CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN:

a) DURING THE AGE OF SHRI MADHAB KANDALI; AND
b) OF GOSWAMI TULSIDAS; WITH THEIR OBSERVATIONS

& THE CONCLUSION
6.1 INTRODUCTION:

The nature of human society has been shaped through the ideas, work culture and behaviour of its members. The society is ever-changing. Under such circumstances, each and every man and woman have to live with certain ideas and ideals in this ever changing society. Because a man is a social animal, it is quite natural that he has a liking for his social status.

A man has no alternative than to surrender and accept the changes that take place along with the change in the society. So, to understand the society one has to consider such changes. Moreover, if one wants to understand the internal condition of a country or a society, one has to study about the womenfolk of that society since it constitute the main basis of the society. It is interesting to note that in a male dominated society, a woman has no other important status than only her ordinary existence. But it is quite natural that along with the change of the time and the society, the existence and the status of a woman changes.

To understand the status of a woman during the time of Shri Madhab Kandali and of Tulsidas and the view points
of the two writers on a woman, one has to go through the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana and the Rāmcharit Mānas. Because both the writers were influenced directly and indirectly by the circumstances of their age. It is therefore, found that both the writers created their 'Kāvya's in accordance with the ideas and ideals of the age. As a result their 'Kavya's became consciously or unconsciously 'the mirror of their age' reflecting the society on it.

One thing is to be kept in mind while analysing the viewpoints of these two writers on women that during their time only a chaste and devoted wife got special status in the society. Right from the personal happiness of the family life to the social status of a woman, she had a very high position. Whenever such status of a woman was disturbed, there was a social upheaval.

We endeavour to analyse the status of a woman during the time of Shri Kandali and Tulsīdās as well as the viewpoints of these two poets on women.

6.2 THE SOCIAL STATUS OF A WOMAN DURING THE TIME OF SHRI MADHAD KANDALI;

The womenfolk of Assam is a part and parcel of the Indian women society. The nature of the society can be
realised through the faith, belief and custom about the
growth. In ancient Assam, the child marriage and the
"Sati system" was rather comparatively less than those in
other parts of India. Of course, the women were deprived
of education facilities since there was no system for
female education in Assam in those days. They had to depend
upon the males in the economic sphere and hardly they enjoy
liberty. But the society was conscious about the status of
a woman. Moreover, the worship of 'Śakti' and establishment
of the Kāmākhya and such other temples of female deities
helped improving the status of a woman.

The study of woman characters in the Rāmāyana of
Shri Mādhava Kandali gives us a comprehensive idea of the
status of women during his age. The woman depicted in the
Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana were a 'class woman'. They were conscious
of the limitations put on them by the lawmakers of the society.
They were well-versed in sociology and politics. The envy
and avarice as a result of the polygamy in the society did
not spare them, but Sumitra or Manoodarī as depicted in the
Sapta Kānda were not found as envious. They were quite chaste
and devoted to their husbands as if they had no existence of
their own. The curse to Räm by Tārā showed Tārā as more chaste
and devoted.\(^1\) Bibhishan’s wife Saramā was also lack of independent identity; but she followed the path of her husband.

It can be assumed easily from the pictures of kings, royal palaces, inner chambers, princes etc. that the society of Kandali’s age was a ‘class society’. The importance given to the brāhmīns and brāhmīnicism proved that the society of his time was a brāhminal one. A class society means a corrupt culture, where violence, exploitation troubles and disturbances exist. So, a picture of a society full of struggles is found in the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana. In such a society, the status of a woman was quite insignificant:

\[\text{“Amāk Etar Nari Sām Dekhilāhā,\hspace{1cm}}\]
\[\text{Nātar Natini Jeṅ Anak Ailehā”}^{2}\]

All the men including Dasaratha, Janaka, Rām, Laxmana, Bharat, Shatrughna, Bāli, Sugriba, Hanumanta, Jambawanta, Angad, Rāvana, Bibhishana and other heroes in the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana were well-versed in politics and were very wise. In the same manner, all women, Kaushalyā, Kaikeye, Sumitrā,

\(^1\) Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana = 4/3665-7.  
\(^2\) Ibid = 6/6508.
Sita, Sarama, Mandodari and other queens were all learned and knew politics. Even the maid Manthara knew politics. She knew what would happen if Bharat would be the king and how Kaikeyee and she herself would be benefitted;

- "Gupta Rupe Tathāpito Hāibo Patesvari".  

Further, that a woman was looked down upon to some extent during the Kandali era is evident from the fact that Rām did not want to accept Sītā after the death of Rāvana. He even advised her to marry anybody she liked. Against this Sītā told him in protest that he was not right to behave with her as an ordinary woman (Etar Naari). It rather proves that the place of a woman was quite pitiful during the Kandali era. The ordinary people had to offer their wives on account of their poverty. Of course there was some kind of sexual slackness among certain people (Etar Naari) also for which they were looked down upon by the society.

The woman is completely under the man in a 'class society'. The sexual purity was the basis of chastity. Rām compelled Sītā into the 'Agni Parīkṣā' and then afterwards

\[3\text{ibid = 2/2287.}\]
sent her to Vanavās only for the sake of sexual purity after the death of Rāvana. Finally due to this tendency of Rām to examine her sexual purity once again, she entered into the 'Pātal'.

In this connection, it is seen that Shri Kandali differs from Valmiki. Sītā in the Sapta Kānda is found to be more courageous than her counterpart in the version of Valmiki. During the 'Agni Parīkṣā', she is found to be an ideal woman, challenging and practical.  

During the Kandali era, the service to husband was the best virtue of a woman. For a woman the husband was the God and therefore, doing service to him was her only duty. The description of such a woman is evident in the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana. Even Kaikeyee, the queen did such services to her husband king Dēsaratha.

- "Nripatir Guhyāte Kaikeyee Mukh Dila,
  Bāyudhari Devi Taan Kariya Humpila".  

\[4\text{ibid - } 6/6508-11.\]

\[5\text{ibid - } 1/440.\]
In addition to this, Sītā's accompaniment to Vana with Rām may also be referred to here. Sītā realised that her life was meaningless without her husband and therefore, she did not even wish to live without him.

- "Tumi Eri Goile Mor Jiwan Nisfal, Katārat Bhar Nuhi Shunjbo Geral". 6

Moreover, the advice rendered by Anusuya on chaste woman to Sīta also reveals the status of a woman during the Kandali era:

- "Dur Diya Aro Sulilanta Anusuya, Swami Bhakati Kar Pratibrata Huwā". 7

Shri Kandali tried his best to maintain the social status of a woman. He made Manoodarī to request Rāvana again and again to send back Sītā. 8 Of course Rāvana also kept the honour of Sītā, because Rāvana did not try to rape Sītā without her consent. 9 Even Hanuman who came from the "monkey family" showed great respect to Sītā;

6ibid - 2/1863.
7ibid - 3/2647.
9ibid - 3/3267.
Shri Kandali thought about the social status of a woman so minutely that even Sita refused to more on the back of Hanuman when the latter proposed to her when she was a prisoner at the 'Ashok Ban';

That a woman was subordinate to a man was best depicted by Shri Kandali. The Sayambara of Sītā can never be described as the real 'Sayambara'. Because it was the wishes of Janaka and of Sītā for which she had to marry. Sītā's version also proved it;

Shri Kandali also gives us the description of some free women. Shurpanakhā is the best example of such a woman.

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10ibid - 5/4260.
11ibid - 5/4325.
12ibid - 1/1189.
13ibid - 6/2411.
Shurpanakhā degrades the position of a woman. The devotion to a husband for such a woman was unknown and uncalled for. They had only one intention, the intention of sexual gratification. The poet referred to such women as the 'Etar Naari'. Even in depicting such a woman, Shri Kandali did not forget about the position of a woman. He expressed that whatever a woman might be she has always been not to be killed. So, Shurpanakhā was not killed even when she attempted to devour Sītā. Only her nose and ears were chopped off.

- "Strijāti Kāranese Jilek
Nākar Kānar Tej Apuni Pilek". **14**

On the otherhand, although the devotion to husband was shown in respect of Tārā, yet the social sense of the "monkey family" was described as low. So, it was not difficult for Bāli to marry his sister-in-law.

- "Rajyachog Kare Mor Sharya Sambaria". **15**

But, in case of Shabari, although she was from a so-called low caste, was shown as devotee to Rām because

**14 ibid - 3/2836.**

**15 ibid - 4/3486.**
she was in real sense a virtuous woman. It shows that virtue does not relate to caste or creed but related to the performance of virtuous rites and customs.

Finally, it is seen that the status of a woman during the Kandali era was quite secondary one. Of course a chaste and devoted one had a high status. The best virtue of a woman was service to her husband. The poet Kandali has expressed this idea through the characters of several women. He has put the social 'Laxmana Rekha' of chaste woman through characters like Sītā, Kaikeyee, Anusuyā, Mandodari and others. On the other hand, characters like Shurpanakhā were looked down upon. He was also conscious of the limited social role of a woman. His work proves that he did never do anything which could have gone against the customary social norma of the woman. We can therefore, safely conclude that Shri Kandali has tried to keep the customary position of a woman in tact.

6.3 SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN DURING THE TULSI ERA:

Tulsidas was 'Maryadawādī' respect for the prevailing customs of the society and reverence for the auspicious Vedic rites and rituals. One cannot neglect this type of...
'Maryadāwād' even to-day. It is absolutely necessary for each society to follow certain rules and regulations. We can have some ideas about the social customs and rites of Tulsīdāsa's society through the women characters depicted by him:

- "Jarr chetan Guna-doshmoy,
  Vishwa-kinha Kartār,
  Sat Häne Gun Gahahing Paya,
  Parihari Wāri-Vikāra.\(^\text{16}\)

The women depicted by Tulsīdāsa were no exception to a customary woman of his age. He described the Mughol age of his time as the 'Kaliyug'. During that 'Kaliyug' the status and position of a woman was pitiable. The women were deprived of their due honour. They were the prisoners at home. They spent the life of a slave with restraints and restrictions. He, of course, blamed God for such discriminations.\(^\text{17}\) Because she was an 'Yoshitā', she could never attain the knowledge of the Śāstras nor had the opportunity to know about the deep learning. Tulsīdāsa expressed it through Pārvati:

\(^{16}\) Rām Charit Mānas: l/12
\(^{17}\) Ibid - l/125/5.
A woman was regarded as obstinate and idiotic since she was devoid of knowledge and honour. At the same time, a neglected and disrespected woman suffered from interiority complex:

- "Ad Mohi Apni Kinkari Jaani,
  Jadapi Sahaj Jarr Naari Apni". 19

It is natural that the environment into which a man is born, has considerable influence on him. The age in which Tulsidas was born was an age of luxury and enjoyment. Physical labour was derogatory for a high class woman. Tulsidas has given this idea through the character of Sītā when he says:

- "Palang Pith Taji Good Hindora,
  Śiyan Dinha Pagu Awani Katora". 20

19ibid - 1/133/1.
20ibid - 2/49/5.
The luxurious life of the age, made a woman the "thing of enjoyment rather than a wife. A woman had no other value. A man enjoyed the right to marry anybody he wanted and as many times as he liked. There was no binding over him. This tendency can be imagined from the statement of नीम at the time of 'Shaktishel' on Laxmana:

- 'Jiho Abadh Kaun Muhu Laye,
Naari Hāni Vishesh chnati Nāhin'.

There was lack of morality in the society. Even a woman forgetting her self-respect and being under lust, ran after love. Tulsīdās expressed a hint at such behaviour of a woman through the character of Shurpanakhā. Such degradation to the society came only because of the fact that people dishonoured the great Vedic ideals. As such a woman was compared to a Dhol, Murkh (idiot), Shudra (a low caste) and Pashus (animals) and therefore, she has the right to be exploited.

- 'Dhol Gawār Sudra Pasunaari,
Sakal Tārra Ke Adhikāri'.

21 ibid - 6/60/6.
22 ibid - 3/29/1-2.
23 ibid - 5/58/3.
There was the abundance of crimes, sins, immoral activities and false varities.\textsuperscript{24} There was a disrespect for Brāhmaṇas and Vedic activities. A woman made men dance; and as such she neglected her legitimate husband and ran after other men. Due to economic hardships the womenfolk disregarded the Vedic rites. The nature of immoral activities that gloomed the society can be well assumed from the fact that the widows wore more ornaments and spent a life of luxury while a woman with a husband had none.\textsuperscript{25} For such a degradation of the womenfolk, not only the woman herself but also the wanton males were equally responsible. The men deserted their devoted wives and fulfilled their lust outside with low caste women. Tulsidās has drawn a clear pen-picture of the wanton society of his time in several places in the Mānas.\textsuperscript{26}

Tulsidās reproached only such immoral and wanton people for their immoral, voluptuous and sinful activities, with the intention that these people might reform themselves through their self-realisation and repentance.

\textsuperscript{24}ibid - 7/98/2.
\textsuperscript{25}ibid - 7/99/2-4.
\textsuperscript{26}ibid - 7/101/1 & 7/102/3.
It is also interesting to note, that side by side with the moral deficiency of the society, Tulsīdās has depicted the brighter side of the society with men and women with high moral character also. He has given a picture of high ideals of Indian Culture successfully through the family of Rām. His women are honourable, adorable and a symbol of age old traditional ideal. The picture of Sītā is the best illustration of the prestige of a woman.

- "Pati Anukul Sādā Rah Sītā,  
  Soohā Khānī Susil Binitā".27

Tulsīdās also depicted the "Griha Laxmī Rup" (Deity of the homestead) of a woman through Sītā:

- "Jadyapi Gṛih Sewāk Sewakini,  
  Vipul Sāda Sewa Vidhi Guni,  
  Niz Kar Gṛih Paricharazā Karai  
  Rāmchandra Āyasu Anusarai".28

The polygamy is a curse on the society. Dasaratha is the burning example of this. Tulsīdās is found advocating        

27ibid - 7/23/2-4.  
28ibid.
the eradication of tortures on women by opposing the polygamy. His Rām was with one wife.

Basically the position of women of Tulsīdās was very high. All people regarded a woman as an honourable and glorious deity of purity and chastity. It was the peculiarity of Indian culture that a woman could not be killed irrespective of what she was. Because the killing of a woman was a grave sin. So, a woman was always to be protected and not be killed. In the society of Tulsīdās, killing of a woman was similar to that of a king or a child.  

Tulsīdās showed deep respect to a woman in his 'Kāvya' - the Rām charit Mānas. But at the same time he was angry with the womenfolk at their activities. It is a fact, of course, that Tulsīdās reproached those women who were against Vedic principles and going astray and committing unsocial and immoral activities and who were also looked down upon by the society. He did never up braid those who were virtuous, honourable and noble women. So, his censuring of some women does not mean the up braid of the womenfolk as a whole.

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29 ibid - 2/166/5-6.
6.4 CONCLUSION:

From the analysis of woman characters in the writings of Shri Mādhab Kandali and Tulsīdās it is seen that both the poets were the follower of the traditionalism. Both of them wanted that the status of a woman as prevalent during the Vedic days should reinstated. A chaste woman was adored by both of them. They were also conscious of the degradation of the them women due to the political atmosphere of the age. It is natural that the status of a woman in a male dominated society where a woman is regarded as a 'Commodity', is pitiable. It pained Tulsīdās to know that during the rule of the Mughols, a woman was used as a 'commodity of luxury'. The moral degradation which degraded a woman can also degrade the society to the same extent. So, Tulsīdās is found to be more stern towards maintaining the status of a woman than that of Shri Kandali. During the days of Shri Kandali, the Assamese society did not experience certain evils existed in the society of North India. Under such circumstances, Shri Kandali could not be so firm in his 'Mārṣayānā' convictions. But the simple and easy-going life of Assamese women reflected in the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana.
It comes to light from the writings of both the poets that the status of a woman was never very high in the male dominated society and she had to live within the limits of the social customs and traditions.

6.5 SHRI KANDALI’S VIEW POINTS ON WOMEN:

It is quite natural that a poet as well as his creations are influenced by the social environment in which he lives. Under such circumstances, Shri Kandali and Tulsidas as well as their creations were not free from such influences of the then environment. Again the reflection of the society is evident in literature. This reflection is of the social, religious and political environment of the age.

The states in the Kandali era was under the Hindu rulers who followed the vedic customs. The moral standard of women was very high. The women were respectable and adorable in the society;

- "Yatra Naaryustu Pujayante Ramante Tatra Devatā". 30

This principle has been successfully followed by Shri Kandali in his Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana. Of course, it is also

30 Manusmrity - 3/57.
true that a woman was never independent in the Indian society;

- "Pita Raxati Kaumara Bharta Raxati Youvane,
  Raxati Sthāvire Putra Youvade,
  Na Stri Suatantryamarhati".31

Shri Kandali could not give up this social custom and tradition. He is found to depict the womenfolk from this point of view. For him a woman was completely under the control of a man. The womenfolk was never free. It is also evident from the statement of Sita;

- "Pāpistha Rāvane Mok Ānileka Hori,
  Tirijāti Parādhin Naho Suatantrī".32

It proves that they were conscious of the social customs and traditions. Even Kaushalyā revised herself on the eve of her journey to Vana thus;

- "Kokil Shochan Howe Susochan Rāwe,
  Nārigou Snope Patibrata Dharmañāwe".33

31 ibid - 1/3.
32 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 6/6508.
33 ibid - 2/1943.
The women also tried to be safeguarded always by men. Most probably that was why Sītā wanted to accompany Rām to 'Vana' although she knew that there would be dangers in the 'Vana'.

Shri Kandali was a liberal minded poet. His views on women were also very liberal. He is found to be conscious about the beauty of a woman. The beauty of Sītā which he expressed through the version of Rām, is quite enchanting. It rather proves the aesthetic sense of the poet.

Shri Kandali was wellversed in depicting the woman characters. At the same time, his views on women were very sympathetic ones. He depicted all the woman characters very well and with considerations. It can be evidenced even from one example of description of woman of the Koshal kingdom.

Shri Kandali gave importance to the description of a woman like that of the Kītikālin Hindi poet Bihārī.

\[34\text{ibid - 2/1963.}\]
\[35\text{ibid - 2/2081-83.}\]
\[36\text{ibid - 1/182-6.}\]
A description of the luxurious life of the royal women is found since he depicted a 'class society'.

It is clear that when Shri Kandali speaks of a woman, he followed the Indian ideals and cultural principles. He only expressed the adorable form of a woman. Although Sītā was charmed at the beauty of Rām, yet she could not express it because she was designed after the ideals of an Assamese woman. She married Rām only in accordance with the selection of her father king Janaka, who decided to give his daughter to one who could fix the 'Guna' to the 'Haradhanu.' that is to fix the string to the bow of Lord Shankara.

One of the major aim of poetry is to produce sentiment (Rasas) in the readers and give them pleasure. Shri Kandali

37 ibid - 3/2668.
38 ibid - 2/2081.
39 ibid - 1/182.
did not allow such opportunities of creating sentiment and give pleasure to escape. For example, the musings of Kuji Mantharā that Jharata would take her for his consort and decorations of herself with best clothes etc. make the readers enjoy well. 40

Shri Kandali gave his attention towards the sentimentality of a woman also. In the Ayodhya Kānda, his description of the sorrows and regrets of Dēsaratha and Kaushalyā at the separation of their son, Rām, expresses the sentiment of for children very vividly. 41

Shri Kandali depicted all the women characters in accordance with their respective age, time, status, relationship with the male counterparts and particularly, with the development of the story. So, the view points of the poet are not one and the same on all of them. Because the view point depends on the circumstances and the development of the story. So his view point on women should be studied keeping this particular point in view.

40 ibid - 2/2285-6.
41 ibid - 2/1728, 86 & 1803, 7, 8.
Shri Kandali is found to depict his women as adorable and respectable. The best example of it is the character of Ahalyā, the wife of sage Gautam. He was merciful towards the women for their faults and was in favour of allowing time for their self-purification. In case of Ahalyā, he made Gautam accepting her which showed that he was with a progressive mind. He gave a very high status to a chaste woman by protecting her from going astray. Even today a woman has to be deprived of such a status. That he made Rām address Ahalyā as 'Mātri' and sage Vishwamitra to praise her, shows the viewpoint of Shri Kandali as the deliverer of women.

In case of Tārā, Shri Kandali also made the character adorable with high qualities. The illustration that Tārā gave more importance to devotion to husband than politics, reminds one of the respect of Shri Kandali towards women. Her devotion to her husband was so deep that she even did not hesitate to curse Rām at the killing of her husband.

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42 ibid - 1/1158-9.
43 ibid - 1/1156.
44 ibid - 4/3665-7.
Shri Kandali has never depicted any woman as evil completely. The evil in the characters are not depicted as natural one but he did it as compulsion of the circumstances. For examples the character of Ṭārakā, Kaikeyee, Shurpanakhā or Mantharā is shown as evil only under certain circumstances.

Shurpanakhā wanted either of Rām or Laxmana as her husband. So, she incited her brother Ravana to abduct Sita only because she was unsuccessful in her attempt to fulfil her desire. Practically speaking the poet wanted to express the instinct of revenge in the mind of a woman. 45

Kaikeyee was at the beginning a wise and generous. But it was because of Mantharā's incitement she went astray;

- "Kuji Tor Bachane dhumit Thāko Luti,
  Hā Rām Bolante Parān Jāi Futi". 46

Mantharā was the maid servant of Kaikeyee and she was afraid that when Rām, the step son of Kaikeyee would be the king, the status of Kaikeyee would go low. 47 From such a

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description the fear of a woman for her existence is revealed.

Shri Kandali has shown what should be the true nature of a 'Tapaswini through the character of Shabarī. The incidents of the Tārā's opposition to Āśāli, her curse on Rām, the divine chariot carrying Shabarī to heaven etc. show that women with high qualities may come out of so-called low caste families.

All the characters like Sītā Kaushalyā, Sumitrā and others were depicted as virtuous and devoted to their husbands in accordance with the Indian ideals. Shri Kandali did not leave any stone unturned to save the prestige and honour of Sītā. He mentioned about the 'Agni Parīṣā' of Sīṭā only to keep the social status of Sītā upright.

- "Nājānā Sīṭāk Parīṣilo Ji Karane,
  Janat Thākiba Rām Hen Laghu Jane". 49

Rām knew Sītā well; but it was done only because Sītā should be above suspicion of the mass people. Sītā has been

48 ibid - 3/3377.
49 ibid - 6/6528.
depicted as a chaste and devoted wife. Her chastity and devotion can be evidenced from her attending of Rāma during the 'Vanavās', statement before Rāvana on the eve of her abduction and also from her reply to Kaushalyā before going for the Vanavās. The self confidence of Sītā is also revealed through these statements. Moreover Rāma could not utter by himself the verdict of sending Sītā to 'Vana' again before Sītā. She was informed of the verdict through Laxmana. The main reason behind sending Sītā to 'Vana' again was to safeguard the social status only.

Shri Kandali's women protested forcefully against the injustice done to them by the menfolk. It is definitely a progressive outlook of the poet. Sītā also protested against injustice done by Rāma. But such protest by Sītā seems to be submission of a common woman before their husbands rather than a protest.

The poet has presented Kaushalyā as devoted to her husband. Because she was devoted and loyal to her husband

50 ibid - 3/3155-6.
51 ibid - 2/1941.
52 ibid - 7/6738
53 ibid - 6/6511 & 7/7098.
54 ibid - 7/7085, 99.
she accepted the orders of Dasaratha and allowed son and daughter-in-law to go to forest.  

Sumitra was, of course, with less personality, who thinks of her own happiness. But she was devoted to her husband and was a 'Tyagamoyee Naari'.

Shri Kandali has depicted Mandodari as a devoted wife. Although she was the wife of an 'Asura', yet she has been placed at a higher status than those of Kaushalya, Kaikeyee, Sumitra and Tara. Since Shri Kandali was conscious of the status of a woman, he depicted most of the women in equal favour. But at the same time he was quite critical of the women who crossed the limit of their status. He reouked them without mercy.

The power of a woman is boundless. Even the gods fail to know them. One cannot understand them from their outward appearance. Such an idea on them has been prevailing since ancient times. Kaikeyee, who once loved Rām, did not hesitate to send him for 'Vanavas'. The poet Shri Kandali made

57 Ibid - 5/4214.
Bharata rebuke his mother harshly. Bharata is found to call his mother a serpent, pitiless, a killer, heartless, a Rāxasini, a tigress, a Yakhinī and the devourer of her own husband and thereby rebuked the whole woman-folk.\footnote{ibid - 2/2277.}

Shurpanakhā, who disguised as a 'Mehini Naari' (an enchantress), wanted to devour Sītā when her intention was not fulfilled.\footnote{ibid - 2/2800.} Shri Kandali wanted to give expression to the revengeful intention of a co-wife and her evil intentions through Shurpanakhā. The need of the character of Shurpanakhā in the development of the story is quite indispensable. Because it was the beginning of abduction of Sītā which led to the killing of Kāvana. It wants to show that destruction begins in this world only for a woman. It was only Sītā for whom Lanka was destroyed like that of Troy for Helen. Again, although Sītā was with all the virtues yet she was looked down upon sometimes on suspicion. But Shri Kandali did never use any word of abuse only to belittle a woman. Of course in certain places, as the situation demands, he used certain terms of abuse against a woman. He is found to be more generous...
than Tulsidas.

By depicting Sīta, Kaushalyā, Sumitrā, Mandodari etc. fully adored with best qualities like simplicity, bashfulness and natural feminine diffidence, he placed the best woman at her best place. On the other hand, he made Tārakā punishable as she acted against the customs and ideals. His statement that killing of such an evil woman was not a sin, rather proved his view points on a woman:

- "Djstarak Apakār Jijane Kēray,
Nāhi Jōsh Tāk Mari Punyeśe Lāhay". 62

According to Shri Kandali, the 'Tapasyā' (meditation) for a woman was to serve her husband and to obey his orders. It was only because of this Sītā wanted to go for 'Vanaśā' with Rām. 63 Kekeye also received the boon only because of her service to her husband. 64 Kaushalyā and Sumitrā were no exception to this. Anusuyā is also found advising Sītā for such devotion to husband. 65

61 ibid - 4/4325.
62 ibid - 1/879.
63 ibid - 1/1163.
64 ibid - 1/440.
65 ibid - 3/2644.
Shri Kandali was an appreciator of beauty of women. Whenever he got any opportunity, he caught hold of it and created 'Shringaar Rasa' by illustrating the beauty of women. In the Aranya Kanda, he illustrated the physical beauty of Sītā in several places in a very enchanting manner. In his description, Rām found the beauty of the nature reflected in Sītā:

- "Rāj Hansa Dekhā Sītā Tomār Gaman,
  Chakrabāk Jugal Tomār Dui Stona". 66

Shri Kandali has proved his efficiency as a poet by illustrating the beauty of different organs of a woman through different similes. He is found to pay his attention to beauty of a woman like other poets, Kalidas, Bhartri Hari, Bhavabhuti, Bāna Chatta, Surdas, Dhanananda and Bihari. But his illustration of beauty is devoid of any type of obscenity and vulgarity.

It is, therefore, found that the viewpoint of Shri Kandali on a woman is quite progressive. He did not want that a woman should be down-trodden and a matter of exploitation for all times to come. So, he depicted all the feminina

66 ibid - 2/2081-2.
qualities that influence the society in its family and social life through some devoted wives who challenged the injustice against them within the limits of the society. In practice, Shri Kandali was in favour of female education, freedom for women and the rise of the womenfolk.

6.6 Views of Tulsidas on Women:

The Ramcharit Manas of Tulsidas is a creation of a transition period. The Mughol regime in India created divisions and difficulties among the Hindus. Since the womenfolk became the target of the foreign rulers for gratification of their lust, the society was filled up with corruptions. The women were exploited in different ways; and had to live a very troubled life. Tulsidas was angry at this degradation of women. Since he was a saint, he wanted that the society should be based on moral principles. But in contrast to it, the social activities were going against these principles. He wanted to bring back the women, who were going against the Vedic principles, to the right tract. It is a fact that whenever one wants to bring the people, who were going astray, they committed. It is only because of this, Tulsidas reproached the evil women. Therefore, we cannot abuse Tulsidas of being the hater of woman.
There are certain references and statements in the Rāmcharit Mānas which rather prove that there was disrespect towards woman in the mind of Tulsīdās. Even he made Lord Shiva to say:

- "Sunahu Sati Tab Nāri Sudhāoo,
Sānyam As Na Dhariya Ur Kāoo". 67

Pārbati also believed that "Naari Sahaj Jarr Aggya". 68

Tulsīdās speaks of the character of a woman thus:

- "Sakal Kapat Aoh Avguna Khāni". 69

The villain of the Rāmcharit Mānas, Rāvana found eight defects in a woman. 70 Another ideal character, Shārata remarked on a woman—

- "Vidhīhun Na Naari Hriday Gati Jaani". 71

Shabārī also said—"Adham Te Adham Ati Nāri". 72

In the words of Rām:

67 Rāmcharit Mānas - 1/51/3.
68 ibid - 1/57/Kha.
69 ibid - 2/47/4.
70 ibid - 6/15/1-2.
71 ibid - 2/162/2.
72 ibid - 3/35/2.
There are several such lines in the Rāmcharit Mānas on the oasis of which some people regard Tulsidas as the hater of women.

According to Dr. Mataprasad Gupta - "Pratek Yug Ke Kalakar Naari chitron Mein Prayah udar Paye Jata Hain, Kintu Naari chitron Mein Tulsidas Behad Anudar Hain".  

Mishra Jandhu also regarded Tulsidas as a hater of women:

"Joswāmījhee Mein Naari Ke prati Jaisi Dharana Milti Hai, uske Hetu Ke To Patā Chal Jata Hai, Par Uskā Purn Samarthan bhāratiya Dristi Se Samchavya Nahein Hai".  

All the arguments to prove the attribute to Tulsidas that he was a 'misogynist' are found to be baseless. Because whenever we consider the lives found in the Rāmcharit Mānas

73 Rāmcharitmānas : 6/11/6

74 Tulsidas - Dr. Mataprasad Gupta, pp. 218.

75 Tulsidas Aur unka yug - Dr. Rajpati Dixit, pp. 76.
which are known to be related to hatred towards women, it reveals the main reasons for writing these lines. They can be studied in connection with the social circumstances of the age. The time of Tulsidas was the time of curse. The high caste men brought home low and vile prostitutes — "Griha Anahi Cheri"; and drove out their devoted wives. From the character of these so-called high caste one can well assume the nature of the common people at large.

Moreover the women also gave up the nature prescribed by the vedic principles and spent their lives in luxury. The widows also gave up their rites and began to use toilets as if their husbands were still alive:

- "Guna Mandir Sundar Pati Tyagi,
  dhajahing Naari Par Purush Ahagi".77

Under such circumstances, the abuse of 'Naari' by Tulsidas meant for bringing the woman to the right tract. He reproached them only to stop them from going against the 'Shastras'. Like a friend telling the unpleasant truth is always better than one who uses false praise, the abuses

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76 Ramcharit Manas - 7/101/2.
77 ibid - 7/99/2.
of Tulsīdās is far better than the praises of the flatterers. It is said, — "Apriyasya Cha Pathasya Vākta Shrota Cha Durlooha".78

Due to such a viewpoint of Tulsījee, who tried for the good of all (Sarvajananahitaya) he was always respected and adored. He should not be rebuked as a 'misogynist'.

From an unbiased analysis it is found that Tulsīdās was a eulogist of a woman in the true sense of the term. It is Tulsīdās for whom Pārāmbi, Anusūya, Sītā, Kaushalyā and others got the high adorabe position in the mind of the people. In no other book of the 'nāmkātnā' group than the Rām Charit Mānas, these women got such a position of popularity and worship and which have been continuing till now. So, the Rāmcharit Mānas can be regarded as "the epic of the rise of women". By delivering Sīta from the grip of Rāvana, he hinted at the deliverance of the women from the hands of the then Mughol rulers. Therefore, the 'Loknāyak' should not be termed as the misogynist. According to Dr. Rōm Kumar verma, Tulsīdās has expressed a great respect for the womankind. According to Acharyya Rāmchandra Shukla —

78 Rāmāyana - vālmiki, Lankā Kānda.
- "Tulsīdās Ne Sab Rupon Mein Nariyon Ki Ninda Ki Hei, Kewal Pramada Ya Kamini Rupon Mein Dampatya Rati Ke Alamban Ke Rup Mein Ki Hein - Māta, Putri, dhagini Ke Rup Mein Nahin". 79

From all these it is rather proved that Tulsīdās had no ill motive to depict woman in a degraded way. The lines of Tulsīdās which were regarded as rediculous to a woman have taken the colour of the age; because he knew:

- "Siyā Rāmmoy Sab Jag Jāni, Karaun Pranam Jori Jug Pani". 80

Under such circumstances he cannot be a 'misogynist'. In most cases, the views of saints and Mahatmās on women are to some extent tough and are suspicious about their character. Since Tulsīdās was a 'Sant', it is not unnatural for him to remain alert against a 'Kamini' or a 'Pramada'. It is the reason for which he warned us to remain aloof from the woman - a 'Pramada' with her 'Bhogya Rup'. From the Psychological view, his 'Nāri dhartsana' is nothing, but a kind

79 Kamb Rāmāyana Aur Rāmcharit Mānas Ke Naari Pētra - pp. 74.
80 Rāmcharit Mānas - 1/8/1.
of ‘Prampurna manki Bhartsana’. He even controlled his mind - ‘Man Jani Hos Patang’.
So, it is better not to regard his ideas against a woman. He wanted to see a woman in her adorable form - the form of a mother, a sister or a wife. His endeavours to institute this view on women are found in his writings in abundance:

- ‘Putri Pavitra Kiya Kui Hou,
Sujas Óhalal Jagu Kaha Saaou Kou’.  

From an impartial analysis of the writings of Tulsidas, it is evident that he reproached the woman when she acted against established principles of the society or a religion. Here he meant those women of the time who lived a luxurious and carefree life and did not respect the great principles of the Vedas and went astray under such circumstances the poet speaks of ideals of life. The composition of the Kámcharit Mõnas is based on several Purânas and Nigama Sãstras - “Manapurananigama Sammat”. As such certain lines in the Mõnas express the ideas of Sanskrit Sãstras more than the ideas of Tulsijae. They are only the translation of the Sanskrit text.

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1ioid - 3/46/Kha.
2ioid - 2/297/1.
For example - these lines of Tulsīdās -

- "Dhol ūśīr Shudra Paśhu Naari,
Sakal Tarṇa Ke Aōhikārī". 83

are the translation of the following lines of the 'Garg Śāmhitā' ;

- "Durjana Shilpino Vēsā Justāscha Patahē Strīyā,
Tāditā Mōrdawang Yanti Naite Satkāre Bhaiṇaḥ".

Similarly -

- "Naari Swaohaw Satya Sāo Khaehing,
Aūgūn Ath Sāda Urt Rahti.
Sāhas Amritā Chapalatē Māya,
Śhay Abīsak Āsauch Adayā". 84

There lines are translated from Śaṅskrit ;

- "Aṁritān Sāhasang Māya
Mukhatwamatiilośhata,
Aśauchang Nirdayaṭawang Cha
Strināṅg Doshiḥ Swaoshavaḍa".

83 ibid - 5/59/3.
84 ibid - 6/15/1,2.
Tulsidas had the capacity to enter into the core of human heart and to depict it skilfully. There are enough examples in the *Mānas* to prove it. The poet wants to see a man and woman within the limits of his or her dignity. That was he reproached Ṭāraka and Shurpanakhā for crossing the limit of dignity; and praised Anusuyā, Sītā and Kaushalyā for acting within the limits of their own dignity. He, who believed, the world as "Siya-Rām-May See Jag", can never be a misogynist. He reproached both men and women equally, who acted against the society, the moral principles, their own dignity and the religious principles.35

That Tulsidas ignored the women can never be taken for granted. He termed Jāli an idiot (*Murh*), because he did not give ears to his wife:

- "Murh Tohi Atishay Abhimana,
Naari Sikhāwan Karasi Na Kanā".36

He was great supporter of "freedom of women within dignity"

- "Kata Vicki Sriji Naari Jag Māni,
Parādhin Sapanahun Sukh Nāni".37

35) *ibid* - 7/99/1-4.
36) *ibid* - 4/9/5.
37) *ibid* - 1/102/3.
Tulsidas had a great respect for each and every woman who were devoted to virtuous activities irrespective of their caste, creed or status. It was due to this that he made Ram, his adorable god and hero of his Ramcharit Manas, show respect to one Shabarī who was from a so-called low caste. His Ram addressed the low caste woman as 'dhāmini' (a woman of worth). It should be mentioned here that the use of the term 'dhāmini' is in the sense of the best woman and an old lady (mother), but the same term 'dhāmini' has been used by the commentators of the ḍhagawat and the Ādhyatma nāmāyana for a 'Mātā' meaning a 'lady' while the scholars editing sanskrit, Prakrit and Hindi dictionaries used it for a 'Chanda, Mānini, Krodhshila, Sunoar Yuwatī'. The commentators of the ḍhagawat for the first time used this term to mean an old woman, particularly an 'old mother' and Surdas and Tulsidas also used it in that sense.

From such uses and illustrations it becomes clear that Tulsidas had a great respect for women of all caste, creed and status. One can easily understand to what extent Tulsidas was liberal towards women. Even he regarded a man, who had bad

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88 ibid - 3/35/2 & 3/36/4-5.
89 Sursāgar - "Jo Sukh Sur Āmar Muni Durlokh So Nand dhāmini Pāwaii".
intentions to a woman, as an "Atatiyae", who was ill for killing:

- Anuja dadhu shagini sut Naari,
  Sunu Saa Kanyaa Sam A Chari,
  Enni Khristi dilokoi Joi,
  Tani yaane Kechnu Paa Na Hoi".  

In the patriarchal society of India, a mother has
been placed at a higher status than that of the father.
Tulsidas also made Kaushalya tell Kam:

- "Jau Kewal Pitu Aysu Tata,
  Tau Jani Jhanu Jaani Jarri Maa.
  Jau Pitu Maa Kanyu Jan Jhan,
  Tau Kanau Sat Asoon Saman".  

Tulsidas in his own epic appreciated a woman with
great respect. He advised a man to show respect to a woman
on one hand and on the other, by saying "Naari Aramu Pati
deo uuja", he advised the woman to serve her husband in the
spirit of mutual love and co-operation. He wanted to make a

31 ibid - 2/56/1.
woman adorable by arousing the spirit of love and abandonment. This is the prime viewpoint of Tulsidas on a woman.

It is rather mean and narrow to ascribe the epithet 'Misogynist' to Tulsidas who had a very liberal view on a woman. It is only a one-sided view on Tulsidas. It is quite baseless. In the book under review, Tulsidas has given a better and more idealistic status to a woman than that of a man comparatively. The ideals as depicted by Tulsidas are in accordance with the ideals of ancient India as shown by the Vedic sages.

When critically analysed, it is found that Tulsidas poses before us as the appreciator of a woman. He deals with 'dhakti' only. Dhakti to God is a spiritual matter. From the point of his subject-matter, he wanted some men and women to prove his conclusion. So, his people on one hand reflected some spiritual entities and on the other, showed the spirit of 'offering of self' (Atmotsarg). All such types of characters are there in the Manas.

From the point of characterisation also, Tulsidas is found to be an appreciator of a woman. He praised and placed almost all the women like Satī, Pārvati, Kausalyā, Sumittra, Sītā, Shabari, Anusuyā, Tārā, Trijata and Manoodari at high
status although he depreciated slightly some women like Kaikayee, Manthara, Shurpanakhā etc. It is proper that one should appreciate the good and depreciate the evil.

From the theoretical point of view also Tulsījēe was an appreciator of women. In his writing some vile and low women came along with some other high and adorable women. It is quite natural that all women are not of high quality which is also true of a man. In practice, Tulsījēe praised both men and women equally who were really praiseworthy. Tulsīdās wanted that there should be an ideal society with some ideal men and women. He depicted some low characters only to make the high characters shine better. But he had no ill feeling towards anybody.

6.7 Conclusion:

Now it is seen that both Shri Māchao Kangali and Tulsīdās tried to express their own views in accordance with the impacts of their time. It is clear from the writings of their books that the social circumstances of both the poets were different. Most probably that was the reason as to why a difference is found between the outlooks of both the poets.

The customs and traditions of women of the time of Shri Kandalī and Tulsīdās were different. The viewpoint of
Shri Kandali on women was quite progressive. He did not regard it as guilty to protest against injustice within the limits of the society. He wanted freedom and education for women. In contrast to it, Tulsīdās was not in favour of freedom to women, from which there might be loss for the society. He believed that there was a duty of women to live a life without crossing the limits of social status and healthy social custom. He was in favour of following the path as shown by the Vedas. But Shri Kandali was liberal in this respect. It is worth-mentioning that the society at the time of Shri Kandali was under the complete control of the Hindu rulers while that of Tulsīdās was under the Muslims.

Both the poets praised equally the devoted wife with good behaviour. So, they praised Sītā, Kaushalyā, Sumitrā etc. and depreciated others like Tārakā, Mantharā etc. It is seen, however, that both the poets are stern against the women who deviated from their duties and committed immoral activities while they praised the devoted and chaste women and made them ideals for the society.

Finally we can easily say that both the poets under consideration showed due respect to Indian tradition and ideals even in case of depicting women. Both of them are found to be conscious about the role of a woman in the family as well
as in the society. They were dead against to any disrespect to a woman and praised a woman of dignity. The oasis of the views on women in case of both the poets was the "Loka Mangala" - the good of humanity.