CHAPTER II

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF RAMKABANDHOO CHUDAMANI

THOSE OF SRI SANKARACHARYA AND SHORT
2.1 INTRODUCTION:

The main object of this Chapter is to give a biographical note, that is, the life and works of Shri Madhab Kandali with the other two Shri Shankardeva and Shri Madhavdeva who finally completed the 'Asamiya Sapta Kanda Ramayana and of Gosuami Tulsidas who wrote the Ram Charit Manas.

Shri Kandali is the most important poet of the Pre-Shankardeva era. He was the court poet of the Darahi king Mahamanikya who ruled the ancient kingdom situated in the central Assam. He translated the Ramayana into Assamese with the advice of this Darahi king.¹ Shri Shankardeva recognised and appreciated the scholarship of Shri Kandali when he described himself as a shasna (a Hare) and Shri Kandali as a 'Hasti' (an Elephant) as regards to their scholarship. He also recognised Kandali as the 'Adi Kavi' and described him as the 'Apramadi Kavi'.² It is rather the greatest proof of Shri Kandali's achievement.

Tulsidas also occupies a unique position in the tradition of 'Ram Kavya' in Hindi like that of Shri Kandali.

¹Dr. B. Roychoudhury - "Shankardev-purva Asamiya Sahitya (an article) - published in 'Shodh' by G.U., pp. 26.
²Asamiya Sapta Kanda Ramayana - 7/7041.
in Assamese. The nectar-like 'Vānis' of the Rām Charit Mānas not only soothe the people in this trouble torn world but also help them in solving the religions problems that attacked the society at his times. Really speaking, the impact of the Rāmcharit Mānas is not confined within the boundaries of the northern India but its eternal appeals touched hearts of millions throughout the world. Several scholars and critics of Hindi literature appreciated Goswāmī Tulsīdās and his masterpiece, the Rām charit Mānas in so many words;

In appreciation of the works of Tulsidāsjee, Mishra Vandhu Vinod remarked;


According to Pt. Ramchandra Shukla;


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Mishra Vandhu Vinod - Sanxipt Etāhās Prakaran pp. 120-1.
Bharatiya Janatā Ka Pratinidhi Kavi Yadi Kisi Ko Kah Sakte Hai To Enhi Mahanubhav Ko .... Aaj Raja Se Rank Tak Ke Ghar Mein Goswami Jee Ka Rāmcharit Mānas Viraj Rahā Hai.  

According to Durvedijee:

- "Ek Adwitiya Kavya Ki Sristi Ki Jo Abtak Uttar Bhārata Mārg Darshak Rahā Hai Aur Us Din Bhi Rahega Jis Din Nāvin Bhārata Ka Janm Ho Gaya Hoga."

From such and such like remarks one can easily understand the importance of Goswāmījī and his poetry.

In case of Assamese, the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana of Shri Mādhab Kandali has been regarded as the only Assamese Rāmāyana.

- "Sāt Kānda Rāmāyana Padabandhe Nibandhilo, Lambhā Parihari Sarodhrit."

Most probably Shri Kandali translated the whole of Rāmāyana into seven cantos; but unfortunately two of them were missing somehow. Later, only to make the work complete

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6 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 6/6685.
after the missing of the cantos and to keep the fame of Shri Kandalī in tact, Shri Shankardeva and his disciple Shri Madhabdeva added the missing parts.

While Shri Shankardeva wrote the Assamese version of the Uttarā Kānda, he praised Shri Kandalī enormously in the following words:

- Purba Kabi Apramādi
  Mādhab Kandalī Aadi,
  Tehe Birachilā Rām Kathā;
  Hastir Dekhiā Lād
  Shashā Jena Fāre Mārga,
  Mor Bhailā Tehnay Awaṣṭhā.\(^7\)

From the above statement of Shri Shankardeva two things come to light; one, that Shri Kandalī was prior to Shri Shankara; and two that Shri Kandalī was an 'Apramādi' i.e. a very poetic genius. One can learn something about the incorporation of the two cantos into the works of Shri Kandalī by Shri Shankardeva and his disciple.

The Rāmāyana of the sage Vālmiki is quite 'Loukik' i.e., related to worldly affairs or human affairs; so also

\(^7\) Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 7/704.
Mādhab Kandali's Rāmāyana. Yet to a 'Vaishnava', Rām is "Alaukik" i.e., super-human, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He is the God Himself. In the Vaishnabite literature Rām and Krishna are identical and both of them are the 'Param brāhma parameswara i.e. the Eternal one, the Lord of all. But Mādhab Kandali's Rām remains as a human being in almost all the times, and therefore at the beginning the Vaishnabite poets were not satisfied with his version. Ananta Kandali while going to depict Rām as the 'Parameswara' lamented at the depiction of Rām as a human being by Shri Mādhab Kandali:

- Mādhab Kandali Birachilā Ramayana, Tak Suni Amār Akul Kare Man. 8

Most probably Shri Shankardeva did not like the plan of Ananta Kandali to write the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana in a 'Āhaki Pradhān Vaishnavi' way which would undermine the works of Shri Mādhab Kandali. So, he took the pains of completing the missing parts of Kandali's Rāmāyana along with his disciple Shri Mādhabdeva. On the other hand he asked his disciple Ananta Kandali to write the Assamese version of some parts of Shrimadbhāgawata which he had already undertaken.

8Ananta Kandali - Rāmāyana, Ayodhya Kānd, 13/14.
This fact has been narrated in the "Kathā Guru Čarit" (an anonymous biography of Shri Shankaradeva) in a very interesting way:


In this manner the nāmēyana of Shri Mādhao Kandali was completed. The missing of the two parts in Shri Vrindānī Rāmāyaṇa has been explained by different scholars differently. Several reasons have been advanced for it.

a) It might be the result of the clashes between the Ahom kings and the Kachāris for which there was a dislocation of the people;

b) It might be the result of some natural calamities like flood, fire etc. which also caused dislocation;

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⁹ Kathā Guru Čarit - pp. 151 (ed by H. Dattabaruah)
c) Some scholars believe that like the original Rāmāyana of Vālmiki, there were only five cantos in the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana by Shri Kandali Dr. Krishnanārāyan Prasād supported also supported this view. 10 Another renowned scholar Dimbeswar Neog also held the same view. 11 He also opined that it would have been incomplete and imperfect without these two cantos.

Notwithstanding these facts, the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana means this Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana which has been completed by three poets:

(a) Mādhab Kandali - Five Cantos (Ayodhyā Kānda, the Aranya Kānda, the kiskindhā kānda, the Sundarā Kānda and the Lankā Kānda) - probable date 1400 A.D.

(b) Shri Śankardeva - the Uttarākānda i.e. the last canto - probable date 1550-60 A.D.

(c) Shri Mādhabdeva - the Adi Kānda, i.e. the First Canto probable date 1550-60 A.D.

As regards the Rām Charit Mānas, there is no controversy;

10 Dr. K.N. Prasad - Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp. 55.
it is the complete work of Goswami Tulsidas. Under such circumstances, we have to add the life and work's of Shri Shankardeva and Shri Madhabdeva along with Shri Madhab Kandali who are the co-authors of the Asamiya Saptakanda Ramayana and of Goswami Tulsidas as the author of the Ramcharit Manas.

2.2.1 MADHAB KANDALI:

Shri Madhab Kandali is undoubtedly the best poet of the preshankari Era. But unfortunately, nothing is known definitely about his date of birth, his works, his education etc. Dr. Maheswar Neog is of the opinion that Shri Kandali lived upto 1400 A.D. Dr. Krishna Narayan Prasad also accepted Dr. Neog's views. But Pandit Hem Chandra Goswami in his article 'Madhab Kandali', considering the relationship of Shri Kandali with 'Faa' the judge who was from the lineage of Mahamunikya, believed that Shri Kandali was there during the Saka Era 1269 (i.e. 1347 A.D.) So, considering all these opinions about the age of Shri Kandali, we can easily conclude that he lived during 1400 A.D.

12 Maheswar Neog Rachanawali, pp. 517.
13 Dr. K.N. Pradad - Asam Prantiya Ramkatha, pp. 52.
14 Hemchandra Goswami Rachanawali, pp. 333.
What we learn about Shri Kandali is only from traditional stories since there is no written evidence about his life. It is found that once Guru Rāghavāchāryya visited the Pāthsala of Mahendra Kandali, where Shri Shankardeva had his schooling. The Guru of this Rāghavāchāryya was Mādhav Kandali. Dr. Neog believed that this was the same Mādhav Kandali who wrote the 'Rāmāyana'. Such references do not show that Mādhav Kandali was alive during the school days of Shri Shankardeva (1461-1469 A.D.). But this reference reveals the "Guru Paramparā" of the teachers of Shri Shankardeva which can be placed in this way - Mādhav Kandali - Rāghavāchāryya - Mahendra Kandali - Shankardeva. There are references in the writings of Shri Shankardeva that Mādhav Kandali was prior to him.

Another basis of ascertaining the date of Shri Mādhav Kandali is the period of the Barahi king Mahāmānikiya's reign. Because Mādhav Kandali was in the court of this king and wrote the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana. King Mahāmānikiya listened the reading of this Rāmāyana.

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17 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 7/7041.
18 Ibid., 6/6710.
19 Ibid. 3/3386.
Several scholarly writers discussed about the Barāhi king Mahāmānikya who was the chief patron of Shri Madhab Kandali. Madhab Chandra Bārdalai, who first edited the Rāmāyana of Shri Kandali is one of them. He in his preface to the Rāmāyana edited by him wrote that Kachāri kings who ruled from the twelfth to the fourteenth century of the Christian era called themselves as the Barāhi kings. Their kingdom was extended from Jayantāpur to Alipukhuri. Bārdalai believed that Mahāmānikya was a king from this dynasty.

A well-known scholar of Antiquarian studies, Hem Chandra Goswami also discussed about the Kachāri-Barāhi kings. According to him the reign of this dynasty began with that of one Birhas and Mahāmānikya was the great grandson of this Birhas. Mahāmānikya Faā of this dynasty ruled during the Śaka era 1250 – 1280 in his Capital Paatheramba! Hem Chandra Goswami believed that this Mahāmānikya was the patron of Shri Kandali. 20

Debendra Nath Bēzbarua discussed about Shri Madhab Kandali and Mahāmānikya in details in his History of Assamese literature. He said that Mahāmānikya was the king of Jayanta—

20 Hem Chandra Rachanāwali, pp. 232.
In the history of Jayantā there are several kings with the title of Mānik or Mānikya. For example Bijoy Mānik (1564–80 A.D.), Dhana Mānik (1596 – 1600 A.D.) Jash Mānik (1605 – 25 A.D.) were some of the kings of Jayantā. Bezbarua guessed that 'Mahāmānikya' might be one of them. But as a matter of fact Mādhab Kendali was of the fourteenth century and as such he can never be of any of these ages referred to by Bezbaruah. Because Shri Kendali was three generations prior to Shri Shankardeva (1449 A.D.)

Dimbeswar Neog in his - 'A new light on the History of Asamiyā literature discussed about Mahāmānikya and said that kings Indrapal and Dharmapāl of the Pal dynasty introduced themselves as the Barāh or Shri Barāh. They extended their kingdom upto the Kapili valley. Since Mādhab Kendali referred Mahāmānikya as a Barāh king so Neog believed that he might be somebody from this Pal dynasty.

Kali Rām Medhi believed that this 'Mahāmānikya' (1396 – 1405 A.D.) was a king of Tripura. According to

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21 D.N. Bezbaruah - Asamiyā Sāhityar Buranji, pp. 92-94.
22 Dimbeswar Neog - A new light on the history of Asamiyā literature.
23 Kaurām Medhi - Rachanāwali.
'Tripura Rājmālā', Pandit Shukreswar and Pandit Baneswar, two Assamese scholars wrote the Tripura Rājmālā during the reign of Dharma Mānikya who was the son of king Mahāmānikya. Although the period of this king and that of Shri Kandali coincided, yet this Mahāmānikya was not a Barāhi king; and as such it can never be believed that Kandali wrote the Rāmāyana in the court of this Mahāmānikya.

Besides these, some other scholars also discussed about the place and age of King Mahāmānikya. But none of them arrived at any definite and acceptable conclusion about them. But it is a fact that both Mahāmānikya and Madhab Kandali were contemporary; and as such the period of Mahāmānikya can be ascertained at the end of the thirteenth or at the beginning of the fourteenth century A.D. Considering all the sides of the question it may be assumed that the Mahāmānikya of Hem Chandra Goswami, who was also known as Mahāmānikya Faa and who belonged to the dynasty began with Birhās was the patron of Shri Madhab Kandali. It is also evident from the history of the Ahoms that during the time of Sukāfā's invasion, the Kachāri-Barāhi kings ruled the area near the river Dikhau; and assimilation of the Tai-Ahoms with these people converted them into Assamese.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\) Sātsari Asam Buranji, pp. 5.
Considering the language of Mādhab Kandali's Rāmāyana, Dr. Bānikānta Kākati remarked that the language used by Shri Kandali can never be of time later than the fourteenth century.\(^\text{25}\) Therefore, even from the point of language used, Mādhab Kandali can never be placed later than the fourteenth century.

Now it is evident that the advent of Shri Kandali, who was three generations prior to Shri Šānkardēva could be ascertained as the first part of the fourteenth century A.D. The language he used also proved such a statement. Most probably he was an influential poet of Bārdowa who lived under the patronage of Mahāmānikya Faa of the Birhas dynasty.\(^\text{26}\) Mādhab Kandali was honoured by the people calling him "Kabiraj Kandali" and by Shri Šānkardēva as the 'Apramādi Kabi' due to his scholarship and capacity of writing poetry.

As regards to the place of birth and death of Shri Mādhab Kandali, nothing could have been decided so far. Different scholars put forward different views as regards

\[^{25}\text{Dr. B.K. Kākati - Assamese, its formation and development, pp. 14.}\]

\[^{26}\text{Dr. K.N. Prasād - Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp.53.}\]
to his place of birth. Pandit Hem Chandra Goswami advanced his views in the following way: Once the Ahom king replaced the Ahom envoys by fourteen Brahmin families, and the family of Madhab Kandali was one of them.\(^{27}\) In certain places Kandali himself revealed that he was from a Brahmīn family.\(^{28}\) Dr. Maheswar Neog referred to a village named 'Kandali' in the present Nagaon district as his birth place. Most probably it was the birth place of Shri Kandali. But it is quite imaginary and not based on any valid ground.\(^{29}\) It can also assumed from the place of the capital of the Barahi king Mahāmānikya, his patron, that Shri Kandali belonged to the central Assam i.e. Nagaon.\(^{30}\) But Dr. Lila Gogoi in his article "Madhab Kandali Aru Mahāmānikya" after going through the different opinions of the scholars expressed that the Rāmāyana was written in the upper Assam. He put forward two reasons about it - (I) the script used in the book and (II) the use of the term 'Sandikai'. In practice the script used in writing in the central as well as the lower Assam was Brāhmoni, Kāthī or Lahkāri while it was the Gargayā in the upper Assam;

\(^{27}\) Hem Chandra Goswami Rachanāwali, pp. 332.

\(^{28}\) Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 4/3990, 6/4887.

\(^{29}\) Dr. M. Neog - Asamiyā Sāhityar Ruprekhā, pp. 65.

\(^{30}\) Dr. K.N. Prasād - Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp. 53.
and the Rāmāyana was found in the Gargāya script. So, from the point of the scripts, it can be easily demanded that Shri Kandali was from the upper Assam.31

According to the first editor and publisher of the Rāmāyana, Madhab Chandra Bardalai, Shri Kandali was the resident of the village Alipukhuri in the district of Nagaon.32 Debendra Nath Bezbaruah also accepted this view.33 So, as a working principle it can be accepted that Shri Madhao Kandali was from the central Assam or the Nagaon district.

During the Pre-Vaishnabite period, titles were conferred on the basis of their achievements. The title 'Kandali' was conferred on the people who were adept in the Shāstras, jurisprudence and such other fields.34 So the scholars opined that 'Kandali' was also a title of honour for Madhab Kandali. Most probably the other title 'Kabirāj' was bestowed upon him by his patron king. Madhab Kandali himself confessed this fact:

31 Dr. L. Gogoi - Sāhitya : Dutiṃān Alochana, pp. 29.
32 Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp. 53.
33 Asamiyā Bhāsa Āru Sāhityar Burānji, pp. 92.
34 Upendra Nath Lekharu - Asamiyā Rāmāyana Sāhitya, pp. 24. and Dr. S.N. Sharmā - Asamiyā Sāhityar Etibritta, pp. 42.
Shri Kandalidev was a Sanskrit scholar par excellence and he was a scholar from the central Assam i.e. from Nagon.

2.2.2 Works of Mādhava Kandali:

In addition to his masterpiece the Rāmāyana (Five centos), Shri Mādhava Kandali wrote the following books:

i) Devajit

ii) Tāmraohuaja Juchua and

iii) Patal Kanda. But since these books reflected the ideas and ideology of the Neo-Vaishnavite writers, they are regarded as interpolation by some poets of the later age. Under such circumstances the 'Pancha Kanda Rāmayana' is regarded as the authentic work of Shri Mādhava Kandali.

35 Sapta Kanda Rāmayana - 6/6710.

36 Asamiya Sahityar Ruprekha, pp. 72. and Asamiya Sahityar Etibrittta, pp. 45.
2.2.3 DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF PANCHA KĀNDĀ RĀMĀYANA:

Since no definite date of birth and death of Shri Madhab Kandali is available, it is rather impossible to find out the date of composition of his 'Rāmāyana' also. Only one fact definite about it is that it was composed at the request of the Barāhi king Mahāmānikya and therefore, we can safely say that this Rāmāyana was composed during the reign of the said king. But the identity of the king Mahāmānikya and the period of his reign being unknown, no date can be ascertained about the composition of the Rāmāyana.

Although Pandit Hemchandra Goswami ascertained this period as 1269 of the Saka Era i.e. 1347 A.D. and accepted by historian Benudhar Sharma yet some other scholars believed that it was written during the fourteenth century.

2.2.4 SOURCE OF THE BOOK:

The main basis of Kandali's Rāmāyana is the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki. The poet himself indicated:

37 Hem Chandra Rachanāwali, pp. 335.
38 Buranjir Safurā, pp. 320.
From the statement of Shri Kandali it is evident that the source of his Rāmāyana was the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki. But Shri Kandali added many things from his own which made it an original work. His statement "Sāto Kānda Rāmāyane Padabandhe Nibandhilo, Lambhā Parihari Sarodhrxta1 1 proves that there had been abridgement of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. Shri Kandali was well-versed in Sanskrit and used several metres (Chhand) of Sankrit in his Rāmāyana. Kandali also used many things from the mass-life and folk-culture of Assam in his work.

There are as many as 5226 Padas (1126 + 773 + 603 + 854 + 1870) in his Rāmāyana and these padas covered from Ayodhya to Lankā Kāandas. Of these 'Kāandas' the Kiskindhā is the shortest and the Lankā Kānda is the longest Kānda.

39 Sapta Kanda Ramayana, 4/3992.
40 Ibid., 6/6685.
42 Ibid., 4/3597, 3598.
2.2.5 SALIENT FEATURES OF KANDALI’S RÂMÂYANA

There are several salient features of Shri Madhab Kandali’s Râmâyana for which it becomes an original work. The major salient feature of his Râmâyana is the abridged form of Vâlmiki’s work – "Lambhâ Parihari Sarodhrite", and Pustak Bicharî Jebe Taita Kathâ Napabahâ, Tebe Sabe Nindibâ Âmak. 43

Although he has made the above remark yet it is not that he had never interpolate certain matters in his work. But this statement is made only to avoid the blame skilfully. 44 Strangely enough the interpolation he incorporated did not disorder the original Râmâyana. On the other hand it made the things more attractive and more natural.

It is found that Kandali followed the Gandiya edition of the Râmâyana and made some changes in the placing of the story like those in the Râmâyana of Bengali poet Kritibâs. For example, Târâ’s Abhishâp (Curse of Tara) in the Kiskinddha Kânda and Kâlnemi Bâdh (Killing of Kâlnemi) in the Lanka Kânda might have taken from such texts.

43Ibid., 6/6711.
44Ibid., 6/6710.
Three different texts of the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki are found. They are:

I) the Gandiya Path;
II) the Deccan Path; and
III) the North-Western Path.

There are slight differences in them. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarmā in his 'Rāmāyanar Etibritta' showed with the help of the analysis made by Father K. Bulke that certain matters are found in the Gaudiya Path which are absent in the other two paths. They are:

I) the story of Sīta's mother, Menakā;
II) Rāmda's Padukā of Kusha;
III) the curse of Tārā on Rām;
IV) the kicking of Dibhishan by Rāvana;
V) the story of Kālnemi;
VI) the coming of Sampāti towards the monkey-armies.

and, VII) the consultation of Rāvana with his mother Nikashā and his step brother Kuber before coming to Rām.

45 Rāmāyanar Etibritta, pp. 19 and Madhab Kandali's Rāmāyana, pp. 67.
All these stories are found in the Rāmāyana of Kandali and as such it can be easily assumed that Shri Kandali followed the Gandiya Path of the Rāmāyana.

The Bengali poet Kritibāsi followed the Gavdiya text of Rāmāyana also. As such there similarities between the Assamese and the Bengali version of the Rāmāyana.

Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana is a story of worldly affairs and Rām is an ideal person. Yet in certain places Ram has also been depicted as an incarnation. One thing is clear that Kandali's Rām is not the 'Almighty God' of the Vaishnāvite poets. Even he had to be reminded by Mātali, the charioteer of Lord Indra to use the 'Brahmastra' against Rāvana. Had he been the Lord, he might have known the 'Mrityu Ban' of Rāvana himself. But others like the Gods, Brāhmins, Sages, Monkeys, Bears etc. accepted him as the Lord of all. In this connection there is much similarity between the Rāmāyanas of Vālmiki and Kandali. Even Kandali's Sīta is very much similar to that of Vālmiki. In some cases his Sīta is more bold and eloquent than that of Vālmiki's. Particularly in the time when Rāvana came to elope her.

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^Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 6/6415.
Shri Kandali depicted his characters as ordinary people of the mass-life in the natural way. In the case of the young people of common life, the out-burst of emotion is much more than the restraint of passions. Since Sita has been depicted as an ordinary or common woman, she is found to be very foul-mouthed.

Customs and traditions are the living force of mass-life. Shri Kandali was quite aware of this. He therefore was successful in depicting them. Dreams, curses, customs etc. have considerable impact on the mass-life. It is beyond doubt that these may influence over mass-mind only because of ignorance or lack of scientific knowledge of the people. The curse of 'Andha Muni', the dreams of King Desarath Tarā and Trijata are some of such blind faith and superstitions only.

Another salient feature of Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana is that while depicting the beauty of nature or of the environment, his mind was pre-occupied with nature and natural beauty of the then Assam; and therefore, his depiction showed us if

47Ibid., 2-1573, 2/1761, 2/2040, 2/2277 etc.
48Ibid., 6/6508.
49Ibid., 4/3597, 3598, 3560, 6/6356, 6/6455 etc.
he drew the picture of Assam only. The poet himself confessed this in his writings.

Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana has another importance since it is the oldest specimen of written poetry in Assamese literature. What he has used in this Rāmāyana is the language of the fourteenth century Assamese people. His use of proverbs and idioms, metres and rhetoric etc. are all unique. As a matter of fact he remained as the ideal for all medieval writers and poets like Shri Shankardeva, Shri Madhavadeva and others. In addition to them, Durgābar, Ananta Kandali, Ragunath Mahanta and such other Rāmāyani poets, also took him as their ideal.

Now, therefore, it is seen that the 'Aparamādī Kavi' Shri Mādhab Kandali not only introduced the 'Rāmāyani' literature in Assam with his Assamese version of Valmiki's Rāmāyana but also fortified the basis of Assamese literature as a whole. With the incorporation of local life and local culture into the Rāmāyana not only made it popular in Assam but also opened a new vista in the literary life of Assam.

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50 Ibid., 5/4062, 4076, 4077 etc.
51 Ibid., 4/3991-93.
Therefore his 'Rāmāyana' can be regarded as the mile post of literary achievement. His Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana is undoubtedly a great achievement for Assamese people.

2.3 SHRI SHANKARDEVA - HIS LIFE AND WORKS:

Shri Shankardeva is the founder of the Neo-Vaishnavism in the North-East India. He was at once a religious preacher, a poet, a dramatist, a social reformer, an artist par excellence and the maker of Assamese culture. He is undoubtedly the greatest poet of all ages. His contribution towards religion, society, fine arts and literature of Assam is undoubtedly unique. He is the founding father of the Vaishnavite literature in Assam.

Shri Shankardeva was born in a village Alipukhuri of Bardowa in the district of Nagaon. There are different views about the birth date of Shri Shankardeva; but most of the scholars accepted 1371 - 1490 of the Śaka era (i.e. 1449 - 1568 A.D.) as the period of his life. Several 'Guru Charitas' (life of the Guru) were compiled in the post-Shankardeva period by different writers like Rāmcharan Thakur, Daityari Thakur, ghushan Dwija, Rāmānanda Dwija, Aniruddha Das etc. which are

52 Asamiya Sāhityar Buranji - pp. 250 and Joyram Daulatram - Namghosā Sandesh, pp. 15.
very much read by the disciples of Shri Shankara. These 'Charitas' not only depict the life and activities of Shankardeva but also of some other renowned followers of him. Sarbabhauma Bhattacharyya in the "Swarga-khanda" of his Padma purāṇa, added certain 'padas' in praise of this great guru. All these are the biographical notes on Shri Shankardeva. During the modern age also, Dinanath Bezbaruah also composed and published one 'Bar-Charit' which was written mostly on the basis of the 'Guru Charita's of Ram Charan and Daityari Thakur. From all these and such writings one can have the idea of the life and works of Shri Shankardeva. According to the 'Kathā Charit' of Bardowa, Shri Shankardeva was born in the tithi of 'Amābasyā' by Thursday in the month of Kārtik. Again in the Charit Puthis of Daityari Thakur and Aniruddha Das, the date of Shankara's death is 1490 of Saka Era i.e. 1568 A.D. There is no controversy about his date of death. Several writers say that his span of life was 119 years.

53 Dr. Maheswar Neog - Shri Shri Shankardeva, pp. 1/2.
54 Kathā Guru Charit - "Kārtikar Sankranti Bar Brihaspati Jyoutisāk Terasha Ek Sattari Sakat".
In the Rudra Jāmāl Acharyya Sanhitā describes the advent of Shri Shankardeva as follows:

-“Purnāswar Bhaguān Baikuthe Prawasannapi Kusumasya Grhe Jaat Dharma Sansthanarthāya Nanasya Kusumkhyāt Jasodā Satya sandhāko Ojjat Šankara Nāmā Kali Nāganaah”. 57

Of course there are some doubts about the accuracy of the date and time of birth of Shankardeva. Of the writers of the 'Charit Puthis', Daityari Thakur and Shushan Dwij are silent about the date of birth. According to Rämchāran Thakur it is the month of Ahin while it is the Fagun for Rāmānanda Thakur. But in the Bardowa Charit it was the month of Kāti in 1371 of the Śaka Era. According to Oimbeswar Neog it was 1371 of Śaka era but the month was Ahinā. 58

55 Dr. Maheswar Neog - Shri Shri Shankardeva, pp. 40 and 188 and Rāmchārit Mānas Aur Pūrbanchaliya Rām Kavyā, pp. 96.
56 S. Bhattacharyya - Shankar Charit, pp. 206.
57 Sri Rāmpad Das - Mahāpurush Shri Shri Śankardeva - Shri Shri Mādhānddeva, pp. 19.
58 Asamiyā Sāhityar Buranjī, pp. 250.
It is said that Shri Shankardeva lived up to the age of 119 years. But it is quite doubtful. And as such historian Gait opined that the date of birth of Shri Shankardeva was later by about thirty years than what had been fixed for it. 59

According to sources available, Shri Shankardeva was born in 1449 A.D. in the village Alipukhuri of Bardowa in the district of Nagap. His father was Kusumbar Bhuyan and mother, Satyasandhya. Since his mother died at his early age, he was brought up by his grandmother Khersuti. Shri Shankardeva was admitted into the Tol of Mahendra Kandali at the age of 13 and within a very short time he learnt grammar, Kavyas and all the Hindu scriptures. He showed extraordinary calibre in his studies.

His first wife was dead leaving a daughter with him. After the marriage of his daughter, Manu, he left for pilgrimage. 60 He travelled almost all the holy places of India and spent about twelve years in the pilgrimage. During this pilgrimage, he met several sages and scholars and met  

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59 Shri Shri Shankardeva, ppl 40.
60 Duija Bhushan - "Bhallanta Uches Pache Shankarar Man Tirtha Karibak Lagi Karila Gaman".
particularly the Vaishnabite scholars of different places. This twelve year pilgrimage had tremendous influence on his spiritual life. It is worth-mentioning that while he visited Brindaban and Puri, he was attracted towards the Vaishnabite philosophy.

The period of Shri Shankardeva was the period of decline of the Buddhism. The Tantrik method of the Sākta religion was in vogue throughout whole of Assam. There were several corrupt practices and indecent and immoral activities in the name of religion. Now Shri Shankara began to preach 'Ek Sharan Naam Dharma'. He was a devotee of Lord Krishna. He tried to unite all sects and all castes of people under his 'Ek Sharan' dharma. He even included Muslims, Miris, Garos, Ahoms, Dhutiyas and such other tribal people in his fold. Non-violence, kindness to living creatures, abolition of untouchability etc. were the basic principles of his religion.  

Shri Shankardeva abolished the worshipping of gods and goddesses and introduced the worshipping of one Lord as Lord Krishna. His religion is based on 'Lasya Shakti'. His religion

is based on the Gita and the Bhagawata and is known as the

'Ek Sharaniya Bhagawati Dharma -
- Ek Dev Ek Sev Ek Bine Nahi Kev,
Nahi Bhakatit Jati Achar dichar.

(The Kirtan)

As regards to the religions philosophy of Shri Shankardeva there are certain controversies. According to some it is 'Vishistadwaitabad' and for some others it is 'AdvaitaDad' and some more others call it the 'Sargani Darshanik.  

He preached his 'Bhagawati Dharma and established the 'Satra's through which he introduced a religions movement in the North-Eastern India. His devoted disciple Shri Madanadeva followed him and helped him in all possible ways. His 'Satras' were the centres not only of religion but also of culture, and other necessary knowledge. He introduced democratic methods in them. As stated his greatest disciple Shri Madanadeva helped him in every step. But he did not get patronage from

63 Rám Charit Mānas Aur Puroanchaliya Rám Kavya, pp. 93.
64 Dr. B.K. Kākati - The Mother Goddess Kamakhyā, pp. 78.
the Ahom kings and therefore, moved to the west where he was respected by the king of Koch Behar. He lived in the court of king Nar Narayan till he breathed his last there in Koch Behar. Shri Shankardeva breathed his last in 1568 A.D. at the age about one hundred and twenty year. He united various people of different caste, creed and nationality; gave a new colour to our tradition and culture; enriched Assamese literature with various creations like songs, dramas and poetry; preached the neo-Vaishnavism in the North-Eastern India and left a world of 'Ek-Sharan' religion for the posterity.

Mahapurush Shri Shankardeva was a versatile genius with rare personality. He was at once a poet, a social reformer and organiser, a dramatist, an actor, a singer, a dancer, a lyrist, a preacher and above all what we may call a super-human. He tried to remove the evils which were in vogue in the name of religion and introduced a religion which could unite all people with different faith and belief. It is therefore, he still remains as a living-force for the people of the North-East India, particularly of Assam.
2.3.1 HIS LITERATURE:

In addition to the religious field, the name of Shri Shankardeva is closely associated with Assamese language and culture. In the history of Assamese culture, the sixteenth century is a period of renaissance. During this period the Assamese nation and its culture took up a definite shape. Now the impact of Shri Shankardeva on the basic elements of culture like religious life, social customs, language and literature of Assam is so much deep that the Assamese culture may be aptly called the Shankari culture only.

As stated, Shri Shankardeva was successful in uniting various people into one fold. In place of worshipping several gods and goddesses he introduced one Lord and infused high class spiritual qualities in them and abolished the distinction between a man and another. He added his various works to the works already begun by Hem Saraswati, Madhab Kandali and such other poets. His literary works alone are sufficient to immortalise him. His works may be classified as follows:

(I) Kavya(Poetry) - a) Harischandra Upakhyan;
   b) Rukmini Haran;
   c) Bali Chhalan;
   d) Amrit Mathan;
(II) Bhakti Tatwa (Religions Philosophy)

a) Bhakti Pradip;

b) Bhakti Rātnākar (in Sanskrit)

and  c) Nimi Nawa-Siddha Sanbād.

(III) Translation Works:

a) Bhagawat (Cantos I, II, VI, VIII, X & XI), and

b) Rāmāyana (Canto VII)

(IV) Ankiyā Naat (Plays):

a) Patni Prasād;

b) Kāli Daman;

c) Keli Gopal;

d) Rukmini Haran;

e) Pārijāt Haran;

and  f) Rām Vijay.
(V) Songs:
   a) Bargeets;
   b) Bhatimā;
   c) Totay; and
   d) Chapay

(VI) Naam Prasanga:
   a) Kirtan, and
   b) Gunmālā.

The Kirtan is the masterpiece of Shri Shankardeva. We have not analysed all his works here since the subject matter of this thesis does not allow them. Therefore, we go directly to discuss about the part of the Asamiyā Saptā Kānda Rāmāyana which he wrote; i.e. the Uttara Kānda of Assamese Ramayana.

2.3.2 Rāmāyana (Uttarā Kānda):

During 1545-46 A.D. when Koch king Chilaray attacked the Ahom kingdom, Shri Shankardeva along with his mates and relatives of the Bhuyān families migrated to the lower Assam and settled in Patbausi of Barpeta. He composed the Uttarā Kānda
of the Ramayana during his stay here at Patbausi. It contains 762 padas in total. In the 'Katha Guru Charita' it is indicated that when Ananta Kandali began composing Assamese version of the Ramayana and discarded the one of Madhab Kandali, then Madhab Kandali advised Shri Shankardeva through a dream to safeguard his Ramayana. As a result Shri Shankardeva composed the Uttarākandā and asked Shri Madhabdeva to compose the Ādi Kanda and added them to the Pancha Kanda Ramayana of Shri Madhab Kandali thereby making it the 'Sapta Kandā'. While staying in 'Patauousi', Shri Shankardeva went for pilgrimage to Puri and returned in 1551 A.D. to Patbausi. He then began composing his poetry then. Most probably he got the advice through the dream after coming back from pilgrimage. So, the approximate date of the composition of Uttarākandā is during 1552 - 1560 A.D. The source of the Uttarā kanda is Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. Shri Shankardeva himself described this part as the 'Uttarā Kanda Kalhasaar' and 'Uttarā Kanda Kalhasesh'. All the stories and relating matters are the translation of Vālmikis Rāmāyana.

65 Asamiya Sāhityar Samixatmak Etibritta, pp. 131 and Asam Prāntiya Rām Sahitya, pp. 121.
but it is an original work based on Vālmiki's work. 67

Shri Shankardeva wrote the Assamese version of the Uttarākānda Rāmāyana to use it in his propagation of Mahāpurushiyā Vaishnābism. His basic idea was only to propagate his 'Naam Dharma'. He openly expressed:

"Aura Dharma Kalit
Namate Par Nai". 68

He agreed with the view that nature of Dharma varies from age to age:

- "Satya yuge puji Bishnu Dhariyā Samādhi,
  Mahā Mahā Jajna Tratā Yugat Arādhi,
  Jana Gati Dwāparat Puji Bhakti Bhābe,
  Kalit Kirtankari Sabe Fal Pawe". 69

'Hari Naam' is the best religion in the age of Kali and therefore, one should sing 'Hari Naam' always:

- "Kalir Param Dharma Jana Harinaam" 70

67 Dr. K.N. Prasad - Shankardeva: Sāhityakār Aur Sichārak, pp. 36.
68 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana, 7/7390.
69 Ibid, 7/7391.
70 Ibid., 7/7025.
Therefore he regarded Rāma as the Lord and took refuge in the lotus feet of Rām and advised others to do so. He also advised everybody to listen to the Rāmāyana Padas so that reverence to Rāma might grow day by day.

There are certain philosophical ideals of Shri Shankardeva in addition to the matters related to dhakti. But these remained within the limitations of his poetry.

From the point of characterisation also, Shri Shankardeva is found to be original. Although Rām is the Lord of all yet he had certain human qualities also. Since he was of human qualities he had to send Sita to the 'Banvas'. But at the same time Shri Shankardeva attributed dutifulness to this cowardly action; and idealised the same.

Sīta is the unique creation of Shri Shankardeva here. She is the symbol of chastity and pity. Shri Shankardeva expressed the trouble and distress, and pains and sufferings of a fateless woman abandoned by her husband through Sīta.

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71Ibid., 7/7478.
72Ibid., 7/7457.
73Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp. 130.
74Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana, 7/6759.
75Ibid., 7/6443, 7071, 7085, 7091 etc.
He also expressed the 'Swami Bhakti' of Sītā:

- "Tomār Charan Sebibe Nāpaelo
  Morese Karma Bipak". 76

The other characters are quite usual. The poet regarded the monkeys and bears as incarnation of gods. 77 It can be easily guessed that the Uttarākanda is basically a devotional composition. Although he composed these lines only to complete the works of Shri Mādhab Kandali yet this creation add to the fame of Shri Šānkaradeva as a poet.

2.4 SHRI MĀDHABDEVA : HIS LIFE AND WORKS:

Shri Mādhabdeva was the greatest disciple, his faithful mate and the worshipper of Guru Šhri Šānkaradeva. Shri Mādhabdeva is equally responsible with his Guru for the spreading of Neo-Vaishnavism in the North-East India. As such it is difficult to assess their achievement without considering them both together. In other words they were complementary to each other. So the union of them both has been described as the "Mani-Kāñchana Sanjoga".

76Ibid., 7/7117.
77Ibid., 7/7447.
Shri Madhabdeva served both 'Ek Sharaniya Dharma' and his Guru selflessly for the whole life. He was a life-long bachelor. He not only followed the ideals and idealism of Shri Shankaradeva but also spread this religion faithfully under his able guidance. His works also enriched Assamese literature.

Shri Madhabdeva was born in 1489 A.D. at a village Narayanpur in the district of North Lakhimpur. His father was Gocindagiri Ahuyan and mother was Manorama. His childhood was marked with poverty and extreme scarcity. His education began in the 'Tol' of Rajendra Adhyapak. At the beginning Shri Madhabdeva was the worshipper of 'Shakti' and was a very proud person. Once when his mother was ill, he decided to offer a goat for sacrifice before the goddess Durga. He sent his brother-in-law Rāmdas to buy a goat, but Rāmdas being a disciple of Shri Shankaradeva was not in favour of sacrifice to the goddess. In this connection Shri Madhabdeva was led to Shri Shankaradeva where the former was converted by the latter. As a result Shri Madhabdeva accepted him as his 'Guru' and was converted to Vaishnavism.

78 Asamiya Sahityar Samixatmak Etihas, pp. 147.
79 Iuid., pp. 147.
Now, Shri Mādhabdeva began to serve his Guru and devoted himself to discussion of religious matters and gave the other worldly things. Even he did not marry the girl with whom his marriage was already settled. Mādhabdeva accompanied Shri Shankardeva when the latter left the Ahom kingdom for the Koch kingdom with his brother-in-law and his mother. He also accompanied Shri Shankardeva in his pilgrimage for the second time. With the presence of mind, capacity for organisation, his scholarship, service to his Guru, reverence for his Guru, and his poetic genius he was selected as the natural successor of his 'Guru'.

Shri Mādhabdeva, after the death of his Guru as the Dharmacharyya of the Ek Sharan Naam Dharma of Assam for the period from 1585 to 1596. He lived first at Ganak-Kuch of Barpeta and then at Sundaridiya and composed most of his works there. While he was at Barpeta, he established the famous Barpeta Satra in cooperation with Nārāyan Thakur and others. Then he was driven away to Hajo by Raghudeva the Koch king who was anti-Vaishnavism; and then he fled away to Koch Behar where king Laxmi-Nārāyan allowed him to stay at Bhelamadhupur. He breathed his last here at Bhelamadhupur

80 Ibid., pp. 148.
81 Asamiya Sahityar Etibritta, pp. 149.
at the age of one hundred and seven years in 1596.  
Of course there are differences of opinion about the date 
of his death. One Daityari ascertained it as 1598 A.D. but 
generally accepted date of his death is 1596 A.D.  

2.4.1 HIS WORKS:  

Like his Guru Shri Shankardeva, Shri Madhavaeva was 
also a genius. His works can also be divided into several 
categories.  

I) Metaphysical works:  

(work on Bhakti Tatwa) - Janma Rahasya, Bhakti 
Ratnawali, Naam-Ghoshā, and Naam Mālikā.  

II) Related to Tales : Adi Kanda Ramayana and Rajsvya 
Kāvya.  

III) Plays : (Known as the Jhomuras)  

a) Chordhara;  
b) Pimpara Guchowa;  
c) Daanimathan,  
d) Bhumi Lotowa;  
e) Bhojan Bihār; and  
f) Arjuna Dhanjan;  

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82 Aspects of Early Assamese Literature (article related to Madhavaeva).  
83 Asamīyā Sāhityar Buranji, pp. 410.
In addition to these plays some 'Charit Puthis' include the following as the work of Shri Mādhabeśa:

a) Ras Jhumurā;
b) Kotorā Khelā;
c) Bhusan Haran and
d) Brahma Mohan

But considering the plot and the way of treating them, scholars do not accept them as the work of Shri Mādhabeśa. Further more three other plays viz. Nrisingha Yatra, Gobardhan Yatra and Ras Yatra although ascribed to him yet they are still not available.

IV) Bargeets: The Bargeets and the Bhatimas are valuable treasure for the Assamese literature. Tradition says that Shri Mādhabeśa composed one hundred and ninety one Bargeets.

Now, we do not analyse the works other than the Ādi Kānda Rāmāyana, since they have no direct connection with this research monograph. Below we analyse the Ādi Kānda Rāmāyana.

85 Ibid., pp. 154.
2.4.2 THE ĀDI KĀNDĀ RĀMĀYANA:

As stated Shri Madhabdeva composed this version of the first canto of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana at the direction of his Guru. Most probably he did it during 1552-1560 when he was at Sundaridīya. Shri Madhabdeva had his liking to depict the childlike activities of his adorable Lord Krishna. For such a tendency in him his Guru asked him to compose the Ādi Kānda which is related to the childhood days of Lord Rāma.

Shri Madhabdeva did not mention about his aim in the Ādi Kānda Rāmāyana. But he mentioned the aim of Vālmiki in writing the Rāmāyana -

"Rāmkathā Amritak Kari Mahādān,
Sādhilanta Jagatara Param Kalyān".  

We can easily regard it as the aim of Shri Madhaudeva's Rāmāyana the Ādi Kānda Rāmāyana. Some critic regard it as merely the translation of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana while some others believe it to be based on Kritibasi's Rāmāyana.  

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86 Kathā Guru Charit, pp. 131.
87 Asam Prântiya Rām Sâhitya, pp. 132.
88 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana, 1/10
89 Asam Prântiya Rām Sâhitya, pp. 132.
Maheswar Neog\textsuperscript{90} as well as Dr. Satyendranath Sarma\textsuperscript{91} also believed that it was the translation of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. Tirthanath Sarma also accepted it as a translation but he praised Shri Mādhābdeva for keeping the originality of Rāmāyana intact.\textsuperscript{92}

Not only the scholars of Assam but also some scholars outside Assam like Dr. K. Bulke\textsuperscript{93}, Dr. Ramānath Tripathy and others believed that the Adi Kānda was composed on the basis of Kritibasi's Rāmāyana. But for Dr. Krishna Nārāyana Prasād such an idea is quite erroneous. He remarked that although the basis of the Adi Kānda is Vālmiki's Rāmāyana yet it is not the word-by-word translation of it. If some similarities are found between the Adi Kānda of Shri Mādhābdeva and that of Kritibasi, then one should not conclude that one has been written on the basis of the other, but it may be regarded as equality of interpretation or understanding only. Practically speaking the Adi Kānda reflects the original genius of Shri Mādhābdeva. He has taken many things from the Mahābhārata, the Padmapurana (Patal Khand), Hanumāntaṭaka, Brihat Dharmapurana

\textsuperscript{90}Asamiyā Sāhityar Ruprekhā, pp. 120.
\textsuperscript{91}Asamiyā Sāhityar Etibrittta, pp. 91.
\textsuperscript{92}Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, pp. 157.
\textsuperscript{93}Rāmkathā, para 283.
\textsuperscript{94}Rām Charit Mānes Aur Purbanchaliya Rām Kāvyā, pp. 102 and 271.
\textsuperscript{95}Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp. 133.
Bhagawat, Raghubansh etc. in addition to the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki. He himself declared:

- "Antaryāmi Nārāyane Jene Prarūtāilā Maņē, Tāke Murkhe Karilo Bekat". 96

Mrs. Keshada Mahanta believed that the Ādi Kānda was influenced by the Rām Bijoya Naat of Shri Shankardeva since she found certain similarities between them two. 97 But in practice it can not be true. Because Shri Shankardeva composed it in 1568 and the Ādi Kānda was composed about seven or eight years prior to it.

The scholars who believe that the Ādi Kānda of Kritibās was the basis of Shri Mādhabdeva's Ādi Kānda point to the similarities between them; particularly in cases of the Mukhyānsa Baran, Kaikeyis Sayambar, Sumitā Prasanga (description of the beauty and the distribution of the 'Payas') Guha chandāl and Ram's Mitratā, Sītar Purbarag etc. But to ascertain it, it needs proper research about it without which one should not jump to such conclusions.

Under such circumstances, it is found that in the composition of Asamīya Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana Shri Shankardeva

96 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana, 1/1483.
and Shri Mādhabdeva contributed a lot along with Shri Mādhab Kandali. As stated earlier, Shri Shankardeva asked Shri Mādhabdeva to complete the Sapta Kāṇḍa Rāmāyana so that the work of Shri Kandali, who was according to him an "Apramādi Kavi", should not be neglected by the people in absence of some parts of the Rāmāyana. It goes without saying that these three geniuses contributed a lot to the Rāmāyana literature in particular, and Assamese literature in general.

2.5 **GOSWAMI TULSIDĀS: HIS LIFE AND WORKS:**

Goswāmi Tulsidās is a bright star of the Hindi literary sky. His place in the 'Rām Kāvyā Dhārā' of Hindi literature is quite unique one. But in his writings there is no such internal evidences from which one can assume something about his life and works. As such the scholars considered some traditional stories about him along with the 'Antah and Bahya' evidences and decided something about his life and works. Below we consider these evidences;

2.5.1 **BAHIR-SAŚYA**:

(External Evidences) - Certain evidences are found about the life and works of Tulsidās from the writings of his contemporary
and succeeding writers. But they are not sufficient enough to have a complete biography of Gosuamījee; yet they are quite useful to know something about him. The following books give some informations about him.

I) Bhaktamāl - Nābhādāskrit;

II) Bhaktamāl Ki Teeka - Priyādāskrit;

III) Rām Rasikāwali - Mahārāj Raghurāj Sing Krit;

IV) Do Sau Bāwan Vaishnavan Ki Vārtā;

V) Mul Gosai Charit - Bābā Veni-Mādhab Dāś Krit;

VI) Tulsi Charitra - Bhawani Das;

and VII) Gautam Chandrikā-Krishnē Datta Misra

Of the above books, the Bhaktamāl contains one "Chhapay" - "Kali Kutil diwa Nistār Hit Vālmiki Tulsi Bhayott" which contains only praise for Tulsīdās. In the Bhaktamāl Ki Tikā by Priyādās, which is not only the 'Tikā' of the original work out to some extent a 'Vistar' of the same also. So, it can never be regarded as a historical work. Again the Rām Rasikāwali has been based on these two and tales about Tulsīdās are incorporated from them. Again the "Do Sau Bāwan Vaishnavan Ki Vārtā" also gives expression to some

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98 H.K. Awasthi - Tulsīdās, Pariwesh Prerna Pratifalan, pp. 22.
extent the life of Tulsidas. But it is also not very important one. In the same manner -

"Veni Madhab Das Krit 'Mul Gosain Charitra Mein Kingwadantion Ko Samarthan Karta Hai Tatha Kuchh Paramparagat Purani Baton Ka Kram Aur Samanjasaya Baithata Hai Jo Ab Tak Asambaddh Sithi. Atah Mul Gosain Charitra Ko Vidwanon Ne Bahumat Se Apramanik Hi Mana Hain". 99

It is therefore seen that what is known as the Bahirsakshya cannot furnish the details of the life and works of Tulsidasje.

2.5.2 ANTAHSAXYA :

(Internal Evidences) - Under this comes the writings of Tulsidasjee which throw some light on the life and his works. For this purpose we can take up the portions of his writings which depict the troubles and distress of his life during his childhood. The portion depicting, his 'Bahu-Pira' and other 'Sharirik Kasta' and the behaviour of the scholars

99Ibid., pp. 23.
towards him and its reactions may be considered here. Such composition of the poet illustrates the then social environment or circumstances of the time; for example:

I) Rudra Beesi (Sanvat 1665-1675 8)

II) Min Ki Shanishchari (S. 1669-1671)

III) Mahamari Ká Prakop (S. 1673 - in Punjab, S. 1675 - in Agra) These lines which indicate the date of composition of the books may be taken as internal evidences. 100

In certain portions, his feeling, ideas, journeys etc. were also indicated. They also can be taken as internal evidences. Besides these, the Panchnāmā can also be included in this class.

2.5.3 TRADITIONAL STORIES:

In addition to the above evidences, something can be known about the life and works of Goswamijee from the traditional stories prevalent in those days. Some of these traditional stories, sayings and proverbs were noted down by some literaturs. Of these scholars the name of Dr. Grierson is worth-mentioning. He recorded many such remarkable things in

100 Ibid., pp. 23.
his 'Notes on Tulsidās. Several writers used such things in their writings. Besides these, more traditional stories, sayings and proverbs are found among the people in colloquial form.

Considering the 'Antah' and 'Bahih Saxya and the traditional stories some assumptions may be made as regards to the life and works of Goswamījee. Although there is a controversy about the date of birth among the scholars yet about the span of life there is no such controversy. Majority of scholars regarded the year 1532 A.D. as the date of birth of Goswamījee and 1623 A.D. as the date of his death. He passed away at the age of 91 years.

- "Sanvat Sorah Sau Asi,
  Asi Gang Ke Tir;
  Sāwan Suklā Saptami,
  Tulsi Tajen Sarir". ¹⁰¹

But, nobody knows how and when this 'Doha' came into being.¹⁰² That Tulsidās was dead at Kashi is without controversy; but scholars differ about his place of birth. Majority of scholars debated about two places Rājēpur of Bāndā and Etā of Soron as

¹⁰¹Mul Gosain Charit, pp. 119.
¹⁰²Rāmnāresh Tripathy, Tulsidās Aur Unki Kavita (Part I), pp. 132.
some supported one place while others the other as the place of birth of Goswamijee. The Mul Gosain Charit as well as the Soron-Sāmagri strongly supported 'Rājāpur'.

In addition to them some important scholars also accept it as Goswamijee's birth place. Traditional stories also support it and some old written evidences are also available. Of the scholars who regarded Rajapur as the birth place of Goswamijee the names of Mahātmā Raghubar Dās, Baba Veni Mādhab Dās Thakur Shiv sing Sengar, Dr. Shyam Sundar Dās, Dr. Pitamber-Duttaar-Thwal Babu Rām Chandra Shukla and Misravandhu are worth-mentioning. Dr. Mātēprasād Gupta also agreed that Rājāpur (Banda) was the birth place. It is seen that the acceptance of this place is quite reasonable.

Almost all the scholars agree that Tulsidās was a Brāhmin by caste and his father was Atmārām Dubey and

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103 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
104 Mul Gosain Charit, pp. 2.
105 Shiwsing Saroj, pp. 427.
106 Goswami Tulsidās, pp. 24.
107 Hindi Sāhitya Kā Etihās, pp. 154.
108 Hindi Navaratna, pp. 19.
109 Dr. M.P. Gupta : Tulsidās, pp. 144.
110 Kavitāwali : Uttarākand-33, Vinay Patrikā, 135.
111 Dr. Grierson : Indian Antiquary, pp. 265.
Different books refer to two names of Goswamījī — one, Tulśī or Tulsīdās, the other Rāmbolā. Most of the scholars believe that 'Rāmbolā' was the name of Goswamījī during his childhood and when he was initiated into 'Dīxā' he changed his name to Tulśī or Tulsīdās. But considering the 'Antah Sāxya', it becomes clear that right from the beginning his name was Tulśī and after his initiation to 'Dīxā' he became Tulsīdās and since he was an ardent devotee of Lord Rāma, he came to be known, as Rāmbolā. Several 'Antah Sāxya' are available in this connection.113

2.5.5 HIS CHILDHOOD & FAMILY-LIFE:

The childhood days of Tulsīdās was quite troublesome and full of miseries, which was due to the poverty of his parents. He was abandoned by his parents and as such he had to loiter like a vagabond. This fact was not only found in

112(a) Rāmcharit Mānas ; 1/31/6.
(b) Mul Gosaī Charit; pp. 2.

113(a) Barwai Rāmāyana, 59;
(b) Dohāwali-11;
(c) Kavītāwali- 7/13, 100, 106; and
(d) Vinay Patrikā-76.
the traditional stories but also is supported by many of the 'Anah Sākṣy'.\textsuperscript{114} He himself has narrated this pitiful part of his life in a very heart-touching way.\textsuperscript{115}

Witnessing this condition of young Tulsī, most probably some saintly person advised him to take shelter at the feet of Shri Rāma.\textsuperscript{116} Later Tulsidās himself confessed that it was the divine power of the name of Lord Rāma and that since he came under the beneficiary of Lord Rāma, he was made satisfied amongst the adversaries. He made references to this fact in the Vinay Patrikā.\textsuperscript{117}

After availing this grace of Lord Rāma, he became the His devotee. He, being relieved of the troubles with the grace of Rām, entered into wed-lock and after the marriage he forget about Ram. He now was enamoured by his beautiful bride.\textsuperscript{118} But due to certain causes he could not enjoy his family life for a long period. It has been referred to by Priyādāśjī in his 'Chaktamāl Tikā'. It was that at the words of his wife,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Vinay Patrikā - 275, 227, 272 & Kavitawali - 57 (Uttarakand).
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Kavitawali - 72, 75 (Uttarakand) Vinay Patrikā - 227.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Vinay Patrikā - 276.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 227, - 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid. - pp. 83.
\end{itemize}
'Vairagya' (i.e. thought of abandonment) came to his mind and began to feel the pinch of crime for forgetting Lord Rama. This has also been depicted by Tulsījī himself.119

There is another controversy about the Guru of Goswāmi. In the 'Guru Vandana' of the Rām Charit Mānas, Goswāmi jī referred to one Narahari or Narahari Dās as his Guru.120 Dr. Grierson also accepted that Narahari Dās was the preceptor of Tulsidasjī.121 Baba Shiwanandar Sahay also agreed to it.122 This Gurujī led Tulsīdās towards the path of Rām Śhakti. Tulsīdās himself said about it.123

Being dejected by his wife, he took up the 'Oxā' from his 'Guru' and began to settle at Kashi. Some say that he came to Kashi after visiting Ayodhya. During his stay at Kashi he frequently visited Ayodhya and visited different holy places like Chitrakut, Mathura, Vrindaban, Kuruxstra, Purushottampuri, Prayag etc. and met the people on his way to these places.

After composition of the Rām Charit Mānas his fame

119 (a) Rāmcharit Mānas - Kākīndhi Kānd Dohā 21. (b) Vinay Patrika - 114, 83 & (c) Dohawali- 255.
120 Rāmcharit Mānas - 1/5.
121 as ref. by Dr. Rājārām Ṛstogi - Tulsīdās, pp. 120.
122 Shri Goswāmi Tulsīdāsji Kā Jiwan Charitra pp. 35/36.
123 Vinay Patrika : 173, Rām Charit Mānas 1/5, 1/36.
spread far and wide. But the scholars living at Kashi began to envy him and began to spread indecent news about his caste etc. particularly the shaioites began to trouble him.

Tulsidas, whose heart and some was completely absorbed into the sea of 'Ram Bhakti', was a very simple honest and humble man. He even saluted 'Asant Jana' (the wicked people) along with the 'Sant Jana' (the honest people) in the Balkanda of his Manas which is the sufficient proof of his modesty.

The natural humility of Tulsijee had its own limitations. He was humble only for the 'Sajjanas' (good people); but he could not tolerate the encroaching of social values. He was always against falsehood like deceiving the people in guise of a Tapas (a sage) or deceiving the people with false propaganda and rejected them at the top of his voice.

His knowledge was deep one. He studied several 'Puranas' and other 'Agama' and 'Nigama' scriptures thoroughly. He had

124Sabua S.N. Sahay - Goswami Tulsidas, pp. 33.
125Kavitāuali : 7/60.
126Ibid., 7/107.
127Vinay Patrika : Chh/8, Kavitāuali 7/165.
128(a) Rām Charit Mānas : 1/9, 3, 12, 14 and (b) Dohāuali : 19, 383, 464.
mastery over the prevalent literatures - the Awadhi and the Braja. He composed his verses under all prevailing 'Kāvyā - Shailis'.

Tulsīdāśjī had the complete and practical knowledge of life. He found that the 'Dustalog's (evil persons) prospered while the 'Sādhujiāns' (innocent persons) suffered. Knowing this bitter truth of life he expressed his anger against it. 129

Tulsīdāś was an ideal devotee, an influential poet, a philosopher, a preacher, an influential leader and a social reformer at once. The Rām Charit Mānas is his masterpiece which is read and loved by thousands still now. It is rather the glory of the nation.

2.5.6 His Works:

Like the life of Tulsījee, his works are still in the dark. Even the 'Antāh' or 'Dāhīya' evidences cannot give us a clear picture about this matter. But it is a fact that in the works of Tulsīdāśjī, his name has been indicated at least in certain places. In that case also there are difficulties. Because about 40 books are found where the name 'Tulsi' was...

129 Kavitaωali : 7/171.
been referred to. But scholars regard some of them as interpolation and only the following twelve books are regarded as his own:

I) Rāmcharit Mānas;
II) Rāmlalā Nahchhu;
III) Rāmajna Prasna;
IV) Jānaki Mangal;
V) Pārvati Mangal;
VI) Gitāwali;
VII) Vinay Patrikā;
VIII) Krishna Gitāwali;
IX) Barwai Rāmāyana;
X) Satsai Dohāwali;
XI) Kavitāwali; and
XII) Bāhuk.

'An Encyclopaedic of Religion and Ethics' edited by Dr. M.P. Gupta, Dr. R.G. Durvedy and George Grierson included on these twelve books as creation of Tulsīdās. Since our research work is related to his Rām charit Mānas we shall directly proceed to discuss about this book and leave the others here.
2.5.7 THE RĀM CHARIT MĀNAS

As stated the Rām Charit Mānas is the masterpiece of Goswāmī Tulsidas. It is not a translation of Vālmikī Rāmāyana but a book which is "Nānā Purāṇam Nigamāgam Sammat" and which bears the originality of Tulsidas. Here one can find a complete picture of Indian life. In Rām, who is the 'Purushottam', all the human and super human qualities are ascribed. It can be regarded as the best epic of Hindi. Tulsidas began its composition in Sanvat 1631 (Shukla Chaitra 9, Tuesday). The writer himself described the beginning of the Rām Charit as

- "Sanvat Sorah Sau Ek Tisa,
Kahaon Kathā Hari pad Dari Sisā;
Naumi Bhaumbār Madhu masā,
Awadhpurī yah Charit Prakasa".

But nothing is know when did it finished. According to Āchāryya Rāmchandra Shukla it took complete two years and seven months to complete it.132

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130 Rāmcharit Mānas; Mangalacharan.
131 Ibid. 1/34/2 and 3.
132 Kamb Rāmāyana and Rāmcharit Mānas Ke Nāripātra; Ek Tulānāmulak Adhayanen pp. 22.
The Rām Charit Mānas is divided into seven 'Kāndas' (Cantos). But description of the things are so elaborate that there are more than 8 Sargas. The whole epic has been completed with four 'Sanvādas'. They are - yajna valka and Bharadwaja; Shiva and Pārvati; Nārada and Rām; and Kāga and Bhusundi Sanvādas. Tulsīdās completed the Mānas in 'Dohās' and 'Chaupaiyon' with different 'Mātrik' and 'Varṇik' chhandas. Generally after four 'Chaupaiyon', one 'Dohā' has been placed. At the end of the Mānas the poet remarked -

- "Satpanch Chaupaye Manohar Jati
Je Nar Ur Dharai;
Darun Avidya Panch Janit Vikar
Shri Raghuvir Rahai". 133

The Mānas contains as many as 5100 'Chanpayes' or 10200 'Ardhalis', which has been supported by authentic copy of the book. Although the Mānas contains the reflection of many books like the Bhramarkali etc. Yet the primary sources are the Rāmāyana, the Adhyatma Rāmāyana, the Prasanna Rāghav Nātak, the Hanuman Bhagawat and the Gita. 134 The Mānas depicts

133 Rāmcharit Mānas, 7/130/2.
134 Ibid. 1/7.
the adorable character of Lord Rām. In addition to that
the characters of Bharat, Laxman, Sīta Rāvana Hanumān etc.
are narrated which individually can be the subject matter
of any epic. The primary 'Rasa' of the Mānas is no doubt
the 'Shānta'; yet the other 'Rasas' like Shringaar, Sir
Karun, Hāsyā Bhayanak, Vibhatsa, Raudra etc. peeped into it
from place to place. The different forms of 'Hāsyā' are also
evident here. The Shringaar Rasa appeared in its time honoured
form which added to the popularity of Tulsīdās. Besides these,
the Mānas is the treasure of different emotions.

Tulsīdāsjae had the complete control over the heart
and mind of the readers or audience for which he could make
them laugh or weep whenever he liked. The Mānas is a 'character-
based 'epic. Tulsījae depicted the characters with his deep
understanding of life. Through the Mānas, he wanted to establish
an ideal society based on moral values.

The Rām Charit Mānas of Goswamī Tulsīdās is the combination
of Purāṇa, drāmā and epic at the same time. His style is found
to be 'Paurāṇic' in certain places while it is dramatic or
epical in others. Like a 'Purāṇa' it has its beginning and has
been divided into four 'Sanvādas', Different stories are also
added to fulfil the need of the subject matter. Besides these,
the gradual development and conglomeration of the theme bears the sign of an epic. Adding to that the magnanimity of characters, the problems and distress of life, cultural exposure, great happenings, the different forms of human life etc. in the book give epic quality to it. The freshness and liveliness of the conversation, the minute illustration of characters, the dramatic quality of the dialogues etc. added dramatic nature to it. For all these inherent qualities, the Mānas has gained a very high status.

The Rām Charit Mānas is an epic of human life. Goswamījī tried to solve our worldly and spiritual problems through it. The 'Tyāg' (abandonment), 'Prem' (Love) and 'Sewa' (Service) of Rām, Sīta, Bharat, Laxman, Dasarath, Kaushalyā, Sumitrā, Hanumān and others can be regarded as the 'nectar-like' solution against to our struggle-torn society. Of course it is a fact that he wrote it to solve the spiritual problems of his time.¹³⁵ Tulsīdāsījī projected the existence of the Lord through feeling and faith. The Lord is 'Sagun' (having attributes) and 'Sakar' (having form) although He is 'Nirakar' (formless) and 'Nirbikar' (unchanged). One can realise Him through one's

¹³⁵Ibid., 1/7 and 1/31/1.
faith and confidence. The aim of human life is to feel His presence the best way of which is the Bhakti marg. Tulsidas believed it to be the solution of our spiritual problems.

The Rām Charit Mānas reflects Tulsidas's ideas of women since he has depicted the ideal forms of a matri (a mother), Bhagni (a sister) and a Patni (a wife). Although Tulsidas was from a male dominated patriarchal society yet he showed respect to the matriarchal society and placed women at a high status. At the same time he said that 'Patisewa' (service to the husband) was the best 'Dharma' for a woman.

- "Nāri Dharamu Patideo Na Dujā".

In practice the mutual relationship of ideal husband and wife is shraddha (Respect) and Viswas (Faith). The wife is the visible form of Shraddhā-nīstha-Asthā (Confidence with respect) and the husband is of Vishwas (Faith). In this manner he depicted the ideal marital life of human beings.

The language of the Mānas is the standard Awadhi in which one can find the reflections of the then folk or mass literature. He used the 'Tatsam' terms of Sanskrit freely and

137 Ibid - 1/56.
very accurately. He also used alien terms in such a manner that they did not disturb the easy flow of the 'Kāvy-parbāh'. In certain places it so happens that nobody can just feel the existence of such alien or foreign terms. In brief, considering from the point of language, ideas, aim, analysis of subject matter, characterisation, theorisation, idealism etc. the Mānas can be regarded as the best book of Hindi literature. It is the masterpiece of Goswamījīe which has been translated into several languages of the world. In India it has a wide circulation in all the nook and corners of the country. Undoubtedly it has been successful in fortifying the Indian ideals and advising the people to organise the society with 'Prem' and 'Tyāg'. It has a unique place in the world literature.

2.6. f CONCLUSION ;

Now it is seen that the Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana of Shri Mādhab Kandali and his associates Shri Shankardeva and Shri Mādhab Deva and the Rām Charit Mānas of Tulsīdās have tremendous influence on Assamese and Hindi literature respectively. All these four poets not only made the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki accessible to the local people in their own language but also tried to
reform the society into an ideal one. In the Sapta Kânda Râmâyana, the human qualities of Râm and Sîta are mostly depicted while in the Râm Charit Mânas Râm has been projected as the 'Purushottama'. But in both the cases, sympathy towards a woman is evident. Along with the main story, the different aspects of woman's life have been illustrated, which are the raw materials for the domestic, social and cultural life of the people. In practice, through the unique creations of their 'Râmâyana' equated both the poets Shri Mâdhâb Kandâli and Goswâmi Tulsîdâs.