CHAPTER - IX
LITERARY VALUES OF THE BIOGRAPHIES
- AS LITERATURE
- AS PROSE OR POETRY

Both Śāṅkara and Caitanya-movements created a new zeal in the field of literature. Poetry, drama, songs, biographies received a great impetus. Some of them specially lyrics and biography opened for the first time a new trend. The religious revival thus produced unique results in diverse forms of literature.

The central personalities of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite literature of Assam are Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. As a result of their religious movements, Assamese culture has newly and firmly been established. The court of the king Naranarāyaṇa of Cooch-Bīhar was the main centre for the literature. Again the satras and nāmghars too, being beautiful places of a new culture, have helped to great extents in enlightening the ideal of a rich literature. The wheel of culture in this medieval period turned centering the religious movement. The contribution of Śaṅkaradeva in the field of religion, society, art and literature of Assam can never be forgotten. He was a religious and social reformer, a composer, a writer and at the same time a singer and an actor too.¹ So, the biographies of Śaṅkaradeva made a remarkable effect on Assamese literature.

¹ Satyendranath Sarma, "Asamīyā Sāhityar Samikṣātmak Itibṛtta". P. 128
Saṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva at first founded the basis of the Assamese prose-literature. Later on, other writers came forward to write their biographies following their ideals. Thus in the middle age of Assamese literature the carita or biographical literature became very rich. In the end of the 16th century, the Neo-Vaiṣṇava literature of Assam attained the maturity as subject as well as literature. The foundation of this literature was laid down by the Vaiṣṇava reformation inaugurated by the great scholar, reformer and the saint Saṅkaradeva.

Side by side in Bengal also, the emotional Bhakti-doctrine is the main stream of the Vaiṣṇavite theology and philosophy imbibed from the extremely devotional fervour discernible in the personality of Caitanyadeva. His followers caught up the real spirit of their Master and gave it a definite shape by producing their notable works.

Though the writing of biography is not a new thing in India but the writing of so many biographies of a living person was not possible in any other age as it was in this medieval period. These have risen to a high-level in both prose and poetry of that period. So inspite of supernatural elements, the literary value and the philosophy of the medieval Assamese and Bengali biographical literature are really appreciable.

(A) ASSAM

The biographies took a prominent part in the field of Assamese literature. These works known as puthis or caritas
were written after the Neo-Vaisnavite movement had started. They were the first of their kind in Assam of that medieval period. Some of the biographies were written in the 'Satriya' style in prose. As a result, it gave birth to an unique literature.

At first, in the satras, the greatness of the gurus was discussed. Then, after the death of Saṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva, their superiorities were brought down in writings. Thus the two main characteristics of the Ahom age — the histories were the one which written in the royal houses of Ahom and biographies were written in the Vaiṣṇava satras, which at the same time helped us know about the social life of Assam. Besides, these writings enriched the Assamese literature, specially Assamese prose literature.¹

Thus these biographies were flourishing getting an advantage to rest on the contributions of the Vaiṣṇavite preachers like Saṅkara and Mādhava. These works can be classified as a branch of Vaiṣṇava literature. They were written partly in prose and partly in verse. In verse, the writers used different kinds of rhythms like pada, dulurī, chabi etc. The languages of these writings are very simple. Generally the first-time writings were done in verse and the biographies were written later on in prose. Both the types rested on the life-histories of their gurus and depended on the then social

¹ Hemanta Sarma, "Asamīyā Sahityav Dristipat", P. 175
pictures too. So, these were the combinations of both the biography and social history. The verse-biographies attracted the people for their simplicity and lucidity. They were also used for singing (kīrtaṇa), whereas the prose biographies were worthy only for hearing (sravana) and not for singing.

Among all the carita-writers, the name of Rāmacarana Thākur is at the top of the list in Assamese literature. He was a singer, a dramatist and also a carita-writer. The faith and attraction of the Vaisnava devotees towards this carita is uncomparable.

As per Śaṅkara's 'Nāmadharma', God is one. In his 'Gurucarita', it has been simply and nicely enunciated. Thus the author shows his adequacy of knowledge in discussing religious matters. The main object of this carita was proclamation of the religious matters, and these are discussed in a frank and elaborate manner in various aspects. While narrating the pilgrimage to various sacred places, the author tries to connect with the stories. Such treatment in stories can be made for artistic effect. The verses are numbered and the same serial continues from the beginning to the end. For the beautiful description which gives the reader much pleasure and richness of materials - the Vaisnāvas regard this biography as superior to others biographies. This work also bears a special

3 Satyendranath Sarma, op. cit., P. 182
importance in its information on social customs. From literary point of view, this biography has got maximum value. Almost in the starting and ending of all chapters, there are some references praising of God. He also used different rhythms at different places as Dulari, Chabi, Lechari etc.

Daityari's 'Guru carita' is accepted by all. It is a valuable carita. His lively description has made this carita poetic, the descriptions are also clear. As a biography, it is full of supernatural elements introduced in order to prove the divine power of the subjects. This work is more an attempt at propagation of the guru's religion than a real attempt in writing biographies in proper manner. The poet's aim was only to attract the common people to the fold of the preachers and also to show the two gurus as men of flesh and blood. And it is here that the special merit of the author lies, with all the facts, figures and incidents, the narrative is really in the oral tradition. The latter part of this carita deals with Madhavadeva's life. The cause of misunderstanding between Madhavadeva and Damodaradeva given by Daityari is quite different from other caritas. In this work also, there are some examples of many unrealities and supernaturalism about the lives of the two Mahāpuruṣas
Bhusana Dvija gives a detailed description of Śaṅkara's childhood. When Śaṅkara got admission in school, he became very serious. He got two lamps lighted on both the sides of bed and kept two books on two stands. He would eat two slices of tāmbula and then started reading etc. etc.\(^4\) This quotation reflects the author's capability of visualising a scene which has enhanced the beauty of the work. While author narrates the meeting between Śaṅkara and Mādhava then he shows how the former convinced the latter with quotations from many sāstras mainly from the Bhāgavata.\(^5\) There is something unique in the method of presentation of materials. He also narrates most of the events of the two gurus' lives in a plain manner. The death of Śaṅkaradeva is a very special quality of this book and it proves the author's idea about the nature of biography i.e., how a biography is about one man's life.

Ramananda's work has many extraordinary qualities for which it stands out as a very significant carita. While writing about the debate between Śaṅkara and Brahmins, the author reproduces the very philosophy behind Śaṅkara's religion. This is done in very simple language.\(^6\) The last meeting between Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva has been depicted very touchingly. Though the death-scene is not so

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4 Bhusana Dvija, "Sri Sri Śaṅkaradeva", P. 11
5 Ibid., P. 51
6 Maheswar Neog - "Śrī Śrī Śaṅkaradeva", PP. 147-57
moving, yet the author successfully depicts the subject as a great religious preachers in a lucid style. This work can be regarded as a valuable book. His sincerity gives a permanent value to this work.

Ramānanda's *Vaṁśīgopāladevar carita* is specially rich in depicting the beliefs and customs of the time. An important social custom of the time has also been brought to light here, it is nothing but the dowry system. The bridegroom had to give some money to the bride's guardian for arrangement of marriage. 7 This carita, also throws light on the administrative system of the satra under Gopāladeva. There is a personal touch in the descriptions. He mentions in different places the way of eating, sleeping and the like of the subject, that he ate boiled rice once a day with ghee without fish or meat. 8 There is also a fine description of the physique of the subject. Such small details make the biography interesting while giving a human touch to the subject. The author has been able to portray the man rather realistically in his own habits and nature. So this is one of the best hagiographies of the Vaiṣṇava period.

Rāma Rāya in his carita is intent on showing how the Dāmodara-cult was separately growing up, though Dāmodaradeva had a good relation with Śaṅkaradeva. Nowhere in

7 Ramānanda Dvija, *Vaṁśīgopāladevar carita*, PP. 7-9
8 Ibid., P. 79
the biography there is any show of ill-feeling to or jealously against the Śaṅkara cult. The author also does not treat the subject as a human being. So he freely uses the supernatural elements which is a general characteristic of his age.

Nilakaṇṭha Dāsa's "Dāmodara carita" ends with the death of the subject and this description has been made vividly and touchingly. We cannot say that this carita is an imitation of the earlier period. This work also throws abundant light on the famous authors and scholars of the 16th century. This carita narrates the philosophy of Dāmodara's dharma⁹ and describes how Dāmodaradeva advised his disciples on the rituals to be observed in his religion.

Dvija Vāṇeśvara and Dvija Divākara's "Harideva caritram" is far away from being a reliable work, either as a biography or as history. It was written mainly to show the superiority of the Vaiṣṇava school of Harideva. Its literary value, too, is next to nothing.

Vanagaṇāgīrī's carita of Harideva cannot be a very reliable work and remains a common place hagiography.

Nityānanda's "Badalā Padma Ātār Caritra" is the only one hagiography on the life of this man of religion. But as a biography, it is devoid of any bright quality. The subject's

⁹ Nilakaṇṭha Dāsa, "Śrī Śrī Dāmodara Carita" PP. 145-146.
character, however, is delineated rather well. The style of its language, too, is a common place one.

Ramākānta has given a detailed description of Vanamālīdeva's life in the common tradition of the caritas. The description of the physique of the subject is a conventional one, betraying regard for the subject as a divine being. The author admits that he was sometimes with the subject. So, we assume that he has treated the subject more authentically. But he has failed in this and this biography too remains, in the same tradition, like the other biographies.

Kavi Sucandāi begins his work rather as a story and it contains many miraculous incidents. But it is true that the activities attributed to Saṁvatsara, are not those of a Vaiṣṇava. They may rather be called Tantric. So, it is difficult to treat it either as a general biography or as a Vaiṣṇavite hagiography.

From the literary point of view, the "Kathā-Guru-carita" is of high quality. In it, the polished ideas of the satriya society are reflected. The language of this carita is also of high standard. The writer describes the beauty of Śaṅkara in this way.

"Koti sūryar sadṛśa jyoti gauravarga chatrākṛti māthā,
nil ākuncita keśa, saṁkhaprayā gṛībā, karnat, makar kuṇḍal, cāru ujjyarita."¹⁰

(His appearance is like crores of suns, bright coloured, umbrella like head, blue-haired, conch-like neck, ear adorned with bright ornament).

So Dr. B. K. Barua and Dr. B. K. Kakati have rightly opined, "Any language may feel proud of a prose work of such magnitude produced as early as the 17th century A.D. In this respect the 'Kathā Guru-carita' claims to be a human document of irresistible charm, absorbing interest and of wide appeal".¹¹

This work is the indication of the prose-work of medieval period. Though there is repetition of some events of the subjects' lives, yet the prose-style of the book makes it pleasant for reading. Through a small sentence, a great idea has been expressed.

"Rājār hangdān, pātrar ki"¹²

(A royal sword only suits in a king's hand but it looks odd in the hands of the general people.)

The devotional bhakti-cult has been simply propagated in a rhetorical figure -

¹⁰ Anon, "Kathā-Guru-carita", P. 66
¹¹ Ibid., Foreword, P. vii
¹² Ibid., P. 68
"Kaṭhār mālā phāte phute
Manar mālā kāhā tute"\textsuperscript{13}

(In wooden chain, crack takes place, but in mental chain, no crack takes place).

This language in which this classic is written is elegant and elevated. The author was conscious of his sacred task. So the language used in our day-to-day domestic life has been the language of this book. It is a kind of hieratic prose, which in its rhythmic movement may be compared with the English prose of the authorised version of the Bible. The songs, tales and middles are also valuable assets produced by this carita.

The author also tries to show the Mahāpuruṣas as super-human beings. There is also human touch in the portraiture of the gurus. The death-scene of Saṅkara deva is very natural and touching. The uniqueness also lies in the judicious use of many small details of the lives of the saints. This is also valuable for the details about contemporary society. The accounts are of a great help in evolving the actual span of life of the two gurus.

Though we cannot say that this work is authentic in all respect because we do not know whether the author or authors are contemporary of the subjects. So it is doubtful whether the information they gave us is correct and also we cannot call it a complete biography, because it is not the record of an individual, yet, regarding its prose-style, it is a

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., P. 517.
unique work among the medieval Assamese biographies. The use of proverbs such as,

"Rajāk swadeśe he puje, vidyāvanta sarvadeśe pujya"\textsuperscript{14}

(A king is worshipped only in his kingdom; but the learned is worshipped in any country)

The author thus used the proverbs and metaphors which make the language pleasant. Occasional use of quotations from religious books like the Bhāgavata and the Purāṇas lends to the style a dignity without making it pedantic.\textsuperscript{15} The Kamrupa words like āpi and certain Kamrupi forms of verbs etc. like 'dāuri' make its language, a language for common people. The author's style of narration is also praise-worthy. So, we are bound to say that this carita is the best of all the hagiographies of the two gurus.

Here we find a distinctive supernatural tone from the beginning to the end. Neog observes in the preface that the style and mode of presentation of the subject is similar to that of Kathā-Guru-carita. Its prose style could be taken for an example of old prose. Many words used here are the examples of modern Assamese, the idioms are also modern. As a biography, it has nothing original in it. Its style is also borrowed. Its only importance is that it is the second and last prose-hagiography of the medieval period.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., P. 25

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., P. 67
Both 'Kathā-Guru-carita' and "Bordowā-Gurucarita" are most valuable biographies. These are the evidences of excellency of the golden age of Assamese literature but they are somewhat different from the prose of Bhaṭṭadeva and its contemporary historical proses.

The caritas of others, as prose or poetry, also glorify the literature. One thing must be noted that the biographers should adopt naturality, but they were lacking that qualities. As a result, they without considering the pros and cons of their character, expatiated only the brighter side. As a result of it the defects which a human inherits were not properly expressed in their writings. Their works begin generally with a salutation, first to God and then to Śāṅkara, Mādhava and other gurus. The subject has been compared to Lord Kṛṣṇa or some relevant god.

(B) BENGAL

During the advent of Caitanyadeva, a wide spread literature flourished in Bengal because of a great force from Vaiṣṇavism. One of the notable features of Caitanya-movement is the contribution it has made in the field of literature. The saintly scholars wrote their works on theology, philosophy etc. Songs, dramas, biographies were also written both in Sanskrit and Bengali. The influence of Caitanyadeva in the

16 Hemanta Sarma, op.cit., P. 186
17 Satyendranath Sarma, "Carit Sāhitya", PP. 91-92
Bengali literature will be regarded as a memorable event and it is attributed as "Caitanya Renaissance".\textsuperscript{18} As much close connection of social welfare to literature was established in this age, this medieval period can be called the "Golden age" of Bengali literature. With the touch of the golden stick of this person, Bengali literature has been brightened up. The unique descriptions of his human and god-like activities have given a special significance to the biographies. With his powerful influence, Bengali literature has got relief from the mysterious systems of worship of the insignificant 'Maṅgala-kāvyā' and the 'Nāth Literature'. Though the biographers, out of devotional emotion, treated Caitanya as a superman, yet we cannot deny their values.

Murāri Gupta is well-known for his kaṭca. He stood as a main evidence of Caitanya's 'Navadvipa-lilā' which is well ascribed in his kāvyā. The voluminous kāvyā exposed Murāri's scholastic attitude in one hand and bore lots of descriptions of historical events on the other. It is also true that what he had experienced directly and put down in his writings, avoided chances of exaggeration or imaginary descriptions.\textsuperscript{19} He is still remembered for his kaṭca because it became the guide for other biographies to produce similar works in Bengali. Moreover, Murāri Gupta held in high esteem for his

\textsuperscript{18} Asit Kr. Bandyopadhyay - "Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibṛtta" Vol II, P. 301
\textsuperscript{19} Haridas Das, "Śrī Gauriya Vaiṣnava Sāhitya" Vol II, P. 73
learning. The later biographers had no hesitation in accepting and following what he had written.

Kavi Karnapura's 'Caitanya-caritamrta' was composed in a new style. So, it deserves appreciation. His drama 'Caitanya-candrodaya' has acquired a special position and from the actual biographical point of view, it can be taken as authentic because the author had some contact with Caitanyadeva from his childhood. In this drama, Kavi Karnapura had shown that the Kaliyuga and Adharma were flourishing. Subsequently their influences reduced and gradually prema-dharma or attraction for religion was promulgamated. He had shown all these by drawing a compasion. Dr. De said, "Kavi Karnapura writes for purely literary effect with a conciously affected but conventional diction, and is often indifferent to the realities of life or drama; while his religious ardour is not passionate enough for his poetic fancy enchanting enough to invest his drama with a higher 'poetic naturalless'."

As his main target was to preach religion, so that could not be the main thing whether there were dramatical qualities or not. Most of the events are descriptive. His 'Gaouraganoddesadipika' is also very famous. It's main theme is praise-worthy. In it, many attempts have been made for the social construction in the post-Caitanya period.

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20 "An Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal", P. 437
Probodhananda's 'Caitanya-caritāmṛtam' is a religious kāvyā, but from literary point of view, perhaps it could not get so much appreciation. Instead of evaluating it as a kāvyā, we can cite it as a source of acquiring knowledge of the Caitanya-cult.

Lots of problems are there in the kārčā of Svarūpa Dāmodara. A copy of this book is not, however, available, but from copious references given by other writers, no one has any reason to disbelieve its authenticity. Svarūpa was one of the main disciples of the Master during the middle and last periods of his life. So, the records kept by him is unchallenged by none.

Of the Bengali biographies, Vṛndāvana Dāsa's 'Caitanya-bhāgavata' is famous. This has been written in a lucid language. The poet nicely describes Caitanya's main events of life. The materials available in this book speak about social and religious backgrounds of the time, which is an important contribution. This biography is a glory of the Bengali literature. All the biographical works which make special references to Caitanyadeva are closely related to 'Caitanya-bhāgavata'.21 From this, the popularity and importance of this book can be determined.

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21 Biman Bihari Majumdar, 'Caitanya Caritar Upādān', P. 175
It is a big voluminous book, divided into three parts. It was composed with a view to singing in praise of this superhuman. That's why various rāgas and rāginīs are mentioned here, like Pata-Maṅjarī, Śrī-rāga, Dvānesīre etc. The poet also used some Brajbuli words-

'Koi nācata, koi gāyata'\(^{22}\)

(Somebody is dancing, somebody is singing)

The poet believe that Caitanya and Nityānanda are the incarnations of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. This idea enriched the kāvya from the beginning to the end. Vṛndāvana Dāsa has drawn a real and true picture of Caitanyadeva. He discussed the enormous life-events of this saint artistically. He was also expert in music. So, he rhythmically described everything. Some musical charm could also be enjoyed in his work. Though he believed Caitanya as God, yet he expressed his real aspects also. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviāj, too, appreciating his kāvya said,

"Manuṣyhe racite nāre aiche grantha dhāmya
Vṛndāvana Dāsa mukhe bhākta Śrī Caitanya"\(^{23}\)

(Such a remarkable book regarding Caitanya was written by a devotee Vṛndāvana Dāsa. A man cannot compose such an excellent book).

We also find some other examples of the author's creative genius,

\(^{22}\) Vṛndāvana Dāsa "Caitanya-bhāgavata", Ādikhaṇḍa, P. 13

\(^{23}\) "Caitanya-caritāmṛta", Ādīlā, P. 37
"Etosov prakāśe keho nāhi cine,
Sindhu madhye candra jeno nājānilo mine"24

(As the advent of the moon is unknown to the fishes in the ocean, so, also, the advent of Caitanya in Navadvipa was unknown to the local people).

This is an example of 'Upamā Alaṅkāra' (Simile). In almost everywhere in his kāvya, he used the 'Payār' and Tripadi metre.

His kāvya is also remarkable as he has drawn a unique circle covering real Nemāi as a devotee Nemāi. Besides that he has drawn the picture of Caitanya's childhood with full of humour. The picture of the separation of mother Śacī from her son has been drawn in an intensive heart-rending way, which touched the hearts of the readers also.

"Nā jāiho āre bāp māyere chāriyā
Pāpini āchaye sabe tor mukh dekhiyā"25

(Do not go anywhere my son, leaving your mother! We, the sinners are looking at you).

Like an acute architect, the poet also painted the first-life of Caitanya-deva as a human being. Such an old historical book is very rare.

About four hundred and fifty years ago, the picture of the Bengali communities were colourfully drawn in this

24 Vṛndāvana Dāsa, op.cit., Madhyakhanda, P. 197
25 Ibid.; Anta khanda, P. 266.
kāvya. Like Śrīmadbhāgavata, this book too used to have a picture of Vṛndavāna. The author in every step of his writings had composed his talent and scholastic views in such a way which is beyond criticism. Among the Bengali literature of medieval period, this was admired by all. Among all the Indian literature, this kāvya stands unique. So he is called the "Vyāsa of Caitanyalīśa".

Jayananda's kāvya, in spite of its largest circulation, did not gain much favour of the orthodox followers of Caitanyadeva for introducing some facts. One of which is that Caitanya did not manifest any repugnance in the presence of women. Again, others suspected that there had been interpolations, so, the present work is not authentic and reliable.

But this work is not without its literary merits. Some pieces are generally poetic, for example, when he describes the beauty of Gaurāṅga in the following manner.

"Kunda kalikāduti danta-ūthila
Pākā telākuca jena adhare phutila" 28

(Jasmine-like two teeth have grown, the lower-lip seems to be a telākuca fruit.)

27 Jayananda, "Caitanya-mangala", Sannyāsa khanda XV and Utkala Khanda ix, 14-15
28 Ibid., Nadiyā khanda, P. 19.
Some of the songs are really beautiful. In the utterances of Sacl apprehending the renunciation of Caitanya, we find a genuine expression of grief.

"Nā'gāihorābāp māyere chāriyā
Kemane. bānciva āmi tumā nā dekhiyā" 29
(Do not go, my son leaving your mother. How shall I live without you?)

The poet also beautifully describes the grief of a young wife going to be separated for ever from her husband.

Jayānanda also draws a lucid picture of the oppression of the Muslim rulers of Gauḍa on the Brahmins of Navadvipa, just before the birth of Caitanya. This ruler has been identified with Jalāl-ud-Din Shāh (1481-87). That Jayānanda's description in this matter is subsequently correct. Though his kāvya is unable to keep a similarity with the Vaiṣṇava philosophy, yet in it, lots of historical or other similar new events are cited which draws the attention of the readers. He tells something new about the political relation between Pratāparudra and Hussen-Shāh. We also know that a famine had brokeout just before the birth of Caitanya. This is also corroborated by VṛndāvanaDāsa. His Vairāgya khanda is also very popular amongst all sections of readers.

29 Ibid., Vairāgya khanda, P. 106.
According to some, the descriptive biography of Jayananda is neither history, nor a kavya. But his acumen in composing songs has lots of evidence in his kavya. He also mentioned various ragas and rāginis. It bears the descriptions like a maṅgala-kāvyā. He himself states in the beginning,

"Caitanya-maṅgala gīta trijagat ānandita
   Jayānanda raṣe nānā chande"  
(With different rhythms, Jayananda writes a maṅgalagīta which gives pleasure to the three worlds).

The descriptions of the twelve months of Viṣṇupriyā are exactly like a 'maṅgalakāvyā'. The poet was also expert in composing songs like 'Padāvali'.

Yet, this kāvyā inherits some defects in its history and reality. In one place, Jayananda mentions the name of Pandit Gosāln or Gadādhār as his preceptor and in another place, he mentions the name of Abhirām Gosāln. So, it is impossible for us to find out who his actual preceptor was. Secondly, he states,

"Caitanya Gosālnér pūrva puruṣā
   āchila Jāzpūre" 
(The fore-father of Caitanyadeva used to reside at Jazpur).

But so far we know that before fifty years of Caitanya's birth, his fore-fathers had run away from Shylet and his father Jagannātha Miśra used to reside at Navadvīpa before Caitanya's birth.

30 Asit Kr. Bondyopadhyay, op. cit., P. 405
31 Jayananda, op. cit., Adi khanda, P. 9
32 Sukumar Sen, Sāhityer Itihās Vol I, Pūrvaśraddha, P. 373
33 Jayananda, op. cit., Utkal khanda, P. 144
birth. So, this is also not acceptable. Thirdly, regarding Caitanya's death, the poet describes,

"Āśātha baṅcita ratha vijayā nācīte
Itala bājila bām pāye ācambite\textsuperscript{34}

(In the month of Āśātha when the chariot-festival was going on, he was dancing in front of the chariot, then a piece of brick wounded his left foot, and the next day he died at night).

We do not find this in other biographies. For all these defects and dissimilarities with other biographies, this kavya is not admired. Another reason is that though he was a Vaisnava, yet at the request of his country-men, he oblated Devi Kālikā. So, in that society, his kavya was not well accepted.

Locana Dāsa's kavya was written mainly on the basis of Murāri's kaṭā. It is a poem of the popular narrative type (maṅgala-type). The poet himself admits,

"Pāncāli prabandhe kañho Gaurāṅga carita\textsuperscript{35}

(I am narrating the biography of Gaurāṅga in the style of a pāncāli kavya).

As per Dr. Dinesh Sen, "The creation of LocanaDasa was very nice; Locana—started writing of a history, but his poetic talent retarded its flow.\textsuperscript{36} Dr. Biman Bihari Majumdar does not agree with it.\textsuperscript{37} Though his Viṣṇupriyā draws our sympathy when she

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., Uttar khaṇḍa, P. 234
\textsuperscript{35} LocanaDāsa "Caitanya- maṅgala" P. 4
\textsuperscript{36} "Banga Bhāsa O Sahitya", Vol I, P. 371
\textsuperscript{37} Caitanya Cariter Upādān - PP. 252-253
was separated from her husband.

"Vasan nā dāy gāye nā bāndhe culī"\(^38\)  
(She neither wears clothes nor ties her hair).

From the point of view of language, rhythm and style, his kāvya is appreciable. Though it is small in size, yet people highly appreciated it. It was gladly accepted by the lower castes of the society also. But some of his religious preachings are defective.\(^39\) As a biography, it is not considered reliable.

In Cūrāmṇī Ąasa’s 'Gaurāṅga-Vijaya' we get many new things. In 'Jharī-khaṇḍa', we find the description of Mādhavendra Purī's religious observances (Tapasyā) in Santipur and Navadvīpa, Mādhavendra's visit to child Nemāi and also Nemāi's description of boyhood and his father's house which we do not find anywhere. None but Cūrāmṇī describes about Caitanya's house.

"Purvadvār avyantare suramya cattare"\(^40\)  
(The doors were towards east and the courtyard was beautiful beyond descriptions),

"Dakṣin kapāṭ diyā avyantare āsī"\(^41\)  
(The door towards south led to the interior of the house).

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38 LōcanaDāsa op.cit., P. 153  
39 Asit Kr. Bāndyopadhyay - op.cit., P. 101  
40 "Gaurāṅga-Vijaya", P. 44  
41 Ibid.
This description is very important. Again the description of Caitanya's visit to Gaya is also very real.

"Kaligrām Bārāyātajiyā prabhū jāye
Samukhe Bāghalpur dekhibāre pāye"42
(Caitanya reached Gaya crossing Kaligram, Barari and Bhaghalpur)

The poet also used some Brajabuli words such as, 'Bichirām', 'Heraye', Dhēyāne etc.43

But it is true that the poet could not expose his poetic talents in this kāvyā. Perhaps this work has failed to cause any attraction to the modern readers.

GovindaDāsa's work deals with the early part of Caitanya's life prior to his renouncing the world. It is said that he accompanied his Master during his tour over South India and used to keep those records of the new sannyāsī. But some of the historians have relied on authenticity. Its language is modern and it has distinctly followed "Caitanya caritāmṛta". Some critics rejected this kāvyā because the descriptions and ideas are so modern that under no circumstances this can be accepted as a pure-biography. Again this has not received the approbation of all sections of the Vaiṣṇava

The 'Caitanya-caritāmṛta' of Kṛṣnadaśa Kaviṛāj is the most authentic of all the works on the life and philosophy

42 Ibid., P. 107
43 Ibid., P. 34
of Caitanya. In this kāvyā, the romance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is highly adorned. In modern days, the critics may say whatever may be its value to the devotee of the faith, the stupendous work is not a poem, but a poetical curiosity of śāstric knowledge, legendary lore, salacious fancy, technical facility and uninspired ingenuity. But even though we are to confess the value of this work. Apart from the biological aspect of it, it is a repository of the theology and philosophy of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. The 'Tripods' are full of emotions where Svārūpa is describing the condition of Caitanya,

Kaḥa Karoṁ Kaḥa jáoṁ. Kaḥa gele Kṛṣṇa paoṁ
Kṛṣṇa binā prāṇa mor jaye

(What shall I do, where shall I go, I am dying being separated from Kṛṣṇa).

Here the tragic theme is described nicely. We are to appreciate his poetic talent for successfully converting his literary thoughts into a kāvyā.

Kṛṣṇadāsa used some Hindi and French words and idioms. As - Paisā, Bat (Hindi), Kuja (French) etc. This kāvyā has written in the combination of Bengali, Sanskrit and Vṛndavani languages. It is true that the poet could not stick to the historical aspect everywhere, but a mystic approach is well-blended with the theology of the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavana. The poet also contributed a lot for the betterment of the human.
society. Almost every home of the Vaisnavas is furnished with a copy of this holy book. We can say with the eminent critic that if Kṛṣṇadāsa had not written this book, we would not have found our Rādā in Vaiṣnava padāvalī. 46

The special feature of Harīcaraṇa's 'Advaita-maṅgala' is the description of Dānlīlā of Mahāprabhu which reminds us to the 'ŚrīKṛṣṇakīrtana'.

'Advaita-prakāś' of Īśān Nāgar appears to be real. The poet had a good writing capacity and his style is also lucid and simple. Poetic ideas are casually observed, the descriptions are real, style and language are also modern. The book is written in the 'payār' rhythm. For its modern language, some assume that it was not written in the 16th century. 47

'Sitācaritra' of Loknātha Dāsa did not receive any admiration from the historians. But the writer not hanker after name and fame. His only aim was to draw the biography of a lady of good character.

A Comparative study:

It may be observed that both Assam and Bengal began to produce literature in different forms, such as biography, songs, kāvyas, poetry etc. The followers of Saṅkaradeva

46 Sukumar Sen, op. cit., P. 352
47 Haridas Das, op. cit., P. 80
and Caitanyadeva were born literary geniuses and they gave a clear pictures of their Masters' or gurus' lives through their works. The biographers also made honest attempts to depict the lives, works and opinions of their subjects. The personalities of their gurus had nice reflections in their works. The prose of these biographies are some what different from the prose of Bhaṭṭadeva or contemporary historical accounts in the form of prose. They had their bases on the spoken language, which makes the language common for all. As a result both the Assamese and Bengali biographies became the centre of admiration and attraction of the people.

Above all, it may be summed up by saying that the Vaiṣṇavite movements in Assam and Bengal made glorious contribution to the field of literature. The poets have occupied a special position in the domain of Bengali literature also. Vaiṣṇavites and the believers of this faith took the responsibility for propagating Caitanya's life and teachings through their works. Though most of the carita-puthis have not yet been printed, in whatever form we may get, them, have filled up the granaries of literature in Assam and Bengal. So the people in general and those of Assam will ever remain grateful to the composers of those writers whose works are shining like the stars in the sky. These carita-puthis or biographies are assets to the lovers of literature.