CHAPTER - III
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3.00  THE BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION
OF KRISHNA ANECDOTE IN THE
SURMA-BARAK VALLEY

The folklore and folksongs about Lord Krishna may be regarded as the perennial source of sweetness from which all types of Bengalee people, rich and poor, devotees and thoughtful, spiritual aspirant and honest--drew the stuff that satisfied the thirst of their minds in the ancient and medieval periods.¹ The Krishna folklore prevails not only in Surma-Barak valley but also in other parts of India. One example in Hindi may be cited from the famous devotional poet Suradas:

मैं नहीं माखन खायों।²

Lord Krishna is the incarnation of Almighty God -- such is the belief of the common people belonging to the Hindu religion. The flow of Yamuna which is known as the most favourite spot of Krishna’s playful activities, has been mixed with the currents of the Padma; this blending has been effected through the folklore about Krishna; the Benglee of East Bengal have bathed themselves in this united flow; and this sweet flow has softened and united minds of the people of the Surma-Barak Valley, and it has enriched the folk-music, tunes and tones. Hence a bard of this Valley uttered in boundless wonder কোনাই তুমি খেইড় খেলাও কেন ?³ The life and activities of Krishna possesses wonderful charming power and constitute a very powerful attraction for the minds of Bengalees of this Valley in a variety of form. Our search is here for the source and nature of the vast influence of Krishna, the story of his life and activities, on the mind and thinking of the Bengalees of this valley, and this search automatically leads us to a deeper perusal.
3.01 The Beginning of the Aryan Brahminical Influence and the Custom of Five Types of Worship (Panchopasana) :-

It is mentioned in the beginning of this thesis that during the pre-Christian period, this Surma-Barak Valley was inhabited by people belonging the Austrikt, the Dravidian and Bhot-Burmese stocks. In course of time the life style and ideals of these non-Aryan people were tremendously affected by those of the well-organised and well-disciplined Aryan society. Frequent conflict took place between the Aryans and non-Aryans, Being defeated, the non-Aryans took shelter in hilly regions. The observation of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in this context is worth mentioning.

“The early history of Sylhet is not known, but it would appear that the fertile Surma Valley area attracted Aryan speaking settlers from west, Dacca and Mymonsingh and beyond and the Aryan language spread in the wake of the spread of Agriculture Communities; and in this way a wave of Aryan language was spread through the plain lands of Sylhet....”4

The observation reveals the fact that with arrival of the Aryans, Agriculture spread in the Surma-Barak Valley.

The Brahmins played an important role in the spread of agriculture in this Valley. Mr. Ramsharan Sharma has shown in his book entitled ‘Sudras in Ancient India’ that when the number of Brahmins in an area increased, they would approach individually or in a body, the king or the rulers for land to be used as a means or source of livelihood and the kings or the rulers would donate fallow or uncultivated land to them.5 This practice prevailed in a remarkable manner in the eastern part of India, and the proof of this practice is sufficiently supplied by a numbers of copper-plate inscriptions and stone-inscriptions discovered in various places of this part of India. It has been learnt from the Copper-plate inscription found at Nidhanpur in Sylhet district that Bhutivarma, King of Kamrup (500 A.D - 550 A.D) donated land to more than two hundred Brahmins in Chandrapur vishaya (a district) for the maintenance once and management of the establishment known as ‘Mayurshalmali
Agrahara.\textsuperscript{6} Besides this the Copper plate inscription found at Pashimbhag supplies information that King Srichanda had donated land to about six thousand Brahmins with a view to propitiating gods like Brahma, Agni, Yogeshwara, Jaimini and Mahakala.\textsuperscript{7} In the Seventh Century Tripura King Adi Dharmafa, with the purpose of performing vedic scarifies, brought from Mithila five Brahmins belonging to five vedic clan (Katyayana, Kashyapa, Maudgulya, Swarnakausika and Gautama) and donated land to them in the area adjacent to the vast expanse of low lying land which goes by the name of Hakaluki at present. These five Brahmins were well versed in the vedic knowledge. Their names were Srinanda, Ananda, Gobinda, Sripati and Purushottama.\textsuperscript{8} This information is contained in the following reference.

\textit{প্রতীচামূত্রস্যাং বক্তগা ক্রেশিরা।}
\textit{দক্ষিণাস্থাং পুষ্পস্যাং হাঙ্গা কৌকিকপূর্মী।।}
\textit{তনাধ্যাং সশস্যা যা টেঙ্গী কুর্কিকরিঁত।}
\textit{প্রালভা দত তত্তুমি ত্যেষু পঞ্চপতিক্ষ।।}

In this way social and religious needs brought about the settlement of Brahmins in the Surma-Barak valley and priestly culture developed extensively in this Valley. And all this resulted from the generous donations and benevolence of the King of this region. There is the reference, in the celebrated book \textit{Srihatter Itibritta} by Achyut Charan Choudhury, to the settlement of the Brahmins belonging to ten clans in this Valley. The clans are, Vatsya, Vatsya, Bharadvaja, Krishnatreya, Parashara, Kashyapa, Maudagulya, Swarnakaushika and Gautama.\textsuperscript{10} The arrival and settlement of the Brahmins in this Valley thus created the background of the vedic-based worship of Gods and goddesses and simultaneously helped in the inclusion, modification, reformation or transformation of the non-Aryan system of worship in the Aryan fold.

It is an admitted fact that the rich Indian culture is the out come of the glorious tradition of the Vedic civilization and culture.\textsuperscript{11} The rich Indian culture has two branches-solar and lunar cultures.\textsuperscript{12} Noticing the widespread influence of the solar culture on
the lives of the people of India, Hare Krishna Mukhopadhaya observes that, this culture gave rise to the system of counting from one to ten as well as the science of applied astrology that covers discussion on the influence of different planets, stars, months, days, fortnights, years on the lives of men.\textsuperscript{13} It is the scientific fact that the sun is the eternal source of energy that controls, dominates, regulates and moulds the existence of all animate and inanimate things and beings of our known universe. Life and dynamism are ultimately derived from the sun. The rays of the sun are every moment fertilizing and giving life, both manifest and unmanifested, to everything of this world:

>| তাহ অলো আসে নভোতল ছেয়ে     |
| দেবতার আশীর্বতীরপূর্বে, আর সে প্রবণ পেয়ে  |
| জাগে তৃষ্ণ, জাগে পৃথিবী, অপন ভেঙে জাগে নিবিদিণ্ড  |
| সবই একই উৎস থেকে প্রাগরস করে আহরণ।\textsuperscript{14} |

An analysis of the cultural and socio-economic history of India shows that the cultivators have all along been dependent on the sun for good and easy cultivation. Agriculture has close and inseparable relation with the sun which is the root of drought, rainfall, moisture, temperature, heat and everything that directly and indirectly influence agriculture. That is why the herdsmen and cultivators in ancient India looked upon the sun as one of their chief and favourite Gods for worship. Thus the sun-cult tremendously influenced the agriculture-based culture of ancient India. The role of the sun was not at all significant in the regions unsuitable for agriculture; the influence of the moon was most dominant in such regions, and the people there were food-gatherers, not food-producers.\textsuperscript{15} In this way a kind of clash developed between the sun cult and the moon-cult, which inevitably resulted in to social polarisation. The observation made by Bertrand Russel has some relevance to this type of development in society:

“All though it rash to attribute any degree of rationality to primitive civilisation, it never the less difficult to resist the conclusion that the victory of the sun worshipers
wherever occurred; it was due to the patent fact that the sun has more influence than
the moon over the crops.”\footnote{16}

The Aryans in ancient India were cultivators. A kind of cultivation mentality is
embodied in the word ‘Arya’. Jawharlal Nehru writes:

“The word ‘Arya’ comes from a root meaning ‘Italics’, and the Aryans as a
whole were good agriculturist and agriculture was considered a noble profession.”\footnote{17}

Since the Aryans were agriculturists, the unbroken tradition of the sun-cult is
conspicuously present in their thinking, mentality and consciousness. A simple
example is found in the word ‘Jyotiragarh’ (Rigveda 7/13/7). The Aryans were the
seekers after light and hence the sun-the eternal spring of light occupies the most
adorable position in religion, philosophy, thinking and mentality, and indeed in every
activity in the life of the Aryans in ancient India:

ও ভূত্ত্বং সং তৎসবিত্তবর্বেৎ
ভৃগোনিতে বীমহি বিয়ো রো নং প্রচোদয়াৎ.\footnote{18}

The verb (root) ‘Krish’ indicated the most important activity in life of the
agriculturist Aryan who built up the solar tradition and solar culture, and from this
root verb has developed the Krishna-cult and the cow-mentality. Similar positive
thinking was active in the European mind also:

“The gentle cow supports our life. Even the mother of Jesus had with her in
stable the cows of peace and plenty, when Jesus was born.”\footnote{19}

The cultural and socio-economic history of the world is essentially the history
of the clash between food-gatherers who are power mongers and the food-producers
who are agriculturists. The same history is present in India. The fight of Krishna with
Indra as recorded in the Rigveda is essentially the indicator of this conflict. Indra was
a leader of the nordic Aryans who were warriors:

“The nordic Aryans who invaded India between 1500-1200 B.C. were a nomadic
war like people.”\footnote{20}

The war-mongering mentality of Indra is reflected in his address to pratardon,
the son of Dibadas, as it is found in Kaushitaki Upanishad:

It is evident that Indra who was notorious for his domineering and war-mongering nature and activities never cared for Justice and truth. On the other hand, the concept of truth, Justice and other noble qualities were highly appreciated and cultivated by the agriculturists whose tradition and culture are represented and reflected by Gods Varuna and Vishnu. There is clear reference in the Srimadbhagvata that Krishna, with the help of Rta (Truth), succeeded in destroying the domineering influence, of the scriptures and antagonised Indra:

The wars of the later times, as narrated in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were essentially a record of the clashes and conflicts between the war-monger and the agriculturists, Rabindranath Tagore noticed the difference between the characters of Rama and Ravana as the difference between two classes:

Ram married Sita by fulfilling the essential condition of breaking the ‘Haradhanu’, Sita, according to scholars, Symbolises the deepline formed on the ground at the time of ploughing ‘The Haradhanu’ actually stands for luner culture created by war-mongers. So the breaking of the Haradhanu by Rama is essentially the defeat of the war-mongers and acceptance of Rama’s supremacy, who obtained right to possess or bring under his control the culture rooted in agriculture. Rabindranath has also shown that the rescue of Ahalya by Rama is indication of the gradual process
of turning fallow land in to cultivable and agricultural land. There goes a mythological story that Bhrigu who was a Brahmin kicked Lord Bishnu in the chest and his descendant Parashuram who had determined to perform the terrible job of exterminating all the Kings and monarchs, was dissuaded by Ram who thus strengthened the tradition of Anti-Brahminism. In the Mahabharata also we find Draupadi born of the earth, Krishna and Haladhara who stand directly for the agriculturist section of the society, and on the otherside Drunacharya, Kripacharya, Ashwathama who represent the priestly class that was in the habit of Antagonising the tradition set up by the agriculturists.24

So it can be admitted that two forces were operative in the formation of the social structure in India, and these were two conflicting forces-the force of the solar culture embodied in agriculture and the force of the lunar culture created by the antiagriculturists who worshipped Lord Shiva and his consort goddess of power. Various gods and goddess evolved from this underlying struggle in course of time, and they came to be worshipped by people. It is noticed that on the one hand there developed the communities of the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the sudras who were cultivators believing in democracy, and on the other hand, there developed the communities of the land lords and the priests who were Brahmins, and they worshiped Lord Shiva and his consort goddess of power. “The real underlying struggle is known to have been between the great feudal landlords who worshiped Shiva and his consort goddess as against the smaller but more enterprising entrepreneurs who opted for Krishna or Vishnu-Narayana.” 25

The landlords and the Brahmins who represented the food-gathering communities and the opportunist groups discovered in Shiva and his consort goddess whom they worshiped a terrible mentality of dictatorship. Because “Shiva has a rather ferocious and dangerous side to his character.”26 On the otherhand, the food-gatherers who were cultivators, derived from Krishna and Vishnu the inspiration for a life of well-being, activity and tolerance: “Vishnu is generally thought of as wholly benevolent.
The god works continuously for the welfare of the world.” In the context of the social polarisation discussed above, polarisation discussed above, it can be said that the tradition based on feudalism could never become dominant in the Surma-Barak Valley. In Nidhanpur inscription there are mentioned names of 24 nos. of Brahmins who were influenced by solar culture or ‘Saurodharma’; like :- যথা কৃষ্ণ, সোমবসু, অর্ক্ষাকাপুর, মিত্রপাণিত, বসুরিষ্ট্রী, সোম সৈন, ভাগরমিত্র, অর্ক দিনকর, শায়েন্দ্রভূতি, প্রভাকরকীর্তি, হর্ষপ্রধা, খুসোম, দিবাকর, অর্ক্ষদ্বক, সূর্য, সত্ত্বিদেব, বসু দত্ত, গায়ত্রী পাল, বসুরিষ্ট্রী, বৃহস্পতিত, ভাগরমিত্র, অর্ক্ষ প্রমুখ।

Naturally the culture centering Krishna and cow flourished here and strongly influenced the life style of the people of this Valley. Its influence is still present in the festivals of this Valley, such as Rakhal Seva, Suryavrata, Maghisaptami, Bholasankranti etc. Even the name of ‘Surma’ bears the trace of the solar culture. The root word is ‘Suramas’ which means a ‘Land of Beauty.’ It is a historical fact in the middle ages the domineering Brahmins thriving on exploitation of various types, had to face the strong wave of Bhakti movement that swept over the whole country, and a large number of the leaders of this Bhakti movement belonged to Sylhet. It is found that the number of people belonging to the Vaishnaba sect is still larger than that of the followers of the Shaktta and Shiva cult. Similarly the Vaishnavite institutions are found here in greater number than the Shaktta institutions. The census report 1901 reveals that in Sylhet region the majority of the Hindus were Vaishnabites. The total Hindu population was 1049248, and of this figure, 313522 people were Shaktas, 57571 were Shaivas and 560379 were Vaishnavites.

3.02 Transformation of Lord Vishnu in to the Worship of Lord Krishna:

Lord Krishna is the incarnation or the human form of Lord Vishnu that is worshipped by a huge number of people in India. Two images of Lord Krishna come out from the Puranas and other branches of Sanskrit literature - one is the skilled politician, diplomat, fighter, moulder of the great Mahabharata, grand propounder of the Geeta, guide of Arjuna; while the other is the dear son of Yashada, who is well-
known as vala Gopal or young Krishna who is always conjoined with Radha. This conjoined forms of Radha & Krishna is worshiped as a symbol of a metaphysical thesis Union of Lord Vishnu and the grand purusha of the Rigveda has been accomplished in conceiving the character of Lord Krishna.31

The inscription found on the body of the Gadura tower discovered at Vidisha is a valuable archaeological evidence and it is ascribed to the foreign ambassador Holeodoras. This inscription tells us that in the second century B.C. Lord Krishna was worshipped as Vishnu riding the Gadura.32 Regarding the period of this identification of Vishnu with Krishna, Hemchandra Roy Choudhury writes:

“A clear indication of the identification of Vashudeva with Narayana-Vishnu is found in the Taitiriya Aranyak................. The Aranyak probably dates from the third century B.C.”33 The Geeta also records of the identification of Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna. There is one reference where Lord Krishna says আদিত্যায় বিপুলচতুর্জ্যাতি স্বামীর্য রবিরায়ুম্মান (১০/২১) and Arjuna also addresses Lord Krishna twice as Vishnu.34 The Geeta was composed in the second century B.C. It was in the beginning of the second century B.C. that many Greek people living in Gandhar embraced the Bhagavata Dharma. But it is also true that the Brahmins did not at first favour the Bhagavata Dharma as propagated by Lord Krishna. There was one historical factor that worked behind the acceptance of Lord Krishna by the Brahmins as Lord Vishnu. Hemchandra Roy Choudhury thinks that,

অশোকের বৌদ্ধধর্ম প্রচারের ফলে ব্রাহ্মণরা আদিত্যায় ভাগবত সম্প্রদায়ের সনে স্বামী স্থান করতে বাধা হয়েছিল বাসুদেব-কৃত্ত বিপুলচতুর্জ্যাতি আরোপ করেন।35

The historians think that though the worshippers of Lord Vishnu were regarded as Vaishnavas in later period, they were not followers of the Bhakti cult. The worshippers of Lord Krishna who believe in the incarnation of Krishna are the real Vaishnavites in the modern sense of the term. The Christian eras supply abundant evidence of the plentiful existence of the worshippers of Lord Krishna. The famous book Buddhacharita written by Ashwaghoose contains description of Krishna’s playful
activities with the Gopa-women, and similar description are available in Kalidasa’s poetry also. The Vaishnavite sect known as the Alwars developed in South India in the 5th and 6th centuries, and the predominance of Vasudeva-Krishna is glaringly noticed in their worship.36

The identification of Vishnu with Krishna or Narayana with Vashdeva has been re-evaluated a new light in the Bengal Vaishnavism as propagated by Srichaitanya, in which this identification is endowed with a new philosophical meaning, dignity, glory and significance. The followers of Bengal Vaishnavism think that the difference in the external appearance of the object of worship leads to the difference in naming:

মণিতাবিভাগ নীলগিতাদিকিভূতঃ।
রপ্পোলাভপ্রাপ্তি ধ্যানভোগতাত্তুত।।

Krishna, Shyama, Hari, Govinda, Madhava, Gopala these names are very favourite ones to the Bengal Vaishnavas. Narayana and Vasudeva are the luxury-embodiment of Lord Krishna, and the Lord Vishnu is the qualified part - incarnation of Lord Krishna, Krishnadas Kaviraj writes :

অবতারীর দেহে সব অবতারের হিতি।
কেহো কোন রূপ কহে, যার যেমন মতি।।
কৃষ্ণকে কহো কেহ নর নারায়ণ।
কেহো কহো কৃষ্ণ হএ সাক্ষাৎ বামন।১৮

This was how Lord Krishna was portrayed as perfect incarnation (Avatari) by the Vaisgnavite philosophers, and this immensely influenced the people’s mind in the contemporary period; and this influence was very strong and irresistible in entire Bengal.

3.03 The Influence of Newly Developed Vaishnavism in Bengal (Vaishnavism of Srichaitanya and Its Influence):

Whatever might be the indirect cause of the prevalence and widespread popularity of Krishnalaore in the Surma-Barak Valley, the most powerful and active
one is Srichaitanya (1486-1533) himself (1486-1533). By birth, Srichaitanya was an inhabitant of Nadia and he passed his life as a Sannyashi in Utkal\(^9\) (now Odisa) and spent the closing years of his life there also. But Sylhet was the location of the houses of his father, maternal uncle and even of his father-in-law.\(^{40}\) Besides this, a major portion of his followers and the preachers of his religious views belonged to Sylhet.\(^{41}\) Hence it was quite natural that the wave of Srichaitanya’s religion most powerfully swept this region, people imbibed spontaneously the ideas of Srichaitanya. In this connection, let us discuss Srichaitanya’s relation with Sylhet and the spread and influence of his religion in this region.

Regarding the dwelling place of the forefathers of Chaitanya, it is learnt that his great grandfather Madhukar Misra settled at a place known as Burunga or Baraganga which is located on the bank of the Kushiara in Sylhet area, and this settlement occurred in consequence of matrimonial relation.\(^{42}\) Upendra Misra was one of the sons of Madhukar Misra, and he shifted to a place known as Dhaka dakshin which is at some distance in the north from the Kushiara.\(^{43}\) There is the direct reference to Upendra Misra in *Srichaitanyakaritamitra*:

\[ \text{শ্রীহট্ট নিবাসী শ্রী উপেন্দ্র মিশ্র নাম।} \\
\text{বৈষ্ণব পস্তিত ধনী সন্তুষ্ট প্রধান।} \]

Upendra Misra was a Vaishnava scholar and his wife was Shobha Devi. Their fifth son (3rd son according to some)\(^{45}\) Jagannath Mishra migrated to Nabadweep for receiving higher education and settled there permanently. Jagannath Mishra was married to Shachidevi. She was the daughter of Nilambar Chakraborty who was an inhabitant of a village known as Joypur which is situated in Taraf division of Sylhet.\(^{46}\) This Nilambar Chakraborty later settled in Nabadweep. The youngest son of Jagannath-Shachi was Nimai (other name was Vishvambhar) who became known as Srichaitanya in later times. Nimai spent the entire period of his childhood in Nabadweep where he came in touch with the people from Sylhet and often played jokes on them. The jokes were, of course, all childish. Vrindaban Das records:
This utterance clearly indicates the influence of Sylhet on Srichaitanya. Vallabhacharya, the father of Lakshmidevi who was the first wife of Srichaitanya, also emigrated from Sylhet. Among those who emigrated from Sylhet to Nabadweep, the most notable personalities were Adwaita Acharya belonging to Nabagram of Lauda, Murarigupta of Dulali, Raghunath Shiromani and Sribas Pandit of Panchakhanda, Jadunath Kavichandra and others. Besides these, Vrindaban Das tells us that may other Vaishnava stalwarts like Krishnapada, Makaranda, Krishnanandajiba, Jadunath Kabi Mishra, Sriram Pandit, Srichandra Shekhar Deb and others originally belonged to Sylhet. That is why Dr. Wakil Ahmed observes:


g16

A poet of Maymansingh sings -


g16

According to Premvilas by Nityananda, the village known as Purnipat falling into Sylhet, was the birthplace of Madhavendra Puri who was the spiritual guru of Srichaitanya’s two spiritual guides Ishwar Puri and Keshava Bharati. After the death of his wife, Madhavendra Puri first went to Bishnupur and then to Vrindavan. This Madhavendra Puri extensively influenced Srichaitanya and his close associates.

Navadweep was certainly the centre of the revolutionary religious movement introduced by Srichaitanya. During the period of Srichaitanya and the period immediately preceding, the people of Navadweep lived a life of unlimited luxury arrogance and pride born of unlimited money, wealth and affluence. It was a completely irreligious life. The profession of a priest was meant for nothing but earning money, and the gorgeous arrangement for worship was only an exhibition of strong attachment to vile worldliness. This was the sure proof of total degradation
and degeneration in the field of morality and religion:

* Dharmar gnanir ana poota holo jibaner gnan -- uga aarhanitik joseitya. Tathokar narodip eta moulamoot sheharangal ak shreechharon dhuna o bilashche maanosh-jibon yapaner kendra hoyo uttho thil.*

Undeniable proof of this condition of life and society is beautifully supplied by Vrindavan and Lochandas:

1. Dharm korm lok sabor eimah jhane.
   Mangalchhrii gite kore jagaran.
   Dantu kari bishoari pujjo kovan jhane.
   Puokali korayo kehe dia bahe dhane.

2. Na sounilo koshnam sansar amishya.
   Nijamde molok tomar pasharinya.
   Ahahare moj furnished samborlak.
   Koshkheen lok dekhi heil moar soka.

Those who ('sradhan ti prasade sabor mahadak') dealt with scriptures opened centres of learning (Chatuspathis), but these were all centres of dry learning and fruitless debate. Under the circumstances, Navadweep cannot be said to have been a place where the tradition of Vaishnavism was powerful. In this context:

Narbonoir prabati shrihitayra bishvon dharme prati anuraghi hoyar be prabhati dekheyilo thil tare jibone deo adi bhaschhumi anrtaa somma-borak uplagakar dhmiyo athishe prabano okta karmkaron sanshob thil eamon anumon aangsaghat jhore na.

All the recognised materials required for the composition of Chaitanyacharita include a reference to Sylhet and East Bengal, but all the biographers are silent about Srichaitanya’s coming to Sylhet. His ancestral home has been neglected by his biographers, just as his wife Vishnupriya is neglected. The same fate occurred to
Urmila in the Ramayana. Facts regarding this unenlightened topic can be collected from writings like Chaitanyakamangal by Joyananda, Chaitanyakamangal by Lochandas Gauranga Vijoy by Chudamoni Das which edited by Dr. Sukumar Sen, Premvilas by Nityananda Das, Murarigupta’s Kadacha, Manasantashini by Jagajjiban Mishra, Chaitanyakavilas by Ramsharan Deb, Adwaita Prakash by Ishan Nagar, Srichaitanya Ratnabali by Rambhadrara etc.

Reference to Srichaitanya’s travel to East Bengal and some description of this travel are found in the two oldest source books- Srichaitanya Charitamrita and Srichaitanyabhagavata one example may be cited here:

তবে কতদিনে ইচ্ছাময় ভগবন।
বঙ্গদেশ দেখিয়ে ইচ্ছা হীল তান।

A description of Srichaitanya’s desire for travel to East Bengal and Sylhet is available in the book entitled Chaitanya Mangal by Lochandas:

একদিনে প্রভু কহিলেন আচ্ছিনত।
পূর্বদেশে যাব আমি সক্রিয়ক হিতে॥
পান্তরঞ্জিত দেশ সক্রিয়কে গায়।
গন্ধ হিংসা গন্ধ নহে এই শিক্ষা তায়॥
আমার পরে পন্ডিতত্বী হইবে ধন্য।
সক্রিয়জন আমা বহি না জানিবে অন্য॥

Besides this, these was his desire for earning money মায়েরে কহিল যাব ধন উপার্জনে।59 Gauranga Vijoy by Chudamoni Das and Premvilas by Nityananda tell us that Srichaitanya came to Sylhet in course of his travel to East Bengal. This fact is also supported by scholars such as Dr. Sukumar Sen, Kshudiram Das, Yajneshwar
Choudhury. There is a book entitled ‘Santanirnaya’ by Krishnabharati which contains a reference to Srichaitanya’s visit to the shrine of Hazo during his travel to East Bengal. According to the facts supplied by Premlal Srichaitanya came to Sylhet and he came by the river Padma because it was during his stay on the Padma that he desired for visiting Sylhet:

কিছুদিন থাকি প্রভু ভাবিলা মনেতে।
যাইতে হইল মোর শ্রীহট দেশেতে।।
পিতৃ-জননীস্য পিতামহের দেশিযা।
পরাতীরে বাট আসিব চলিযা।।

There is also a beautiful description of Chaitanya’s travel to Sylhet:

রথপূর্ণে লাদলবনে করেন স্নান তপন।
লোচিতাকে নানারঙে করেন তুবন।।

তথা হইতে মহাপ্রভু বিঘটে আইলা।
যেইস্থানে পরদৃশ্য যজ করাইছিলা॥
সেইস্থানে প্রভু কৈলেন স্নানী তপন।
এখানে সিভূর দেশ পরে উপস্থিত হন।

Srichaitanya first went to Burunga in Sylhet and meet his grandfather Upendra Mishra and his grandmother there. The particular location where Srichaitanya stayed in Burunga came to be known as the home of Chaitanya at one period. At the time of departure, Srichaitanya gave two wooden images to his loving grandmother and said “পালিয়ামি ভবৎ পৌত্রম সসত্তানানিহ স্থিত।”

Regarding Srichaitanya’s travel to Sylhet, scholars differ in their opinions. Some opine that during his pre-sannyas and post-sannyas life, Srichaitanya visited Sylhet at least twice. In the recent period Dr. Baniprasanna Mishra has his own surmise
that Srichaitanya came to Dhakadakshin in Sylhet on the first Sunday of March in the year 1515. This scholar depends upon hear says, festivals commemorating Srichaitanyas coming to Sylhet and some other factors.67 Achyutcharan Choudhury, collecting proof from a book entitled *Sat-Sampradaya Katha* written in Assames (15th Century) has shown that from Dhakadakshin, Srichaitanya went to Hazo.68 The well known *Chaitanya Gopha* still carries the memory of Srichaitanya.

It can be said without any doubt that the travel of Srichaitanya to Sylhet left a far reaching effect on the life of the people of this region. Some think that Vaishnavism was first introduced and preached in Sylhet by Tapan Mishra, an inhabitant of Sylhet.69 Adwaita Acharya engaged his disciple Ishan Nagar in preaching Vaishnavism in Lauda region.

तुमি मोर प्रिय शिष्या आरज समाने।
मोर अगोचरे दुःख ना राखियो मने॥
गौरनाम प्रचारिह मोर जन्माहाने।70

At the call of Adwaita, Dibya Singha, the king of Lauda, embraced Vaishnavism, went to Shantipur and in later period came to be known as the Krishnadas of Lauda:

श्रीहट्टे देशेर राजा वैष्णव हইল।
এই রাজা বৈষ্ণবের দেশী ছিল বড়।॥
বৈরাগী হেঞ্জা প্রাতুর কৃপা পাইল দুঃ।71

It is learnt from the book entitled ‘Rasatattwavilas’ by Ramananda that Srichaitanya had sent Jnanvara and Kalyanvara to Hedamba Kingdom, later known as Cachadi Kingdom which was located to the east of Sylhet, and Ramdas and Madhavdas to the community of the Hajongs who dwelt at Susanga-Durgapur in the border areas of Mymansing, for preacing his religion of love.72 Since the time of king Chitom Khomba, after 1759, the people of Manipur began to be inspired by Vaishnavism and
also began to embrace it.73 Govinda Manikya, King of Tripura was also inspired by Vaishnavism.74 These data tells us clearly that Srichaitanya’s Vaishnavism expanded over the boundaries of greater Surma-Barak-Valley and touched Manipur, Tripura and the hilly region of Cachar.

The rule of an institutional religion is গুরুজনায় একে করে ভক্তত্ব ভাগ করে।75 From Srichaitanya’s Vaishnavism sprang up three sects of Vaishnavites in Sylhet region, and they go by the names of Kishoribhajan, Jaganmohan and Brahmanandi.76

**The Kishoribhajan sect:**

The Kishoribhajan sect believes differently from the pure Vaishnavites. “Each worshipper devotes himself to a woman whom he considers as his spiritual guide and with whose help he expects to secure solvation of his soul.”77

**The Jaganmohini sect:**

The Jaganmohini sect was founded by Jaganmohan Goswami who was the disciple of Gopinath an inhabitant of Vagnasur. The chief shrine of this group of the Vaishnavites is the centre of Vithangal.78

**The Brahmanandis sects:**

The Brahmanandis are the disciples of one Brahmananda, a Vaishnava belonging to a place called Kachuarpar in Chapghat area. They have a lot of similarity with the Jaganmohan group.79

The consequence of the evolution of different sects among the neo-vaishnavism is establishment of a large number of Vaishnavite centres (II) which go by the local names of ‘thaan’ and ‘akhdas’ in various places of the Surma-Barak valley.
1. **Thakurbadi**:

   The oldest of these centres is the temple located at Dhakadakshin which was the birth place of Srichaitanya’s father, and it is the chief and the most well known centre. It is called Thakurbadi. It was built probably by Dewan Golabram in 1740. There is the mention of its importance in ‘Vishvakosh- “Dhakadakshin is known as famous shrine in Sylhet and it is regarded as the hidden Vrindavan”

2. **Panathirtha and Adwaita Akhada**:

   Adwaita Acharya built the shrine of Pana for fulfilling his mother’s (Nabhadevi’s) desire for pilgrimage. A story goes that by his wonderful yoga powers Adwaita created a waterfall out of a hard rock at Lauda:

   
   ![Image](image1)

   In the year 1898 one Gokul Chandra Das built one vaishnavite centre called Adwaita Akhada in the birth place of Adwaita. “At Nayagoan in Sunamganj has recently been started in the honour of Adwaita, one of Chaitanya followers”

3. **Vithangal Akhada**:

   It was founded by Ramkrishna Gosai. This Akhada belongs to the Jaganmohini sect.

4. **Jogaltila Akhada**:

   It was established about 200 years ago in the middle of Sylhet town. The present temple of this famous centre is a construction of much later period.
3.04 Krishna-Lore Grown Under Royal Patronage:

It is a wellknown fact that, literature, art, culture, architecture, sculpture, religion etc. developed greatly under the patronage of kings, emperors, members of royal courts and powerful and rich persons belonging to the aristocratic section of society. In this connection Shusking observes in his book *The Sociology of Literarary Taste*—“......The history of literature is a large part of the history of the beneficence of individual princes and aristocrats.”

The history of the Literature of old and medieval periods are, in a sense, a history of the patronage of King and aristocratic persons. In respect of literature, art and culture, king was the only source of money and bread. All artists and literary persons had to depend upon kings for sustenance. The term ‘King’ includes Kings, emperors, landlords, members of royal courts, ministers rich and powerful persons.

When a poet was welcomed in a royal court he could achieve recognition, appreciation, respect and high status and fame. Kings would maintain poets in their courts, because the poets would sing in praise of the Kings and rulers. The ministers of Kings also followed the same custom.

Traces have been there of such poets and singers of praise since the Vedic period. Such singers were called the ‘Sutas’ in the *Rigveda* which contains reference to ‘Sutas’ singing of fame and heroic achievements of various kings and rulers. The 14th Hymn of the 18th Sukta under the 7th Mandal of the Rigveda contains a reference to the fight fought by king Sudas against Tutsuda, and Sudas’s victory in this fight. The *Shatapatha Brahmana*, in connection with a description of the “Ashwamedha Yajna” prescribes a direction that the Brahmins should sing by day and the Kshatriyas by night.

The same tradition continued in the age of the Mahabrata also. In Bengal, a court poet of King Lakshman Sen was given rich prizes for composing the epic entitled *Pavan Duta* and the prizes consisted of a stick made of gold, an elephant and title ‘Kaviraj’. One Sloka by Umapati Dhar tells us that Trailokya Chandra, king of Harikel and the father of Srichandra who was one of the famous rulers of Bengal, rewarded
his court poet with a rich donation of vast land property for composing Chandra Chuda Charita. Maladhar Basu was awarded the title of ‘Gunaraj Khan’ by the ruler of Bengal. Besides, Kavindra Parameswar and Srikar Nandi were the court poet of the Chitagang rulers Paragal Khan and Chhuti Khan respectively. There was the trend of discussion on Scriptures, Puranas, histories and religion in the royal courts of Tripura, Kamrup, Kuchbhar and this was conducted entirely under royal patronage. It was from this type of discussion and culture in royal courts that religious faith and spiritual ideas would develop in the minds of Kings and rulers.

The trend of religious and literary discussion and culture in royal court existed in the Surma-Barak Valley also. An atmosphere of scholarly discussion prevailed in the royal courts of Heromba Kingdom and Jayantia Kingdom, and that was the source of the religious beliefs of the Kings of these countries. Though unfortunately there has been no written record of the existence of such a trend in these Kingdoms, we can form some idea about it from scattered sources like booklets and long-prevailing stories and folktales.

3.05 The Royal Court of Heramba Kingdom:

The Kings of Heramba had been under the influence of Shaiva and Shakta religions for long. The goddess worshipped in the royal family was ‘Ranachandi’. The temple of Ranachandi is extant at Kashpur which was once the capital of the Heramba Kings. It needs to be mentioned here that Ranachandi was not any goddess, it was just a sword like that of Shivaji, which goes by the name of ‘Bhavani’ and like that of the Ahoms which was known as Hengdung. Along with this sword, other gods and goddesses were also worshipped here, and there were also the cruel practice of human sacrifice. There is also the proof of the parallel existence of Vaishnavism and the tradition of worshipping Lord Vishnu. Achyut Charan Choudhury writes:

डिमाङ्गने ऐहैर राज सिंहासन अधानहर करिनेन बिसूर अंश बलिया
परबनरौजाले तहाराइ नारायण उपाधि धारण करिनेन।

91
92
93
Padmanath Vidyavinode has referred to one stone - built temple and described it as Vishnumandapa. This temple is believed to have been built during the reign of King Harishchandra Narayana. King Biradarpanarayana was a worshipper of Lord Vishnu, and the tradition of Vaishnavism can be guessed easily from his Conch marked with the images of ten Avataras, which was constructed in 1671. By citing lines from Sankardevacharita written by Kanthabhusan, Padmanath Vidyavinode shows that a messenger sent by the Heramba King put the most earnest appeal to Shankardeva:

ছেড়ন দেশর রাজা পঞ্চাইছে আমাক।
অনেক ভক্তি ভাবে তোমাকে নিবাক।

This indicates the depth of devotion and respect of the Heramba Kings for the Vaishnava religion. Upendra Chandra Guha mentions that during the region of king Krishnachandra (1780-1813) Vaishnavite gods and goddesses such as Madanmohan, Lakshmi-Narayan etc were worshipped in the royal palace with pomp and grandeur along with the Shakta gods and goddesses. In 1790 King Krishnachandra Narayana performed one ceremony known as Mahadanam Hiranyagarbha as celebrated in Matsyapurana. In this ceremony Lord Vishnu and Lokapala are involved, hymns are chanted and one gold vessel having the shape of a lotus and high to the measurement of seventy two fingers. All holy rites are performed and best regards are tendered by prostrating on the ground and chanting the following hymn:

নমঃ হিরণ্যার্ঘ্যে হিরণ্যাক্ষচায় ।
সপ্তৌক্সান্তাঽধুনাং গায়ে নমঃ নম:।

Besides, the expression Shri Shri Harisharanam is contained in all royal deeds of donation and letters. The regular worship of Lord Vishnu and various Vaishnavite ceremonies such as Jhulan, Dol, Rathayatra, Maharas etc were held with
pomp and grandeur in the royal house, and there are clear evidences of this.\textsuperscript{100}

Evidence is there of the prevalence of Vaishnavite thinking and culture since the time of Surdarpanarayana. Poet Chandra Mohan Varman who was a contemporary of King Krishnachandra, writes a poem in praise of the King:

\begin{center}
\textit{সুরদোপ মহারাজ মহাপুণাবান।}
\textit{প্রতিদিন গুরু রাজা ভালবত পুরাণ।।}
\textit{পুরাণ পঠন করে গুরু মহাশয়।}
\textit{পাতামিত্র সহ রাজা প্রবন্ধ করয়।} \textsuperscript{101}
\end{center}

It was because of King Suradarpa’s attachment to Vaishnavism that the practice of human sacrifice was stopped in the royal house during his time. At the order of Chandraprabha Devi, the mother of the king, Bhubaneswar Vachaspati accomplished the verse translation of \textit{Narada Puran}. The translation goes by the name of \textit{Shri Naradiya Rasamrita}. The Book circulation committee of Silchar Normal school got the book printed in 1942, and it was edited by Pramada Charan Bandyopadhyaya.\textsuperscript{102} The book contains, in addition to panegyric for the king, various mythological stories, different rules prescribed for living different stages and periods of life, glorification of various vratas, various rites, meant for atonement and for Shraddha ceremony, devotion of Lord Hari, various ways for attaining salvation etc. This rare book has again been printed and published by Parul Prakashani one in 2007 and it has been edited by Sri Amalendu Bhattacharjee. The Brahmapurana was also translated in Bengali under the patronage of King Suradarpa Narayana. Unfortunately the complete version of the book has not been found; some translated portions and closing portion of the book have been referred to by Upendra Chandra Guha.\textsuperscript{103}

There was the practice of holding musical performance at the royal court. The kings themselves would compose songs. Suradarpa Narayana, Ramchandra Narayana and Krishnachandra Narayana-these three kings composed songs of Shakta religion. In later times, the Vaishnavite thinking and feeling became dominant in the songs composed by king Govindra Chandra Narayana. He was the last king of Cachar dynasty.
He has given expression to his passionate urge for self-surrender to Lord Hari in a song composed in Bhatiall Rag.

हा रे मन दिन गोल हरि बल ना। धु
प्राणভাই! ধর্মরাজ অনুচ্ছে বাঁধিয়া নিবে তোমারে
তাতে আছে অনেক যত্ন। 104

An anlysis of the song reveals that merciless fate has compelled him to enter into an agreement with the British and thus he has been able to get himself reinstated on the royal throne. Now he has been able to realise that he has been turned into a plaything in the hands of the British. A profound sense of sorrow and regret generates thinkings of renunciation of worldly affairs and repentance for not singing the name of God, which he now realises to be the essence of life and the world.105

The kings would learn and study Sanskrit Scriptunes and the Puranas. Govinda Chandra’s father Krishnachandra was a good scholar in sanskrit and a religious minded person. Drawing entirely upon Raspanchhyadyaya of the Bhagavata, Krishnachandra composed a book entitled Maharasa and the book testifies to cultured reifind taste of the King.

রাস পঞ্চায়িত অবলম্বনে ইনি (কৃষ্ণচন্দ্র) বসন্তায় মহারাস নামক যে গীত রচনা
করিয়া গিয়াছেন ইহা অতীত সূচীবৃত হইয়াছে। 106

Later research has proved the book to be the work of Gobinda Chandra himself. Upendra Chandra Guha has mentioned that King Krishnachandra wrote two books entitled Rasilamrita and Vasanla Vihar. These two books are now not available.107

Govinda Chandra’s book Maharasa is written on themes related to Vaishnavite feelings and ideas. The book gives clear indication of the introduction and spread of Vashnavite festival of Rasa and songs and dances. This fact has been clearly referred to by Upendra Chandra Guha.

গোবিন্দ নারায়ণ প্রজানিদের মনোরঞ্জনার্থ সম্প্রুত রাসপঞ্চায়িত অবলম্বনে রাসগীত
রচনা করিয়া রাজ্যান্ধ্রে রাসোপল, নৃতায়ীত প্রভূতি প্রবর্তন করিলেন। 108

Gobinda Chandra has presented in brief the entire portion of the ‘Raspanchadhya’ of the Bhagavata in his book:
Also a few slokas have been collected from the book entitled *Sri Krishna Karnamrita* and other Vaishnavite books. After portraying the proper Vaishnavite background and celebrating the proper Vaishnavite ideals in the introduction to the book, Govinda Chandra has composed verses dealing with Lord Gauranga:

रजधाम बासश्रूषी स्नियिस कातर।
बाक्य नाहि स्मरे प्रभु भावे ज्ञार ज्ञार।।
श्री गेहराद कृष्णचन्द्र लीलामृत रसे।
श्री गोबिन्दचन्द्र नृप करे जानि भासे।

He maintains the attitude of true Vaishnavism and the ideal of the *Bhagavata* all through out and lastly visualises in his minds eye the Raslila of Sri Krishna with a charmed mind:

राति उपासुर्ज नारी  कृष्णाहामोदिता नारी
निजालये गत कृष्णप्रिया।
श्री गोबिन्दचन्द्र नृप  उत्तर रस कदाप्राप्त
मनोरम पुरायानू हृप्प।।

Govinda Chandra also collected many songs which are sung on the occassion of the Hindu Sraddha Ceremony. These songs were published by Nalini Kumar Varman in the form of a book in the Bengali year 1378. This book contains 38 songs composed on Goshtthalila and Namakarana of Sri Krishna. Thus it is clearly understood that the Hill state of Hedamba Kingdom and particularly the kings of this land were tremendously influenced by the irresistible current of ideas and thinkings generated by the engulfing Vaishnavism of Lord Srichaitanya in East Bengal and particularly in greater Sylhet.

3.06 **Jayantiya Royal Court**:

The influence of the Shakta and the Shaiva cult was there in the Jayantiya royal
family. But there was also some trace of Vaishnavite devotion and the tradition of the Krishnalore in the family. King Kamdeva ascended the throne of Jayantiya in the eleventh century. He invited to his court a scholar-poet named Kaviraj from the capital of Munjaraja who was the king of the country of Malava. Being inspired by king Kamdeva, this poet composed a book entitled Raghavapandaviya.\textsuperscript{113} In the early part of the eighteenth century king Bada Gohain (1731-1770) and his wife Kashwasati formally accepted vaishnavism by being the direct disciples of one Brahmin called Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya.\textsuperscript{114} In 1790 Ramsingha (ii) became the king of Jayantiya, Nityananda Goswami initiated Ramsingha in to Vaishnavism, and in 1806, the king installed the twin image of Radha and Krishna and engaged his guru in the job of worshipping the image.\textsuperscript{115} Queen Kashwasati had profound faith in and deep devotion to Vaishnavism. She offered a land grant of a large area in Dharmapur Mouza for the maintenance of the worship of Lord Vasudeva and Lord Jagannatha.\textsuperscript{116}

Rajendra Singha became the king in 1832 after the death of Ramsingha. He had also profound faith in Vaishnavism and remained most of his time engaged in singing the name of Lord Hari. He also composed many Vaishnavite songs. Two lines from one of the Jhulan songs composed by him are cited here:

\begin{quote}
ঘুরে ঘুরে একশশ বাজে
দুয়ে খোলনা কুলালে।\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

The king himself would sing and there was much demand for ‘Kirtan’ in the royal court. This has been clearly mentioned by Achyut Charan Chowdhury. The author also says that,

\begin{quote}
জয়স্তীয়ায় কীর্তনের বিশেষ সমাদর ছিল, কাজেই কীর্তনী পদবী ও সন্তানিত ছিল। \textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}
3.07 Tripura Royal family:

Like the Kachari or Jayantia royal family the Tripure royal family also adhered to Shakta and Shaiva cults, The entry of Vaishnava thinking in this family took place in the pre-chaitanya period. Devanath Bandyopadhyaya observes that,

ঢিপুরার রাজারা প্রথম দিকে শৈব ও শাক্ত ধর্মবিশ্বাসী হলেও গোবিদ্মাণিকের
সময় থেকে বৈষ্ণবধর্ম রাজ্যধর্ম হয়ে ওঠে ।

This observation appears to be partly true. In the appendix to his book entitled Vidyapati Giti Sangraha Subhadra Jha has included one verse containing Vaishnavite feeling, and the verse was composed in the court of the Tripura King Dhanamanikya. Dr. Sukumar Sen says that,

গানটি ঢিপুরার রাজা ধনমাণিকের রাজকীয় সরকার চারপাশে রাখেন রাজা।
অতএব ধনমাণিকের রাজ্যকাল (১৪৯০-১৫২২) মধ্যে লেখা।

The reign of Dhanamanikya witnessed remarkable development of literature, music and dance. Utkal Khanda Panchali, Yatrakaranidhi and Vaishnava verse were composed. The king founded Vishnumathaa for the worship of Lord Vishnu and the spread of the practice of Vishnu worship. There is the reference in Rajmala:

পরে বিশ্বামৃতা এক নৃপে নিমাইল।
সাবর্ণ হইয়া রাজা উৎসর্গিয়া দিল ।

All this supplies the proof that Vaishnavism was able to attain a strong hold in the cultural atmosphere of Tripura during the 15th century. King Govindamanikya (1660-1676) was nourished in a tradition of Vaishnavite culture. In 1669, Vrhanaradiya Puranas was translated in to Bengali and the job was done in his court. The king was eulogised as one deeply devoted to Lord Vishnu:

"চন্দ্রবংশ অবতাং ত্রিপৃল নৃপতি ।
বিশ্বামৃতার ধর্মশালা সহায্যবত ॥
গোবিদ্মাণিকে দেব ধর্ম অবতার ।
ধর্মেতে পালিলা রাজা বিবিধ সংসার ॥"

The translation was made for the purpose of propagating and spreading the
cult of devotion to and worship of Lord Vishnu the gold coin introduced by King Govindamanikya contains the following writing:

“শ্রীশ্রীরাধাকৃষ্ণপদে শ্রীযুত রাজা গোবিন্দমালিকা।”\textsuperscript{124}

The King also constructed one temple of Lord Jagannatha at Udaypur. All the works give evidence to the deep and unmixed devotion of king Govindamanikya to Lord Vishnu. Besides this, it is learnt from Rajmala that Virachandramanikya collected, compiled and edited a number of verses composed by Ghanashyam Das and Narahari Chakraborty and his completion is known as Gita Chandradaya.\textsuperscript{125} His son Radhakishore Manikya also composed many verses celebrating Lord Krishna and his consort Radha.

3.08 The Krishna-Lore -- Its Influence on the Life of the Mass People.

বাদালা প্রদেশে কৃষ্ণের উপাসনা প্রায় সকলব্যাপক। গ্রামে গ্রামে কৃষ্ণের মন্দির, গৃহে গৃহে কৃষ্ণের পূজা, প্রায় মাসে কৃষ্ণের উৎসব, উৎসবে উৎসবে কৃষ্ণের কথা, কথা কথায় কৃষ্ণের কথা, সকল মুখে কৃষ্ণের কথা। কাহারও গায়ে দিবার বঙ্গে কৃষ্ণের কথা, কাহারও গায়ে কৃষ্ণের কথা। কেহ কৃষ্ণের কথা করিয়া কোথাও পড়িয়া করিসে না; কেহ কৃষ্ণের কথা লিখিয়া কোন পত্র বা কোন লেখাপড়া করিয়া করিয়া না, .......... বনের পাথী পূর্বে তাহাকে রাধানাম শিখাই। কৃষ্ণ এদেশে সকলব্যাপক।\textsuperscript{126}

The Krishna-lore is as naturally born of its emotional appeal to the mass people as grass grows on earth and moss in water. Mass people’s mind is ever imbued with Krishna-consciousness. The topography of Surma-Barak Valley, with its endless varieties, has strengthened and enriched this consciousness. Its consequence is the multifarious manifestation of Krishna-lore in folklore, folk-songs, folk-dance, religious observances, proverbs, riddles, customs and conventions, practices and rites, sense of right and wrong, good and bad, symbols, prejudices, preconceptions, faith and conceptions - that conspicuously prevail among the diversified population distributions in the region. We try to give below a brief outline of all this.
3.09 Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases:

The truths about life and the world, as obtained through experience and rhythmically expressed in rhyming and ornamental language are called proverbs, and they extensively influence the mind of the mass people. The proverbs of the Surma-Barak-Valley are composed in the local dialect, a special local terms is applied to then - the term is Ditan which comes probably from the Sanskrit word drishtanta. Again the Sanskrit word ‘Sloka’ is pronounced as Silaka in the local language. Such Ditans or Silakas are often heard in almost every house of this Valley. They are used by people in their daily life, in giving expression to their feeling of joy and sorrow, anger and sentiment, movements manners, hopes and despair, in their conflicts and quarrels, gatherings and meetings and markets - in short, everywhere. Proverbial phrases are also equally used by the mass people in their daily life.

The name of Rama is often used in proverbs, but the name Krishna is not widely used; instead of the word Shyama, Govinda, Gopal etc. are frequently used. The scriptures says that Sri Krishna is the incarnation of Lord Narayana. Hence the name Narayana and the stone called ‘Shalagrama’ which is accepted as the symbol of Narayana, have figured in proverbs. One such proverb given here:

हालाहालि शाळग्राम
तारा खाइले पुरुर नाम
मा बाप डेफल
तारा खाइले किऊर नाम।

The proverbs tells us the common experience that to a newly married husband, his sister-in-law and brother-in-law are dearer than his parents. Another proverb reminds us of the moment of Krishna’s birth the ‘Astami Tithi’, that is the eighth day of the New Moon:

“शयन उठान पाश मोड़ा
तार मध्ये भीमहोड़ा
दूर हेलेर जानमतिथि
One proverb speaks of Yashada who feels proud of being the mother of Lord Krishna simply by bringing up him since his birth, though she did not conceive him -  পরর পূতে পৃতপৃতি যশোদা ভাগামভী।

We can also cite one proverb in which Krishna’s foster father Nanda Ghosh is blamed for the constant trouble given to people by Krishna when he was an uncontrollable child spoiled by the over indulgence given by the foster father as a mark of his boundless filial affection - যত দোষ নন্দ যোষ।

It is thought that the proverb has been composed to refer to the occasion of Krishna’s conquest of Mathura by killing king Kansa. The Ghoshas tradionally deal in milk and milk products and if honesty in the business is doubted, the doubt is expressed through the following proverbs:

ঘোষর দই হই কয় নি চুকা।

Krishna or Shyam is the ever-pleasing person.

So the reference to Shyam is contained in the following proverbs which are used on various occasions:

1. শাম যে গেছিল বনা/পাক উঠে মনে।
2. দূতির গলার পৃতি/শ্যামর গলার মুতি।
3. শ্যাম রাখি না কুল রাখি।
4. কত উঠে কত পড়ে কত উঠে মনে।
    অম্বার শ্যামর বাশী অবিরত হুরে।।
5. নাগমতি শ্যামর বৃতি।
    একঘাটো খাই, আরেক ঘাটো মুতি।
6. ভাবে দদগদ শ্যাম
    তোর চাপি মোর
    নেংটি আরাইলাম।
7. Šāmar biṭti.

There is also the mention of the names such as Hari, Kanai, and Krishna in a number of proverbs:

1. Kūmā kēmēn, yār mēn ēmēn.
2. Dhāiya Dhāiya kanāi/ki baclē jamaī.
4. Rākē hari mārē ke/mārē hari rākē ke?
5. Yēnā baiṁ gopāl/ānē tān kopaī.
7. Sūkē ḍakātē nā kēn hari/trūlāi rēlō gūdāīṛi.

The mention of the name Jagannatha occurs in a few proverbs:

1. Drnin chintā dhn dhn/nirāmkkāi drka
   yōgīr chintā jagannāth/fakār rīt māka.
2. Parār mātāt dīyā hāt/ākīra kāte jagannāth.

Many proverbs contain the simultaneous mention of the two names Krishna and Radha:

1. Yēmēn rādā tēmēn kūmā.
2. Sāt mēn tełō naɪ/rādār nācō naɪ.
3. Jītē nā kāo jācō gō rāi
   mātē nī kāo jācōībāī.
4. Pūktēt naɪ cām/rādākūmā nām.

Krishna and the spring season are inseparable. Some proverbs concerning spring have been composed:

1. Aīlēr bāsanākāl/ūrā bētīr ērā fāl.
There is also a proverb concerning Chaitanya who is believed to be the incarnation of Lord Krishna:

দেখিয়া কানা, পূনিয়া কানা, বুঝিয়া কানা
এই তিনকানায় নষ্ট করলা চৈতন্যের কারখানা।

Being encouraged by the teachings of Srichaitanya, many people renounced the world and devoted themselves to the singing of the name of Lord Hari. Such persons are called Vairagi in the local language. In course of time many false Vairagis appeared on the scene. An attitude hatred towards such false Vairagis is expressed in the following proverbs:

1. সেব না পাইয়া বৈরাগী।
2. তৃহ বৈরাগী অহিলা বেগারির তাইসে।
3. সাধ কি বৈরাগী নাচে।
4. বৈরাগী আইতেও পাচ্চিকা/ঘাইতেও পাচ্চিকা।
5. একশ এক চড়া খাইয়া বিলাই বৈষ্ণব।
6. খাতিকুলও গেল, বৈষ্ণবকুলও গেল।
7. তিলক কাটাইড় বৈষ্ণব অওয়া যায় না।
8. টেকায় তুই চাকর বাকর কথায় তুই মাছী।
ভিক্ষায় তুই যোগী বৈরাগী
পাতায় তুই ছাগী।
9. আগে বেশ পরে দাসা
মারে মারে কুটনী
সবকর্ম ছাড়া দিয়া
অখন বোঁটী।

Context of kirtan is referred to in many proverbs:

1. রাটী বেটি খোঁড়ি গাই
কীর্তনে গেলে নবিন্দর আশা নাই।
2. আউলা বেটির বাউলা কীর্তন।
3. পাইয়া পরে ধন বাপে পুতে কীর্তন।
The black or blackish colour of Krishna is also celebrated in some proverb :-

1. काला जगद्वर भाला/काला पाओर तला।

3.10 Riddles :

When one thing is described in the guise of another thing purposefully for perplexing one’s comprehension, such type of description is called a riddle. A single sentence or a number of sentences can constitute a riddle. Riddles are built upon a variety of subjects, such as different objects, human beings, their size, shape and behaviour, occasions and festivals, birth, marriage, death etc.\textsuperscript{133}

A riddle is termed \textit{pai} in the Surma-Barak Valley. It attracts equally both a child and a grown up person. The popularity of riddles is over continuing. The Krishna-lore also sometimes becomes the subject of treatment in riddles. Some folk riddles directly deal with Krishna, as in the following \textit{pai} :-

| दाड़ि गोल्फ उठा नाई, किन्न पुरुष श्रेष्ठ है। |
| सेह श्रेष्ठ पुरुष कौन खामाहारत कह। |
| कृक्कें तनि किन्न करे नाइ रूप। |
| बल सेह बुद्धिमान केबा सेहजन। |

\textbf{Answer - Krishna}

Again, Krishna is identified as Udayanag in the following riddle -

| शिब मठके मनुष्य गेबा बर्तिन। |
| यार तरज महारेव विदित भूरन। |

(Krishna)

Sri Krishna is the incarnation of Lord Narayana. So Narayana is also treated in popular riddle :

| प्रथम अक्षर बलब ‘ना’ शेषे कोकर अक्षर के सह। |
| साकार वा निराकार भेद मात एह। |
| मध्येत बलम आहेन राय महाशय। |
| येई नाम जगले भाई पापमुक्ति हय। |
Radha, along with Krsihna, is also hinted at such riddle as:

1. লম্বাৰে বামভাগে কাহার জনন।
   সেই রমণীর নাম বল দেখি এখন॥
   (Radha)

2. ঘরে থাকতে রাণি
   ভাইগনার প্রেমে মজে মানি॥
   (Radha)

The widespread influence of Krishna is noticed in the use of the word Krishna in many riddles regarding many things and objects of life and world, such as:

1. এক থাক দূই থাক, তিন থাকে জোড়া
   কৃষ্ণে ভাজায় রাণী মূখ্যান পোড়া।
   (হৃষকা)

2. কালা কামিনী কালা ঘাস থায়।
   হাতা করি ডাক নিলে বৃদ্ধাবন যায়।
   (বাজানাত)

3. কালা কৃষ্ণ ধলা ফুল
   সার ফালিয়া বাকল তুল।
   (মূর্তাবেত)

4. কালা গাই কালা শহৰ
   দূই পাড়ে নাপেশ্বর
   যদি গাই হা করে
   দূই পাড়ে কৈকারে।
   (মেঘপ্পঙ্কা)

5. দূই চরণ কৃষ্ণবর্ণ পেট কাটিলে আটে।
   বাসলে কি ভাসাইব পন্ডিতো মার্গ ফাটে।
   (কালোপিপোড়া)
Many riddles are there that deal with Srichaitanya and his mother Shachi Devi:

1. দশমাস দশহিং সকল মা ধরে
কিন্তু কলিযুগে ১৩ মাস গর্ভ কারে ধরে ?

(Srichaitanya)

2. গাছর পাতা খাইয়া গর্ভ হইল যার
বল সেথি বুদ্ধিমান কিবা নাম তার ?

(Shachi Devi)

3.11 Popular Practices, Customs and Conventions:

One very widespread popular practice in Bengal is Bhaifota which falls on the second day of the new moon after the Kalipuja festival following Durga puja in the month of Aswing or Kartika. On this day a sister puts a mark on her brother’s forehead with sandal wood paste (Chandan paste), and wishes him a long life. There exists one anecdote that Yamuna, sister of Yamaraia King of Narak (hell) had drawn the first mark of Bhaifota on her brother’s forehead, and the mark was drawn with chandana after the performance of all function and the observing all holy sites. Again, there is the popular belief that Subhadra, sister of Krishna put the mark of Bhaifota on Krishna’s forehead in Hastinapur. This was the introduction of this festival as a bond of unity between brother and sister, and the practice has been continuing.

This practice of Bhaifota has two parts. The first part consists of simply putting a mark of chandana by sister on brother’s forehead, and this is done on the first day of the new moon. There goes a rhyme in the Surma-Barak Valley:

প্রতিপদে দিয়া ফোটা মালিলাম নিয়ম।

dhitiya dinya fota karaib dorjona.

On the second day this festival is performed with all pomp and grandeur in every house. There rings the Krishna-Subhadra lore in the rhyme:

dhitiya dinya fota soubhra soukrami.

ননাবিধ মিত্রব্য আচারজন করি।


বিচিত্র আসনে কৃষ্ণ বসিলেন যখন।
চূরা চলেন আনিলেন সূজ্জ্ব তখন।।
চূড়া বাঁটি মদলঘট করি সারিসারি।
ধানা দূতা দিয়া ভুইনে আরে শ্রীহরি।।

There prevails a popular belief that the practice adds to the longevity of brother. The practice of Bhajfota is not observed in the month of Agrahayana. The popular belief is that Bhajfota in Agrahayana is ominous, since the sister of King Yama drew the mark of Bhajfota on her brother’s forehead in this very month.

Some other festivals centring round Sri Krishna are Janmastami, Radhastami, Suryabrata, or Kala Thakurer brata etc. The festival of Janmastami is observed on the eighth day after the full moon in the month of Bhadra, and Radhastami on the eighth day after new moon in the same month. The festival called Suryabrata is observed mainly in the Surma-Barak-Valley. “সূর্যচরণ বা ঠাকুর চরণ পূজিত। রাধা মেনে সূর্য পূজা চলে গোবিন্দচরণ পূজিতেন। এখানেও তাহ।”

This festival is observed on any sunday in the month of Magha. The main function of this festival is singing songs celebrating Krishna’s activities and the singing starts with sunrise and continues till sunset even for two or three hours beyond sunset.

Popular belief and prejudices are found to control people’s minds even in this age of globalization. The sight of couple of ‘Shalik’ bird at the moment of strating a journey is believed to be a good sign - জোড়া শালিক দেখা ভালো সকালে বিকালে। Such prejudice is likely to be rooted in the influence exerted by the myth of the ‘Shuk’ and ‘Shari’ of Vrindabana. The two words ‘O Krishna’ are uttered at the time of putting rice in cooking can in many houses of rural areas. This is done with a mind wishing Krishna’s favour that will purify food, body and mind. The names of Krishna and his consort Sri Radha are uttered in a loud voice before starting any type of religious and devotional songs which goes by the name of ‘Krishna’ in the Surma-Barak-Valley. Such as:

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বলিয়ে প্রভু,
নিতাই, চৈতন্য, অজ্ঞত, গদাধর
শ্রী রাধারাণী কি জয়।”

The practice of uttering the names is also followed in social occasions such as community feast, marriage and even burial and cremation of deadbodies.

Some popular games and sports of this region also bear the memory of Krishna or Krishna-lore. As for example we hear the names Rakhal Raja, Golokdham, Laikhela etc. The first name refers of Krishna as boy tending cows, the second symbolises Vrindavan or heaven and the third reminds us of Krishna swimming in the river Yamuna.

* * * * *
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30. Census report of 1901:

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31. Hangsnarayan Bhattacharjee: *Hindude Dev-Devi Udbhav O Kramabikash*,
    Vol. II, P. 274
34. (১) য দৃষ্টা হি তাং প্রাধৰ্যতাত্ত্বারা রাখা
    বৃত্তিতে নবিন্দাম শমঞ্জ বিক্ষো। ১১/২৪
(২) তৎজ্ঞিরির্পূর্ধা জনৎ সমগ্র
ভাসতোলা: প্রতিপঞ্জি বিভূ। ১১৩০
Jagadish Chandra Ghosh: Srimadbhagavatgita, P. 171-174
35. Hemchandra Roy Choudhury: Early History of the Vaishnava Sect, P.107
37. Quoted by Dr. Khudiram Das in his book Vaishnav Rasaparaksh, P.126
39. “চৈতন্য জীবনের কালক্ষেপ অনুসারে ৫৮৯ গ্রা: মে মাস থেকে তিরোধান পর্যন্ত শ্রীচৈতন্য গ্রাম
১৮ বছর স্বায়ত্তের নীলাচলে বাস করেছেন। তাহাঁ ১৫১০ গ্রা: ২৬শে জানুয়ারী সন্ধ্যাশ্রমের
পর থেকে ৫৮৯ সনের মে পর্যন্ত বহুবার নীলাচলে গমন ও কিছুদিনের জন্য অত্যাবাহী অবস্থান।”
ভ: বাংলি প্রস্থ মিশ্র: উল্লেখিত ঢাকা দক্ষিণ, পৃঃ ৫৪-৫৫।
41. “সর্ব বৈষ্ণবের জন্য নবধীপ গ্রাম।
কোন মহাত্মীয়ের জন্য সে অন্য নামশ্চ।।
শ্রীবাস পণ্ডিত আর শ্রীরাম পণ্ডিত।
শ্রীচৈতন্য শেষের দেব কোলাকা পূজিত।।
ভবরাগ বৈদা মূর্তির নাম যায়।
শ্রীচৈতন্য এসব বৈষ্ণবের অন্যের।।”
Satyaendranath Basu: Srichaitanya Bhagvat (Brindaban Das), P.12.
43. Ibid: P.29.
44. Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhay (ed.): Krishnadas Kavirajer Chaitanya
Charitamrita, P.271.
47. Vrindaban Das: Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat ed. by Satyendranath Basu, P. 220.


54. (a) Satyendranath Basu (ed.): *Sri Chaitanya Bhagvat* by Vrindaban Das), P.12

(b) Visvaranjan Gorai (ed.): *Lochandaser Chaitanya Mangal*, P. 52.

55. “ত্রিবিধ বৈসে একজাতি লক্ষ লক্ষ।
সরসষী দৃষ্টিপাতে সবে মহাদক্ষ।”
Satyendranath Basu (ed.): *Srichiitanya Bhagvat* by Vrindaban Das, P.12


57. Satyendranath Basu (ed.): *Srichiitanya Bhagvat* by Vrindaban Das, P.78.


59. Vishvaranjan Gorai: Ibid., 126


62. Nityananda Das: *Premabilas*, P.24

63. Quoted by Bani Prasanna Misra in his book *Unmochita Dhaka Dakhin*, P. 34


72. “এতবলি মহাগোপু ডাকে রামদাস।
দুইভাই সদে চলে মাধব দাস।।
এই নাম বিলাইবা উত্তরদিগেতে।
জানবর কল্যানবর ডাকমে তুমিতে।।
মোর আজা বল বাপু পূরব দিগতে।
যারে তারে বিলাও এই নাম ভালো মরে।”
রসত্বঙ্গিলাস।
75. Heresy proverb.
78. Ibid: P.96
79. Ibid: P.96
83. Ibid: P.118
84. Ibid: P.133
86. Devnath Banerjee: *Rajsabhar Kabi O Kabya*, P.1
88. Devnath Banerjee: *Rajsabhar Kabi O Kabya*, P. 2
89. “রাজার পৃথীবী সৃষ্টি দুইজন স্ত্রীলোক ছিলেন - একজন সৃষ্টি, অপরজন মায়া।”
   Devnath Banerjee: *Rajsabhar Kabi O Kabya*, P. 2
90. “দত্তপুঞ্চ কক্কুলিতঃ চামরে হেমদ্বঃ / যো পৌষ্পস্রাবলভ কবিক্ষানুজঃ চক্রবর্তী। শ্রীমতীর: সকল প্রাতিহন্তরতন্ত্রী / কাক্ষায় সারসত্তমিব মহামূল্যেত্তাঃ জগদ।” Quoted from
98. Amalendu Bhattacharya (ed.): *Heramba Rajer Dandavidhi O Heramba Rajer Hrindanvidhi*; (by Padmanath Bhattacharya), P. 104.

100. Upendra Chandra Guha : *Cacharer Itibritta*, P. 115.


102. Amalendu Bhattacharya (ed.) : *Sri Naradi Rasamrita* (Beng. Tr. by Bhubaneswar Bachaspati), Introduction P. XXVIII.

103. “ইতি রূপপুরাণ পুত্তক সমাপ্ত।।

সন ১২২১ বাংলা, মাহে ১৩ আষাঢ়, মঙ্গলবার।”

Upendra Chandra Guha : *Cacharer Itibritta*, P. 58.

104. Amalendu Bhattacharya (ed.) : *Sri Naradi Rasamrita* (Beng. Tr. by Bhubaneswar Bachaspati), Introduction P. X.

105. “গোবিন্দ চন্দ্র পরাধীন

এ রসে (নাম) হইয়া হীন

রাম নাম মূখে নাইছে বোল।

হরিপ্রেমের বানে

কেন না ডুবিলাম।

বিক্ষোর জনম বিফলে।”

ibid : Introduction P. 10.


108. ibid : P. 103.


110. Upendra Ch. Guha : *Cacharer Itibritta*, P. 104.

111. Amalendu Bhattacharya (ed.) : *Sri Naradi Rasamrita* (Beng. Tr. by Bhubaneswar Bachaspati), Introduction P. XVI.

112. ibid : introduction P. XVIII.


115. “রাজা রামসিংহ বালী জগদ্ভূ গোবামীর পিতা নিত্যানন্দ গোবামীকে ১৩৩৮ সনের ২৫শে অগ্রহায়ন তারিখে রাধাগোবিন্দ দেবতা স্থাপন করিয়া মৌজা চিকনগোল হইতে এক কিলো ২৬/০ হাল ও এক কিলো ১২/০ হাল সিংহমোহরের তাম্পত্রে দেবোত্তর দান করিয়াছিলেন।” জয়ন্তীয়া (পৌঁছাগ পং), প্রথম বদ্ধমুকের কাগজ, ১২৪৭ বাংলা, ১১ই শ্রাবনের রোবকারি।


117. ibid : P. 432.

118. ibid : P. 446.


120. গানটির প্রথম চারি ছাত্র এইরূপ :-

প্রথম তোহর প্রেমগৌরব গৌরব-বাড়লি গেলি / অধিক আদরে লোডে লুবলি চুকলি তে রতিনোড়।

যেমন এক অপ রাধ মাধব পলটি হেহব / তোহি তোহবিল জয়কে। অমৃত পিবত তৈখান জীবন রাহি।


121. Amalendu Bhattacharya (ed.) : Sri Naradi Rasamrita (Beng. Tr. by Bhubaneswar Bachaspati), Introduction P. XXX.

122. ibid : Introduction P. XXX.

123. ibid : Introduction P. XXX.

124. Quoted by Devnath Banarjee : Rajshyhar Kabi O Kabya, P. 90.

125. ibid : P. 95.


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