



Kamayani

[Bilingual : Hindi - English]

By

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TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH

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INTORUDCTION

Kamayani literally means 'the daughter of Kama'. In Indian literature Kama denotes something more than a mere libido-sense. As Vincent Smith has rightly pointed out, it bears a combined meaning of Libido and Eros of the Greek mythology. It is the basic urge of life-the creative urge and instinct; the sense to preserve, protect and expand. In Vedic hymns, it has been praised as an all-pervading consciousness and the root of life. The daughter of Kama is Shraddha, which etymologically means 'the preservor and the purveyor of Truth.' Shraddha implies urge, faith and determination to live with Truth as its basic principle. Manu the great sage defines Shraddha as a symbol of determination i.e., 'Sanklpa.' Shraddha, the heroine of this great epic, therefore, symbolises the basic guiding principle of man and his life.

Prasad has taken the great myth of Deluge as the source of his literary theme and story. In Indian Mythology Deluge does not stand exclusively for a mere physical and universal inundation but also bears a deep philosophical and metaphysical significance. It marks the end of the urge to live and stands for complete inaction; inertia and annihilation. It is the Thanatos-the God of Death and Destruction overpowering the urge to live and create i.e. the Eros. Kamayani begins from the great Deluge, when Manu, the protector (not creator) of mankind and the lonely survivor of the 'Sur-Civilisation', found himself left on the Manoravasarpana-the great Himalayan peak. Desperate and desolate, he had lost the urge to live that is the spirit of Eros. A little later, he finds nature blooming again and therefore, realises that it is the life, which is everlasting and supreme and not the death. At this moment Shraddha comes and attracts Manu towards a life of action and fulfillment. She discards renunciation and false asceticism. Her message is the message of will to live life of action transforming the 'I-consciousness' into the 'world-consciousness' for therein lies the complete fulfillment of life and its Summum Bonum. This is what is philosophically called the Eternal Bliss, the Anand. In Indian philosophy it means an all prevailing

consciousness with equality of thought, mind and action and an endless magnitude of human consciousness with a glorious realisation of truth without any material dimension. This is the 'Bhuma Tattva'. Kamayani, that is Shraddha, therefore, resuscitates Manu's lost vigour and enthusiasm and puts him back into a life of action and creative attachment.

Great epics always begins in a state of despair and darkness. Milton's Paradise is first lost to be regained later. Hell precedes Heaven in Divine Comedy. Manu fails to realise the truth and the purpose of Shraddha's dedication and loses himself in the mire of lust, passion and sensuousness. Pandora's Box is now open and the Innocent Sin repeated. He deserts his spouse Shraddha and one day finds himself in the land of Ida, the queen of the Saraswat kingom. At her instance, he rebuilds her kingdom with a material outlook and prosperity. Class struggle begins. Hatred and distrust again cast their gloom on man. The modern civilisation of science and machine is born and causes an irretrievable wound of stress and strain and discontent and despair. Manu tries to molest Ida but faces a great upsurge and mass revolution forcing him to retreat. Shraddha, who saw and realised all this in a dream, comes to Manu and takes him to the Himalayas. Manu now contemplates and realises his fault and regains the eternal bliss and paradise.

This kaleidoscopic view of the story of Kamayani amply displays that it is not a mere mythology nor a story of events and episodes. Manu is a character symbolising the 'mind' and its life and its struggle. It is the struggle of life for its complete fulfillment—the eternal joy and bliss.

Prasad always regarded Indian Scriptures and Puranas (from which he drew the source of this story) as historical documents in which many interpolations were subsequently wantonly done., History according to him, is not a mere statement and document of political events but is 'a biography of society, its culture and patterns'. A cogent interpretation of history in his view, is an infallible source of strength for any race and community. Kamayani presents a psychological interpretation of human history—not racial, not material but the basic conflict of 'man'—his littleness and limitedness, follies and faults of his life and the continuous struggle, he is involved in. The base of Kamayani is historical, sociological, anthropological and above all psychological in its structure.

Kamayani is an allegory. Its characters are symbolic and allegorical.

Shraddha, as stated above, is the daughter of Kama and the preserver of truth with an infallible will and determination to live a conscientious and moral life. It denotes an unshakeable faith in righteous, just and good human conduct. Manu stands for man and his mind, mind in all layers of human consciousness, both individual and collective. Ida, is a symbol of material wealth and prosperity. It embodies the rational and intellectual approach of the modern mind, shorn off creative, compassionate and balanced erotisation of self and its energy.

This allegory of Kamayani falls in line with the great Indian tradition of metaphorical and allegorical works like *Probodh Chandrodaya*. Its outstanding merit is that the surface story is neither rendered subordinate nor weaken itself to inane. It maintains to get on very well and runs parallel to the implied or the suggestive story. The reader, therefore, never finds himself in a dry and arid land of philosophical contemplations or intellectual exercises nor is chained with the surface story.

Prasad was a great cultural and philosophical poet. He was a Shaiva and an erudite scholar of Indian literature. He is known as one of the most successful philosophical poets of the modern Romantic poetry of Hindi literature. He is wholly mystic. Kamayani is a mystic epic with a deep philosophical approach and understanding. Its mysticism strengthens man to discover the totality of his life—a life of universal love and brotherhood. That is the 'Kingdom of God in man.'

Kamayani therefore, is an epic with a practical purpose and point of view combining human ethos and pathos in its poetic creativity. It couples individual with society not merely with a contractual agreement but with a mutual and organic gravitational pull. Kamayani is not a pessimistic document of human failures. It does not agree with the philosophy of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche. It does not confirm the views of Darwin and Freud. In fact, Prasad realised that the modern age, with all these views, does not augur well for future. Its a SPHINX dying of its own riddles and enigma. Man needs a reassurance of his basic human goodness and energy. This 'moment of history' must slowly but perceptibly glide into a 'moment of humanity' without which man, now at the end of this tether, has no future. Kamayani is practical in its ideal and hopefully reassuring in its contents. It reinterprets human skill and demeanor.

Kamayani is refreshingly new and is traditionally and mythologically old. It is both the story of the 'first man' that is Manu and also of the modern man, who is equally symbolised and characteristically displayed in him. The enigma of Manu, his conflict and struggle, his lack of faith and determination, his pseudo-attachment and hedonistic interpretation and the way of life, psychological inhibitions, complexes and perversions are impressingly same. Akin to modern man, he is psychologically abnormal, schizophrenic and nostalgic with a diseased auto-erotic base. Prasad wrote Kamayani when Freud had established his libido-theory and the Pleasure Principle. Manu is Freudian in nature dealing in sensuousness and passion only. To him, Shradha does not exist as a 'woman' in the true sense of the term, but only as a source of sensuous satisfaction.

Kamayani is reckoned as the second best epic after Ramacharit Manas (Tulsidas). Its relevance is unquestionable. It has already won the coveted distinction as an immortal work of great importance, creative skill and poetic excellence. Sri J. K. Sadani has translated it into English and I must felicitate him for not taking liberties with the poet and for not deviating from the original spirit and content. It is said that translation is a well nigh impossible task and never justifies itself as it never carries with it, the original meaning, import and creative disposition of the writer. Sri Sadani, I should not be chary to say, is an exception. To the best of his ability, he has acclimatised himself to the creative and poetic climat  of the original work and has maintained its basic creative urge and skill. I am sure, it will gain its spurs and meet its objective to present the noble perspective of this great epic and through it the psychological story of man caught by an octopus of confusion and chaos, yet trying to free himself to discover the real path of human glory and readiness to become really human. This translation, therefore, is a window that opens upon a great world.

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