CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY PERIOD - MADHAB KANDALI & TULSIDAS
THEIR POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, RELIGIOUS, LITERARY & CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS.
3.1 INTRODUCTION:

Literature is like a mirror. The poet-literateurs are like the watch dogs of the society. They are influenced by different aspects of the environment. They study all these aspects minutely and try to establish a healthy tradition in the society. The reason for feeling the need of discussing briefly about the contemporary period of the two great poets, Madhab Kandali and Tulsidas before going through the analyses of their 'Rāmāyana' is that they were also influenced by the environment of their age, reflection of which are evident in their writings.

For the sake of convenience we have discussed the contemporary age of the two poets under the following heads:

I) Political;

II) Social;

III) Economic;

IV) Religious;

V) Literary; and

VI) Cultural environments
3.2 POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT DURING THE ERA OF SHRI MAHADEV KANDAL

In Assam, both the people and the royal families left a tradition of political and cultural discourses since very old days. One has to study the archeological materials, old scriptures, kavyas, Purānas, Tantras and its contemporary historical literatures of India to understand these ideals. It is difficult to analyse the political environment without a comprehensive idea of the geographical location, the nature of aboriginals, and the ancient social environments.

The historical data, available till today, prove enormously that not only in the hilly regions but also in the plains that the people were organised into certain units under some feudal chiefs. But these units were not permanent. Most probably due to the lack of political dexterity no political unit could have been organised, nor monarchy was established. Therefore, only traditional stories are found about the kings who established certain kingdom only, and elaborate history of the period is not available. But the political environment of Eastern India, particularly of Kamrup is worthmentioning. Because many thing about the fame and reknown of the dynastys of Barmanas, Pushyabhuti and the Guptas are available. All these are

---

1 Dr. N. Saikia - (ed) Assamiyā Jātir Etiorittā : Rajnaitik āyavyasthā, pp. 95.
authenticated by the Harsha Charita, writings of the Chinese traveller Hiu-En-Tsang, the Kālika Purāṇa and the Yogini Tantra. Shri Madhab Kandali belonged to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During this period the ancient Assam did not constitute only one kingdom but was divided into several small kingdoms. During the thirteenth century, the independent small kingdoms established by the Bara Bhuyans made the central authority a weak one. This condition prevailed up to the reign of the Ahoms and the Koch kings in Assam.

During the first part of the thirteenth century the Muslims attacked Kamrup several times; although king Prithu of Kamrup repelled the attack for the first two times in 1204 and 1206 A.D. Yet most probably in 1228 Prithu was defeated by Nāchirudoin Edad and made him a vassel king. But in 1255 A.D. Mālik Uzbek, Nawab of Bengal, died when he was taken prisoner while attacking Kamrup. After this incident the Muslims did not dare to attack Kamrup at least up to the sixteenth century. With the aggression of the Muslims there was a beginning of relationship of Assam with the Muslims and this relationship had a very far-reaching influence over the political and cultural life of Assam. 2

2 Dr. S.N. Sarma: Assamiya Sāhityar Samixatmak Etibritta, pp. 58. and Sir E. Gait - A History of Assam, pp. 46.
There was most probably anarchy for few years after the end of the rule of the Pal dynasty and the Bar-Bhuyans (1000 - 1200 A.D.). At the beginning of the thirteenth century (1201 A.D.) one Kanta Nath of the Khem Dynasty became the king of Kamrup and took the name "Niladhwaja". Niladhwaja shifted the capital from Pragjyotishpur to Kamatapur immediately after coming to the throne. He invited Brahmin scholars to his court for the discussion of the Vedas and other scriptures. During his reign, the Mussalmans attacked Assam thrice, first in 1204 A.D. when Baktiar Khiliji attacked and fled away being defeated. But some soldiers were kept as prisoners of war who afterwards settled in Assam and the settlement of Muslims in Assam began with them. In the second time in 1228 A.D. Giasuddin, Subedar of Bengal attacked Assam and defeated some of the vassel lords of Niladhwaja from whom he collected some revenue. In the third time, Ektiaruddin Mallik Yujbek, Subedar of Bengal defeated the viceroy of Niladhwaja and declared himself to be ruler of Kamrup, whom after few months was defeated and was taken as a prisoner by the armies of Niladhwaja. He died in the prison.

---

3 Padmanath Gohain Baruah; Asambar Buranji, pp. 21.
In 1295 A.D. Durlobh Narayan ascended to the throne of Kamatapura. During his time, Shankardeva's forefather Chandibar along with seven Kayastha families and seven Brahmin families migrated to Kamrup from Kanaujpur. He was very much pious and devoted to learning. Shri Madhab Kandali witnessed such an environment during his time. Because the time of Shri Kandalideva has been ascertained as between 1299 A.D. and 1329 A.D. After king Durlobh Nārāyana his son and his successors ruled from 1330 to 1420 A.D. On the other hand, the Ahom king Sukafā went from Tipām through the river Dihing towards the west and made friendly relationship with the Barāhi and the Morān kings and occupied the 'Saumār Peeth'. The Ahom kingdom was extended towards the west from 1270 to 1380 A.D. during the reign of five kings Suteufā, Subinfā, Sukhangfā Sukhrōngfā and Sutufā. Although during this period the Moghals attacked India, yet Assam remained untouched. Most probably, therefore, nothing is referred to the tyrannies of the Mussalmāns in the Assamese and the Uriyā Rāmāyanas.

During the fourteenth century, the poets received their inspirations primarily from the royal patronage. The kings

---

5 Ibid - pp. 22.
7 Assamar Buranji, pp. 34.
appointed the scholars to translate the scriptures in Sanskrit to vernacular languages so that the moral, religious, spiritual and poetic ideals of these 'Sastras' might be known to the common people. The poets translated them accordingly into local languages and added some local colour to them. Of such kings devoted to learning the names of Durlobh Nārāyaṇ, Indra Nārāyaṇ and Shrimanta Tamradhwaja of Kamatapur and the Barāh king Mahāmānikya are worth-mentioning. The poets translated them accordingly into local languages and added some local colour to them. Of such kings devoted to learning the names of Durlobh Nārāyaṇ, Indra Nārāyaṇ and Shrimanta Tamradhwaja of Kamatapur and the Barāh king Mahāmānikya are worth-mentioning.8 Shri Mādhab Kandali translated his Rāmāyana on the request of this Barāhi king Mahāmānikya.9

The contemporary political environment was never an exciting one. The mass people lived peacefully and happily. But as he was under the royal patronage, Shri Kandali had some idea of politics, which aided him in translating the Rāmāyana. For example, in almost all the ancient literatures of India there are references to the 'Chaturanga Sena' consisting of 'Hoy' (Horse brigade), 'Hasti' (Elephant brigade); 'Rath' (Chariot brigade) and the 'Padātik' (army); but no mention is available about the navy or naval armies in them.10

8 Asamiya Sāhityar Samixātmaka Ētibritta - pp. 57.
9 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana - 6/6710.
10 Mādhab Kandalir Rāmāyana, pp. 141.
Yet a picture of 'Navy' has been illustrated in the Rāmāyana of Kandali. Most probably the naval force was introduced in Assam in those days. This has been supported by the introduction of naval forces during the Saraighat wars long after the days of Shri Kandali.

One of the features of the wars of the medieval Assam was the use of stockade. The Ahom Buranjis speak of such stockade for fortification:

- "Moi Māṭir 'Garh' Bāndhim Rahiba, Kathār Garh Bāndhim Pachiba.|12

Shri Kandali with such a practical idea speaks of a wooden stockade used in the war between Rām and Rāvana.|13 This reference may be regarded as evidence of Assamese warfare in those days.

In practice the founders of ancient Kamrup i.e. Assam learnt many things from the tradition of India and introduced a novel type of administration here. This system united all

11 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana : 2/2454-56.
12 Dr. S.K. Bhuyan : Deodhai Asam Buranji.
13 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana : 6/5037, 5049.
the tribes into one and gave a good administration for them. Inspite of being a monarchical form of government, this system gave all the people irrespective of caste, creed and religion, opportunities for them all and allowed them to lead a good social life. The king could not be tyrannical. That the king was guided by the council of ministers and other organs of the government can be evidenced by the books. Although at the beginning the eldest son ascended to the throne yet later the kings were also nominated by the courtiers and important citizens. All these signify the well established administration and good political environment of the era of Shri Kandali.¹⁴

It can be easily concluded that Shri Kandali who had enjoyed the patronage of the monarchs earned a good deal of experience of political life. Although some smaller kingdoms were established inside Assam, yet these kingdoms were not engaged in struggle and warfare during this period. There existed a peaceful political atmosphere, which helped the Barāhi king Mahāmānikya to discuss about scriptures like the Rāmāyana in his court. The poet Shri Madhab Kandali also did

¹⁴Dr. N. Saikia – Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 100.
not lag behind to pick up the chance.

3.3 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT DURING THE AGE OF SHRI MADHUA KANDALI:

The influence of the natural environment on the Assamese society and culture is quite immense. The Assamese culture grows out of the colourful mass life. The tribal cultures of the hills surrounding the Brahmaputra valley also play a very important role in it. So, a very wide and vast extension of our social life is evident.

The relation between the tribal people and the Aryans of the then time can be known from the Ramayana of Shri Madhua Kandali. Because the Assamese nation and its literature grew with co-mingling of several nationalities existing at that time. One important thing is to be noted that Assamese developed in such a way that almost all the people of all tribes and nationalities residing in Assam either accepted it and used it for literary discourses or at least, as the lingua franca among them. Several Indian scriptures were translated into Assamese. Under such circumstances Assam, during Kandali's age, was deeply associated with the culture and civilization of India. Otherwise the Saraii king Mahamaniyak could not have got the Ramayana translated by Shri Madhua Kandali into local
Assamese language. The contemporary and the post-Kancali poets were also patronised for their poetic translations of the Mahābhārata and other Puranas by the non-Aryan kings. 15

It is seen that in the contemporary Assam of Sūri Kancali, a great Assamese nation came into being as a result of the mixture of different tribes and tribal people. As a result it has a tremendous influence on the nation. Side by side there grew a social tradition in the fertile land of Assam. It not only brought forth social stability but also contributed a lot in the intellectual development of the people.

A family is the unit of a society. The existence of the family has been evidenced right from ancient times in Assam. 16 The marriage has been regarded as the indispensable rite for a family. The family began with the marriage. When the union of a man and a woman is recognised by the society, the marriage turns into a social institution. The marriage does not confine in the sexual relationship only. The family life centres around the marriage. So, the marriage has been accepted in all religions as the best social rite.

16 Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 41.
In the Hindu society, the marriage has a religious purpose. According to Hindu religious principles a married woman is a co-mate of her husband in his spiritual and worldly matters. Therefore, a wife is called the 'Irīna laxmi' (mistress of the house) and the 'Sahadharmini'. Castil, and devotion to one's husband were regarded as the basic features of a Hindu woman. Since marriage has been accomplished according to religious principles, the abandoning of a 'Dharma-patni' (wife taken under religious principles) has been regarded as injustice and against religion. But under certain indispensable grounds divorce was allowed.¹⁷

During the Kandali era, these principles were followed by the Assamese society like the Vedic society did; and still are continued. In Assamese society a widow sister-in-law is not allowed to be remarried by a brother-in-law (sover) of course some people live as husband and wife without performing vedic rites. But Shri Kandali did not mention such marriages in his writings.

There are several descriptions of reformation of marriages in the Rāmāyana of Shri Kandali.¹⁸ Even king

---

¹⁷ Asamiyā Jātir Etiobitta, pp. 44.

¹⁸ Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana : 1/1334-36.
Dasaratha cohabited with all his three 'Dharma-patnis' for procreation of a son.\(^{19}\)

During the Vedic period, Indian society was based on the principle of 'Varnashrama'. The influence of this principle was evident on the Assamese society during the period of Shri Kandali. The people were divided into Brahma, Xatriya, Baishya and Sudra in accordance with the works, they performed.\(^{20}\) In the Gita, the Lord Himself said:

\[
\text{"Chaturvarnang Mayä Sristang, Guna-karma-Vibhagashah"}^{21}
\]

But during Kandali's time classification of men was not done on the basis of 'Guna' and 'Karma' (Quality and work performed) but on heredity only. On the other hand some type of 'Guilds' were formed in the society by the working people and different castes came into being. It has been evidenced when it has been narrated in the Rāmāyana that all the thirty-two castes had given up their business when Rām left Ayodhya for the forest.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 1/653.

\(^{20}\) Mādhab Kandālir Rāmāyana, pp. 135.

\(^{21}\) Gita - Canto IV, sl. 13.
The same idea is available when one goes through the description of different peoples accompanying Bharata to take Ram back to Ayodhya. All these different castes can easily be regarded as the castes based on profession or on labour.

The staple food of the Assamese people have been rice since ancient times. They also used curd (Doi), Ghee and 'Pāyasa' along with rice. Different 'pithās' (cakes) were also prepared from rice and Gur (molasses) Fish and meat were also used. Of meat, the flesh of deer was very much liked by them. But it is found that no other Dāl except 'Māti Dāl' was used by the common people. The 'Mug-Dāl' was used only by the kings or rich people. Of different vegetables they used the 'Lāo' (guard), Komorā, Šengēnā (drinjal), Kachu (Arum), Laisāk, Sariyah Sāk (mustard plants) etc. were very common to them. A special type of spice was used in Assam called the 'Khār'. Generally it has been prepared from plaintain trees. They used one type of intoxicating drink called the 'Lāopāni' made out of rice. Some wealthy people also used such drinks

23. Ibid., 2/2382.
made out of fruit-juice.  

Some informations about the food that used in the time of Kandali are found in his Rāmāyana. King Dasaratha proposed to Rām to take rice together before leaving for the forest.  

while narrating the food supplied to 'Kumbhakarna' there are the mention of different varieties of food like - anna-vyaujan, Mithāi, Kharikā Jahār Pithā, meat of different animals, wine etc. That Rām also killed different animals in the forest for food is also narrated.

Shri Mādhab Kandali described different varieties of fruits while illustrating the chitrakut and the Ashok Bana which are not found in the original Vālmiki Rāmāyana.

During the Kandali age, the wealthy people wore the 'Pat' or silk cloth and the common people used coarse cotton dress comprising of 'Athumuriyā Churia' and 'Gamochā' and occasionally some 'Eri' and 'Mugā' cloths. The women of Assam wore 'Mekhelās'.

---

25Ibid.
26Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana ; 2/1911.
27Ibid. 2/2316.
28Ibid. 6/5422, 2/1975.
29Ibid. 2/2491.
30Ibid. 5/4086-89.
The married women used 'Oranis' (Veils) and vermillion on their forehead. Both men and women had long hair and used ivory combs. In the royal families, they used gold ornaments and common people used silver ornaments. Even the 'Karls' (courtes) were used as ornaments.

In the Rāmāyana of Shri Kandalik there is no description of cloth worn on different parts of the body; only there is the mention of the 'Netastra', Netakāmlī, Dibyastra, Pattabatra etc.\(^\text{31}\) There is the mention of 'Sannāha' (armour), brassieres and cloth used as turbans etc.\(^\text{32}\)

There is the mention of ornaments and toilets in the Rāmāyana of Shri Kandalik. There are the mention of the mukut (the crown), kundal (ear-rings), Sāt sari Hār (necklace), Kankan (bangles), Balay, Bajae, Angathi (rings), Nupur, Churāmoni etc. in several places.\(^\text{33}\) The vermillion on the forehead of married woman is also mentioned in several places.\(^\text{34}\)

It can be assumed that during the days of Mādhabh Kandalik, music and dancing was abundantly practised in Assam. He made a

\(^{31}\)Ibid., 2/1512.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., 2/1870, 1938.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., 2/1870, 1938.

\(^{34}\)Ibid., 2/2201.
mention of the 'Bhāt' as singers in his Rāmāyana. Different musical instruments are also mentioned there in. But the musical instruments as referred to in his Rāmāyana are not same as Vālmiki did in his work but these were the instruments of the contemporary Assam of Kandali. The 'Natuas' or the dancers took dancing as their profession.

The coronation ceremony of the kings was the major festival for the people in ancient times. So, the arrangement for the coronation of Rām, coronation of sugriva etc. are narrated in Kandali's Rāmāyana. Games and sports were also in use in those days for popular enjoyment. Of the games, the 'Pāsha' (i.e. game of dice) was the most important one. Kandali also mentioned some of the Assamese games like the 'Kusti', Bhantā, Junti etc. In the Lankā Kanda, Kandali speaks of these Assamese games in the Rāmāyana.

It becomes clear from the incident that the Barāhi king Mahāmānīkya requested Shri Madhab Kandali to translate the

35 Ibid. 2/1499.
36 Ibid., 4/3719.
37 Ibid., 4/3741.
38 Ibid., 5/4099 - 4101.
Rāmāyana into Assamese that Assamese occupied an important place in those days. Because this Assamese language was used as the lingua-franca among different people here. Till now no written literature of pre-Kandali period has been found. So, it is evident that the basis of the language used in his Rāmāyana was the verbal language, folk-songs, folk-tales and sayings and proverbs of the people.\(^{39}\)

Practically speaking the then Assamese society is also reflected in the Rāmāyana of Shri Mādhab Kandali along with the Indian society of Vālmiki. It is due to this that Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana becomes enjoyable like Vālmiki's original one.

3.4 **ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE AGE OF SHRI KANDALI**

Enough data is not available to depict a complete picture of the economic environment of the age Shri Kandali. Practically speaking there is no system of writing systematic history in Assam during those days. Historical descriptions are available only from the days of the Āhom kings. Certain books like the Mahābhārat, the Rāmāyana, Tantra scriptures, 

\(^{39}\text{Ibid., 2/2276, 2/2598, 5/4173 etc.}\)
Harsha charit of Ban Bhatta, Meghdoot of Kalidas, Raghuvarana etc. contain some description of the political and social environments of their time. But nothing is available about the economic environment of the time.

About the economic condition of ancient Assam, some data can be had from the writings of the Chinese traveller Hiu-In-Tsang, the Buddhist literature, the archeological materials (like images etc.) the inscriptions on stones, the copper-plates, terracotta etc. No coin used in ancient Assam is discovered till now. Probably due to the frequent earth-quakes, flood etc. most of the ancient antiques are lost. The statues, images and the utensils found in Ambari near Guwahati in 1970-71, enormously proved that most part of our antiquity has yet to be discovered. We can gather certain data about the economic condition of the Kandali period from different historical writings and archeological discoveries.

3.4.1 JANA SAMPAD (POPULATION): VILLAGES & TOWNS:

Census of the population was not carried during the days of Shri Madhab Kandali; yet it is sure that the population

---

40 Assamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 50.
was a mixed one in those days very much like our present one.

In ancient times trade and commerce between different parts of India and China was carried through the land route via Assam; and along with it, there was migration of people also. Most probably during the days of Narakāsura, who was well-known in the Purānas, there was immigration of Aryan civilisation into Assam. Since king Narakā came from Mithila, he took along with him some brāhmanas and other royal officials. In this manner people from different parts of India migrated to Assam under royal patronage. Besides them, some other people came to Assam in search of their livelihood. 41

Since no census was carried during those days it is difficult to know how much people of what tribe were there in Assam. But it is a fact that intensity of casteism was not very severe in Assam in these days. Because the kings were from different tribes and they had to be placed at high castes. Under such circumstances, it was difficult to make the caste system vigorous. 42

41 Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 51.
42 Ibid., pp. 52.
The main stay of the common people of Assam was agriculture. They lived in villages. The towns were primarily manned with king and his courtiers, the royal priests, the army and other officials. The administration arranged for the construction of temples and appointed priests for them and also supplied day-to-day needs of them.43

The villages were of different sizes - big and small. The people constructed their houses and made arrangements for drinking water. Even in some places they arranged for irrigation in the paddy fields. It is known from the writings of Hiù-En-Tsang that Assamese people also reared birds and animals. That people used bamboos for the construction of their houses can be evident from the statement:— "Chāripāśhe chhaiāre Diyā Chanchāli".44

Practically speaking the villages were the units or the communities of the state. These units had intercourse with each other. The main reason for the unity among the people was that they began to live together and united in the villages

---

43Ibid., pp. 52.
44Charyyāgeet.
which was also substituted by natural, social and religious causes and made them more united. Generally in one village people of different castes lived; although different caste confined themselves into different regions. These different regions were called the chouuri, chuk, pārā or the Kuchi. The titles of these 'Chouris' were demarcated with the caste of the people living in them. For example - Bāmun chuburi or Bāmundkuchi, Ganak Kuchi etc.

There were arrangements of 'Haats' and 'Bazars' for buying and selling of food grains and other day-to-day necessaries. Besides these food grains etc. fowls and domestic animals like pigs and goats were also bought and sold in these markets. In addition to commercial and economic relations, social and cultural relationships were established through marital arrangements among the people of different villages. 45

3.4.2 LAND TENURE:

In the matter of land, the Ahom kings following the general northern Indian tradition, claimed that all land

45 Dr. B.K. Baruah – Asamar Lok Sanskriti, pp. 157.
belonged to the crown. Not only did the king exercise this right over lands, cultivated or waste, but he extended his prerogative of ownership over all woods, forest, ferries, mines etc. But in theory as the Ahoms were governed by the principle system, the enjoyment of the soil was vested Sukaphā and the principal nobles who accompanied him on his toilsome march across the king could alienate only those lands for legal tenure of the occupier had no documentary evidence. However, the king had at his disposal all uncultivated land. 46

The king generally donated land to Brāhmins on religions purposes and no revenue was fixed on such lands. Such donated lands could be kept under possession by the successors. 47

The system of land survey and collection of land revenue by the government was also prevalent in Kamrup. The government officials decided the boundaries for land and the revenue thereof. Excepting the nobles, Brāhmins and the people nearer to the kings no common people could be the owner of lands. These people had to be the tenants of the nobles. 48

46 History of Assam, pp. 270.
47 Dr. P.C. Goswami: Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 54.
48 from the Nidhanpur grant writings.
There is a clear indication of the status of the agricultural society of the period in the 'Daakar Sacho' (writings of Daak). 49

3.4.3 INDUSTRIES:

Industry was highly developed in the Ahom period. There are references to weavers, spinners, goldsmiths, potters and workers in ivory, bamboo, wood hide and cane. According to Muhammadian historians, the people were very skilful in the weaving of embroidered silk cloths. They made their caves, trays, stools and chairs by carving them out of a single block of wood. According to records, a minister of king Pratap Singh made it compulsory for every adult able-bodied male to make a bamboo basket and every adult able-bodied female to spin a certain quantity of thread every evening. 50

It is also known from the notes of foreign travellers that there were different classes of people for different types of works like weaving, spinning, colouring of threads.

49 Asamiyā Sāhityar Samiṣṭāmāk Etiṣrītta, pp. 50.

50 History of Assam, pp. 271.
and pottery, wood craftsmanship, bamboo and cane works etc. There are references of different types of cloths prepared by the Assamese people in the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Horsa Charit. Since the ancient days, the Eri, Mugā etc. have been reared and silk cloth from their cocoons have been prepared in Assam.\(^\text{51}\) Besides these it is also found that gold, silver, copper, iron etc. were used here in Kamrup.\(^\text{52}\)

Although from the archaeological materials many things about the royal authority and the places of worship can be known yet nothing can be known about the economic condition of the mass people. Ordinarily by the term economic condition we mean the dwelling places, food and cloth and the ceremonies that people celebrate. Due to absence of any written history the economic condition of the people of Kandali’s period remained unknown. Only the excavation in Ambari and Tezpur throw some light on it.

Certain descriptions in Shri Kandali’s Rāmāyana throw some light on the economic condition of his period. The pictures of the villages and the dwelling houses of the people

\(^{51}\) In Bān Bhatta’s Harsa Cherita reference is made to one Kshauma Bāstra meaning silk cloth while in Kautilya’s Arthasastra, Kamrup has been referred to as the Kesha-karan Bhumi meaning a land where ‘Palus’ (Caterpillars) are reared.

\(^{52}\) Kautilloy ; Artha Śāstra.
give us an idea of the economic condition of the time. The Assamese people built their houses with bamboo and thatches and such houses were also built during the middle ages in Assam. 53

Shri Madhab Kandali had a very keen observation; and his knowledge was many sided and wide. He did not leave any stone unturned to colour the original Rāmāyana with local culture and environment. 54 What he spoke about the food and cloth habit, games and sports, and ornaments used in his Rāmāyana, all reflect the middle ages Assamese society. 55

The statement that "Chhatrish Jātiye Tejileka Nijabritty" 56 when Rām went to forest, suggested the various professions of Assamese people of the time. Finally it can be said that the pictures of villages and towns, professions of the people, the trade and commerce and industries are nothing but the picture of Kandali's Assam. 57

3.5 THE RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT OF SHRI KANDALI'S AGE:

Different religions were practised by different tribes of Assam since time immemorial. The ancient kings of Kamrup

53 Sapta Kandab Rāmāyana, 2/1641-43.
54 Ibid. 6/6478.
55 Ibid. 5/4062-4, 4075-7.
56 Ibid. 2/2007.
57 Ibid. 2/2332.
were devoted to the Rājārṣi i.e. virtues of a king as narrated in the scriptures like the Manusāṁhitā, historical writings of the Purāṇas and as authenticated in the Alāṅkāraśāstra. The devotion of Mahārāja Bhāskar Vārma to Lord Vishnu and his faith towards Lord Vishnu and the Vaishnavas are narrated in the Harsha Charita of Sānuhatta. In the Kālīkā Purāṇa a king has been advised to bow to all gods and goddesses and to be respectful to all religions. He is also advised to treat equally all the opinions of different communities.

In the Kamrup Kāj Śāsanāwali, there is a hint to 'oneness' of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. The same idea has been preserved even in the Yogini Tantra, the Kālīkā Purāṇa and other ancient writings of Kamrupa. In the Śrīmānta Rāmānūjacharita which was written during the 13th and 14th centuries of the Christian era, the writer Awamāthik Vedānāryya began the text with a prayer to 'Harihara Paramātma'. It shows that not only the Shaiva sect but also other sects like the Vaishnavas and the Shakta regarded Lord Shiva as a deity to be adored. According to Dr. Banikanta Kākati—

58 Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 117.
59 Ibid., pp. 121.
According to historians, the Tantrik Shākta Dharma, which incorporated some non-Aryan elements entered into the Aryan world. Several rites and rituals of non-Aryan origin like the 'Yādu', Sanmohan, and other 'Aabhichār Kriyās', some unsocial behaviour, sacrifice of birds and animals, sacrifice of human being, Tantra-mantra, worshipping of ghosts and spirits and of the 'Dākini-Yogini', worshipping of the Yoni etc. were reformed and were made fit for the Aryan culture.

Special mentions of female deities like Shakti, Sarasuati Uma, Durga, Kaali etc. are found in the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Yogini Tantra, which were composed in Assam. From these evidences from the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Yogini Tantra, Dr. J.K. Kākati came to conclusion that Jhauma Naraka, the foster son of Aideh king Janaka was the first man to introduce the Shākta religion in Kamrupa.

Among the Acharyyas of the Shākta sect, the names of

60 Purani Kamrupar Dharmadhāra, pp. 17.
Agastya, Durbāsā, Bhārgava or Parashurām, and Bāsīstha are worth-mentioning. These names are also specially related to the Kaula sect of Kamrup. Moreover, in all the Kaula Texts there is the mention of the Kamrupa Peeth and the Yoni of Goddess Kāmākhya while discussing about the 'Śākta Kaula Śādhanā'. In both the Kālikā Purāṇa and the Yogini Tantra, there are elaborate description of Goddess Kāmākhya and the method of her worship.63

It is undoubtedly true that of all religious ideals, the Vaishnavite ideals were quite progressive. Scholars including Dr. Ā.K. Kākati guessed that even this Vaishnabite religion was preached here since long past. In the 'Śīla-śhasana' presented by king Bhutivērmā in 554 A.D. which was discovered in Bàrgangā of Nagāon district, he was described as "Ashwamedh Yāji" and "Param Bhagawat". It enormously proved that the Bhagawat sect of the Vaishnavas existed during those days. Besides that the worshipping of Lord Vishnu has been evidenced in the Rājśhāsanawali of Kamrup. In addition to these, the copper plates of king Laxminārayana discovered in North Lakhimpur along with the idols of Lord Vishnu in different places of Assam also substantiate that Vaishnavite

There are clear evidences that books like the Kalīka Purāṇa, Sualpa Matsya Purāṇa, Angiras Sanhitā, Mahābhārat Tatp-aryyatikā by Dev bodh Acharyya, Manwarthavivriti by Narayan Sarbajna etc. were composed in Kamrup during the 11th and 12th centuries of the Christian era. The thirteenth century scholar Nilāmoarāchāryya of Kamrup who was well versed in different branches of philosophy wrote that his forefathers were worshippers of Lord Viṣṇu and were well versed in the Vaishnavite principles.\textsuperscript{64}

The Smriti Ratnakara and the Bhagawat Purāṇa which were composed approximately during the 13th and the 14th centuries show in details the greatness of Lord Viṣṇu and the Vaishnavite principles. In addition to that, people of Assam believed in rebirth of the soul, sanctity of holy places and bathing in the holy rivers.\textsuperscript{65}

Dr. K.N. Prasād opines that due to the popularity of the Rāmāyana, people began to accept that Lord Rāma is the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Of course the worshipping of Rām

\begin{footnotes}
\item[64] Asamiyā Jātir Etioritta, pp. 126.
\item[65] Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana 1/1980.
\end{footnotes}
came into use at a later date. Bulke remarked that even in a limited way the Rām-worship began during the 1st century B.C. It has been substantiated by the plates in the temples of the Gupta Age.

It is definite that Shri Kandali was not free from the influences of the contemporary religious ideals prevailing in Assam. The Adi and the Uttarā Kāndas of Rāmāyana projected Rām as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu while the Adhyatma Rāmāyana and the Ananda Rāmāyana, which were later creations, made Rām the Lord Himself. And as such the Rāmāyana was transformed into a Vaishnavite scripture. Although in Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana due to the influence of Shri Śankardeva era there are some Vaishnavite influences, yet the references to other sects made by Kandali could never be deleted completely. So the conglomeration of influences of different religious ideals is quite evident in his poetry. There are descriptions of different people of different sects like the Śaivites taking the Devadesh Juli on hand and chanting 'Śiva', 'Śiva'; Śāktas worshipping the Goddess sacrificing animals; the

66 Asam Prāntiya Rām Sāhitya, pp. 6.
67 Bulke - Rām Kathā, pp. 146.
68 Rāmāyanar Etibritta, pp. 307.
70 Ibid - 6/5294, 5649, 5649.
Vaishnavas\textsuperscript{71} worshipping Lord Vishnu etc. in Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana. But the influence of Vaishnavite sect in his Rāmāyana is found to be more evident than those of others.\textsuperscript{72}

In addition to that Shri Mādhabdeva in the Ādi Kānda and Shri Śankaradeva in the Uttarā Kānda illustrated themselves as the devotees of Lord Krishna and accepted Krishna as the 'Param Brahma'.

Now, therefore, it is evident that during the days of Shri Mādhab Kandali all the major sects of Hinduism like the Śaiva, Śākta and the Vaishnava prevailed in Assam. In addition to them in some cases the worship of lesser gods or some secondary sects also went side by side. Shri Kandali had a liberal view towards the different sects. Although he himself was a staunch Vaishnava yet he did not have any ill feeling towards other sects. It shows the greatness of the nature of the contemporary religions attitude of the people of Assam.

3.6 THE LITERARY ENVIRONMENT DURING KANDALI'S AGE

No literary creation of any age can shake off the influence of its own age. The Rāmāyana of Shri Mādhab Kandali

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., 2/1715.

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid., 2/2224, 2229.
is of no exception. Of all the Rāmāyanas composed in regional languages, the one of Shri Kandali is the oldest. The versions of Rāmāyana in other regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Uriya etc. were composed only about hundred to hundred fifty years after the composition of Shri Kandali’s version. Although Kandali’s Rāmāyana is the oldest of regional versions yet no weakness in expression is found either in his language or in his style. On the contrary, his language and style bears the evidence of a powerful and highly developed literary tradition of his time. 73 The reason behind it is that there was a well-developed form of Assamese language during the middle ages.

By the term pre-twelfth century literature, we generally mean Sanskrit literature. Of course the ‘Charyya geets’ also comes under the tenth-twelfth century literature. During this period most of the folk songs and the Mantras were also composed. 74 Since the folk songs do not bear any historical evidences, they can never be placed prior to the twelfth century A.D. 75 On the other hand, the language of the Mantras was quite modern except names of some fruits. Language

73 Dr. S.N. Sarma - Asamiyā Sāhityar Samixātmak Etibritta, pp. 75.
74 H.C. Goswami - Asamiyā Sāhityar Chāneki (quoted from Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta - pp. 75.
75 Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 73.
of some of them can be guessed as of the Vaishnavite period or even of the later period. The example of ancient literature of Kamrup, particularly of the pre-twelfth century literature, can be had from different sources like the Śāhṣhānawali of the ancient kings, the Dohas of Buddhist Siddhacharyyas, the Kālikā Purāṇa the Hastayurvāda, the Swalpamatsya Purāṇa etc. 76

There are enough evidences that Sanskrit was widely studied in Assam. Due to natural calamities and lack of scientific methods of preservation, several Sanskrit and Assamese books are lost. But the part, which has been saved and preserved, prove sufficiently that Sanskrit was studied here. The lingua franca of the ancient royal courts of Assam or Kamrup was Sanskrit. Not to speak of the ancient kings, even the Āhom kings when communicated with other countries generally used Sanskrit. So in ancient Kamrup, Sanskrit enjoyed a high position as the medium of politics, religious discourses, poetry, philosophy and the language of the court. 77

The Charyya Padas or Charyya Gaets refer to a particular type of 'Geet' or songs. 78 Certain songs were composed to explain

---

76 Ibid., pp. 66.
77 Ibid., pp. 77.
78 Charyapada : Rām Rām Guru aru Rām Dās Āta Dwee. Mādhab Kirtan Kare Dīnā Pāli Huie.
the purport of the Buddhist philosophy through some symbolic language. These songs were the musical development of the Sahayāni Tantrik ideals. Several persons from Kamrup were among those Siddhacharyyas who composed these Charyya padas. These Charyyapadas were bound by different 'Rāgas'.

The proverbial sayings of the Charyyapadas contain deep philosophical ideas like -

"Apnā Mānse Harinā Sāiri,
Duhil Duh Ke Bente Sāmēa,
Hather Kankan Mā Leo Dāpon etc.".80

There are certain illustrations in the Charyyapadas, the literary value and the picturesqueness of which are quite unique. Although these are the creations of ancient days yet the meaningful use of symbols and clear expression of emotions give poetic beauty to them.

As stated above, several ancient 'Puthis' (books on religion) were destroyed by damp climate floods, earthquake and such other natural calamities. Under such circumstances it is not impossible that all writings of the pre-Kandali

79 Dr. L. Gogoi : Asamar Sanskriti, pp. 63.
80 Charyyapada (quoted from the Asāmiyā Jātir Etibritta, pp. 87.)
days might be spoilt in this way for ever. Yet we get the evidence of the poetic genius and scholarship of the ancient Assamese scholars through the 'Shāsanawali' and rock inscriptions. Several rock inscriptions and copper-plates of the period from the fifth century A.D. to the thirteenth century A.D. have been discovered. The rock inscriptions and the copper-plates have their importance from the point of history and literature respectively. The persons who inscribed in the copper plates were scholars, poets and persons well-versed in science of metres at once.

The rock inscriptions found in the ruins of Emāilī1 (Probable date 1233 A.D.) and the other2 (date 1352) not only depict the poetry of ancient Assam but also bear the evidence of the growth of Assamese prose literature. Considering the specialities in form and phonology of the Charjupāla, the scholars regarded it as pre-historic Assamese. Its poetic beauty and high theoretical value are not found in any contemporary literature of India. Besides these, the Mukh-Pandita of Kavi Bharati, the Smriti Ketnakar of Vedacharya, the Kavi Kaumudi of Nilambaracharyya, the Prakāsha a 'shasnya' 3:

1 Asamar Sanskriti, pp. 65.
2 Ibid.
Kātyāyana's Shraddhāsutra and the 'Tīka' of the viṣṇu-
Purāṇa enormously proved the scholarship of ancient scholars of Kamrup. All these books were composed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Finally from such literary cases, we can undoubtedly conclude that ancient Kamrup i.e. present Assam was quite ahead in attainment of knowledge and in most cases she was quite ahead of most of the other regions of India. Although Sanskrit was the major medium of scholarly discourses, yet Assamese attained the status of independent literature by marching systematically in the path of progress.\footnote{83}

Shri Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyana has a special place in the history of Assamese literature. Because no definite evidence of written ancient Assamese literature prior to Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana has been discovered still now.\footnote{84} The king Mahāmāñikya requested Shri Kandali to compose the Rāmāyana in Assamese 'Padas', prove sufficiently that Assamese literature took a clear and particular shape during those days. Of course it is also a fact that there were several scholars in the contemporary period of Shri Kandali. Even Shri Kandali referred

\footnote{83}{Op.cit., in (75), pp. 89.}
\footnote{84}{Shashi Sarma ; Mādhava Kandali Rāmāyana, pp. 169.}
it in his Ramāyana:

- "Pandit Ldkar Jebe Asantosh Upajaya,
  Hāt-jore Bolo Shuddha 8āk".85

There are a host of well-known scholars like Hem Saraswati, Harihar Bipta, Kavi Ratna Saraswati Rudra Kandali and others, who composed several literary pieces. Some of them were contemporary and others of the later period of Shri Kandali referred to these scholars as the 'Pandit Loks' in the above lines.

It is doubtlessly true that Shri Kandali realised the very soul of the poetry from the tradition of Assamese literature. Otherwise it would not have been possible for him to own and express such a high ideal in his "Sapta Kānda Ramāyana". In addition to the local terms, Shri Kandali used several terms from the Prakrit and the Apabhraṃsa in his Rāmāyana. He also used certain terms prevalent in modern Bengali, for example -

- "Altār Barna Keho Pingliyā Kaali,
  Katohō Kapili Bagi Handi Je Shrigāli.
  Kato Kāni Kato Khuri Katohō Gandali
  Kānyāri Gajjāri Prachandi Chāmundi."86

85 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana ; 6/6711.
86 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana ; 5/4173-74.
In his poetry he used different metres like the Durpadi, Payār Tripadi, Dulari, Chhabi, Jhumuri etc. Besides these, his use of figures like the 'Jatūthāch' and 'Fankarā Jojana' (Proverbs and sayings) are quite worth mentioning. Such uses can never come into being accidently unless there is a tradition of such uses in literature. Practically speaking Shri Kandali's Rāmāyana becomes the torch-bearer for the posterity.

It is seen that Shri Mādhab Kandali was the successor of one high class literary tradition. In addition to the rich tradition of folk-literature, he gathered inspiration from the Charyyapadas and Buddhist 'Dohās'. Probably the works of scholars prior to Shri Kandali could not be preserved for damp climate of Assam. But it is sure that had Shri Kandali not been the successor of well-developed Assamese literature growing side by side with the rich literature of Sanskrit, he could not have composed such a unique piece of poetry like the Sapta Kanda Rāmāyana.

3.7 THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF SHRI KANDALI'S AGE:

India is a land of different peoples with different caste, creed and faith. A great culture grows here out of

\[87\text{Ibid - 6/5004- 34 (Dulari)}\]
\[3/2853- 78 (Jhumuri)\]
\[6/5820- 24 (Chhabi) etc.\]
different peoples who forget their distinct identities like the small tributaries joining a river. There has been no breaking or destruction of its cultural tradition in spite of constant aggressions of foreigners.

The cultures of the Dravidians and the Aryans are the basis of Indian culture and the basic ideal of this culture is 'unity in diversity'. The basic tendency of Indian culture also prevails in Assam. Assam has been keeping the ideal of co-ordination in tact since old days in spite of its being a state of various peoples like the Aryans and the Mongoloids. Although we do not find a complete picture of the cultural life of the people of Shri Kandali's age yet we can have at least some idea of it.

From the compilation of the Assamese version of the Rāmāyana by Shri Kandali, it can be easily assumed that Assam was deeply connected with all India culture and civilisation. Assamese society constituted with Aryans and non-Aryans was inspired by one all-India feeling. In this connection, we can refer to the elements of culture like architecture and sculpture, drawings and paintings, dance and music etc.

---

88Madhab Kandalir Rāmāyana, pp. 138.
Architecture can be said to be the meaningful art of a developed nation. To understand the intellectual development and the artistic creations of a nation one has to study the architecture of that nation. Like the Greeks and the Egyptians, India was also a highly developed nation as regards to art, architecture and sculpture. The Tajmahal, the caves of Ajanta and the temples scattered all over the country speak of the architecture and sculpture of India to the world.

Assam is also rich in art and sculpture like the other parts of India. The temples and other plates indicate its rich traditions. The temples of Assam still bear the evidence of ancient architecture and sculpture here inspite of all the wears and tears of the natural calamities.

No systematic history of architecture and sculpture of Assam is available. The main reason of it is the devastions caused by natural calamities. Most probably the people could not think of constructing permanent building as they were frequently disturbed by floods, earthquakes etc. The houses made out of bamboo, thatch, cane etc. were never permanent. Besides, the use of bricks came into being only during the rule of the Āhoms. Of course all temples which were constructed during the pre-Āhom days were all made of stones only.\footnote{Asamar Sanskriti, pp. 61.}
is also true that no excavation under scientific process has still been carried in Assam till now. So, it has never been possible to bring to light all the pieces of art, architecture and sculpture hidden in the soil of Assam. In this connection the remark of R.D. Banerjee is quite worth-mentioning:


One can have some informations about the pre-shankardeva culture from the copper-plates, the Harsa charit and the writings of Hiuen-Tsang. The praise, which the materials sent by king Bhāskar Varma to Harshavardhana as gift received in the court of the latter speak of the cultural tradition of ancient Kamrup.

As regards to the sculpture of ancient Assam, we get some pieces of stone only, but nothing as examples of sculptures

---

90 Archeological Survey of India (1924 - 25).
There were several buildings in Pragjyotishpur and Sonitpur.

The ruins of temples at Sadiya can be regarded as the examples of the Buddhist sculptures. Besides, the images of elephant scattered over around the temple of Hajo are definitely the work of some skilful sculptors. There are several stone images around Kāmākhya temple also. In this connection the remark made by archeologist Kanaklāl Baruah is worth-mentioning:


The sculptures of Guwahati are scattered over Guwahati and its surrounding neighbourhood. There are several references in the Prachya Shasanawali edited by Dr. Maheswar Neog of copper-plates which speak of the sculptures of ancient Assam. For example the rock inscriptions of the Umananda Temple; the inscriptions of the 'Kanai Barashi Boa Shil' about the defeat of Turkeys; the inscriptions of the Kāmākhya Temple at the

---

92 Asamiyā Jātir Etibritta (article - 'Sthāpatya Aru Bhāskarjya by Ṣugal Dās) pp. 169.
Nilachal hill; the inscriptions of the Ganeswar Puskarini and such other rock inscriptions of hundreds of temples in Assam. Mr. E. Gait in his 'A History of Assam' has translated the writings of most of the inscriptions into English.

It shows, therefore, that Assam was not lagging behind of the other parts of India as regards to sculptures. It can also not be said with certainty that the cave-dwellers of Kamrup did not draw any picture in the caves although no such drawings have been discovered till now. It is a fact that the climate of Assam is not conducive to preservation of such drawings etc. Not only such drawings or paintings are difficult to find but data about fine-arts are also difficult to find now. But there is no doubt that there had been study of Indian art and culture here.

The ancient Kamrup was a country of temples. These temples are full of drawings and sculptures. These were done in the Indian way of drawing and sculptures. There are

---

93 Dr. Maheswar Neog; Praśya Śasanwali; pp. 19-36.
94 A History of Assam (2nd Ed.), pp.57-63.
95 Hanel; Indian Sculpture, fragmentary other records of early Indian Art.
descriptions of traditional Indian art and architecture in
the Vinay Agam and other books. The ancient images of the
walls are the inscription of these drawings and paintings.
The sculptors - the Ojas and the Khanikars worked in this
line upto several years after the death of Lord Buddha. Moreover the traditional stories about Chitralskha and Ushā
of Sonitpur speak of the fine arts in ancient Assam. There
are several references that the old kings of Kamrup were the
patrons of five arts.

The drawing of the 'Marals' in the 'Pujas' can be regarded as one of the fine arts. The drawings and paintings
on the 'Janma Patrikas' and the places of worship in Kamrup
if taken together and studied, may give an idea of the fine arts in ancient Kamrup. Even today, drawing of the Maral and
the Rāshi Chakra have been used widely in Assamese society.

In ancient Kamrup, pictures were drawn on the wooden
or earthen plates fitted to walls at the beginning; but later
they were drawn on papers or 'Sauchi Patras' under the 'Fleks' method. This basic method of Indian drawing prevailed upto
the thirteenth century.

---

96 Indian Sculpture, pp. 33.
Songs, dances and musical instruments are the principal organs of culture. All these were practised in Assam right from very ancient days. One can have sufficient knowledge about it in the old Sanskrit texts, writings of the Pre-Shankardeva era, Buddhist charyapadas, rock inscriptions, notes by foreign travellers etc. The Kālika Purāṇa and the Yogini Tantra are two authentic scriptures composed in Kamrup. In both of these well-known books, there are references of song's, dances and musical instruments. We can know something of fine-arts of ancient Kamrup from these.  
One can gather certain data of dance in ancient Kamrup from the stone images. There are instances of such dancing in the 'Ojā-pāli' performances.  

The ornaments used by the native people also indicate the culture of the place. There have been enormous uses of ornaments in Assam since old days. There are long lists of ornaments in the sculptures of the Ahom days particularly in the sculpture of 'Joy Doul' at the Joy Sāgar. There are evidences of luxuries and toilets there. Of course there were

98 Musical apparatus like veena, Venu, Turyya Shankha & Mridanga in Kālika Purāṇa & Yogini Tantra. Others like Dambaru, Nepur, Heruk Veena, Patah, Mādal, Ghanta etc. in Buddhist Charyya Padas.

99 Asamiya Jatir Etibritta, pp. 191.
variations in accordance with the variations of tribes. People used toilets like the Kasturi, Agaru, Chandah and Anjan. Moreover they used the umbrellas, Jāpis, Hats, Pāduka, Poyjār Fānti etc. The tribal people used to carry bags on their arms.100 Such an idea can be had from different sources like the Kālikā Purāṇa, and other Sanskrit texts, stone images, the Pre-Shankardeva writings, the Charyya Gaets, the sayings of Daak, the proverbs and sayings prevalent in those days etc. 101

Shri Mādhab Kandali could not shake off the influence of the contemporary influences. The palace of Rām indicates the then sculptures of Assam rather than those of Ayodhya.102 From these it can be assumed that the art of drawing was developed in the Kamrup of Shri Kandali. For example, the pictures drawn on the walls of Rāma's palace indicates this.103 But such pictures, drawn were not there in Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. It is Kandali's own creation. From this it can be inferred that there was the development of the art of drawing during the days of Shri Kandali in Assam.

100 Asamar Sanskriti, pp. 57.
102 Sapta Kānda Rāmāyana : 2/ 1641-3.
The reference of dance, music and musical instruments by Shri Kandali indicates that there was enormous use of these things during his days. In addition to it, reference to the use of ornaments is also found in his writings.

It is, therefore, found that Assam was rich in the cultural side in ancient times. Signs of all round development is found in the fields of sculpture, fine-arts, music, dance and such other fields of art. Practically speaking the folk-life was full of folk-art. Under such circumstances, when shri Madhab Kandali composed his Rāmāyana the rich cultural heritage peeped into his mind, as a result of which we can find the picture of colourful historic traditions of ancient Assam in his writings.

3. THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE AGE OF TULSIDĀS ;

It is natural that all conscious literatruers are influenced by the society. As a result, consciously or unconsciously the true picture of the age is reflected in their writings. The same idea can be experienced in the writings of Goswāmī Tulsīdāsji.

---

104 Ibid., 4/3719.
105 Ibid., 3/2668-69.
Tulsīdās was born at the age when the reign of the Pathan kings i.e. the kings of the Lodi dynasty came to an end and the reign of the 'Mughals' became a permanent one. The rulers of this age were after power and authority and were not guided by any principle or ideal. Their eyes were not on the welfare of the people but were only on the means to increase their powers and authority. From all the quarters it was a state of ego, luxuries and of cruelty. All these circumstances had a deep impact on the mind of Tulsīdāśjī. Under such circumstances Tulsīdāś constructed the idea of 'Rāmrājya'.  

The rulers forgot their duties and retreated from them. They took exploitation of the people in place of the protection as their duty. The sharp eyes of the poet got its glance and therefore he said.

- "Ved Dharma Duri Goye,
  Bhumi chor Bhup Bhoye".  

Tulsīdāś has given the description of the Yavana kings in different places. Dr. Rājpati Dixit remarks on the

106 Indranath Madan; Tulsi Chinton Aur Kala, pp. 76.
107 Dr. Shilawati Gupta; Tulsi Sahitya Mein Rajnītik Vichār, pp. 30.
108 Kavitāwali, 7/176.
tyrannical rule of these kings;


From the point of Tulsīdās's view the then administration was a 'Tāmsī' one (i.e. Vindictive one); The 'Dand' (punishment) was the main organ of the administration. Taxes were imposed but revenues collected from taxes were not spent for the welfare purposes. In his 'Mānas', Tulsīdās made it clear that the king ruined the people. 110 In other books also the supported this idea. In his Dohāwali, he says that of the four means of a king i.e. Sām, Dām, Dand and Bhed, the king accepted only the use of dreaded 'Dand'. 111 The rulers practised different evil ways upto the killing of Brāhmīns for gathering money. 112 As a result there was the increase of poverty, starvation, epidemics, difficulties sin etc. 113 The political environment therefore, in those days, was quite troublesome and unbearable.

109 Dr. Dixit; Tulsī Āur Unkā Yug, pp. 11.
110 Rām Charit Mānas, 7/153/2.
111 Dohāwali, 559.
112 Kavītāwali, Uttarā Kānda, 179.
113 Ibid. 81.
The poet has given us a true picture of the contemporary political environment through the illustration of the 'Kaliyuga'. The poet of the Mānas illustrated the Mlech, administration as the 'Rāvan Rājya'. In the words of Dr. Shambunath:

- "Rāvan Ke Atyacharon Tathā us-se Santrast Devtayon Aur Rishimuniyon Kā Jo Varnan Mānas Mein Kiya Goyē Hai, Vastutah Wah Madhyayugin Videshi Vidharmi Śhāsakon Dwarā Hindu Dharm Aur Bhāratiya Jantā Par Kiya Gayē Atyachār Kā Varnan Hai". ①

Dr. Indranāth Madān also supported this view when he says:

- "Rāvan Kē Anyāyon Kā Varnan Kar Tulści Ne Apne Samay Ke Śhāsakon Ke Rājnitik Atyacharon Ki ar Hi Shanket Kiya Hai". ②

Tulsīdās finished the Rāvana in guise of the Mlech king with Rām. The poet here imagined an ideal state through the Rām Rājya. He ascribed the ideal of "Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram" very skilfully in the Rāmrājya. The picture illustrated in the 'Mānas' is definitely the depiction of the kingdom of the

① Dr. Shambunath; Hindi Mahākāvya Kā Swarup Vikās, pp. 527.

② Dr. I.N. Madān; Tulści Chintan Aur Kalā, pp. 65.
Mughal emperors who were religious fanatics.

Tulsīdās himself witnessed the administration of yavan kings. The troubles which he suffered turned his attention to the evils and corruption of the political environment. Tulsījee was annoyed at the tyranny, luxuries and apathy to the sufferings of the people on the part of the rulers and therefore, whenever and wherever possible he depicted his ideal of 'Rāmrājya'. It is needless to say that his Rāmrājya was nothing but his 'ideal state'.

3.9 THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT DURING THE AGE OF TULSIDĀS JEE:

The social environment of the age of the Tulsīdās was the environment when the Hindu rule came to an end and the rule of the foreigners i.e. the Muslims began in India. There are differences between the Hindus and the Muslims as regards not only to religions practices but also to the social practices. As a result a social danger came into being which Tulsīdās himself witnessed. Therefore, the social environment of the age of Tulsīdās reveals as an 'Antah Sāxi' in his writings.

During his days, there was casteism and the difference of higher and lower castes prevailed. But there was no 'Āshram' system, yet people respected the Sādhus, Bhaktas, Yogis etc.
During those days a woman was regarded as a 'matter of enjoyment' only. The lover for physical beauty of the Mughols and the Pathans made the women a thing of lustful attraction and of luxury. During that period polygamy was prevalent in almost societies.\textsuperscript{116} It was also prevalent in the Hindu society; but it was found in abundance in the Muslim society. Here mention may be made to translation of Jahangir's India by Moreland -

"The governors are usually bribed by the thieves to remain inactive, for avarice dominates manly honour and instead of maintaining troops, they fill and adorn their mahals with beautiful women and seem to have the pleasure house of the whole world within their walls".\textsuperscript{117}

Such was the condition of the society during his time. Although the land was fertile, there was no production due to the inactive and idle nature of the people. The life of the common people was quite pitiful and vile; because the ruler was not for the ruled; but on the contrary, the latter was for the ruler. Since the rulers and the rich people applied

\textsuperscript{116} Dr. Bhagirath Misra - Mahākavi Tulsīdās Aur Yug Sandarbh, pp. 11.

\textsuperscript{117} Fransisco Pelaert, ed. 1925.
their power and authority only to fulfil their own avarice and as a result the mass suffered from poverty, lack of self-confidence, in difference to life and lack of morality. This was the most important reason as to why it was necessary to infuse faith in God in the minds of the Hindus.

The 'Kali Yug' which Tulsīdās depicted after the Purānic methods in his 'Mānas' and the Kavitawali gives us the picture of the social environment of his age. There was a great change in the social environment as nobody followed the ancient Indian 'Varnāshram Dharma'. Nobody followed the vedic principles. Different people introduced different 'Mārgs' and mass people followed any one of these mārgs they preferred. Tulsījī, while illustrating the Kaliyug kept his attention towards this fact.

Tulsīdās believed that the social imbalances is the result of the slackness in following the Varnāshram Dharma. Therefore, he gave importance always on following the Varnāshram Dharma since a society without any principle deteriorates.

It is known from the internal evidences of literature that the economic condition of the then society was going down. For example the cultivators did not get the means of agriculture;
the beggars the alms; the traders their profit and the jobseekers their jobs. People in general were without their livelihood. 118

In the Bhagwata, the inconsistencies of the then society were depicted in the description of the 'Kaliyuga'. 119 In addition to it, Tulsīdās depicted the realities of his time in almost all his writings.

Tulsīdās also believed that social healthiness can never be achieved if no decorum is followed. So, he laid stress on the Varnāshram Dharma. He gave a place of honour to the Brāhmins. 120 He made the family of Rām as the ideal for Indian families. He tried to introduce one ideal society through the portrayal of the Rām-rājya.

Therefore, it may be taken for granted that a conscious artist like Tulsīdās could not but see the discrepancies that took place in the society. There prevailed a gloom of distress in the society where there was no decorum. The values of social life dwindled due to the administration of aliens, which was

118 Kavitawali : 7/96, 97, 99.
119 Shrimadbhagawat : Canto II & III.
120 Rāmcharit Mānas : 3/15/5-6, 3/33/2.
depicted by Tulsīdās and made the picture of his contemporary society very living and clear.

3.10 THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE AGE OF TULSIDAŚ:

The rulers of the age of Tulsīdās were all Muslims. So, the economic environment was dominated by these rulers. Their aim was to amass more and develop the royal treasury rather than developing the country. As a result they exploited the people from all sides. The people were always distressed. They did not have enough money for 'Daan-Dakshinā'.\(^{121}\) In those days, the landed property of the Hindus was snatched away through several means and was distributed among the Muslims; and gradually the Muslims became the Zamindārs. Although the land was taken over by force; yet the rulers legalised them. Moreover such persons who grabbed the land and property of the Hindus were made high officers and sometimes they were given 'Jāgirs' as a prize for their misdeeds. Generally three classes of people - a) High; b) middle and c) Lower class were found in the society from the economic point of view.\(^{122}\)

\(^{121}\) Kavitāwali; 7/79.

\(^{122}\) Sri Nārāyan Singh; Krāntikāri Tulsī, pp. 207.
In those days there were two ways to become a rich man. They were, first, agriculture and 'Zamindāri' and second, to join as an administrative officer. In the high class, people like big Zamindārs, Mansabdār, Subedār etc. were counted. Besides them the working labours were in the third category. 123

Due to the economic hardships, the poor parents kept their children as servants to rich men and sometimes even they sold them as slaves. 124

In addition to these, it comes to light from history that during the period from 1555 to 56 there was a great famine in Delhi, Agra and in the western part of the Hindi belt. Similar famine also took place during the period 1595-98. Due to such frequent natural calamities the economic condition of the people of Tulsī's age deteriorated. 125 Rām charit Mānas also refers to "Sārning Bār Dukal Parai". 126 Under such pitiable economic condition, the status of a woman was very deplorable.

---

123 Ibid., pp. 207.
124 Dr. Iswari Prasad; History of India, pp. 564.
125 Ravindranāth Singha; Kamba Rāmāyan Aur Rāmcharit Mānas Ke Nāri Pātra, pp. 43.
126 Rām Charit Mānas; 7/101/3.
During the days of Tulsīdās, the hair was the only ornament for the women, that means, they did not have any ornament except their hair on the heads. The distress suffered by the people badly influenced their morality. The economic strain was so strong that people of all castes (Jati-kujati) became beggars. Such a very lamentable picture of the economic distress is found in the 'Kavitāwali'.

In this way, it is found that the economic condition of the people during the days of Tulsīdās was quite diplorable. Because of the Muslim rulers, the trouble and distress of the Hindus knew no bound. The rulers laid more stress on the collection of taxes rather than looking towards the distress of the people. As a result the economic condition of the peoples went from bad to worse and hatred against the rulers began to grow in the minds of the people. Tulsīdās has clearly depicted this economic condition of the people in his writings.

3.11. The Religious Environment during the Age of Tulsīdās:

The economic environment in the Eastern, Northern and Southern India during the age of Tulsīdās was the result of the

---

political, social and religious reactions of the time. During the later period the religious ideals grew out of the knowledge of the Vedic literature and the 'Karmakānda'. In the South, Rāmānujačāryya, Vishnuswāmi, Nimbārk, Mādhavachāryya, Vallabhāchāryya, Śankarāchāryya and such other philosopher Bhaktas' prepared the foundation of religion, which had tremendous influence over the mass-life. As a result the basis of the Bhakti cult was established and this Bhakti cult began to grow. 130

The impact of the Southern Bhakti cult also spread towards the North during the days of Tulsīdās. Of course, the religious environment of the North was a bit different from that of the south. In the southern India, neither there was the spreading of Buddhism much nor the Islam had strong influence like that in the Northern India. But the North suffered from them both. In the mean time both Jainism and Buddhism were divided into several sects and sub-sects. Both these two lost their original 'Sādhna' and 'Sadāchār'; but their idea of 'equality' began to influence much. The 'Śādhakas', who followed the 'Yogdarshana', began one new sect with this idea of equality. The 'Yoga Parak' sects like the 'Siddha' the Nath etc. fall

---

130 Mahākavi Tulsīdās Aur Yogsanderbh, pp. 16.
under this new sect who were mostly 'Tantriks'. In their ideology there was more of magic and surprise than of salvation and the union of 'Atma' with the 'Paramātma'.

The 'Nirguna Sant mat' was also influenced by such philosophy of which Kabir was the founder. But like Tulsīdās, Kabir was also a 'Samanuayuādi' (one who believes in the Union). Both Kabir and Tulsīdās were two 'Mahātmās' who followed the 'Guru-shishya' tradition of Swami Rāmānand and who followed mainly his ideology. But the only difference between them was that they deduced different conclusions. Kabir was the follower of the 'Nirguna' while Tulsīdās, was of the 'Saguna upasana'. The influence of the 'Sant Mat' of Kabir spreaded among the untouchables and during the time of Tulsīdās this influence began to dwindle and scattered over different sects. 131 This made Tulsīdās doubtful about the 'Vidhiwat Bhakti':

"Shruti Sanmat Hari Bhakti path,
Sanjut virti vivek,
Tehi Na chalahing Nar Mohbas,
Kalpahi Panth Anek". 132

---

131 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
132 Rāmchrit Mānas : 7/100 & Dohawali : 444.
He was against the Bahusampradaywad (Multi-sectism):

"Kalimal Grase Dharmsab
Lupt Bhaye Sadgranth,
Dambhind Nij mati
Kalpi Kari Pragat Kinha Bahu Panth."\(^{133}\)

During his time the difference between the Śaivites and the Vaishnavites was at the zenith. These religions were divided into sects and sub-sects as a result of which religions unity was going down. Tulsi took up the path of unity and tried to unite the Śaivites and the Vaishnavites. The 'Śiva-Pārbati Sambād' in the Mānas can be explained in this line. Tulsīdās through his Rāmcharit Mānas placed one good ideal before the disappointed Hindus due to the then confusing religious environment which had a deep influence on the Hindus.\(^{134}\)

Tulsīdās wanted to bring an end to the clashes between the Śaivites and the Vaishnavites and therefore made Lord Rām (i.e. Vishnu) the worshipper of Lord Śiva and vice-versa.\(^{135}\) Tulsi followed the 'Samnay Kā Mārg' (Path for union) and as such made Purushottam Rām praise and worship Lord Śiva. Rām told that Śiva was greater than himself;\(^{136}\) and in the same

\(^{133}\) Rām charit Mānas; 7/97.

\(^{134}\) Kamba Rāmāyana Aur Rām Charit Mānas Ke Nāri Pātra, pp. 38.

\(^{135}\) Rām Charit Mānas; 1/104/3 & 1/106/1.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 6/2,3.
manner Shiva accepted Ram as the 'Param Brahma'. In the Rām Charit Mānas almost all the Vedic gods like Prithvī, Brahma, Indra, Yama etc. are referred to and are given due places only as a measure to create unity among different sects. The poet referred to all these gods very cleverly in his Mānas but they were not worshipped. All the Vedic gods are depicted as the admirers of Rām and at the same time he discarded the selfishness of the gods.

In this manner, Tulsīdās with his ideology of union prepared a soothing ideal for the disappointed Hindus. Dr. G. Grierson also praised Tulsidas for his ideal of unity and regarded as the greatest 'Loknāyak' of the North India after Buddha.

Now it is clear that the religious environment of India during the time of Tulsīdās was quite diversified and wanting in unity. Due to multi-sectism and religious difficulties, the form of religion itself became corrupted and deformed. Tulsīdās tried to save Hinduism from disintegration and introduced a new path for unity.

---

137 Ibid., 1/104/4.
138 Ibid., 2/12/3.
139 Kamba Rāmāyana Aur Rām Charit Mānas Ke Nānri Pātra, pp. 40.
3.12. THE LITERARY ENVIRONMENT DURING THE AGE OF TULSIDĀŚ

In the literary field, Tulsiḍāś endeavoured to own all the preceding and contemporary styles of literatures including folk literature in the manner in which he took up all previous religious customs and traditions with a liberal outlook.

The tradition of 'Rām Kāvya' began with Vālmiki's Rāmāyana. But the mature poetic style and the well-organised subject matter of his Rāmāyana prove that the tradition of 'Rāmkathā' might be definitely there before the composition of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana in some form or other in folk-literature although not in literary form. Even there are certain references of lexwāku, Dasarath, Rām, Janak, Sīta and Rāvan are found in the Rik Veda. Moreover rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, Sarju and places like Ayodhya, Tribeni Sangam etc. are referred to in the Vedic literature. Maharshi Vālmiki might have amalgamated these stories and tales into one and created his Ramayana.

---

140 Dr. Dhirendra Verma; Hindi Sāhitya Kosh (Part I) pp. 695.
141 Dr. Mohan Sing Tomar; Hindi Rām Kāvya Aur Vishu Dāś Ki Rāmāyana Kathā, pp. 1.
142 Dr. K. Bulke; Rāmkathā, pp. 25.
143 Dr. Amal Pal Singha; Tulsi Purva Rām Sāhitya, pp. 19.
In the Mahābhārata also, there is a reference to 'Rām Kathā' in the 'Bhim-Hanumān Sangvād' and the 'Shodas Rāj Upakhyān'.\(^{144}\) For this grandeur, the Rām kathā had been referred to in most of Sanskrit epics, dramas etc. as an ideal character.\(^{145}\) Even in the Buddhist and the Jain literatures Rām has been referred to as noble and great.

Due to the fame and greatness of the 'Rām Kathā', it becomes a subject matter of literary pieces within and outside India. In India the story of Rām has been depicted in almost all the languages like the Tamil, Malayalam, Asamiya, Bengali, Pūrṇābī Hindi etc. In other words due to the speciality and popularity of the Rāmkathā, the story has been narrated in almost all languages right from the classical languages like Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa to the modern languages. As such there are enough such literature in Hindi also.\(^{146}\)

The twelfth century has been regarded as the beginning of Hindi literature. During the days of Rāmāyana writer Tulsidās, the Muslims with their culture and civilisation became very powerful in India. Their influence spreaded not

\(^{144}\) Mahābhārata : DronaParva 7/59/1-3 & Šhānti Parva 12/ 22/51-62.

\(^{145}\) Dr. Jagadish Prasād Sharmā : Rām Kāvya Ki Bhūmikā, pp. 134.

\(^{146}\) Dr. Gopal Singh Chauhān : Keshav Aur Rām Chandrikā Punārmulyānkan, pp. 86.
only in the social and religious fields but also in the field of literature. At the same time there was a new development in literature during this period through the 'Bhakti' movement. The majority of people wanted to get rid of the worldly affairs and save their lives by taking up 'Dīxā' or 'Mantra' from some Puzaris, Sādhus or Santas. And as such the people began to show more respect to them. This type of communal tradition was also attached to the Rām Kathā and therefore, during the fourteenth century several books were written on the basis of the Rāmāyan story. But the Rāmcharit Mānas has its own popularity because people were not very much interested in the Rāmkathā prior to the Mānas.

Several critics including Ācharyya Rām Chandra Shuklā, regarded Tulsīdās as the beginning and the end of the 'Rām Bhakti Sākhā' although there were several writers who dealt with the 'Rāmkathā' in their writings prior to him.

In addition to the Buddhist and Jain literature the reference to the Rāmkathā is available in the 'Prithivirāj Rāso' in its 'Dasawatār Vārnā' in as many as 38 padas. As stated,

---

147 Dr. Shyam Sundar Dās : Hindi Sāhitya, pp. 189.
148 Hindi Rāmkavya Aur Vishnudās Ki Rāmāyana Kathā, pp. 2.
the Rāmkathā is also available in certain writings prior to Tulsīdās. They are, for example, the Shamaraxa strotra of Swami Rāmānand, the Bharat Milāp and the Angad Paij of Vishnu Dās, the Rām Bhajan Manjari of Agra Dās etc.

All the writings of Tulsīdās are full of the Rāmkathā and the Rāmcharit Mānas is the masterpiece of the Rāmkathā. As in the case of religion, he had a liberal view to all the previous traditions, so also in literature he tried to own almost all the styles of previous and contemporary literatures and folk literatures. Like that in the Veer Kāvya system of the Veergāthā period, he expressed the heroic character of Rām in ever-flowing metres like the Kavit, Chhapay, Tibre etc. Such metres are numerous in the Sundar and Lankā Kāndas of the Kavitāwali and in the Lankākānda of the Rāmcharit Mānas. Again following the Siddhās, Nathas and the Nirgun Sant Kavis, he composed "Chaupai's" and Dohās of the 'Sākhi' style. Such a style is found the Vaisakhi Sandipani Rāmājna Prasna, Dohāwali etc. of Tulsīdās. In the Rāmcharit Mānas also the Dohā-Chaupai style of the Premākhyānak Prabandhak Kāvya has been used.

149 Tulsīdās Aur Unkā Yug, pp. 383.
Moreover, the poets Gang, Brahma, Narahari etc. who were contemporaries of Tulsījee used the 'Lalit' style of the poet Kavītā Savaiyā. Tulsīdās also used this style in his Kavitāwali through Brajbhashā. Tulsīdās was the inspiration for the 'Ritikālin Kavis' for this style.  

One of the particular systems of the Nirguṇ Sant Kāvyā was the 'Pad-paddhwati'. Surdās and other Ashtakhāp poets of the Krishna Bhakti cult used this style in their poetry. Tulsīdās also used this style in his Geetāwali, Vinay Patrikā and Krishna Geetāwali.

Tulsīdās was much influenced and inspired by the folk-songs. It shows as if the folk songs and folk culture were polished and reformed by Tulsīdās. A great influence of these is evident in the Rāmcharit Mānas. The style and method of folk songs are found in his Pārvatī Mangal, Jānaki Mangal, Rāmlalā Nahchhu and in some places in the Kavitāwali and the Geetāwali also.  

In practice, Tulsīdās composed the Rāmcharit Mānas for the people who had deep literary and philosophic taste with

---

150 Mahākavi Tulsīdās Aur Yug Sandarbh; pp. 20.
151 Ibid., pp. 21.
a view to reform the mass-mind and composed other books also keeping the need and taste of the society in view which he did by accepting the influence of previous and contemporary literatures.

Now it is seen that in addition to the Sanskrit literature, Tulsījī accepted numerous ideas from the previous and contemporary literateurs. He also did not overlook the mass-life and folk-culture. Therefore, he has given such a standard to literature which can originate an ideal society for the people. Tulsidas was undoubtedly the ablest literateur of his time who respected all other contemporary writers of his age.

3.13 THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE AGE OF TULSIDĀS;

Art is the manifestation of our thoughts and ideas and at the same time, it is the sign post of our culture. Art is related to our day-to-day life. The life of religious minded Indians is full of art. Indian art begins with religion. So, the religious nature is the speciality of Indian art. Aristotle said that art is imitation. Being inspired by this statement the Indian artists give more stress on the physical form and built up. As the Indian art is related to religion, it lays stress on symbolism. The 'Anwalās' and 'Chots' are constructed...
on the top of the temples. The Anwala or the 'Amiak' is the symbol of knowledge and the 'Ghot' is of fullness and the 'Shikhar' itself is of the height of thought.\(^{152}\)

Since very ancient days, India has been well-known for her paintings, architecture, sculptures, and music. The most ancient example of Indian paintings are found in paintings of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. There are certain geometrical drawings which were painted with black and turquoise colour. Dr. Anand Kumār Swamy said that such pictures were also prevalent during days of the Vedas. In the Jatakas there are references to eighteen subjects as a part of education of which paintings was one of them. During the days of Buddha, paintings were so attractive that Buddha for bade his disciples not to look at them.\(^{153}\) In the Kaamsutra of Vatsāyana, paintings are regarded as the 'Shatanga':

- "Rupabhādān Pramāṇāni
  Bhāw-lāwanya Yojnam,
  Sādṛishyang Varnikābhagang
  Eti chitra Shadāngkam".

\(^{152}\) Babu Gulab Ray; Bhāratiya Sanskriti, pp. 200.

\(^{153}\) Rāmchāri Singh Dinkar; Sanskriti Ke Āchar Ayā; pp. 407.
The Chinese painters also recognised all these characteristic marks. Persy Brown believed that these characteristic marks entered into China from India.154

The description of paintings i.e. Chitrakalā is found in the Mānasollās, Kumār Bihār and the Shilparatna. In the Uttar Rām Charita, there is a reference to one painter name Arjuna. The Jain book the 'Nāyādharmakāhāo also proved the wide use of 'Chitrakalā'. In the 'Vishnu Dharmottar' also, there are specific description of 'Chitrakalā'. The later literature gave a special place to painting.

Three types of plates were prepared for paintings. They were first, either clay plates or walls, second, animal skin or cloth and third, wood, 'Tālpatra', stone or ivory. In India, paintings are found on the walls and in later dates they were painted on 'Tālpatra' i.e. leaves of palm trees and on papers even.

Since India is a tropical country it is difficult to find very old pictures. What we know, we can know it from some old texts that there had been enormous development in

154Ibid., pp. 408.
paintings in ancient India. Every house of the Indians were decorated with paintings which were painted on earthen plates. The paintings found on such earthen plates bear religious theme. Generally the Chaityas, Bihārs and Mandirs were built out of caves of hills and pictures were painted on their walls. Of such caves, the Jogimarā cave of Rāmgah in Madhyapradesh is the oldest one. 155 But the pictures and paintings of the Ajanta cave are the richest treasure of Indian art and paintings. There are twenty four Bihārs and five Chaityas and pictures were drawn and painted on almost all the paintings are the best examples of ancient art and paintings.

The Gupta Age is the golden age of Indian art. During this period there were several centres for art like Sārnāth and Mathurā. Besides these, several paintings of the last part of the eleventh century of the Jain style are available. The paintings of the caves of Elephanta and Ellora are of this class. 156

With the coming of the Pathāns the art of paintings began to lessen. In the Muslim society, there was no place

155 Sanskriti Ke Chār Adhyay, pp. 409.
156 Bharatiya Sanskriti, pp. 286.
for idol worship as well as paintings. Maulāvi Nābi of the fourteenth century wrote:

- "Islam Dharma ke Anusār Ishvar Ki Sristi Kā Anukaran Karke Tasvīren Banāna Gunaḥ Ka Kam Hai. Isliye Jo Log Bhi Kapre, Sikke Ya Bartan Par Chitra Banāte Hai; Ve Islam Ke Niyam Se Gunāhgār Hai".

As a result, the art of idol making and paintings were not practised generally during the period of Muslim civilisation.

Although the Muslims were against any type of idol making and paintings, yet during the Mughal period Akbar was to some extent liberal towards paintings. Humayun took two painters, Sayed Ali and Abdusmad from Persia with him. With these two Humayun got his book of poetry 'Āmir Hamja' painted. Akbar also got the tranian story 'Hamaj Naṭā' as well as other Indian stories of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata painted by artists. During the reign of Jahangir and Shah Jehan there was a considerable development of the Mughal paintings. But during the days of Aurangzeb the development of the art of painting was hampered like that of the other arts. Tulsīdās witnessed such Mughal tradition.

157 Bhāratiya Sanskriti, pp. 291.
The idealistic basis of Indian painting has been spiritual since very ancient days. It had its relationship with faith. As such art was not only for the sake of art but it had certain intensions. Kalidas has indicated the defects of such art in his 'Malavikāgni Mitra'.

The Vastukalā (i.e. art of building a house) had its relationship with selection of site for buildings, the building of a house etc. The Nagar of Khajurāho (in Madhya Pradesh) is the best example of Vastukalā; and because of its special features, it has become the example of the development of the Vastukalā in India.

There are two major categories of the construction of a Vastu: (a) Dhārmik (religions) and (b) Laukik (wordly or for human being) There are several classes of the Dhārmik type like upbhed-stupa, Chaitya, Bihār, Mandir and Stambha etc. while in the Laukik type come the Rāj Prāśād (Royal Palaces), Durga (fort), common houses etc.

With the coming of the Muslims to India, there had been a great damage to the Indian temples and idols. But the

---

158 Hindi Sāhitya Kā Vrihat Itihās (Part I), pp. 649.
159 Ibid., pp. 569.
Muslims themselves were the patrons of sculptures. They built several big palaces in India which later became the source of pride for India. Big forts, grand Masjids, beautiful palaces and large Imam's were built in different places like Delhi, Ajmer, Agra, Jaunpur, Gauḍa Malawa, Gujerat, Bijapur, Sasaram, Lucknow etc. which are the best examples of the Muslim sculpture. The sculptures which were designed during the days of Humayun, Akbar and Shahjehan are the pride of India. The Tajmahal is the best example.

No other symbol is as forceful as the idol. As such the art of making an idol has been practised since very old days. Idols of gods and goddesses were made Reference of such idol making was made by Varahmihir in his Brihatsanhitā. In the later stage idols of kings were also made by the people; and names of the kings were also inscribed in them. The statue of king Kaniska is the best example of such idol making of a king.

The unsurpassable beauty of the paintings of men and women in the cave of Ajanta are the matter of pride for Indian paintings. In addition to gods, kings, men and women, the idols of animals were also made there. These idols the Vrishobh,

160 Hindi Sāhitya Kā Vrihat Etihās, pp. 609.
Singha and Hasti are also the best examples of the art of sculpture making.

Besides these sculptures, the idol of Buddhas and Jain in bronze and other metals are also found in different places of India. Art specialists recognised them as specimen of high standard art.

The art of sculpture making has been evidenced in the Buddhists 'Stupas', Ashoka stambh etc. Even doors were constructed in these 'Stambhs' with stone. Several images and idols were also engraved on these doors. Such several doors were discovered in Vārhat, Bodh gayā, Rānchi and such other places.

The assimilation of singing, dancing and musical instruments is known as music - a 'Sangeet'. A 'Sangeet' is a classical method. When and how the classical music entered into this country is difficult to ascertain. In India the tradition of the 'Sangeet' began with the Sām Veda. The 'Rīchās' of the Vedas were sung. Lord Krishna Himself spoke of the greatness of the Sām Veda

- "Vedanang Sāmvedosmi". 161

---

161 Shrimedbhāgawat Gītā: 10/22.
The classical analysis of music is found in the Nātyaśāstra of Bhārata; but there is no reference to 'Raagas'. One Matang in his 'Vrihachheshi' referred to the 'Raagas' for the first time. 162

During the period of the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata, the 'Sangeet' had been spread among the mass people. Several musical instruments like the Bheri, Mridang, Shankh, Muraj, Parnav etc. were in the 'Sangeet Kax' of Rāvana. During that period the Sangeet developed side by side with the Nrityakalā (Dancing or art of dancing).

During the Mauryya period; particularly during the days of Chandragupta and Kaniska Indian music had its considerable developments. 163 This period was known as the Dawn of Indian music. In those days music was under the patronage of the royal court as well as of the mass people. As such there was a considerable development of music.

The Sangeet Ratnākar of Shardaṅgdeva, which was written in the thirteenth century of the Christian era is a very high class treatise on music. He analysed music in its different

162 Bhāratiya Sanskriti, p. 295.
163 Ibid., pp. 296.
aspects and the book is similar to the Nātyaśāstra of Bhārata. After Shardandgdeva, the western music began to influence its Indian counterpart and as a result a new type of Hindustani music came into being. Amir Khusro, who was the first poet of the Khadiboli, was the patron and guardian of this stream of music. He invented some new 'Raagas' by mixing the Indian with the Persian Raagas; of which the 'Yaman' and Shahānā are still prevalent. The credit of the Akbal system goes to him.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century Vaijubawra was quite popular and during the middle ages the 'Padas' of the Vaishnavas became much popular. Joydeva and Vidyāpati were the two beginners of this style of music. In addition to them, Surdas, Meera and other Ashtachhap poets also sang their own 'Padas'. They were not only singers but also 'Bhaktas' at the same time. In the case of Tulsīdās it cannot be ascertained whether he was a singer; but it is true that his 'Padas' were meant for singing. Most of the Vaishnav Bhaktas were there during the days of Akbar. Akbar was a good appreciator of music. Tansen also belongs to this period. He

164 According to Bhārata, Shardandgdeva deals with the nature of Raag, Rasa etc.
165 Bharātiya Sanskriti, pp. 298.
gave much publicity to Hindustani music. One Damodar wrote a high class book on Indian music during these days. Music had been much practised right from 1675 A.D. to the eighteenth century.166

Musical instruments are the mates of songs and dances. Now-a-days there are several kinds of musical instruments in our country. Of these many has been in use since old days; and others are of present days. The Bānsuri (flute), Nagārā, Shankh (Conch cell) etc. are ancient instruments.167 Of these the 'Bānsuri' is associated with the 'Lalit gāyana'.

There had been a co-ordinated effort of both the Hindus and the Muslims for the invention of several instruments like the Veenā, Sarod, Tamburā, Sārāngi, Dilrūwā, Pakchāwaj, Tablā, Nagrā, Sekhar, Bānsuri, Nafiri, Shehnāi, etc.

Like that in the instruments, in the case of dancing also, there was a concerted effort of both the Hindus and the Mussalmans. Dancing had been regarded as an art since very old days. There is an elaborate discussion on dancing in the Nātya Śāstra of Bharata.168 The Khajurāho paintings and sculptures

166 Ibid., pp. 299.
167 Hindi Sāhitya Kā Vrihat Etihās, pp. 654.
168 Ibid., pp. 657.
bear enough proof of pauses and styles of dancing.

By the time of Kalidās, Indian dancing achieved a highly developed stage. The 'Ganikās' kept the art of dancing in tact like the songs and singing. Generally dancing was of two types in India - the North and the South Indians. The North Indian dance is mostly a Kathak one which developed in the royal court of the Muslims. In addition to it, classical dance also becomes very popular and Ahirs, Kahārs and Dhobis also perform folk dances. Although there are some differences yet the form is one and the same.

Goswāmī Tulsīdās, who can be regarded as the representative of the Rām Bhakta Kavis, can also be regarded as the main centre of the cultural flow. He gave birth to a vast and great cultural inspiration through his Rām Charit Mānas which in later ages gave birth to new theories of cultural life and showed new directions to the new generation.

It was the beginning of the Muslim era when the Rām Charit Mānas was composed. In spite of the antagonism of the muslim rulers in general to art related to other religions certain arts flourished due to some art lover rulers among them; and the impact of them fell upon the poetry of Tulsīdās.169

169 Ibid., pp. 474.
Tulsidas had no direct connection with the art of painting. But his grand and beautiful depiction of his adorable Lord gives us an idea of the paintings of his contemporary artists. That Tulsidasjee was attracted to paintings can be evidenced from his reference to the Chitrashalaon in every house and to the pictures related to certain ceremonies in the Rāmrājya of the Rāmcharit Mānas.

For the interest of some Muslims for sculpture, the sculpture of the age was influenced to some extent. In the Rāmcharit Mānas there is a direct evidence of sculptures of his time in the references of idols of the "Purna Ghot dhārini Devi" on the doors and the paintings of the Nāgwali, Patrapatāka and the Kalpalatā in it.

The description of Tulsī's Ārādhya, his Bāl Lilās, his dresses and pauses etc. also give expression to the contemporary. Although Tulsidas did not have direct connections with the art of sculpture yet his association with the Vaishnav Mānoirs made him aware of this art. The beautiful and living description of the temples in most of his writings give us a complete picture of the art of sculptures of his time.

Most of the poets of the Sagun Bhaktidhārā were either good musicians themselves or at least lovers of music. In the
poetry of Tulsīdās, there is a considerable tendency for classical and other music. In the Vinay Patrikā and Shri Krishna Geetāwali, there are clearcut mention of classical Raag-Raagini's while in the Rām lalā Nahchu, Pārvati Mangal and Jānaki Mangal there is a touch of folk music.

The age of the Mediaeval poets was not the age of the development of the art of dancing. During this period this art of dancing was confined to the prostitutes and professional artists. Since Tulsījēe was away from the royal court and its luxurious life, he had no connection with the art of dancing. But when in his writings the reference is made to royal amusements or mass amusement, he made some limited reference to dancing. For example the description the Faag in the Geetāwali. 170

Tulsīdās joined the cultural field through the Loknātya (folk drama). He began one cultural programme of the Rāmbhakti through the Rāmlilā, the tradition of which is still continuing.

Now, therefore, it is seen that the cultural environment in the age of Tulsīdās was quite extensive. The direct and

170 Hindi Sāhitya Kā Vrihat Etihās (Part V), pp. 476.
indirect impacts of all developments in different fields of culture like paintings, sculpture, music, dance, musical instruments etc. was evidence on Tulsīdās. He depicted them all through his literary and cultural efforts very successfully. The truth is that, the Rām Charit Mānas of Tulsīdās is a shining achievement. His Rāmlilā songs and depiction of culture in literature are two great gifts for the generations to come.

3.14, CONCLUSION:

Now it is clear that both the 'Rāmāyanā' poets, Shri Mādhab Kandali of East India and Goswāmī Tulsīdās of North India were influenced, directly or indirectly, by several impacts of their own age. Both the poets recognised the eternal political, social, economic, religions, literary and cultural ideals of their contemporary period for which no question marks can be put on them against their relevance still now. The manner in which the Saptā Kānda Rāmāyanā is read and respected in Assam, is also used for the Rām Charit Mānas in the Hindi belt. Not only they are read and respected from the point of religion but also are read and analysed from the point of literature. In short they are always evaluated and revaluated. That both of them did not compose the Rāmāyanā only for the sake of translating the great scripture might be the major reason of their popularity.
They made their work suitable to their age; and inserted the reflection of the age.

As a result their works become universally acclaimed and their popularity remains in tact. Therefore, it can be said that the contemporary environments remained to be influential and inspirational in the cases of both these writers, on the basis of which they composed the 'Sapta Kanda Rāmāyana' and the 'Rāmchorit Mānas'. 