape speaks volumes about your celestial personality. Your eyes are radiant and unworldly. They emit nectar and show the appearance of God incarnate. The composition and the mien of your hand seem to be blessing the world. Your heart is pure and large. One of the glands of your heart is no doubt small but it is developing gradually. The world will be highly benefited by you."⁴

Inspiring his devotees to fight against their self, *Acharya Tulsi* said, "Man has great capacity. He can feel the consciousness, awareness by fighting against his self. The devotee, who does not know how to fight with foreign elements, can never go up to his inner self. One, who conquers one's soul, conquers the whole world. Sketching his radical personality, Dr. *Nemichand Jain*, the editor of the magazine '*Tīrthankara*' says, "*Acharya Tulsi* performed the great task of asking people to open the doors, windows and ventilators of religion and to let light and freshness come in. He did not confine religion to a limited field but gave it every opportunity to fly and to expand like a free bird."⁵ *Acharya Tulsi* said that consciousness of self and the rise of self should be the main aim of devotion. He had many tasks before him but his primary task was personal spiritual practice. He could never forget this aim, wherever he might go and what ever he might do.

Here the opinion of *Jainendra kumar* the famous author, is worth mentioning. He said, "I am an author. Wielding pen is my Job. I am mentally free and therefore I am not prepared to yield to some one easily. Even then, I feel real affinity for *Acharya Tulsi*. He is one of those great men whose personality never rises above them. *Acharya Tulsi* is so full of life and vitality that the gravity of his seat automatically fades away before his personality. He dresses like a *Jain Acharya* but so far as inner purity and sensitivity is concerned, he has been close to the people of all castes and creeds. I have always found him alert and awakened. Lethargy is nowhere to be seen.⁶

Here are some lines from a letter written by Dr. *khoobchand Baghel*, M.L.A. Madhya Pradesh, "I had seen great men like Mahatma Gandhi, *Arvind Ghosh* and *Maharish Raman* and now I very much yearned to see some one having reached the same heights of spirituality. I thought there was no one left who could stand at par with them. But after seeing *Gurudev Shri Tulsi*, I feel every moment that he should be regarded among the best of the spiritual leaders of India.⁷ "Expressing oneself with full entirety, be it through deeds or through speech or through any other medium, is one's greatest achievement." This was the opinion of Dr. *Nagendra*, and he must have this after seeing the simple, austere and transparent personality of *Acharya Tulsi*.⁸ The desire for the discovery of one's existence and the restlessness to get it leads way to devotion. Reverend Gurudev Tulsi felt that on reaching the climax of restlessness, one automatically gets the way to devotion. According to *Hajari Prasad Dwivedi*, the author, who does not have sympathy in his heart and who does not look at the different levels of life cordially, can never create great literature.⁹ *Acharya Tulsi* was an ocean of compassion and his compassion was related to the whole of mankind. It was his dream that pains should be taken so that the whole mankind might be tied up by the threads of compassion, friendship and peace—

Kare prabala puruṣārtha sabhi meṁ, abhinava āsthā jāge.

*joṇe sabake antermanasa po karuṇā ke dhāge.*¹⁰

In the words of *Vivekanand*, if you want to get desired success in life, you should have an aim, think over it, dream of it and make it your life. Fill your mind, muscles, nerves and all the limbs of the body with that very aim, that very idea, and leave everything else aside. Success will then definitely come to you.¹¹ *Acharyashri Tulsi* too was of the opinion that when a devotee is dedicated whole-heartedly to his goal, he gets every thing. *Acharya Tulsi* has maintained the dignity of the cultural words. He has never described a dignified word like mother as 'mumma' or 'mammī'. He has always used the synonyms like 'ammā' 'mā māī' 'mavañālī' 'māyañā' 'māvarī' 'mateśvarī' 'mañjī' and 'māu'.¹² Suggesting the solution to the fickleness of mind, *Acharya Tulsi* says—

āye kese hātha meñ, mana ki sahi lagāma.

Uti gati ka aśva yah, letā nahi virāma.

Tana mana ke pīcche cale, to sādha ka ki hāra.

Tana mana anugāmī rahe, khule sādhanā dwāra.

Einstein, the famous scientist once said, "I have devoted my whole life to knowing matters and their secrets, but now I want to know the knower. So long as the knower is not made knowledgeable, the discovery of science will remain incomplete. If I am reborn as man, I would like to devote all my efforts for knowing soul. Then the knower will be the subject of what I want to know." This statement of Einstein expresses his great yearning to know the self. *Acharya Tulsi* gave the highest priority to the knowledge of self.

Acharya Tulsi believes—"The great secret of success in life lies in concentration. Concentration is necessary not only in the field of spiritual practice but in all walks of life—education, art, commerce and science etc. The force that lies in concentration can never be there when it is divided. Einstein, When in his laboratory, got so absorbed in his work that he forgot even hunger and thirst. Mind gets strengthened only when it is undivided and entire. The faculties of a broken mind are scattered and then life

becomes a burden and gets idle. Great scholar Swet morden says that there are two reasons of man's failure and sorrow—lack of firm determination to execute one's plans and to waver and to be fickle. *Gurudev Tulsi* describes a fickle mind like this—

camcala mana hī hara mānava ko, dara dara bhatakātā hei.

*mana para saṁyama karne vālā, puga puga sukha pātā hei.*¹³

Senior Journalist *Jainendraji* says, "There seems to me very little disintegration in the personality of *Acharya Tulsi*. There is great unison in his conduct, speech and thinking. That is why his personality is so dynamic.

There are five characteristics of truth—

1. Uniformity of saying and doing.
2. Freedom from the desire of gaining prestige and self-praise.
3. Freedom from the feeling of vanity for having done something.
4. Avoidance from false tendency.
5. Freedom from excitement

All These five characteristics were realized in a very simple and natural way in the life of reverend *Gurudev*.

The echo of the *Aṇuvrata* movement has reached from the humble hut of a poor man to the *Rāṣṭrapati Bhawana*, Dr. *Rajendra prasad*, the first president of India says, "In the present age when man is dazzled by material prosperity and is neglecting the moral and spiritual values of life, balance can be maintained only by such movements. In that event only man can expect to escape from the destructive consequences of materialism. *Acharya Tulsi* gave priority to spiritualism over his poetic faculty. Taking back his book '*Agni Parīkṣā*', an excellent poetic work in spite of its being proved blameless by the court, amply proves this fact. Reacting on his taking back the book, some authors and saints said to *Acharya Tulsi*, "Your book is genuine, it is an excellent literary work. Why did you take it back? You have

insulted the whole literary world by doing so." Pacifying them, *Acharya Tulsi* said, "I am first a saint, a spiritual devotee and then an author or a poet. I considered this issue, first from the point of view of a spiritual devotee and then from the point of view of a poet. I have taken the decision of taking this book back to save the value and dignity of non-violence. I do not think I have made a mistake."¹⁴

Acharya Tulsi believes that the experience of pure consciousness raises spiritual devotee above all the fellow feelings. Then he thinks of one thing only and that is—one must get peace, all the people must get peace, the whole world must get peace and every creature must get peace. *Acharya Tulsi* used to say, "I shall go to each and every village, that too, on foot, and make the people aware of the goal of life. I wait for the bad people of every class. I wish such people to come to me so that I may bring about a change in them, transform them and motivate them towards spirituality. I want myself to be soul personified and I want to make all my religious community and the whole mankind to be soul personified, be it the field of meditation or karma. I want to arouse group consciousness. I wish that the others too should taste the awareness that I have got.

He said on the basis of his experience, "I wish that by the experiments of means, the internal rhythm should be so linked that there remains no difference in the external and the inner tunes. By doing so, every action of ours will become a cause of liberation. Then there will remain no difference in thought and self-contemplation."¹⁵

Here is one of his revolutionary quotations, " I have come in search of man. I do not want the help of gods. People are always looking intently at gods for every thing. Have they got nothing else to do that they will come running every time we call them? It is my firm belief that no god will come down from heaven to do our errands. The people living on the earth itself will have to rise to be supreme souls."

Acharya Tulsi believed in—

Asto mā sad gamaya

Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya

Martyouḥ mā amrata gamaya

Take me from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light; from death to immortality.

He said, "I want to replace begging for principal exertions. A person believing in principal exertion will speak the language "Let me proceed from falsehood to truth; from darkness to light; from death to immortality". It is true that no one can be cut off from past and future but by avoiding unnecessary memories and fancies, one can make good use of one's energy. The unnecessary memories of the past rust the force of life. According to Krishna Kumar, an eminent thinker, "The condition of a mind absorbed in the past is no less than that of mental disease. This disease destroys first of all the faculty of imagination and then gradually it destroys the other facilities. Reasoning gets weakened; flexible thinking becomes impossible and all wisdom is lost."¹⁶

The morale of *Acharya Tulsi* is reflected in these lines, "It is said that omniscience cannot be attained in the present age. One cannot acquire the knowledge of *purvās* nor can ladder of destruction be attained. Why? In my opinion, to assume this is our greatest weakness. If these goals are coveted for earnestly, who can stop one attaining them?"¹⁷

In order to infuse intensity in spiritual devotion constant practice of psychical activity is required. This activity plays an important role in getting success in life also. Psychical activity means to get absorbed in whatever we do at whatever time, not to keep our existence aloof from that. Speaking of the three periods of time—past, future and present—*Acharya Tulsi* said, past is remembered, we imagine future, and in present, mind always remains fickle and unsteady. *Gurudev* presented a new thinking, a new idea in the field of philosophy. According to him, through psychical activity, mind can be changed into un-mind. It can be done like this—so long as there is no thinking, there is no mind. Thus, the practice of psychical activity is the successful process of converting mind into un-mind. The real meaning of

psychical activity is the awakening of consciousness and the awareness to consciousness.

Maharshi Vinod describes the greatness of *Acharya Tulsi* in these words; I have felt that *Acharya Tulsi* is a godly person. He has come into this world to spread the message of God and to complete his work. He lived neither in past nor in future. He always lives in present.¹⁸

Acharya Tulsi said, "I can declare that a person who does not get training in meditation and does not practice meditation, will remain incomplete and incapable and will not be able to attain anything worthwhile in life." He had firm faith in the value of devotion and meditation. He said that the energy, Tejas, light and joy that are accumulated through meditation couldn't be gained by any other practice. In the words of *Acharya Mahapragya*, can templatation—a procedure related to meditation is the process of brain washing.

Reverend *Gurudev* had the simplicity of a child, the energy of a youth, the thinking of a matured person and the experience of an aged man. That is why his devotion became his safety valve wherever he went. The darkness of evils could never reach up to him. The purpose of a devotee is fulfilled when the feelings of liking and disliking cease to be. And when this stage is achieved, every action of the devotee becomes meditation. Meditation is a powerful means of awakening the dormant power. In the opinion of reverend *Gurudev*, meditation is the characteristic of consciousness on the attainment of which the feelings of liking and disliking come to an end. This is the moment of complete awareness, the moment of breaking up the complex of delusion and is the moment of observing non-violence. On the awakening of the consciousness of meditation, a spiritual devotee lives within, although he may be moving about in the outer world.

Gurudev Tulsi firmly believed that religion and sect are two different things; they are not one and the same. Of course, spirituality and religion can be placed in one category. He tried to put religion and spirituality into practice in the day-to-day activities of life, taking them out of the four walls

of temples and mosques. He said that the religion that does not bring about a change in the way of life that does not live in the activities and *behaviour* of man is not religion; that is a sect, a ritual and worship. He wondered at the religious people who had been practicing religion for fifty long years and yet no change came about in their lives. In his opinion, only the man, who finds out peace in disturbance, purity in impurity, balance in imbalance and light in darkness, passes the test of spirituality. Continue making efforts to gain your goal, keep your mind in a state of trance, your body healthy and your speech restrained. This is the way to spiritual devotion.¹⁹ Pursue your goal, get lost in your aim, if you want to change yourself; otherwise it is very difficult to change.

Acharya Tulsi said, "We set two goals in our life. The first was to present the ancient culture of spirituality in the latest form; and the second was to explain explicitly that religion and sect are two separate things and not one.

An extract from his speech delivered in the year 1954 bears testimony to his intense spiritual pining—"It had been my long-cherished dream that people should feel the same as or even greater attraction to religion and spirituality than they do to watching plays and cinema and eating delicious food. We should not have to invite people to listen to religious discourse or sermons; they should come on their own, out of their inner curiosity and the desire to get peace of mind and to live religion and spirituality."²⁰

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- ¹ Acharya Tulsi, Vicārom ke vātāyana meṁ, Sadhvīpramukhā kanakaprabhā, p. 59.
 - ² Ibid, p. 42.
 - ³ Letter from Shiv Raj patil, ex-president, Lok sabha.
 - ⁴ Acharya Tulsi, merājīvana-merā Darśana sadhvī pramukhā kanaka prabhā, part-8, p. 197.
 - ⁵ Acharya Tulsi, Vicārom ke vātāyana meṁ, p. 52.
 - ⁶ Ibid, p. 27.
 - ⁷ Letter from Dr. Khoobchand Baghela. M.L.A., Madhya Pradesh.
 - ⁸ Dr. Nagendra, Vyaktitva kī paribhāṣā.
 - ⁹ Sahitya Sahacara, Hajari Prasad Dwivedi, p. 19.
 - ¹⁰ Aṇuvrata, p. 16.
 - ¹¹ Sāadhanā ke śalākā puruṣa : Gurudeva Tulsi, Samaṇī Kusum Prajñā, Jain Vishva Bharati, Ladnun, 2005, p. 2.
 - ¹² Acharya Tulsi kā kāvya vaibhava : Samaṇī Kusum Prajñā, Jain Vishva Bharati Ladnun, 2007, p. 286.
 - ¹³ Sāadhanā ke śalākā puruṣa : Gurudeva Tulsi, p. 10.
 - ¹⁴ Ādivacana, Acharya Tulsi, p. 6.
 - ¹⁵ Quoted from the sermon delivered by Acharya Tulsi on 26-2-1967.
 - ¹⁶ Mana Kī Daśā, Shri Krishnakumar.
 - ¹⁷ Ibid, p. 283.
 - ¹⁸ Acharya Tulsi, Vicārom ke Vatāyana meṁ, p. 183.
 - ¹⁹ Letters of Acharya Tulsi. Par-2, p. 3
 - ²⁰ Quoted from the sermon delivered by Acharya Tulsi in the year 1954.