There are three distinctly identifiable recensions of the Rāmāyana, the Southern recension, the North-West recension, and the North-East recension. This much is commonly subscribed to. Dr Jacobi, in his Das Rāmāyana has made an elaborate study of all the three recensions of the Rāmāyana and is of the opinion that the Southern recension (which he designates as C) is the most reliable. The text as well as the poet, having flourished in Northern India, the text of the Northern recension is naturally older but because of the enthusiasm of Sanskrit scholars and rhapsodists the text of the Northern recension underwent certain changes which were piously introduced in order to polish whatever appeared to these scholars to be of less than epic grandeur. In the North and the East where there were centres of classical Sanskrit Literature such changes were definitely more numerous than in the South. More recent scholarship is also of the opinion that the Southern recension is perhaps the most authentic. Dr C. Bulcke has analysed the different recensions on the basis of its story

1. Das Rāmāyana, Bonn, 1893, pp. 7-9
element and pointed out the distinctive elements in all the three recensions. From my study of MSS and the variations that I have come across, I am inclined to think the RMK draws its sustenance from the Eastern recension. This fact has also been corroborated by Dr Indira Goswami in her study "Mādhava Kandali Rāmāyaṇa āru Samasaṃayik Samaj."¹

As mentioned in the Lāṅkā-kāṇḍa of the BMK, Mādhava Kandali took up his translation at the behest of the Barāhi King Mahāmāniya. That he had translated and recited the verses to the King can be ascertained from: 'mādhava bhananta mahamanike sunanti' (Kandali recites and Mahāmāniya listens).² At the end of the Kīśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, Kandali writes:

Vālmīki composed the epic in prose and verse metre. With utmost care and consideration, I am rendering in verse what I understood of his epic, in brief.³

At the end of Lāṅkā-kāṇḍa also, he says:

I have made the seven-cantoed Rāmāyaṇa in padabandha (vernacular verse composition)

1. Rihāñāni, Sāhitya-Samkhya, 1982, p. 73. Goswami refers to her thesis 'Comparative Study of the Rāmāyaṇa of Mādhava Kandali and that of Goswami Tulsī Dās', where she has critically discussed this point.
2. Aranya-kāṇḍa, v. 737
3. Kīśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 601-602
by taking the essence of it and shunning extraneous matter.¹

From what he says we get to know that the main principle of his translation was to give a brief rendering of Vālmīki's central ideas and themes. Without maintaining Vālmīki's chapter divisions (Sarga) he narrates the incidents in consecutive order and attempts to express the main ideas in a nutshell, making elaborate descriptions less elaborate and at places leaving out whole verses. For example, when being informed of Rāma's imminent coronation by Mantharā, Kaikeyī was so overjoyed that she made Mantharā a gift of a precious shawl and expressed her joy thus:

mantharāyā vacaḥ śrutvā kaikṣyā harṣitā tataḥ
ekaṃabharanaḥ muktvā kuvjaya pradadau subham
dattvā oṃbharaṇam śrīmat pritidāyaṃ praharṣitā
tatāḥ Kaikeyī mantharāṃ vākyamidaṃ tatrāvratī punaḥ
manthare yat tvaya meadya priyamākhyaśtaispitam
tadidaṃ pritidāyaṃ te pritya bhūyo dadāmi te
rāma bē bharate bāpi visēgo nāsti kacana
tasmāt priyām me yadrāmaḥ rājā rājyeabhisekṣyati
na me priyāṁ kineidataḥ paraḥ bhaved

yadadya rājā sutamīstātmajam
gunākaraṃ rāmamudārvikraman
sa yauvarājye pratipēdayisyati

(2.6.29–33)

¹ sāatakāṇḍa rāmāyana pedabandhe nibandhilo
lambha parihari sārodrhita (Ra, 6.56.24)
Kandali has expressed the whole idea in only four verse lines:

raṁa abhiseka sumi saharisa mano
gyāra kāḍhiyā hāra dilā tetikṣane
rājya deuka rāmaka nṛpati dasaratha
laiyo kuji prasāda phalila manoratha

Overjoyed by the news of Rāma's coronation she out of glee, took a necklace from her neck and gave it to Mantharā. Let King Dasāratha give Rāma the kingdom, you Kujī, take this, my wishes are fulfilled.

Kandali has not only stripped elaborate descriptions but has left out in their entirety some incidents in the original Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. When Bharata goes to Rāma to ask him to come back to the kingdom, the two Sargas (2.116 & 118) describing his encounter with Jāvāli where the sage was giving materialistic instruction on the uselessness of forsaking his kingdom, are not there in the EMK. In the same strain the interview of Bharata and Hanumāṇa in the Laṅkā-kāṇḍa (6.82–90) is not there in the EMK. The incident of Kāikeyī's having insulted a Brahmin as being ugly and the enraged Brahmin's curse that she herself in later life would have to face much public insult (2.8.32–33) does not find a place in the EMK.

1. Ayodhya-kāṇḍa, v. 84
While brevity had definitely been the soul of his translation, he has at places, elaborated on what was only hinted at in the original. We can cite, for example, the detailed description of Citrakūta.\(^1\) Besides a few incidents not to be found in the original, there are in the BMK, for example, the Kāka-episode described in the Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa.\(^2\)

As the story goes, while sleeping with his head on Sītā's lap, a crow came and pecked at Sītā's breast. On waking up, the enraged Rāma blinded the right eye of the crow with an arrow. This story is there in Kṛttibāsa's Rāmāyana and in the Kathā-Rāmāyana of Raghunāth Mahanta also. This may have been a popular folk-tale of this region. May be he drew from such sources for the BMK. The mother-figure Kujā, in disguise, tries to be a paramour of Bharata and Hanumāna trying to pass off as a Brahmin from Saurāstra before the burning of the Asokabana etc. are not there in the original. These are Kandali's additions.

Such embellishments may have been presented either to add poetical flavour at the request of Mahāmānikya (mahāmānikara bole: kāvyarasā kicho dilo: dugdhaka mathila yena gr̄ta).\(^3\) Besides Kandali believed Rāma's story to be based on folk reality and earthly happenings, and not something handed down from the gods.\(^4\) Moreover he had his

\(^1\) Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 580-594
\(^2\) vv. 1000-1011
\(^3\) Rā, 6.56.24
\(^4\) Kiskindhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 604
eyes always on folk realities and ways.  

Whatever may be the case, Kendall’s fidelity to Valmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa was inordinate and for him Valmiki’s Rāmāyaṇa was as good as the Veda’s. Therefore, even though there are minor additions or subtractions he has not left out anything of import and in no way deviated from the spirit of the original. In fact, in many places, he has rendered Valmiki’s verse word for word. For instance, this famous śloka of Lanka-kāṇḍa in the Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa:

dēśe dēśe kāḷatrāṇi dēśe dēśe ca bāndhavāḥ
tam tu deśāṁ na pāśyāmi yātre bhṛtā sahodarāḥ

(6.101.15)

he has translated as:

bhāryā puttra bandhu yatā pāi yathā tathā
hena natu dekhoḥā sodara pāi kathā

Wives, sons and friends may be found anywhere, but nowhere can I see a brother like you.

In the same vein in Sundara-kāṇḍa:

ākhyāte grāhṛarājena samītpatya plavaṅganāḥ
sahitāḥ pritisambrstāḥ simhanādaṁ vinédire

1. Kīśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 603

2. As far as his fidelity to the original is concerned the following remark of Professor K.K. Handiqui seems quite pertinent: "This would perhaps help even in determining the text of the original Rāmāyaṇa in Sanskrit" (Bhāgavālī, vol. II, p. 99).

3. Ro, p. 338
te tu gatvā samudrasya daksinasyottaram girim
samudraṃ dadṛṣṭurbhiman timi nakre samākulam
(5.1.1-2)

has been rendered in four lines in Kandali:

sampātira bacanata khandila hisāda
kautuke bānare karileka simhanāda
saba senāgana laiyā angadaje bira
daksin sāgare jānta uttarara tira

The words of Sampāti removed all gloom and the
monkeys roared in glee like lions. The Vīra
Angada marched with all his forces towards the
south to reach the northern bank of the sea.

What Vālmīki says when Kausālyā entreats with Rāma not to
go to the forest:

dasa viprānupādhyayo gauraveṇātiricyaste
upādhyāyān dasā pitā tathaiha byatiricyaste
pitīn dasā ca mātaikā sarvyām bhā prthivīṁ bibbo
gurutvenābhbhavati koasti mātrṣamo guruh
(2.22.12-13)

is translated as:

dasa bipra adhika gaurava upādhyāya
tāto dasa guna pitā dekhite juwāi

1. v. 4
bāpata adhika dasa guna howe māva
prthibita guruttara dekhite svabhāva

An Upādhyāya is superior to ten Brahmins, a
father to ten Upādhyāyas, a mother is more than
ten fathers; so a mother is the most honourable
of all.

Regarding his authenticity and fidelity to the original he
has said, 'if what I have written is to not be found in the
original - the blame is mine.'

His principles of versification, then, may be
summarised as follows: that while he studiously maintained
the spirit of the original, he has condensed elaborate
descriptions at places while in others he has elaborated on
what was only hinted at in the original. Further, some
embellishments as far as incidents and descriptions are
concerned, had been added to enhance the poetic flavour of
the original.

Even though the RMK is a faithful rendering of the
original in Sanskrit, Kandali has introduced a local flavour.
Assamese life and ways find a reflection in his book. His
descriptive brilliance and pictorial qualities strike us as
the most original. His description of the goings-on in the

1. Ayodhya-kanda, v. 291
2. pustaka biśi yheb tebe sabe nindibā āmāka (Rs, 6.56.25)
mind of people with nature as the backdrop, in his depiction of Citrakuta is a case in point. It is to be noted that the same background of nature and its corresponding reactions in man's minds have been described later by Śaṅkaradeva in his Hara-mohana of Kirttana-ghoṣā. ¹

The distinctive features and the significant qualities of his adaptation are treated in more detail in the following pages.

ii. METRE

In Mādhava Kandal, perhaps the best among the pre-Śaṅkaradeva poets, Assamese metre and rhythm took a powerful and shapely form. He used fourteen syllable pada or payāra and eight syllable jhumuri among payāra versifications and doladi (6+6+8) and ghavi (8+8+10) among tripadi metres.² To cite instances:

Payāra: jaya jaya rāmacandra jagata ādhāra
brahma hara purandara sevaka jāhāra
srṛṭi sthiti laya jāra lilā anupāma

¹ Śaṅkaradeva, Kirttana-ghoṣā āru Nāma-ghoṣā, ed. Maheswar Neog, 1967, ed. 5, pp. 146-149
² Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, p. 23. Altogether in his five kandas of the Rāmāyana, Kandal used pada fifty seven times, jhumuri six times, doladi forty times and ghavi twenty three times. The computation of the Lahkā-kanda has been taken from the printed edition of Madhavachandra Bardalai (Rb).
hena rāma pade karo sadāya pranāma

Jhumrī: rāma lakṣmana cā\ī
bolanta dekhiyo bhāi
caudhaya rākṣasa āse
juṣṭhībāka abhilāse

Dolādī: rāghave bolanta sunday jāneki
tomāta bolohō kāja
niosaya karīyā ābese jānilo
āmi haiba jubēra
kosalyā māwera sadṛṣa dekhoḥ
daikē sata māvaka
moka rājya dite pucite nrpati
āsicā tāna thāvaka

Chāvī: rāghavaka pariḥari sabe yabe cali bhailā
śoke kāro sārīra nashe
bibhiṣanā sugrīvava yata kapi bhālukera
āṭhāke nayane jala bahe
śrīrāma bolanta sunā bāpu hanumenta toka
alamkāra nāhi yogyapara
yehi abhimata tora maṇta bēṇoani āche
āmāta māgiyo deo barā

1. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 1
2. Aranyā-kāṇḍa, v. 216
3. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 166
4. Lanka-kāṇḍa, Bh, p. 413
It is to be noted that Sāṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva extended this range of versifications and employed a more longish metre, lechāri (10+10+14) and Mādhavadeva, particularly, made a number of experiments in the last part of his Nāma-ghosā.

iii. FIGURES OF SPEECH (ALĀNKĀRA)

The figures of speech (alānkāra) have come down to Mādhava Kandali as a legacy from the Sanskrit original. Among the different alānkāres, Upamā (SIMILe) with most of its varieties, is found used in the widest manner. To cite some examples:

(a) nukouāila mukhasīrika huyā rājyahina
rātr jena candrakānti nakara malina2

The loss of kingdom could not darken his facial glow as the night cannot dampen the lustre of the moon.

1. In this connection, Mahendra Bora writes: 'truly he (Mādhava Kandali) was 'flawless', and his triumph over the form (chavi) was complete. No wonder, the poet who could polish so nicely two such rough quartzas as payāra and dularī and make them shine like precious gems, should succeed in the very first attempt to get a near-perfect material like chabi shining with all its natural glow and native hue. In fact, nothing was left to the poets of the next period to develop on the technical plane; if anything was left to be done, it is to give some flesh to the form' (Fundamentals of Assamese Metre, 1977, p. 195).

2. Ayodhya-kānda, v. 219
My body trembles at the sight of Kaikeyi just as the deer trembles at the sight of the tigress.

The Devi (Sitā) who is the best woman in the world, was surrounded by them (Rākṣasī) as clouds cover the brightest star in the firmament, as hair covers the Campaka and Mallikā and as ashes cover the flames.

Among the other alāṅkāras, the majority of which are also simile-based alāṅkāras, the following may be noted:

Rūpaka (Metaphor)

Rāma's face is the lotus and my eyes are black-bees. I cannot prevent them from enjoying incessantly.

1. Ayodhya-kanda, v. 307
2. Sundara-kanda, vv. 182-183
3. Ayodhyā-kanda, v. 15
Nidarsanā (Illustration)

rāmara bhāṛyyāka nica rākṣe bāṁcosa
sucira mukhata diyā neyana jāntasa
gale silā bāndhi taṇi tara samadraka
khudrapakṣi hūyā dhāra desa garuḍaka

O vile Demon, you desire the wife of Rāma, surely you want to rub your eyes with the point of the needle. You intend to cross the ocean with a stone fastened round your neck. You challenge Garuḍa being an insignificant bird.

Utpreksā (Poetical Fancy)

uparata megha jena dekhiya sobhana
bāḍhila nikali jena prthivira tana
sikharata paṭe mandākinī suklajala

a tanka dhākiyā jena bastrara āṇcala

The beautiful clouds above look like the projection of the earth's breasts. The top (of the hill) is sprinkled with the water of Mandākinī as if the breasts were covered by the fringe of the garment (Āṇcala).

1. Arānyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 504-505
2. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 592-593
Vinokti (Speech of Absence)

basanta nosohbe bine kokilara role
nisphala jivana prabhu tum bine kore

Life without you is as meaningless as the Spring
without the sweet melodies of the cuckoo.

Arthāntaranyāsa (Corroboration)

mohora nimitte kika sokaka jalaya
gambhira sāgara kadōcito naṭalaya

Why grieve for me? The profound ocean does never
move.

Sandeha (Doubt)

sāṅkarara bhāryya kibā tumisi pābhati
rohini bharani citrā nubhā revati
kibā apeswarā tumidandhavara nāri

Are you Pārvatī, the consort of Sāṅkara or Rohini
or Bharāṇī or Citrā or Revatī or a Celestial
Dancer or a Gandharva Damsel?

1. Ayodhyā-kānda, v. 348
2. ibid., v. 420
3. Aranyā-kānda, vv. 175-176
Cii

Atisoyakti (Hyperbola)

hari hari lakhái tañi ki karile moka
agani lagâile gâwe ki karibo toka¹

Oh Lakhái! what hast thou done to me? You are consuming me with flames (of sorrow). What am I to do with you?

Vyājastuti (Artful Praise)

sādhu sādhu sakhi tumí mora mahāmitra
āmāra kāryyata dekho utrāvala citta
alpese antara mātra bacana kāryyata
mukhata amṛta dekhi kapāta manata²

Well done, my good friend, you are very anxious to do my job. There is only a small difference between your words and deeds. Sweet are your words, but your mind is full of hypocrisy.

Besides these, Dīpaka (Illuminator),³ Drṣṭānta (Exemplification),⁴ Viṣamam (Incongruity),⁵ Aprastuta-prasāmsā (Indirect Description),⁶ Svabhāvokti (Natural

¹. Aranya-kāṇḍa, v. 66
². Kīśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 402-403
³. ibid., vv. 30-34, 43-46
⁴. ibid., v. 94
⁵. ibid., vv. 226, 227
⁶. ibid., v. 198
iv. SENTIMENT (RASA)

While the sentiment of pathos (Karunā-rasa) predominates the seven cantoed Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, in Mādhava Kandali Śṛṅgara or the sentiment of love strikes out as the most prominent. Uttara-kāṇḍa, which offered the maximum scope for sustained Karunā rasa, does not figure in the five cantośas of Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa. It may, therefore, be logically assumed that Mādhava Kandali's insistence on the sentiment of love was deliberate. Kandali himself, in the Kiṣkindhāyā-kāṇḍa, says that the practice of verse must have an active awareness of popular taste and folkways. This awareness, then, led to his insistence on Śṛṅgāra-rasa, or the sentiment of love in the Rāmāyaṇa. Of the five cantośas, in the first four, we find striking instances of the use of Śṛṅgāra as the following examples will show:

(1) Rāma's eulogy to Sītā's beauty, moved by his impending separation from her, as he prepares to go to the

1. Aranya-kāṇḍa, vv. 702, 703
2. v. 603
Being stung by the wrath of Hara, Cupid, not finding solace anywhere, dives into the lake that is Sītā's navel. Having thus reached his own city, Cupid closed the gates and smoke emerged and became the hair on her abdomen. Waist slender as the middle of a 'Dāmaru' and abundant hips adorned with an ornamental girdle with bells. Cupid's city is like a well of nectar and the luxurious revelation of your luscious hips and loin.

(ii) On Rāma's proposal to leave her behind in Ayodhyā a disappointed Sītā complains:

campaka kalikā jena mora kalevara
lundi ghundi ācilāhā jehena bharamara

1. Ayodhyā-kānda, vv. 338-340
When my body was tender as a Campaka bud you were savouring it like a blackbee. Now that I have blossomed into a flower and can bear fruits, why do you stop enjoyment and leave me fruitless?

(iii) After Vēlī was killed and Sugrīva was made King by Rāma, he with Lakṣaṇa, was staying at the Prasāvana mountain. Rāma feels the pang of Sītā's loss more acutely in the raining seasons and tells Lakṣaṇa:

svabhāve bārisā kāla kāma atireka
ekogetā dine jīi eko bariseka
rāghave bolanta lakhāi nasahi parāna
sariraka dahe madanara pāñhābāna
campaka mālati gondhe hṛdaya nasahi
prāna sañkalaya jena sitāra birahe

It is but natural to feel more love-sick in the rainy season; one day seems as long as a year. I can bear it no more. My whole body is stung by Cupid's five arrows; my heart can no longer bear the intoxicating fragrance of Campaka and Mālatī. As if I will die being separated from Sītā.

1. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 346-347
2. Kiskindhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 336-337
(iv) When Hanumān narrates to Rāma how he had been to Lankā and met Sītā and offers Rāma a precious stone from Sītā as a memento Rāma wails:

*candrabadanika dekho caksu more bhari
ālingiyā thākohō lājaka parihari*

I see but the moon-like face (of Sītā), I refuse to be shy and embrace her fervently.

Other poetic sentiments like humour (Hāsya), heroism (Vīra), the disgusting sentiment (Vibhatasa) are subservient and complimentary to the dominating sentiment of pathos in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa and to the sentiment of love in Mādhava Kandali's. The sentiment of humour comes next to that of pathos in predominance as this sentiment appealed directly to and was appreciated greatly by the masses.

Mādhava Kandali's way was much popular with his successors. Pītāmbara Dvija who was discarded by Saṅkaradeva as being base (tāmasika) has echoed in 'bilāpa kai kānde devi rukmiṇī/ kona aṅge khuma dekhi nāilā yadumāṇi' Mādhava Kandali's lines: 'kamana aṅgata moka hina dekhilahā/ kikārene prabhu moka apekhiyā jāhā' Even though Bhaktirasa or the sentiment of devotion, was naturally, predominant,

1. Sundara-kāṇḍa, v. 674
2. Kathā-guru-carīta, ed. Upendrachandra Lekharu, p. 96
3. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 349
instances of Śṛṅgāra-rasa are not too few either, as in Rāma-bijā,1 Rukmini-harana2 and Hara-mohana of Kīrttana-ghoṣā.3

v. LANGUAGE

The RMK is a glorious example of the coming of age and maturity and complete flowering of the Assamese language. His choice of words and a rare flexibility in his use of words are highlights of his language. Like his contemporary Harivara Vipra, Mādhava Kandali not only used tātsaṇa, tādṛṣṭa, semi-tātsaṇa and deśī words but also introduced many foreign words. For example, the use of such foreign words as nāphara (servant)4 nukara (servant),5 dokāna (the shop),6 bājāra (the market)7 are significant. The peculiarity of his use of words lies in the presentation of events, incidents and persons through a strikingly individual application of various figures of speech. He used to attack a subject from all possible facets rhetorically and succeeded in giving the exact picture. The accumulation of metaphors,

2. ibid., pp. 112-113
4-5. Sundara-kānda, vv. 210, 326
67. Ayodhyā-kānda, v. 869
similes, illustrations etc. lent such vigour and strength to his language that he was not only a shade above his contemporaries but is hardly ever equalled by those to follow. For example, we can cite here Bharata's censure of Kaikēyī when she had been instrumental in sending Rāma away to the forest:

susini nāgini nikāruni saṃhārini
nirdayini rākṣasini bāghini dāruni
jakṣini dākini tañi susvāmi bhakṣini
pisācini ābe rāṇḍi bhaili ālakṣini

Moreover, Kandali's language is essentially dramatic. The conversation between Dasaratha and Rāma immediately before the latter left for the forest is a case in point:

sumantra mantriṇa : bulilanta rāme : sighe rathkhāna ḍāka
sumare sumantra : naḍēkibi ratha : dasarathe denta hāka
najā thāka thāke : ḍāka ḍāka ḍāka : uthalila duiro rola
sumantra mantriṇa : mana dodhā bhaila : karaya citta
āndola

In fact, the health and vigour of a completely developed language that we find in the later Vaiṣṇavite poets is first to be encountered in some force in MK. The RMK is a useful text, therefore, for the study of the

1. Ayodhya-kānda, v. 785
2. ibid., vv. 472-473
formation and development of the Assamese language.

Linguistically speaking, the HMK has a number of significant factors: firstly, his frequent use of new absolute words and secondly, his constant and at places repetitious use of phrases and idioms. Phade (tearing, being torn), 1 bihaitā (married), 2 hānkara (roar, call loudly), 3 hāttolā (the scanty remainder in the purse), 4 naiherira (a near one), 5 nehā (affection, love), 6 melāmdā tāi (to beat one's own drum), 7 tāhaka (extreme anger), 8 biou (ignoring), 9 pānpoka (dried up), 10 dhundhuli (cunning), 11 tihā (horns), 12 tāhaka (surprised), 13 sānja (evening, a meal), 14 āsaṭi kusaṭi (of relatives), 15 utabhanā (joyous, thrilled with joy), 16 dādari (a long pole-like stick with a hook at the end used for seizing and pulling something), 17 penṭi (belly), 18 ghaṇi (an experienced man), 19 thāṭkāra (great noise), 20 bippōha (a forest, a body), 21 are some such archaic uses not be found in the late Vaisnavite poets. Of mostly used verb forms in the HMK are: tudō (to out into pieces), 22 hāmphuśiyā (to give out a menacing sound ?), 23

1-5. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 97, 399, 443, 449, 1046
13-17. Sundara-kāṇḍa, vv. 120, 190, 364, 418, 602, 629, 810
18-21. Rā, 6.5.21, 6.7.33, 6.13.65, 6.19.18, 6.19.89, 6.19.47
22. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 186
23. Kiskindhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 52
antalleka (surround and attack, attack),1 kitāila (got ready),2 bombāle (to flow incessantly),3 sanāila (sharpen),4 hānkāri (summoning, calling),5 bigutiya (giving troubles and sufferings),6 bhasāriyā (strangle),7 āntāila (finished),8 etc. Kendall's use of the word pāni (water)9 in so many places is significant. Another striking factor is that he has employed the spoken and dielectrical forms of many words. For instance he has often used: kāhāni (story),10 dandukābana (the Dandakārṇa),11 jāngalā (a gateway),12 oali (the child),13 hāthi (the elephant),14 biyāli (the afternoon),15 āithā (bribery),16 cele (braided hair),17 etc. From the following lines we can form some idea as to Kendall's way of using phrases and idioms: āsaja sumiya jena teliyāra jānta (evil sounding like an oil press - 'mill'),18 ōipoira bāwe meru parbhatā uḍila (as if the Meru mountains were being blown up while a 'tipsy' bird flew),19 tumī sāpe sava nāgapurika

1-5. Kiśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 55, 61, 67, 73, 396
6-8. Sundara-kāṇḍa, vv. 256, 398, 803
9. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 112; Kiśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 562, 578
10. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 260, 491, 732; Kiśkindhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 16, 18, 53, 80; Sundara-kāṇḍa, vv. 73, 74, 75
11. Sundara-kāṇḍa, v. 278
12-16. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 17, 547, 617, 629, 630
17. Sundara-kāṇḍa, v. 135
18. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 45
19. ibid., v. 238
gilila (as if a small snake swallowed the whole of the abode of big snakes),¹ palavara eśhata digaja bandi bhaila (like an elephant being captured in a bamboo trap for fish),² jānilahē ite bharatara bhārī bhāile (it is to be guessed that he is bribed by Bherata),³ āmi bhaile kaikura aṣṭamira ēga (my fate is akin to that of the sacrificial goat on the eighth day of Durgā worship as far as Kaikyē is concerned),⁴ ghṛta kāḍhi laile sañī ki kavbo ghela (what is the use of the remainder after the butter is extracted),⁵ narakara palura svargaṇāśāhi āsa (an infernal worm does not aspire after the heaven),⁶ bharasiyā rāvanara pūñātesa drṣṭī (an angling Rāvana concentrates on the fleet attached to a fishing line),⁷ āhāsa eśnīyā jena phariṇga uḍāntī (like leemste covering the whole sky),⁸ trāileksaṛa nātha edī tapasika eśa (preferring the hermit to the lord of the Universe),⁹ dhelara bhitare jena nīganiya pasi (like a mouse inside a dream),¹⁰ marantēm

1. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 238
2. ibid., v. 253
3. ibid., v. 609
4. ibid., v. 611
5. ibid., v. 424
6. ibid., v. 687
7. Aṣṭāvedīya-kāṇḍa, v. 469
8. Klāṣikyāśya-kāṇḍa, v. 569
10. ibid., v. 669
nalāgaya jīvāra anśadhi (the dying one needs no health tonic),
alapa pānīra sola dadarā dadari (an empty vessel sounds much),
ekehāte kone dharibek dui sola (who can hold two 'sol' fishes in one hand?),
kāoaka lágiyā āni harāile māṇika (losing a pearl for the sake of mere glass),
kāṅgāra dibhine jena thira nohe nāwa (a boat without a rudder),
sarabṛṣṭi kare jena megha dhāle jala (shooting arrows like a heavy shower),
bāgha namāriyā kone ājarāhā chāla (putting on a tiger's skin before killing it),
agani dahanta yena sūkāna banaka (like fire scorching dry grass),

These phrases and idioms owe their peculiar appeal to the fact that they always co-exist with quite familiar similes and metaphors. A contemporary writer has underlined such uses in Kandali and he claims that this has strongly influenced Saṅkaradeva and other late writers. But we should perhaps point out that MK's contemporary Harivara Vipra has also shown a marked affinity to such uses. Kandali's grammar has also its peculiar characteristics. Of the Enclitic Definitives or Numeratives - guṭī, -goṭā, -juri, -jana, -to, -khāna/khānī, -kunda are found in use. Of the plural suffixes -gana, -saba, -sā, -sakala, -caya, -rā

1. Ra, 6.6.16
are most frequently used. -i and -ni are the principal feminine suffixes used. The use of different forms of pronouns and personal pronouns and the various moods of verbs in Kandali are distinctive. In Kandali we find that the anterior -ā- is shortened under the influence of the following -ā-. The personal suffixes to nouns of relationship, such as, -era, -erā (putera, Ayo/v. 719; bhāyerara, Kiš/v. 271; māyerara, Sun/v. 431) are quite in vogue. The conjunctive participles, such as, -era, -erā, -ero etc. (bindhi-era, Kiš/v. 67) are also in curious use in Kandali. Besides these there are some other peculiarities in Kandali's verses. Dr Kakati, however, would take some of these peculiarities found in Kandali as a generalised phenomenon so far as all the pre-Sankaradeva poets are concerned: "In all these writers the Assamese idioms and expressions seem to have been fully individualised. The personal affixation to nouns of relationship is fully established and so is the anterior -ā- shortened under the influence of the succeeding -ā-. The addition of personal ending after participial tenses in -ib- and -it- was not fully established. A good deal of fluctuation is noticeable, the participial suffixes sometimes standing alone without any personal ending and sometimes taking them on. There is in all these writers a curious use of the conjunctive participle,

e.g., hāni-ere (does pierce), kari-era (do you do). The past participle in -ib- is also found in all these writers, e.g., maribāra prajā (the slain people), dibāra astra (weapons given)."¹

B. THE DATE AND IDENTITY OF MĀDHAVA KANDALI

The date and identity of Mādhava Kandali have not so far been fixed with any degree of certainty. We are, of course, definite that he was anterior to Sāṅkaradeva (1449 A.D.-1568 A.D.), who has complimented Kandali as an excellent poet writing on Rāma-lore.² Secondly, we have the sure internal evidence that Kandali wrote at the behests of the 'Barāha Rājā Śrī Mahāmāṇikya' or Mahāmāṇi,³ But who is this Barāha king Mahāmāṇikya or Mahāmāṇi? We have nowhere in any epigraph or in any of the numerous chronicles

1. 'The Assamese Language', Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, pp. 5-6
2. pūryvakavi aprāmādī : mādhava kandali ādi
   pade viracilā rāma-kathā
   hastāra dekhiyā lāda : sāsā yena phēre mārgha
   mora bhaila tehnaya avasthā
   (Rc. Uttara-kānda, p. 472)
3. kavirāja kandali ye : āmākase buliwaya
   kariloho sarvajana-bodhe
   rāmāyaṇa supayāra : sri-mahā-māṇikya ye
   barāha rājār anurodhe
   (Rc. Lāṅkā-kānda, p. 448)
in the Assamese language the mention of this particular name. Thirdly, in the biographical work called Guru-\textit{carita-kathā}, there is a reference to one Mādhu\textit{v}a Kandali whose pupil Rāghavāchāryya came to inspect the school kept by Mahendra Kandali, Saṅkaradeva's teacher. It is quite probable that this Mādhu\textit{v}a Kandali may be the same person as our poet.

Scholars, however, have not generally taken note of Mādhu\textit{v}a Kandali, Rāghavāchāryya's guru nor have they paid much attention to variations of the patron-king's name - Śrī-Mahāmāṇikya (Mahāmāṇikya) and Mahāmāṇi. They have tried to identify the king with some king or other, having a name ending with '-māṇikya'. This sort of attempt started with Madhu\textit{v}ahendra Bardalai who brought out the first edition of Rāmāyana of Mādhu\textit{v}a Kandali, Mādhava\textit{v}adeva and Saṅkaradeva. He conjectured that one of the three Jayantāpur kings - Vijaya\textit{māṇ}ika, Dhanamāṇika and Yasāmāṇika belonged to sometime in the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{2} Bardalai refers to an earlier opinion that Kandali belonged to Ālipukhrū, Saṅkaradeva's birth-place.\textsuperscript{3}

Pandit Hemohandra Goswami writes, "Mahāmāṇikya was a king of Barāhī Kachārīs and he ruled about the middle of

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Guru-\textit{carita-kathā}}, art. 50
\item Preface to \textit{Rh}, 1899, p. xv-n
\item ibid., p. xii-n, refering to \textit{Jonākī}, vol. III, p. 185
\end{enumerate}
the 14th century at Dimapur. In an old Āhom Buranji the seventh generation of the Barāhī king, Detsing, the great-great-grandson of Mahāmāniṇkiya, was the contemporary of the Āhom king Dihiṅgiyā Rājā.¹ He seems to have later revised his opinion in his Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts where he states, "The Barāhī constituted a branch of the Hinduised Kachāris. Before the advent of the Āhoms, the Barāhī kings were ruling over the whole of the south bank of the Brahmaputra with their capital at Sonāpur, somewhere near Sadiya. His probable date is 1347 A.D."² Commenting on Goswami's later remark Dr Maheswar Neog says, "From the names of places like Namacān, Barbat, Sonāpur, Bānpur, etc. in the Kachārī chronicle, art. 23, on which Goswami's statement is based, it would appear that the Kachārī capital was somewhere in the Sibsagar Sub-division about the position now occupied by the Bānpherā, Sonāri, Barāhī and other tea-estates."³

Kanaklal Barua in his Early History of Kāśrūpa takes the latter part of the fourteenth century and the Kapili valley (Nowgong District) as the date and place of

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1. cf. Goswami's article in the Bāhi, vol. xviii. The Buranji here referred to has been published now by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, as Kachārī Buranji, 1936

2. Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts, C.U., 1930, p. 139

3. 'Assamese Literature before Sāṅkaradeva', Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, 1959, p. 25. Two other scholars also show their awareness of this possible inference.
Mahāmāṇikya. Kaliram Medhi accepts the middle of the fourteenth century and Tripurā as Mahāmāṇikya's time and kingdom respectively.

All these surmises are based on somewhat distant external evidence, because the identification of Mādhava Kandali's patron king Mahāmāṇikya with kings of similar names coming up in different semi-historical accounts, given evidence to by the scholars, is scarcely very valid. Professor Banikanta Kakati in his historical grammar, Assamese, Its Formation and Development seeks to assert presumably on linguistic grounds that Kandali belongs to the fourteenth century at the latest, while he conforms to Madhavachandra Bardalai's view about Mahāmāṇikya being a Jayantāpur king and Kandali being a native of central Assam (now represented by the district of Nowgong). But the linguistic grounds for assigning Mādhava Kandali to the fourteenth century at the latest are not pronouncedly stated. There, of course, are the many archaic forms in the Rāmāyaṇa text of Kandali, which could probably establish a distance of time between Saṅkaradeva and Mādhava Kandali.

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1. Early History of Kamrupa, 1933, pp. 320f
2. Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, 1933, intro., p. xci
4. See 'Language', p. Cix
In the present state of our knowledge about Assam’s political and literary history before Śaṅkaradeva, it would be hardly possible to affirm any particular locality or any particular period of time to which the poet Mādhava Kandali alias Kavirāja Kandali and his patron king Śrī-Mahāmāṇikya or Mahāmāṇi belonged.

Towards the end of the Laṅkā-kāṇḍa, it is found to be mentioned presumably by Mādhava Kandali, "I have made the seven-cantoed Rāmāyaṇa in padabandha (vernacular verse composition) by taking the essence of it and shunning extraneous matter." This statement has created a good deal of confusion among writers on Mādhava Kandali. The earliest publisher Madhavohandra Bardalai made a great assumption not based upon any sort of historical evidence when he wrote, "That Mādhava Kandali translated the whole of the seven-cantoed Rāmāyaṇa from the original Sanskrit is seen from the colophon at the end of his Laṅkā-kāṇḍa. But we do now find that the Ādi-kāṇḍa and the Uttara-kāṇḍa of the Assamese Rāmāyaṇa have been done in verse by Mādhavadeva and Saṅkaradeva and that the remaining five kāṇḍas only, namely, Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, Aranya-kāṇḍa, Kīkīndhyā-kāṇḍa, Sundara-kāṇḍa and Laṅkā-kāṇḍa are by Mādhava Kandali. From Saṅkaradeva's rendering of the Uttara-kāṇḍa it is seen that there was

1. sātakāṇḍa rāmāyaṇa padabandhe nibandhilo
   lambhā pariharī sārodhṛta

(Rs, 6.56.24)
peace in the country in Mādhava Kandali's time. When afterwards the Kachārī king was expelled from Newgong there was turmoil in the kingdom. In the disturbed hour Mādhava Kandali's Ādi- and Uttara-kaṇḍas were destroyed and the five other kaṇḍas only remained. Saṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva recovered only these five kaṇḍas. Mādhava Kandali's story of the kaṇḍas being destroyed in the Kachārī wars finds echo in the writings of other scholar-scholars. Even in the Guru-carita-kathā, which tells us how Saṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva came to write the Uttara-kaṇḍa and Ādi-kaṇḍa in order to supplement the work of Mādhava Kandali, there was no mention of Mādhava Kandali's writing these two cantoṣās. It is to be considered a bit strange why Mādhava Kandali should have put his statement about making seven cantoṣās, if he made them at all, at the end of the Lankā-kaṇḍa. Dimbeswar Neog in his New Light on History of Assaśyā Literature writes, "There is also little doubt that only five kaṇḍas of his rendering of the Rāmāyaṇa have been extant. The Ādi- and Uttara-kaṇḍas might not be written at all, or if written were surely lost before the time of Saṅkaradeva."1

The surmise that Kandali wrote the Rāmāyaṇa in full seven cantoṣās is based on his Lankā-kaṇḍa statement. In the absence of any confirmatory evidence of any value, the

1. Preface to Eb, pp. xiii-xiv
2. p. 115
statement itself becomes doubtful. It becomes a text-critical question whether or not the statement is genuine or spurious. I have examined as many as six manuscripts of the Lanka-kānda especially at this particular spot. But none of these dated or undated manuscripts go further back to the 18th century. Even if Kandali wrote pañca-kānda rāmāyana or some such other thing, it must have been changed to sāta-kānda rāmāyana, as by that time the concept of seven-cantoed Rāmāyana became general and popular. It may not be unlikely that even as Saṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva were revising or editing Kandali, they might have put in the idea of Sāt-kānda Rāmāyana.1

About the influence of Kandali on his successors, Dr Birinchi Kumar Barua says, "The legacy of a rich and beautiful diction which Mādhava Kandali left in his Rāmāyana exercised a tremendous influence on Saṅkaradeva and his immediate successors."2 Dr Maheswar Neog adds, "There are other material influences of Mādhava Kandali on his successors. Durgāvara's Gīti-rāmāyana (as we shall presently

1. Mādhava Kandali of Devajit, Mādhava Kandali of Tāmradhvajaruddha and Mādhava Kandali of Pātāl-kānda must have been later writers as is evident from the language and style and are much inferior poets compared to the great Mādhava Kandali (Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, pp. 31-32 and Asamiya Sāhityar Rāptikhā, p. 71). The ascribing of such works to Kandali as has been done by some scholars (Hemohandra Goswami, Birinchi Kumar Barua and others) will not do any honour to him.

see) and Ananta Kandali's version in many places only plagiarise Madhava Kandali. The prose version of Raghumāth Mahanta (the late eighteenth century) is also very largely indebted to the same poet. Thus the whole Rāmāyana literature in Assamese is pervaded by Madhava Kandali's personality."¹

C. CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Even though the RNK is not an original creative work but a faithful rendering in Assamese of the original in Sanskrit, it still throws light on many facets of the then Assamese life and society. A consideration of the RNK in this light, therefore, has a peculiar socio-historical significance. From a study of Kandali's Rāmāyana we can form an adequate idea of political thought and administrative policies prevalent in his time. In the Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, king Dasāratha dwells on the principles of international relations, political diplomacy and the duties of a king.² In the Kīśkindhyā-kāṇḍa Vālī takes Rāma to task and criticizes Rāma for having struck him with an arrow from behind. But Rāma rationalizes his act by saying that in administration and in liquidating socially evil forces and enemies what is apparently not proper may also be resorted to. This is a

¹. Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, p. 31
². Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 49-52
reference to political opportunism and expediency. While talking to his ministers in the Sundara-kanda, Rama catalogues the traits that a minister ought to have. From the conversations of Hanumana when he had gone to Lanka as a royal messenger we get to know what a royal messenger should be like. While trying to capture Hanumana with a Nag-pasa (a noose used to entangle an enemy) Meghnada says that as illnesses must be treated as soon as the first symptom shows, in the same way, an enemy must be destroyed as soon as he raises his head. Dr Neog has observed that these constant references to the duties of a minister or a royal messenger and the behaviour towards an enemy and ways of destroying him must have been practically followed by the King Mahamaniya.

Madhava Kandali's reference to 'Sandikai' as being present among the ministers in the court of Ayodhya after Dasaratha's death, and the mention of 'Palika' in the ranks of Ravana's army are significant. Sandikais are top

1. Kiskindhya-kanda, vv. 240-247
2. Sundara-kanda, vv. 729-731
3. ibid., vv. 485-485
4. ibid., v. 449
5. 'Assamese Literature before Sankaradeva', Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, p. 29
6. Ayodhya-kanda, v. 716
7. Rs, 6.9.197
officials in the Āhom hierarchy. In Padmeswar Nāohaī's Phukan's history it is stated that this title was given to only Āhom or Borāḥi ministers; Phakan 'ā hlatary It la atatod that tbla titla vaa giron to aaly Ahan or Borahi adLnlatara, Kāṣis. Kandali has also used the word 'Pātar' once: "Someone tamatingly asked 'what sort of a Pātar you are.' Pātar must refer here to some top official of those days. In Assam Darbar Pātar has been described as one of the top brass who could qualify to be a Borphukan or a king's representative. These refer to the wide-spread and well-established influence of the Āhoms in those days.

Contemporary religious habits also find a place in the EMK. There are somewhat detailed descriptions of Śiva and Śakti cults in his text. Of various gods and goddesses Śiva and Pārvatī are mentioned most frequently. Such references as 'Rāma observed his father at the top of the palace like Kubera at the top of the Kailāśa', 'to me Rāma's palace is like Kailāśa', ‘Rāma was, as if,

1. Līla Gogoi, Sāhitya-Saṃskṛti-Durāṣaj, 1973, p. 35
2. Padmanath Gahaṇibarua, Assam Darbar, 1976, p. 113
4. Padmanath Gahaṇibarua, ibid., p. 228
5. Maheswar Neog, 'Assamese Literature before Sāhikadeva', Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, p. 142
6. Ayadhya-kāṇḍa, v. 45
7. ibid., v. 149
worshipping Pārvyātī and Saṅkara, etc., which are not there in the original, show his emphasis on and the popularity of such cults. Candī and Raṇacandī had been frequently mentioned. In the Laṅkā-kāṇḍa, Bajradamṣta mutters a prayer to Candī, before entering the battlefield. In the same kāṇḍa Rāma says to Śuka and Sāraṇa: "I'll cut off the ten heads and Rāvana will be sacrificed in the worship of Raṇacandī." Moreover, the reference to a portrait of Śiva and Pārvyātī together on one of the walls of Rāma's palace is definitely significant. That sacrifices were made in the worship of the goddess (Devi-Pujā) is also mentioned more than once: "I have become, to Kaikeyī, the sacrificial goat of the eighth day (Aṣṭamā) of the worship of Devī." This refers to such practice of offering sacrificial goats in the worship of the Devī. Śiva had been worshipped in Assam since ancient times by both Aryans and non-Aryans, and during the writing of the Kālika-purāṇa, the Śaṅka cult occupied a significant place in Assamese society. Rāmānanda Dvija in Gurucharita talks about the religious situation of

1. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 163
2. Rs, 6.13.41
3. ibid., 6.5.8
4. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, v. 154
5. ibid., v. 611
the land before the launching of Saikaradeva's Neo-Vaisnavism:

People did not worship Kṛṣṇa or perform the rites sacred to Hari. They, on the other hand, would willingly worship Haiprava and consider it to be the greatest of religions. To that deity, they offered the blood of tortoises and goats, which they later drank as a sacred drink (prasāda). ¹

The influence of Śiva and Śākta cults described in the BMK reflects the general religious situation of his society. The picture of a Yogī amongst those running in a train following Rāma before he left for the forest is particularly significant:

The Yogī had his ragged wallet hung on his shoulder. He had his dāsā's kūṭhi (platter sometimes in the form of a trident) on his hand ... He was tired, and his begging wallet dropped down. He cried 'Śiva! Śiva!' all the time. He threw away all his gods of worship (that he was carrying in the form of idols). ²

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1. Śurumarīta, v. 28

2. Translation taken from Maheswar Naog's 'Assamese Literature before Saikaradeva', Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, p. 30
This is nowhere to be found in Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa. According to Dr Neog, these Yogīs or Nāth-Dharmīs belong to the Śaiva sect, and that this adequately describes the then Nāths.¹

From Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa we get to know that Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) was also popularly worshipped: 'Viṣṇu has been painted riding the Garuda',² 'Vāsudeva on the peak of the Meru mountain',³ 'Rāma found his mother engaged in worshipping Viṣṇu',⁴ 'Rāma touched her feet while she was thus engaged in worshipping Viṣṇu',⁵ 'My devotion to Viṣṇu is rendered worthwhile now'.⁶ At places there are not infrequent references to Mantra⁷, Rakṣā-bandha⁸ etc. Rites performed to propitiate the various grahas (deities) like Saturn (Sāṇi) etc. are also mentioned. The practice of astrology and the predictions of soothsayers are also described.

Dasāratha, giving reasons for making Rāma the crown prince says:

¹. Sāṅkaradeva and His Times, Gauhati University, 1965, p. 89
². Ayodhyā-kānda, v. 156
³. ibid., v. 162
⁴. ibid., v. 223
⁵. ibid., v. 60
⁶. ibid., v. 62
⁷. ibid., v. 1004
⁸. ibid., vv. 311-312
The two planet deities Rāhu and Mangala are now not in my favour. That is what the court astrologer found from his calculations and he has told me so. Such a combination bodes ill and means death to the king. This also bodes ill for the subjects.  

Fire was worshipped and black goats were sacrificed. The use of mango trees to burn the body in funeral rites, the large pole (kheeani-dāndi) to poke the burning body, the offering of dasāpinda (offerings of food to the deceased) on the ten days following death, Kākabali (offering to crows) of raw fish (labeo rohita) and birds and snānabali are also described in the RMK.

From his description of the social situation in Ayodhya after Rāma had left for the forest we know that Varṇāśrama-dharma was piously observed there. The prevalent castes, sub-castes and professions in those days can be found from the description of the subjects who had

1. Ayodhyā-kānda, vv. 55-56
2. Rā, 6.25.9 -10
3. Ayodhyā-kānda, v. 305
4. ibid., v. 855
5. ibid., v. 704
6. ibid., vv. 512-513
accompanied Bharata in his mission of trying to bring Rāma back from the forest. Different castes and professions referred to in v. 889 (Ayo) include: Kṣatriya, Vaisya, Kāyastha, Naṭa (dancer), Bhāṭa (singer), Telī (oilman), Tānti (weaver), Thāṭhāri (blacksmith), Soṇāri (goldsmith), Kasmāra (belt metal worker), Seṅkhāri (worker on conch shells), Banīyā (merchant), Camsāra (cobbler), Kamsāra (blacksmith), Sutāra (carpenter), Dhebā (washerman) etc. etc. Besides these, he has in other contexts, referred to other castes and professions such as Guāl (milkman), Nawār (boatman), Hādi (sweeper) etc. We can also form an idea of the socio-economic standing of these people from descriptions in his book. Agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of the time, followed by trade and commerce. The Vaisyās had been associated with both agriculture and trade. Of agricultural products varieties of rice like kharikā jaha and Sāli are often mentioned. In verses like these: 'What is the use of the remainder after the butter is extracted?' ‘Like fish on a frying pan’ we get to know something about the food habits of the Assamese people in those days. While talking about the women of Lanka their taste for pāyas and sweet fruits had been

1. Ayodhyā-kānda, v. 513
2. Re, 6.18.17
3. Ayodhyā-kānda, v. 424
4. ibid., v. 823
Of various fruits Madhuphal (Papaya), 2 Ām (Mango), 3 Jām (eugenia jambulana), 4 Paniyal (Indian palm), 5 Tāmbul (Areca nut), 6 Kanṭhāl (Jack fruit), 7 Nārikal (Coconut), 8 Kamalā (Orange), 9 Śripal (Wood-apple), 10 Kardal (Averrhoa carimboila), 11 Kal (Banana) were most popular. The habit of nut chewing has been referred to in many places. 13 Areca nuts do not figure anywhere in Vālmiki.

Flowers described in many places of the RMK, and especially in the descriptions of Citrakuts such as Juti (Jasmine), 14 Madār (Coral tree), 15 Sevāli (Night jasmine), 16 Bakul (Helengi), 17 Kāṇcan-tagar (Crepe jasmine), 18 Asōka, 19 Palāsa (Flame of the forest), 20 Campaka Baka (Swamp tree), 21 Tulasī (Sacred Basil), 22 Ketekī (Jasminum), 23 Mālatī (Aganosma saryophyllata) 24 etc. are mostly local and not to be found in Vālmiki's original. Besides flowers, a veritable catalogue of trees, plants, and birds to be found in Assam can be made out from descriptions of the Citrakuta and from Hanumān's description of Lāukā. Of trees Sāl, 25 Tāl (Palmyra), 26 Khajura (Dato palm) 27 Asватhā (Peepul tree), 28

1. Ra, 6.11.20
2-12. Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa, vv. 395, 586; Sundara-kāṇḍa, v. 707
Bata (Banyan), 1 Nembu (citrus plant), 2 Amlaki (Emblic myrobalan), 3 Nārikal (Coconut tree), 4 Gwā (Betel-nut), 5 etc. are mostly from Assam and many birds described like Kanaka (a bird of the Heron family), 6 Baka (Paddy bird), 7 Maupiya (Honey sucker), 8 Kokila (the Cuckoo), 9 Rheñeh (Owl), 10 Rājhamṣa (Goose), 11 Cakrabāka (the Ruddy shieldrake), 12 Kalahamṣa (Drake), 13 Khañjan (Wag-tail), 14 Mainā, 15 Bhātāu (Parrot), 16 Cutiyā sālikā (of the Majnā family), 17 Kapavati (Dove), 18 etc. belong to spp. commonly found in Assam. Even these descriptions are not an impersonal catalogue but have the flavour of felt life and are lively and imaginative. The description of Rāma's palace in the Ayodhya-kānda 19 is based on typical Assamese large mansions.

We also find references to and adequate descriptions of the dress, ladies cosmetics, and of games played in the Assamese society of those days. Kandali's Rāmāyaṇa mentions almost all of the forty different varieties of ornaments used by Assamese men and women listed in the Kālikā-purāṇa. 20

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1-5. Sundara-kānda, vv. 93-94
6-14. Ayodhya-kānda, vv. 589-590
15-18. Sundara-kānda, v. 103
19. vv. 149-157
20. Indira Goswami, 'Mādhava Kandali Rāmāyaṇa āru Samasamayik Samaj, Bihāṇī, 1982, p. 82
Besides, Dhoti, Silken Sārī, Kendall mentions even Gold thread. White was usually worn on auspicious occasions. There is reference to Jambumāli going to a battle dressed in red. In Aranyakaṇḍa there is an instance of Anasuyā giving Sītā cosmetics. In the Sundara-kāṇḍa Hanumāṇa describes the games he saw being played in the playgrounds of which Bhāntā, Tokorā and Dhopa games are specially significant. Bhāntā is played with pieces of bamboo and Tokorā is played with the crust of a coconut. In the meadows of Assam, Dhopa is still played specially after Bihu.

In the ṚMĀ there are references to various dances and dancers. The Ayodhya, Kiṣkindha, and Lanka-kāṇḍa are full of references to many musical instruments. Of these special mention may be made of Mādal (a kind of

1. Sundara-kāṇḍa, v. 355
2. Ayodhya-kāṇḍa, v. 438
3. Ṛa, 6.47.24
4. Ayodhya-kāṇḍa, v. 59
5. Sundara-kāṇḍa, v. 385
6. Aranyakaṇḍa, v. 26
7. vv. 106-108
8. v. 1117
9. v. 328
10. Ṛa, 6.18.24
dram), Biradhāka (a heavenly instrument), Dhol (drum), Habir, Rāstāl (a kind of musical instrument made of four or two pieces of split bamboo), Kartāl (a rude musical instrument composed of four pieces of split bamboo two of which are held in each hand), Tokāri (a stringed musical instrument played with the finger, like a guilar), Binā (the Indian lute), Dotarā (a musical instrument with two strings), Singa (a wind instrument made of buffalo horn), Bheri (a kind of trumpet), Dagar (a kettle drum) etc. only a few of these are to be found in Valmiki's original, the rest are typically Assamese.

Harivara Vipra, a contemporary of MK, in his Babrubāhanar Yuddha, gives a similar list of musical instruments. MK has used the words Naṭa and Naṭi, referring to dancers, in a pejorative sense. In this regard, what Sītā says, out of bitterness, when Rāma refuses to accept her before Agniparikṣā — the test of fire — after he has killed Rāvana, and when she was first asked to go rather to Bibīśāna or Laksmana: 'Treating me as if I were a Naṭinī of a Naṭa.'

This way, from a study of the RMK, we can form a comprehensive idea of the Assamese people and society of the fourteenth century and their way of life, religious faiths and beliefs, food-habits, caste-system, trades and

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1. Babrubāhanar Yuddha, ed. B.K. Barua and Maheswar Neog, Vv. 56-57
2. Rs, 6.50.55
professions, industries, fruits and flowers, birds and beasts, administrative system and political ideas, etc. This is not an exact replica of the society depicted in Vālmīki's Rāmāyana, but is not entirely removed from Aryan society and culture either. Right from the beginning of the first century A.D. Aryans made inroads into Assam, and their culture, region and social mores had started influencing the Assamese. This, naturally, came in contact with and at places clashed with the local tribal cultures. The society described in the RMK is a reflection of the end result of this intermixing. While taking the Aryan civilisation as the principal trend, we also get to know about the typically regional variations and mores from a study of the RMK.

Thus, the present study while making an attempt to restore the original version of Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyana on the basis of a close critical analysis of the text has also been concerned with revealing the various aspects of the contemporary Assamese life and society as depicted in the RMK. The detailed study of Kandali's style, diction, translation, metre etc. etc. is directed towards establishing the fact that the interpolations and insertions into his text in later periods clouded to a considerable extent the

1. Maheswar Neog, Purapi Asamiya Samajaru Sanskriti, 1966, p. 3
originality of Kendall's version. Therefore, the necessity of a text critical study has assumed an importance today not only for restoring an early Assamese version of the Ramayana lore in its pristine form but also for getting a comprehensive idea of the contemporary Assam, and the RMK in this respect has served as a reliable document of considerable historical importance.
A. SOURCE MATERIALS

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Kandali, Madhava, complete Ayodhya-kanda (Br). Collected from Beláśar and kept at DHAS, MS No 950, undated

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Kandali, Mādhava, complete Sundara-kānda (N), Nowgong MS. Dated Saka 1730 (ca A.D. 1808)

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Kandali, Mādhava, complete Sundara-kānda (S₃), Sundarīdiyā-sattra MS. Dated Saka 1651 (ca A.D. 1729)
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Kandali, Mādhava, incomplete Sundara-kānda (S), Sundaridīyā- sattra MS. Undated

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