PREFACE
The basic reason as to why Indian literature has been able to secure an unbroken status in the world literature is its philosophy and religions and human values. All the greatness of human values is reflected in it. For this, the Indian scholars have given special importance to the 'Maryyada purushottam' Rām and the 'Līlā purushottam' Shri Krishna. If Rām is the beginning of Indian literature and culture, then Krishna is the end of it. If Rām is the basic ideal, then Krishna is the basic practice. In the same manner, if Rām is the theory, Shri Krishna is the practice of it. In Indian literature, there are the unity of 'Maryyada' and 'Leela'; ideal and practice and theory and its application and therefore Indian literature has been able to secure a special status in the world.

In different parts of this vast Bharatvarsha, different 'Kāvyas' have been composed on the oasis of the Rāmāyana. The Rāmāyana of 'Ādikavi' Valmiki is the oasis of these all. Over and above in Sanskrit, the Rāmāyana has been composed in several languages like Pali, Pakrit, Apaonrana, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Kanadi, Mālāyalam, Gujratī, Mārāthi, geygali, Assamese etc. In countries outside India like Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, etc. the Rāmākāvyya has been composed which indicated the human values
of the Ramayana.

This monograph - "A Comparative Study of the Woman characters of the Asamiya Sapta Kanda Ramayana and the Ram Charit Manas", is a study of woman characters given in these two famous scriptures namely the Asamiya Sapta Kanda Ramayana by Shri Madhab Kandali in Assamese language and the Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulsidas in Hindi. Among the writers, who made the tale of Ram popular, Shri Madhab Kandali of the easternmost part of India i.e. Assam and Goswami Tulsidas of the North India i.e. of Hindi belt occupy unique positions in their respective literatures. Like Shri Kandali who made Rāmkathā (Tale of Ram) popular in the eastern India, Tulsidas made it in the northern India. The contributions of these two great personalities towards literature and culture are quite unique.

Several scholars have taken up research work on the Ramayana literature. The following are some of them:

1) Dr. Krishna Narayan Prasad (Magadh) : "Asam Prāntiya Ram Sāhitya".

2) Dr. Indira Goswami : "A Comparative Study of Ramayana of Madhao Kandali & that of Goswami Tulsidas.

3) Dr. Rāmcharan Thākuriya : "Madhao Kandalir Ramayana".
4) Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma; "Ramayanar Itihastra".
5) Upendra Nath Lekharu; "Asamiya Ramayana Sahitya".
6) Dr. Keshada Mahanta; "Asamiya Ramayani Sahitya".
7) Kanak Chandra Kavyatirtha (ed) - "Asamiya Ramayana".
8) Dr. Kamnath Tripathy; (a) "Ramcharit Manas Awaj Purovanchaliya Ram Kavya".

(b) Kritibasi Bangla Ramayana Aur Ramcharit Manas Ka Tulanatmak Adhyayan".
9) Father Camil Bulka; "Ram Katha".
10) Dr. Sukumar Sen; "Ram Kathar Prak-etihas".
11) Pracodh Chandra Sen; "Ramayana U' Bharat Sanskriti".
12) Viyay Mishra; "Valmiki Ramayana Tatha Ramcharit Manas Ka Tulanatmak Adhyayan".
13) Shankar Raju Naidu; "Tulsioskrit Ramcharit Manas Aur Kamo Ramayana Ka Tulanatmak Adhyayan".

All the above mentioned works are definitely on different literary aspects of the Ramayana; but none of them deal exclusively with the woman characters in the Ramayana literature. None of them made any comparative study of these characters. Therefore I had a long standing desire to make a comparative study of these characters since I read the
Ramcharit Manas and the Sapta Kanda Ramayana. I approached my respected teacher Dr. Shupendranath Roychoudhury, Reader of Hindi Department, Gauhati University and the appreciated my venture. He also assured me of his guidance and advice in this regard.

The present thesis - "A Comparative study of the woman characters of the Sapta Kanda Ramayana and the Ramcharit Manas". With such a comparative study one can have a comprehensive idea of these two major languages of India along with an idea of the customs and conventions of these two regions relating to social and cultural life of the people. It also gives us an idea of the cultural values of the people. In this connection the role of women in our cultural and social life is quite indispensable to and inseparable from the whole society.

The main basis of our social and cultural life is the woman. The gift of a woman from our individual life to the national life can never be overlooked. Today a woman has assumed a newer greatness. A woman revolted against the medieval values and has been trying to achieve new personality of her own. It can be assumed that the new picture of a woman would come out when one studies and analyses the texts where the instincts and emotions of a woman, her values and traditions are reflected in an ancient way. Under these circumstances,
we have selected the woman characters of the Asamiya Saptap Kanda Ramayana and the Ram Charit Manas and made a comparative study of them, because such a study would give us a complete picture of women of two different regions of India and the values and cultures growing in connection with them. We also believe that such a study would bring the east and the north of India much closer.

This study is based primarily on the 'Saptap Kanda Ramayana' edited by Harinarayan Dutta Baruah and the 'Ram Charit Manas' of Tulsidas. For the sake of convenience of study we classified the whole work into eight chapters.

The first chapter is an introductory one dealing with the subject matter of the thesis, its scope and the materials for research. The second chapter deals with the life and works of Shri Madhava Kandali along with the works of Shri Shankardev and Shri Madhabdeva who supplemented to the Saptap Kanda Ramayana along with Shri Kandali and of Goswami Tulsidas. In the Saptap Kanda Ramayana of Shri Kandali only five chapters out of seven are available and as such the other two chapters (Skandas) were supplemented by Shri Shankardeva and Shri Madhava Deva; as such the life and works of the latter two writers are to be supplemented along with those of the former.
In the third chapter, we endeavour to discuss the probable influence of the contemporary political, social, religious, cultural and literary environments of the two poets. Since a man is a social animal; no one can get rid of such impacts. The poets are no exception to this. So, the impacts of contemporary environments of the poets are analysed here in this chapter.

The fourth chapter deals with characterisation in the two Kavyas. We try to analyse the female characters of these Kavyas in consideration. In the same manner the fifth chapter deals with a comparative study of woman characters as found in the Sapta Kanda Ramayana and the Ram Charit Manas. Here the similarities and dis-similarities are shown clearly in them.

The sixth chapter is a study of the social status of women during the periods of Shri Kandali and Tulsidas. We also analyse the observations of the writers on women in their Kavyas. Their views represent not only their own but also the views of the people in general as such these views have historical values.

In the seventh chapter, we make a psychological analysis of the characters. The poets have dealt with the psychology of
women very clearly and elaborately.

The eighth chapter is our conclusion. It contains our findings. After a careful study of the subject we tried to come to some impartial conclusion.

The research paper is supplemented with a bibliography - a list of Assamese, Hindi, Sanskrit and English books which we have consulted in carrying out the research work.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratitude to some persons publicly who helped me in various ways in carrying out the research project. First of all I must express my deep gratefulness and reverence to Dr. Shuvendra Nath Roychoudhury, Reader, Hindi Department, Gauhati University, without whose able guidance and timely help I could never be able to complete this work. I shall remain grateful for life to him.

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Finally I would beg apology for any omission and commission, which might crop up due to my incapacity with folded hands.

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