CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION
We have so far analysed in details the woman characters as depicted in the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana by Shri Mādhab Kandali (along with two chapters incorporated by Shri Shri Šankardeva and Shri Shri Mādhab Deva later) and in the Rām Charit Mānas by Goswamī Tulsīdās, from different angles and different point of views in the proceeding chapters. Here in these two poets of the middle ages of Indian Bhakti cult one can find the diverse and multifarious picture of women which not only reflect the customs and conventions of the time but also reflect the various elements that influenced the mind of the poets. It is quite natural because both the poets accepted the changes that took place during the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries for which their Kāvyas virtually became the 'Dastavej' (Record) of the then society.

Practically speaking the tale of Rām (Rām-kathā) is mixed up with Indian life like 'salt in water' and the absence of which Indian life seems to be a dwarf one. Probably there is no such Indian, who is ignorant of tales of Rām or whose heart does not leap up with these stories. Therefore, the original Ramayana of Valmīki has been translated into different regional languages of India: and it still continues to render into different versions. In this connection the name of the
"Apramādi Viṣṇuva Kavi" Shri Madhab Kandali of the Eastern India and the "Bhakta-Siromoni" Goswami Tulasidāsa of the Northern India are worth mentioning. The works of both these two poets are equally respected and loved by the people like that of the original one.

The approximate date of the birth of Shri Kandali is 1400 A.D. and he was born in the district of Nagaon of Assam. He was a 'Bhakta Viṣṇuva Kavi' (a poet of the Viṣṇuvaite cult). His life and works cannot be ascertained from any 'Antah-sāxi' or 'Bahīn-sāxi'. But what we know of him from traditional stories that he rendered the Rāmāyana into Assamese at the request of the Barāhi king Mahāmānīkya. All the seven chapters (Kānda's) of his Saptā Kānda Rāmāyana are not available now; and only five out of them, are found. As such, the other two 'Kandas' are later added by Shri Shankardeva (1449–1568 A.D.) and Shri Madhab Deva (1489–1569 A.D.). Shri Madhab Kandali was a Brāhmin by caste while the other two were of 'Kayasthas'.

Shri Kandali, for the sake of his poetry, made a concise version of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. But he has realised and identified the core of the Rāmāyana. His viewpoint is quite religious. Shri Shankardeva, who is the social and
religious reformer, best painter, dramatist, singer, lyricist, artist, poet and what not, added the last chapter - the 'Uttarā Kānda' while his scholarly and the best disciple Shri Mādhabdeva added the first chapter - the "Ādi Kand" to the available five Kāndas of Shri Kandali. These two - the 'Guru-Shishya' were the stern devotees of Lord Krishna (alone and not with Radha) and, therefore, they added devoted and prayer songs in praise of Lord Krishna at the beginning and the end of the Saptā Kānda Rāmāyana.

The data relating to the life and works of Tulsīdās are more available than those of Shri Kandali. But at the same time these data are not very authentic also. His life-span was approximately from 1532 AD to 1623 AD. The date of the Rām Charit Mānas is 1631 of the Vikram era. He was born in a Brāhmin family. Being devoted to Rām, he was simple, honest, virtuous and very soft-hearted. But he was never a flatterer. He had a deep study and had a strong capacity for observation. He was a stern devotee of Rām and a preceptor of unity. He did not go for any royal patronage but worked in dependently.

In cases of both the poets, Shri Kandali and Tulsī, no information is available about their parentage, education
birth place etc. Their ideals of life can be had from their practical knowledge social understanding and moral values.

The 'Rām Charit Mānas' is not the literal translation of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana but a Kāvya based on the Purāṇa etc. (Nana Purāṇa Nigama Sannata\(^1\)) which reflects the originality of Tulsīdās. Like wise the basis of the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana is the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki and it has been indicated by the poet himself:

-Wālmiki Rachilā Shāstra Gadya-Padya Chhande, Tāhāt Bichari Āmi Kariyā Prabandhe.\(^2\)

Although Shri Kandali has confessed that his 'Rāmāyana' is after all a translation of the version of Vālmiki, yet one can find originality of the poet in his work. Because Shri Kandali composed his lines considering the changes of time and place. He was a scholar in both Assamese and Sanskrit literature. The same is true of Tulsīdās, because although he composed the Mānas in Awadhi yet he knew Sanskrit well.

\(^1\)Ram Charit Mānas - 7.

\(^2\)S.K. Rāmāyana - 4/3992.
The impact of time is quite evident in cases of both the poets under consideration. Both of them were directly and indirectly influenced by the different situations. Both the poets accepted the eternal elements for creation of literature like contemporary social, economic, political religious, cultural and literary environments. For which till now nobody raised a question of their relevance.

The political situations which Shri Kandali witnessed was dominated by local royal powers; and there was kingship in the country. Shri Kandali himself was under the patronage of the Barahi king and wrote the Ramayana at his request. On the other hand Tulsidas experienced the Mughol rule. Due to the luxurious life style of the rulers and indifference to troubles and difficulties of the common people life of common people was very difficult and painful. Tulsī had to undergo troubles for it; and therefore, in the least opportunity he used to speak of the ideal state. It may be easily assumed that what he called the 'Rām Rājya' in the Mānas is nothing but the 'ideal state' of his mind.

The 'Kāvyas' under consideration clearly reveal that influence or impact of contemporary social situations worked equally on both the poets. In both the version of the Ramayana, there are enough examples of caste-system, untouchability,
greatness of the Brāhmins etc. But both the poets did not give any importance to the castesystem; they only gave equally high status to a devotee of Rāma irrespective of their caste, creed etc.

Both the poets are devoid of their own passionate feeling when dealt with social understanding. They illustrate with equal emotion the relation of Vātsalya love and affection between a mother and a son. The importance of a child is placed above all others; because a son is the saviour of its parents. They also referred to Polygamy in family life. The service to the guests is also referred to in both of them. In addition to these, both the poets illustrated the food, habits, weddings etc. of the contemporary people in accordance with the principles of the śastra and with the customary habits of the people.

Dress, toilets etc. according to the prevailing cultural customs, are also depicted by both the poets. The cultural marriage of both the poets was that social equality and success of humanity could be achieved through 'love' only. The historical background of Shri Kandali seemed to be one Vaishnavite society which is based on human values. But Tulsidas is found to make 'status' as the main basis of the social background.
Shri Madhab Kandali used several metres like Pada, Dulari, Chhabi, Jhumuri etc. to express his thought and ideas while Tulsidas used Doha, Chaupai and Sorda metres for his Mānas. There are 5226 Padas in Kandali's Rāmāyana while there are 5100 Chaupais or 10200 Ardholi in the Mānas.

Since the main object of this monograph is to study the female character of both the Kāvyas - the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana and the Rām Charit Mānas, we do not lay more attention to the male characters therein. In both of them, Śīta and Mandodarī are the main female characters. There are certain secondary woman characters in both of the Kāvyas. In both the works, the heroines are adorned with all best qualities of a woman like incomparable beauty, devoted to their husbands, well-behaved, kind hearted with motherly affection etc. Since both of them were Bhakta Kavis', the heroines were selected on moral principles and moral values and they tried to establish their ideals of life as the best ideals for a woman. The heroines, leaving aside some infamy against them, are the ideals for the whole womenkind and are to be adorned by all for their qualities of heart and head.

In addition to the illustration of woman characters, both the poets depicted the relevance of the contemporary
life, social values, customary attitudes, the place of women in a male-dominated society, the highest realisation of female life etc. etc. No difference is evident in the characteristic features of Sita and Mandodari in their writings. Both, Sita and Mandodari were well-versed in devotion to their husbands and they did not retreat from the service of the husbands. Mandodari was successful in establishing the best ideal of womanhood by deparring her husband 'Ravana' who deviated from the path of morality. Both of them tried to establish the virtue of a woman and her fruitfulness through the conversation between Sita and Anusuya, wife of the sage Atri. In cases of other secondary characters both the poets successfully depicted the characteristic features within their limited scope. From this point of view, the examples of the characters like Kaushalya Sumitra, Trijata, Ahalya, Sarayu, Tara and others may be cited. Those female characters who crossed the limitation of feminine values are equally reproached and were defamed. In this connection, Kaikeyee, Manthara, Shurpanakhā etc. are the best examples. On the other hand a woman like Shabari who was born in a low-caste and like Trijata, a 'Rāxisini' could get the honour of an ideal woman due to their devotion to Ram. Practically speaking, both the poets tried to glorify
the virtues and ideals of women in accordance with the contemporary social values. They tried their utmost to establish these ideals for all womankind.

Considering the customary features, there is practically no difference between these two poets. The similarity which we find between them is due to the primary basis of their works and the influences, direct and indirect, on them. But in cases of picturising Manthara and Sita when banished, there are some innovation in case of the Assamese version. Shri Kandali has given importance to personality and outspoken quality of a woman; while on the other hand Tulsidas did not care for all these as he directed all his attention only to show the greatness of Ram alone. As a result Tulsidas introduce neither the banishment nor the entering into 'Patal' of Sita. Here one thing may be mentioned that what we find as difference between these two poets are due to their personal taste, contemporary environments and view points of their age. The differences as evidenced in the cases of female characters are due mainly to differences in the time and place of the two writers. But since both of them being Vaishnavite in their faith the differences fade up before the similarities.

From the writings of both the poets under consideration it is revealed that a woman did not enjoy considerable rights
in their time. Although they enjoyed all types of facilities and comfort, yet their status in the family was not strong and influential. Even they were not consulted in important matters. The Putrasti Yajna, sending of Rām and Laxman with sage Vishwamitra, the decision of Rām’s coronation etc. are the best examples of neglect to a woman. The Bideh king Janak also did not consult his queens in the time of Sītā’s ‘Swayambara’. This was because the women had such a status during the times of both the poets.

There are certain differences relating to the status of a woman in the writings of Shri Kandali and of Tulsidas. During the days of Shri Kandali Assamese society was an organised and rich one under the Ahom and Koch kings, where inspite of some religious clashes there were peace, order and prosperity in it. The place of a woman in this society was really a good and high one. She was honourable, educated, well-behaved and well-versed in Vedic activities. But the place of a woman during the times of Tulsidas was quite different. Because the rulers of his time were faithful to the Quran. Since there is a difference between the Vedic and the Quranic view points, a difference in their administration is quite natural. The same view points are responsible
for the differences in the position of the women in their
times. Under such circumstances a difference is evident
in between the position of a woman of Kandali's era and
that of Tulsī's era.

The poetry and poets can never remain aloof from the
contemporary situations and environment. Shri Kandali and
Tulsīdās are the representatives of their age as well as the
hero of the age. Since their viewpoint are influenced by
several elements of the time, their views on a woman also
differ naturally. While Kandali put importance on social
customs, Tulsīdās did it on the status, particularly on Vedic
values. Therefore, Tulsīdās thought of a 'māyā sītā' for the
abduction of her by Rāvana, while Kandali without taking help
of such imagination, depicted the picture of Sītā who was
well-versed in social principles. Practically speaking,
because the poets kept the local customs and conventions
in their view, difference in depicting a woman naturally
came.

The social status, behaviour and activities of women
of Kandali's time differ from those of their counterparts of
the Tulsī era. Views on widows of the two poets differ. During
the days of Kandali, the life style and activities of women
were in accordance with the principles of the Śāśtras. The
characters of Tara and Mandodari are the best examples. But during the days of Tulsidas, the activities and behaviour of the widows were not in accordance with the Shastras. As a result they could not be as honourable as those of the Kandali's time.

Both Madhab Kandali and Tulsidas equally praised well-behaved and devoted wives. Sita, Kaushalya, and Sumitra are equally praised and Taraka, Shurpanakha, Manthara etc. are reproached by both the poets. In practice the view points of both the poets on women remained parallel to the circumstances of their time.

Madhab Kandali as well as Tulsidas were 'Bhakta Kavis' (Devotional poets) and were not Psychologists. We can not analyse the characters of women pictured by these poets of the Mediaval poets on the principles laid down by the modern psychologists or by the Freudian principles. But as a matter of fact through their minute and natural descriptions, the psychological side of the characters reveal themselves. Both the poets illustrated very successfully almost all the instincts and emotions of a woman like her love - love for children, conjugal love in its different forms, her envy, her heart-burning, sex-urge, sex-gratification her ego etc. etc. which are the matter's of Psychology.
In an analysis of the woman characters in the poetry of Shri Mādhab Kandali reveals clearly that a woman has one independent personality of her own like that of a man. She has the right to take her own decision. Therefore, she faces all burning problems and thereby proving her independent identity. She proves her own victory. Because of this viewpoint, his women became the owner of glorious and great personalities.

According to Shri Kandali, a woman is neither for the enjoyment of somebody nor she is a toy to be exploited by somebody. She can never be evaluated without considering her prestige, abandonment, freedom, love and service. But Tulsidas did not want to establish the identity of others before 'Purushottam Rām' and therefore, he did not indicate this aspect of woman characters also. For him, not to speak of others, even Śītā did not have any independent personality, although her devotion to her husband made her great. Same is the case with Mandodarī. Therefore, unlike Shri Kandali, he did not care to illustrate the banishment of Śītā or her entering into the 'Pātal' (the other world).

Finally we can come to the conclusion that both Śrī Mādhab Kandali and Gosvāmī Tulsīdās were two great poets of
their age, who were instrumental in satisfying the mass people with the 'nectar' of the Ramkatha. Basing on the original Rāmāyana of the sage Vālmiki, these two poets composed their versions to which they supplemented their contemporary ideas and ideals and thereby making their versions everlasting and pertaining to all places. Both of the poets gave equal status to women and thereby enhancing their position and status in the society and made them the ideals to be followed by all women. Leaving aside a few exceptions in them, both of them lifted the female characters upto their zenith, which made them ideal and honourable in the society till now. Although there are several versions of the Rāmkathā, yet because the source being one and the same, the Rāmāyanas do not confine itself in religious field only but they show ideal ways in other fields of life like familial, social, virtuous, political, cultural etc. Therefore, the Rāmāyana has been appreciated and respected not only in India but also in other parts of the world with equal devotion. The fame of the Rāmāyana would prevail so long as the sun and the moon exist and at the sametime, the Asamiyā Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana and the Rāmcharit Mānas would shine and glitter throughout the world.