



Brief Glimpses of Raskhan and his Visions of Lord Krishna in Sujaan

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Abstract— *The present study is about Raskhan the hindi poet Saint who flourished in the 16th century and composed his verses in Braj Bhasha, the dialect of Western Uttar Pradesh. The first part of the study confines itself to the brief but catchy and informative descriptions of Raskhan as they appear in traditional stories passed on from generation to generation and the subsequent paper will deal with select verses of Sujaan composed by Raskhan. The study will focus mainly on the author's own translations and interpretations of such verses that deal with the visions that Raskhan had of his Beloved Lord Krishna*

Keywords— *Raskhan, Sujaan, Visions, Krishna, Lord, Vrindavan, Mathura.*

INTRODUCTION

The name of Raskhan is well known among the students, teachers, connoisseurs and critics of hindi poetry. That Raskhan, though a muslim, was devoted heart and soul to the worship of Lord Krishna is evident from most of his work that consists of spontaneous utterances in verse that appear to be revelations or visions that the pure heart of Raskhan was a witness to. Raskhan, having given up all worldly aspirations, took to the austere path of spirituality without prior thought or calculation.

RASKHAN THE PROPHET OF UNITY AMONG RELIGIONS

Saint Raskhan's remarkable journey transcended the boundaries of religion as he embraced the divine with an open heart. Born into a varied cultural background, he sought to understand the nature of spirituality beyond the confines of his religion. Reading through the teachings of various religions, he recognized the common thread of love and compassion that connected all paths to the divine. With unwavering commitment, Saint Raskhan has focused on promoting unity and tolerance, fostering interfaith dialogue and promoting harmonious coexistence among believers of different faiths. His deep belief in the goodness of

humanity and the omnipresence of God inspired countless souls to follow a similar path of transcendence, showing that the purest form of devotion is that which unites religions and embraces the divine universal nature.

LOVING THE LORD IS PARAMOUNT

Raskhan was a true lover of the Lord. He wanted humanity to rise above age old ritualistic practices to realize Divinity. He believed that the vision of the Lord was possible only through true love of the Lord. This is what he says in Sujaan about his love for Lord Krishna:

एक सुतीरथ डोलत है इक बार हजार पुरान बके हैं।

एक लगे जप में तप में इक सिद्ध समाधन में अटके हैं।

चेत जु देखत हौ रसखान सु मूढ़ महा सिगरे भटके हैं।

साँच हि वे जन आपुनपो यह स्याम गुपाल पै चारी दके हैं।²³ (Sujaan, p.6, verse 23)

One goes around performing pilgrimages, another one is engrossed in the recital of a thousand puranas, yet another person is engaged in telling of the beads and performing austerities. You observe yet another one lost in meditation. O Raskhan, all of these people have actually gone astray. Only those people are the truthful ones who have lost their minds in the constant love for Krishna.

RASKHAN - A PART AND PARCEL OF INDIAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALLY

This is what Saba Naqvi says in her book *In Good Faith* supporting the idea that many prominent muslims who rose to eminence in India in their own field never appeared as exclusive foreign entities from other muslim nations. That through years of toil in this country they became a part and parcel of it inasmuch as it is impossible to separate them from this intricate fabric of Hindu culture and civilization. This is particularly true of Raskhan and this is what is nicely put across to readers in the book by Saba Naqvi :

For instance, take the sixteenth-century poet Raskhan who became a Krishna devotee and is considered one of the masters of Braj Bhasha, which has had a rich literary tradition before Hindi. The pen name 'rasa', is described by one scholar as a Braj Bhasha pun, meaning 'mine of rasa'. Born Saiyad Ibrahim, the son of a minor jagirdar, he moved to Vrindavan after becoming a Krishna bhakt. He composed a rich body of devotional poems describing the beauty of Krishna and his love for Radha. His leelas or devotional songs on Krishna are still popular and anyone who follows the evolution of Braj and Hindi, is familiar with his works, still available most commonly as Raskhan Rachnavali. His grave at Mahavan in Mathura, is a popular pilgrimage spot. (Naqvi 145-146)

THE STORY OF RASKHAN

A popular story goes thus - One fine day, Raskhan Pathan, a young man in teens and the heir to a rich merchant in Delhi, was observed standing before a Paan Shop in Old Delhi. He had ordered for the preparation of the betel leaves and was thus waiting at the shop. In the meanwhile his gaze wandered to a picture that was displayed just behind the Paan shop owner. The picture showed the infant Krishna, all smiles, standing naked and barefoot. Unknowingly, Raskhan felt drawn to the smile of the blue infant Krishna and ventured to ask the Paanwala, "Brother ! Who is this sweet child ? Why is he naked and barefoot in such inclement weather ? Is there nobody to take pity on him ?" To which innocent query the Paanwala replied , "Babuji ! Don't you know ? He is the infant Krishna whom we hindus worship as Kanha." Raskhan's curiosity was not at rest and so he further asked the shopkeeper, "Where is he to be found ? I am going to buy him clothes and slippers." The Paanwala replied that if Raskhan was serious in finding out the whereabouts of Krishna and giving him clothes and footwear he should surely go to Vrindavan and enquire of the people there.

Raskhan, therefore, made up his mind to find out the whereabouts of Krishna. Procuring expensive garments and dainty footwear for the infant Krishna the enthusiastic Pathan set out on horseback towards Vrindavan. The idea

is beautifully stated in the Book 252 Vaishnavan Ki Varta. " रसखान ने वो चित्र ले लियो और मन में ऐसो संकल्प कर्यो जो ऐसो स्वरूप देखनो जब अन्न खानो उहाँसु घोडा पर बैठके एकरात्र में वृन्दावन आयो " (Ramdas 433)

Even though a muslim, Raskhan's first love was hindi poetry and his composition 'Sujaan' is of surpassing beauty, both as poetry and as a spiritual offering of his to Lord Krishna whom he worshipped and envisioned till his last breath.

RASKHAN'S INTENSE LONGING FOR KRISHNA AND BRAJBHUMI

The very first verse of Sujaan is proof of the intense devotion that Raskhan had for his beloved Lord Krishna:

मानुष हौं तो वही रसखानि बसौ ब्रज गोकुल गांव के खारना

जो पसु हौं तो कहा बसु मेरो चरौं नित नंद की धेनु मँझारना

पाहन हौं तो वही गिरि को जो धर्यो कर छत्र पुरंदर धारना

जो खग हौं बसेरो करौं मिल कालिंदी कूल कदंब की डारना।।1।।

The translation of the foregoing verses goes as follows:

If Raskhan were to be born as a human again, he would prefer to be born among the cowherds of Gokul in Braj. On the other hand, if he was destined to take birth as a cow, he would prefer to graze among the cows of Nand. If a stone, he would prefer to be a stone on the mountain that Gopal held as an umbrella to protect the people of Vrindavan from the wrath of Indra. If by chance he was born a bird, he would like to make his nest in the kadamba tree on the banks of Kalindi (Yamuna).

RASKHAN'S DEPICTION OF LORD KRISHNA AS THE STEALER OF HEARTS

Francesca Orsini has beautifully translated one of the verses from Sujaan in a beautiful and insightful manner. The verse goes as follows:

बेनु बजावत गोधन गावत ग्वालन सङ्ग गली मधी आयो I बान्सुरी मे उनी मेरोइ नाव सुगालिनी के मिस टेरी सुनाओ II ए सजनी सुनि सास के त्रासनि नंद के पास उसास न आयो। कैसी करौ रसखानि नहि हित चैनन ही चितचो चुरायो।।174।।

Playing his flute and singing a herding song

He comes with his cowherds amidst the cows.

Through his flute he sounded my own name on

a pretext of calling the cowherd boys . O friend, hearing it , for fear of my mother-in-law, even

with my sister-in-law nearby I could not catch my breath;How should I act Raskhan, I who have no well-being, No peace have I, for the stealer of hearts has stolen it. (Orsini 173)

RASKHAN'S DEPICTION OF LORD KRISHNA'S CHILDHOOD

धूरि भरे अति सोभित श्यामजू तैसी बनी सिर सुंदर चोटी।

खेलत खात फिरै अंगना पग पैजनी बाजति पीरी कछोटी।

वा छवि को रसखानि बिलोकत वारत काम कला निधि कोटी।

काग के भाग बड़े सजनी हरि-हाथ सों लै गयो माखन-रोटी॥ (Bhati 138)

Some Gopi describing the beauty of Lord Krishna to her companion says that the young Lord Krishna looks beautiful with his dust-besmeared body. His hair gathered together in a knot looked absolutely beautiful. He was wandering in front of his house playing and eating butter and roti. As Krishna walked the anklets tied to his feet sounded sweet. He was wearing a yellow lower garment. Seeing his beauty even cupid felt ashamed and started to admire him. O Companion ! That crow was lucky who took away the butter and roti from the hands of Krishna and flew away.

RASKHAN'S DEPICTION OF THE ETERNAL LOVE OF THE GOPIKAS TOWARDS SHYAM

In one of his rare compositions in the Sujaan, Raskhan says the following about the condition of a Gopika who has fallen in love with Lord Krishna:

जा दिन ते निरख्यो नंदनंदन कानी तजी कर बंधन टूट्यो।

चारु बिलोकिन कीनी सुमार सम्हार गई मन मोर ने लूट्यो।

सागर कों सलिला जिमि धावे न रोकी रुकै कुलको पुल टूट्यो।

मत्त भयो मन संग फिरे रसखानी सरूप सुधारस घुट्यो॥56॥

The gopika who has fallen in love with Lord Krishna says to her companion, "O friend! From the very day I saw Shyam, I seem to have abandoned all family honour and the loyalty. The soft glances of Shyam have stolen my heart. The Love of Shyam, like the limitless ocean, has so enundated my heart that the waves of this love have broken the bonds of family relationship. My mind is now totally intoxicated with His Love as though I had drunk all the ambrosia given to the gods.

जा दिन तें मुस्कान चुभी चित ता दिन तें निकसी न निकाारी।

कुंडल लोल कपोल महा छवि कुंजन तें निकस्यो सुखकारी॥

हौ सखी आवत ही दगरे पग पैँड तजी रिझई बनवारी।

रसखानी परी मुस्कानी के पाननी कौन गनै कुलकानी विचारी॥79॥

The above beautiful lines of Raskhan could be translated as follows:

From the day Shyam's smile has pierced my heart - from that very day I am unable to forget that smile as he emerged from the lanes of Vrindavan, his ear rings ornamenting his beautiful cheeks, his very presence so pleasing to my heart. As he came closer, I lost control of myself and started to follow him to gain his favour. Just to gain that Divine smile of Shyam I have even neglected my family.

CONCLUSION

Raskhan's unparalleled composition "Sujaan" is doubtedlessly a treasure trove of the mystical visions and close encounters that Raskhan had with his Sweet Lord Krishna. To delve deep into this magical composition is to try to fathom the intellect of Raskhan that was ever diffused with the Ambrosia of the Devotion to the Supreme Lord Krishna who ever dwells in the hearts of men who sing his glory night and day.

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