CHAPTER - IV

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SANKAR-DEVA AND HIS ASSOCIATES TO LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND EDUCATION
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CONTRIBUTIONS OF SANKARDEVA AND HIS
ASSOCIATES TO LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND EDUCATION

1. SANKARDEVA
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   (c) A Singer, a dancer, an artist and a musician.
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Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva was on the one hand the fountain head of the Bhakti movement in Assam and on the other hand the pioneer of Assamese art and culture, language and literature and also of education. He was a great genius, prophet, reformer and an educationist with encyclopaedic knowledge, majestic personality and brilliant power of exposition. He summed up in his long life of 120 years all that was good in the known past. Long and full five centuries have passed since his time and even at this time also his is a name known and own to all who live in Assam.

The great Sankardeva was a great student of a great age under a great teacher. At his 12th year he entered in to the tol of Mahendra Kandali, the then
great Brahmin Sanskrit scholar on a Thursday in the month of Bhadra and completed all the four Vedas, fourteen sastras and eighteen puranas within a short period of 10 years. Within a very few days in 1462, the very year he was admitted, on learning the plain alphabet he composed a poem consisting of individual letters which with or without his knowledge was a complete and deep description of the Lord Vishnu.

Karatala kamala Kamala dala nayana,
bhaha daba gahana gahana bana sayana,
Kharatara barasara hatadasa badana
Khagachara nagadhara phanadhara sayana.
napara napara para saratara gamaya
sabhaya sabhaya bhaya nama hara satabhaya.
jaga dama mapa hara bhaha bhaya tarana
para pada layakara kamalaja nayana. 1

All the eight lines of the epoch making first poem of the beginner student poet great Sankardeva is a never to be questioned description of what the Lord Vishnu did and what He was like. After a short span of ten years (to some biographers seven years) his teacher Mahendra Kandali had to declare that Sankar-

1 Adarsha Asomiya Path (Part II), Cont'd.. 131/-
By D.S. Deka, 8th Edition, 1994,
pp. 8 (ASTP Ltd)
deva completed all he had to do. 'What I know is all taught, there is nothing more in me - 'jikhini jano pahralo, eko naio aru.' Thus submitted the great teacher to his great student. He read in such a remarkable Sanskrit Tol and under such a remarkable Sanskrit teacher. He started learning in Sanskrit and also he had a great love and deep knowledge in the language, but he wrote for the people he lived amongst and so most of his famous writings are found in Assamese, the living language of the people. His only aim was to unlock the tight-locked box of knowledge under the key of Sanskrit language with a new cut key of Assamese language for distributing it amongst the illiterate mass to whom knowledge was beyond reach. Except the Bhakti Ratnakara and some stotras he did not like to waste time in writing in Sanskrit because that was a time for books in Assamese on almost all branches of literature. He composed a large number of texts consisting of translations, commentaries and original works to expound his

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1 Katha Guru Carit - Edited by U.C.Lekharu, Pub. 1987, pp. 28
creed and practical utility which were constantly required for regulation of daily duties and as such they undoubtedly encouraged literacy and learning.

The neo-Vaisnavite age of Assam is the period of renaissance of Assamese literature. Sankardeva and Madhabdeva, his favourite disciple, composed a great number of songs, dramas, verses and narratives where they explained and expounded the teachings of the faith they wanted to propagate. Along with writings the great scholar also organised unique organisations like satras and namghars to spread the message of his thinking throughout the state. Until the time of Sankardeva Sanskrit literature in tone, colour and form appeared to be the only religious literature and therefore suffered from certain limitations. Sankardeva made a good attempt to make Assamese verse form literatures for religious purposes. Of course in Bargitas and Ankiya Nats he used a kind of mongrel dialect known as Brajabali, but that too in a comprehensive way. Though not purely Assamese, it is also a sweet lucid language for describing the story of Lord Krishna and this character as popularly and clear-
ly comprehensively as if in Assamese language. It is better to point out here that all the Brajabali poetry mainly centres round Krishna's activities in Braja i.e. Brindaban.

A saying goes that as the great poet Valmiki took up his pen only when the direction came from Brahma, so also the great sage Sankardeva took up his pen only after the receipt of the Gita in the water of the Brahmaputra. But most biographers deny the fact and suggested proofs how he had the Bhagabata with Sridhara's Tika through Jagadish Mishra and Bhakti Ratnavali by Visnupuri through Kanthabhusana. The list of his writings can be summed up as :-

(a) Ankiya Nats like Keli Gopal Kaliyadamana, Ram Vijaya, Rukmini Haran, Parijat Haran and Patni Prashada.

(b) Translation of the Bhagabata's Chapter I, II, III, VIII, X, XI and XII.

(c) Stories like Harichandra Upakhyan, Amritamanthan, Ajamil Upakhyan and Balichalan.

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(d) Other Bhakti based books like Bhakti Pradip, Anadi Patan, Bhakti Ratnakar, Gunamala, Numinaba Sidha Sangbada and Uttarakenda Ramayana.

(e) The unique translation of the Bhagabata for every Assamese house with the popular title the 'Kirtana'.

(f) Bargits, the noble numbers on the activities of Lord Krishna.

(g) Bhatimas

(h) Totayas

(i) Chatihas

Amongst these 'Harichandra Upakhyan' was his first book written in the Tol during his student days and Ram Vijaya is his last work. Again his 'Kirtan' is the sum total of the Bhagabata, the Gita, the Padma Purana and the Brahmapurana and it was the product of the early part of his religious life while 'the Dasama', one of the four Vaisnava Vedas written at Patbausi on the activities of child Sri Krishna.
is that of the later part. His 'Rukmini Haran* is praised to be his best writing - sweet and lucid as the fountain of amrit. The Gunamala is a small book to be read and recited within short hours of two dandas which is like an elephant put into a small jar, the big Bhagabata which is summed up being an elephant and 'the Gunamala' the small jar. 'Chihna Jatra' is his first drama or Nat which he called a Jatra consisting of music, songs, dances, dialogue and acting. He wrote it and staged it under his direction which continued for seven days and seven nights. Though it was of such long duration the play was so interesting that his audience devotees felt it to be for one day and one night only. Here the dramatist himself played the role of Lord Narayana besides dancing and singing and playing the musical instruments. For this performance he made khols and used nine khols at a time. At the same time he was in the stage as the Narayana, at the dance and at the khols also quite surprisingly making all wonderfully astonished:

"tohito Sankara, ohito Sankara
Sankara is there, Sankara is here also"¹

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Thus the great artist, dramatist, actor and musician taught people how to take part in a play. His Kirtan-ghosa is a beehive or 'Kalpataru' to the people where anybody can get something as sweet and delicious food. There are stories for children, language and literature for scholars and songs and recitation for others. In every Hindu home of Assam, there should be a copy of Kirtan-ghosa as a symbol of the sacred guide. In almost all works he was mostly inspired by the holy Bhagabata, the Sun amongst the Puranas. He made a bold and extra ordinary attempt to translate the Bhagabata into simple Assamese verse for the common people. But he was right to think that he should not start the work alone as it was not a light job for one single life to complete the entire text and accordingly allotted different sections for translation to different disciples of his. He took for himself the major portion of the great text including chapter I, II, III, VIII, X, XI and XII. Thus starts the renaissance in Assamese poetry.

Since the time of Bharatmuni a Nat or a drama had been treated as a sastra and was always in
Sanskrit. Sankardeva was the first to write plays or Nats in a regional language of India. His plays are called the Ankiya Nats in smaller readable units which are Keli Gopal, Kaliya Daman, Ram Vijaya, Rukmini Haran, Parijat Haran and Patni Prashada and all consist of only one act or anka. These unique ankiya nats have occupied a remarkable place in the ancient Vaisnavite literature. Sankardeva quite at first took up his pen in the name of Lord Krishna and continued the purpose throughout all his life activities and ankiya nats enjoy no exception. Before his discovery of Bhaona he thought of teaching people rather the mass people through a kind of concrete idol of Lord Jagannath which he did and established for the purpose. But to gain the minds of the people he discovered a better device and it was the bhaona or the ankiya nats. Some critics like to say that though Sankardeva was against worshipping an idol of any God or Goddess he could not do away with it as his ankiya nats and their performance may be called or assumed to be another form of idol worshipping. Above all it is true that dramatisation has been the most popular means for any religious revolution in the world including Christianity in England. With the same purpose and for the same reason Srimanta Sankardeva also started writing
ankiya nats. These nats were very soon successful in 'Pleasing, gathering and influencing people — loka ranjan, loka sangraha, loka sthiti.' Like a drop of oil on water (taila bindubya) they immediately entered and spread in the minds of the people. On the other hand an Ankiya Nat consists of both verse and prose — Geet and katha each part being complete in itself and the theme is clearly comprehensive even without any one of the two. Besides there is the sutradhara to explain everything before the audience — the Samajika loka. Well decorated costumes of the different characters, dance and music at proper situations, the well recited dialogues and the varied activities of the sutradhara make the whole performance enjoyable and acceptable. In fact the dramatist Sankardeva himself has entered into the Ankiya nat as the sutradhara where he inaugurates conducts and concludes the play in a systematic and plainly and attractively comprehensive way.

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1 Ankiya Bhaona — By B.K. Kakati, Madhyamik Asomiya Katha Chayan, 1983, pp. 113
The Bargits are another kind of uncomparable literary product of Sankardeva. These sacred songs were and still are meant for devotional purposes. There was a time when singing Bargit was treated as an essential part of literacy. On the other hand it is a cultural aspect to have sung a Bargit. In most of the school and college functions as well as in public functions Bargit is treated as an ornament to the cultural items. Very rightly Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati has called them the 'noble numbers' as they appeal to heart and heaven. These songs are more heart appealing than any other prayer songs, more poetic than any other poems, more informative than any other great texts, more attractive than music and at last more permanent than literature. Written in Braja-bali and Maithili mixed these Bargits were the original and own creation of Sankardeva. It is not known of course as to how many Bargits he wrote, but it is a known fact that most of his Bargits had been lost in a fire at the house of Kamala Bayan and at present not more than forty one of them are found to be heard. At the great loss he felt so sad that he decided not to compose any of the kind but advised his disciple Madhabdeva to do it for him and

1 Dr. M. Neog (Ed) * Banikanta Cont'd. 140/-
Kakati Rachanawali, 1991, pp. 44
it was done accordingly. A saying goes about the number of Bargits to be 240.

"bara Kuri Bargit, tera kuri fakara". ¹

Bargits are broadly divided into three parts, some for the morning, some for the noon and other few for the evening prayer and they are with different ragas like Ashowari, Natmaltar, Dhanari, Gauri, Shuha, Bashanta, Srikedar, Kalyan, Bhatiali, Sindhura etc.

Most of his valuable writings were performed while he was at Barpeta. To him Barpeta was a place proper for his living for the purpose. He made Barpeta a place of peace and comfort, a 'Kashi and Mathura of Assam'.

'Asamar Kashipuri Dwaraka Mathurapuri
Asamar Barpeta Dham. ²

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¹ A saying
At all time he was assisted by his great disciple Madhabdeva who was the best servant in his personal work, a great assistant in his troubles, a good and proper companion in his religious revolution, an obedient disciple in relation and at the best the life and soul of his heart. It will not be an exaggeration to state that Madhabdeva made Sankardeva a Sankardeva as we know. At any time we cannot deny the fact that a good student makes a teacher great. Even Sankardeva also confessed that he would be more widely established by the 'Barar po', the other name of Madhabdeva given by Sankardeva out of his love towards the other. Once at an incident when Madhabdeva could weave the Brindabali Bastra a little longer than Sankardeva, the guru declared that his disciple was more efficient than himself in many matters - 'tumi motkai bahra, Tomar dwara mor sakalo bahriba - You are more efficient than me, I and my all will surely be increased by you'. ¹ Besides,

during the last part of his life, he had the fortune of receiving royal patronage under the Koch king Naranarayan of Cooch Behar for about fourteen years, where he completed a lot of books in peace and safe. King Naranarayan was truly liberal in extending royal co-operation from any angle for the development of literature and for this purpose he took and kept Sankardeva in his court as a court poet for the remaining days of the sage.

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Like many other medieval saints and religious preachers Madhabdeva was also a leading musician, composer and writer. In literary aspects he was the right hand of Sankardeva to whom Madhabdeva was like his body, his wife, his legs, his son, his grandson and his hands. He composed one hundred and ninety one devotional lyrics many of which are still widely in vogue in Vaishnavite circles. These are traditionally known as the Bargits (noble songs) which were composed as advised by his own guru Sankardeva. He became famous and popular as a composer of devotional songs. He also wrote six devotional plays and arranged for their performances. He himself directed the performance of his two plays Govardhana Yatra and Rama Yatra. In his Nrisimha Yatra he played the role of Nrisimha quite successfully. Madhabdeva's contributions to the faculty of Assamese literature are many and varied and they may be classi-
fled into four major categories :-

(a) **KAVYA** : (i) Adikanda Ramayana and

(ii) Rajasuya Kavya.

(1) **Adikanda Ramayana** : Amongst his earliest works the translation of Adikanda Ramayana counts unique importance. It was the work of the master translator under his guru's direction - when Sankardeva was at Patbaushi. It is said that the first and the last books of the complete Ramayana translation of Madhab Kandali, a literary predecessor of Sankardeva were lost or destroyed. The former in a dream requested the later to restore his Ramayana by adding the first and the last chapters. So Sankardeva directed Madhabdeva to take the work of the Adikanda while he took himself the work of the Uttarakanda. Madhabdeva took the advice and started by selecting the only cantos which are related to the life and personality of Rama-chandra. Most of the cantos not relating to the glory of Rama have been omitted and many others related events are also rapidly passed over. Rama in Madhabdeva's translation is the Lord
Visnu Himself with all the noble and divine qualities. The style and description of the translation bear no difference from any original composition.

(ii) **Rajasuya Kavya** : A creative and descriptive work of Madhabdeva relating to the Koch King Narnarayana and his brother Sukladhwaja was composed in about 1570 A.D. at the inspiration of the royal brother. The poet praises both the king and the prince who were the real lovers of learning and devotees of God. The book has been clothed with the 10th book of the Bhagavata and ornamented with the Sabha-parva of the Mahabharata. With the epic - purana colour the poet keeps Krisna at the Godhood centre of the circle of the Rajasuya Sacrifice of the Pandavas where the natural human qualities of the super natural Lord Krisna radiate as its raddii. Here the Supreme Narayana is a perfect incarnation, and ideal house holder, a loving husband and a friend, Philosopher and guide of the Pandavas.

(b) **DEVOTIONAL COMPOSITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS** :-

1) Janma Rahasya, 2) Bhakti ratnavali, 3) Nama malika and 4) Namghosa.

(i) **Janma Rahasya** : A small work containing

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about three hundred verses seems to be Madhabdeva's first work. The translation was made under the direction of Sankardeva as wished by Bhubaneswari, wife of prince Sukladhwaja, brother, Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Koch king Narnarayana. The work mainly deals with the creation and dissolution of the world and gives an account of the ten principal incarnations of Narayana. The poet also pays tribute to Sankardeva as to be an incarnation of God.

(ii) Bhakti Ratnavali : Madhabdeva's second work Bhakti Ratnavali was completed when he was staying in Sundaridiya near Barpeta in the later part of the sixteenth century after the death of his guru Sankardeva and before his migration to Cooch Behar. It is a unique translation of an original devotional collection of verses by Vishnupuri, a Sannyasi of the Advaitya School. The work is regarded as a sacred book amongst the four - Kirtana, Dasama, Ghosa and Ratnavali by the Vaisnavite Mahapurusia sect. The book bears a divine and supernatural origin and the manuscript by Vishnupuri came to Sankardeva from Brahmananda, a disciple of Vishnupuri, through Kanta-bhusana, a Brahmin of Kamrupa studying in Banaras.

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under Brahmananda, Sankardeva assigned his most trusted and worthy disciple Madhabdeva for its Assamese translation. The book deals with ekasarana devotion at the feet of the Lord Krishna. Sankardeva considered himself that the book was in no way different from his labouriously completed Bhaktiratnakar. The thirteen chaptered Assamese translation of the book by Madhabdeva lays special emphasis on Sravana and Kirtana amongst the nine ways of devotion. As in the Vaisnavite faith in Assam Bhakti ratnavali also admits the complete surrender of the self to the adorable deity and for this reason it has been placed in the line of Kirtana, Dasama and Namghosa in the religious life of the Vaisnavites.

(iii) Nama Malika: Nama Malika was composed while Madhabdeva was in Cooch Behar for the last few years. The original work of the Brahmins of the court of king Purusottama Gajapati of Orissa was translated by Madhabdeva in six hundred verses. It also glorifies the Holy name of Lord Krisna and narrates the other requisites for realisation of God.

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(iv) **Namghosa**: Madhabdeva's contributions to Assamese language and literature are all concentrated in the thousand verses of Namghosa written in Cooch Behar. Like the best honey from flowers in a honey hive, Namghosa is also a collection of the best of all the Puranas, Vedas, Vedantas, Upanisads and other social sciences. It contains one thousand hymns and as such Namghosa is also popularly known as Hazari ghosa (Hazari meaning a thousand). The hymns are the translation mainly from Gita and Bhagavata and other Puranas and Upanisads. A few are of his own expression of the religious experiences, philosophical beliefs and devotional guide. It is a series of prayer to the shapeless almighty composed at the direction of his guru Sankardeva. In this world literature he keeps "all including himself".

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1 Prithibir dharma Sastra aase jata jata
Samestara sar aase ghosar madhyata.
- Mani Kanchan, by Bhuban Ch. Sarma, 1989, pp.21

2 Naswar amar deha haibeka hata thakibo atma mor ghosar madhyata.
- Manikanchan - by Bhuban Ch. Sarma, 1989, pp.20
It is the life of the Assamese people, their own Gita and their own Upanisada. Namghosa is Madhabdeva's last and best work - the songs of his journey to eternity, a pleasant enjoyment of the glory of the name of the Lord without narrating stories. It is a poetry of the best Indian Vaisnavite poems of kindness and sacrifice. Like fire flies this divine book glitters but does not burn. It is the friend and guide of those helpless who suffer from worldly discontentment. All the verses are soft to touch and sweet to taste with the hard and difficult depth inside like a soft ripe plum with sweet juice outside and a hard unbreakable seed inside. They are always with new life and newer meanings with wider explanations. It was written after the death of Sankardeva while he was staying at Bhela Dowara in Cooch Behar and was completed within two years. The work may basically be divided into three sections, the first of which deals with Namadharma, the second with self surrender at the feet of the supreme lord and the last one is a series of rhythmical lines for singing the names of Visnu Krishna. The opening verse of Namghosa suggests the overall philosophical aspect of the work and the author - "I bow down to that devotee who is indifferent to liberation and I beseach that type of
devotion which is full of that deity who is the Lord of the Yadavas, crest jewel of the world, but subservient to his devotees."¹ If Sankardeva's Kirtan is sweet and tasty milk easily digestible, Madhabdeva's Namghosa is more substantial cream sweeter and tastier to take but difficult to digest.


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¹ "muktita nispriha jito sehi bhakataka namo rasamai magoho bhakati."

- Namghosa by Madhabdeva -

Ist two lines

Ed. by Dr. M. Neog with Kirtan ghosa, pp. 684
As a dramatist of the time Madhabdeva had a distinct personality. His plots are all incidental with comic touch and the clever naughty child Krisna, the Lord of the three worlds is the centre of his imagination. Biographers of Madhabdeva want to mention only six one act plays of his, but nine available plays now demand Madhabdeva's name as the author. Late Kali Ram Medhi, who first collected and edited the plays of Vaisnavite period had also nine plays of Madhabdeva in his list. However, the number is controversial and perhaps some later writers wanted to popularise their works with the name of the fame. Bhusana-harana and Rasa-jhumura, Kotora-Khela are the works where Madhabdeva's name as the author is not beyond doubt. However, Bhojana-vihara is no doubt a genuine product of Madhabdeva. In that sense the play Brahma-mohana with the same sequence may be from Madhabdeva's pen. Between Rama Yatra and Govardhana Yatra, of course the second has more biographical evidences of his own authorship. Rama yatra is said to be totally destroyed because of its unwanted length which took five days to enact. Rama yatra deals with the entire story of the Ramayana while Govardhana yatra is about the holding of the Govardhana peak by Krishna

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to protect the inhabitants of Gokula from the heavy rain water caused by angry Indra. Of course both of the plays are not available now.

Most of the plays of Madhabdeva are popularly known as jhumara. Of course as already stated jhumura is a popular name given to his plays by the later vaisnavites and biographers. In no playlet Madhabdeva has given this name. Jhumura is an extended term of the word jhumur which is a kind of chorus song with dances by tribal women in rhythmic beats of dramas. Except Arjuna bhanjana all his playlets are short and based on a single situation. None of them has a full fledged story and all depict the character of child Krishna with gopis and Yasoda. Unlike Sankardeva's play and his Arjuna bhanjana, the cunning Krisna is the creator of these funny situations.

His earliest composition Arjuna-bhanjana was written in about 1555 A.D. while Madhabdeva was in Ganak Kuchi. The next play Cordhara was composed in 1570 A.D. at Sundaridiya and Bhojana Vihara at
Barpeta in 1585. Madhabdeva lived at Sundaridiya for 12 years and during this time he wrote the other plays in between 1575 and 1585 A.D. Ramyatra was his work during his later part at Barpeta while Govardhana Yatra was at Sundaridiya. The theme of Arjuna-bhonjana or Dadhi-mathana is taken from Bhagavata Purana and that of Cordhara is his own invention. Bhojana vihara is based on Bhagavata Purana but with modifications. In Bhusana harana, Rasa-jhumura and Kotora khela the author has drawn interest in the role of Radha as a grown up milk maid and a beloved of Krisna. The appearance of Radha in a way different from the Vaisnavite beliefs and Sankara - Madhaba ways of thinking raises the points of doubt in connection with the authorship.

(d) **Devotional Lyrics** *(Bargits and Bhatimas)* - Madhabdeva's devotional lyrics are not only honoured by the Vaisnavite sect but also by the entire Assamese society. Though Sankardeva was the pioneer in this branch of Assamese literature with his first Bargit in 1490 Madhabdeva's Bargit's are much greater in number. At present we have about 191
Bargits and except 34 by Sankardeva all the rest are the works of Madhabdeva. Those Bargits were the strongest and deepest motivating slogans of the Vaisnavite movement in Assam. As a coin has the impression of the king on one side and the real value on the other so also those Bargits describe divine activities of Krisna in outward songs and music with a deeper philosophy inside. They are the arrows in feathers that speedily flew high above and sowed the seeds of Vaisnavism where they had fallen upon. They are religious in content and devotional in purpose like the Hindi and Marathi Bhajans. Very rightly Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati calls them "noble songs", Kali Ram Medhi the "great songs" and Debendra Nath Bezbarua the "holy Songs". Most of his Bargits are composed in the Brajawali language a language which was accepted by the then Vaisnavite leaders of Assam. Bengal and Orissa as the Braja loving Krisna Centric artificial common holy language. They are the classical songs of

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1 Madhyamik Asomiya Kabita Chayan, 1973, published by SEBA, pp. 19
Assam which Sankardeva and Madhabdeva introduced for using in the fourteen prayers of the day (the chaudhya Prasanga) in their own language and tuning. Madhabdeva's lyrics are a part of the religious life of Assam and at the same time a source of consolation for the distressed hearts with lofty ideas, literary treasures and heart rendering beauty. Like his dramas the Bargits are also on the Vatsalya bhava (filial emotion) with the childish and juvenile sports of Krisna and his filial relation with Nanda and Yasoda. All Bargits including those of Madhabdeva are rasa based and they can be had within the following six rasas:

1. Lila - Divine sports of Krisna
2. Viraha - Pangs of separation from Krisna.
5. Caturi - Cleverness of Krisna.
6. Paramartha - Supreme Knowledge.

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In lila type of lyrics Madhabdeva has included the jagana (waking Krisna from sleep in the morning), Calana (movement to Brindavana with cows and fellow cowherds), Khelana (Pastoral sports) and nritya (dancing). In Khelana and nritya lyrics Madhabdeva's Krisna plays with the cowherd boys in the sands of Yamuna and Brindavana and dances before Gopies, the milk maids for milk, butter and sweet. His lyrical Krisna is a "Bala Gopal", a little cowherd boy, the only naughty child of a rich and loving milk maid mother and a clever unmanageable wicked boy for the helpless milkmaids of the locality. His Krisna in the Bargits, the Lord of Lords is a problem child to the mother and the others and at the same time the centre of attraction and affection to the inhabitants of Gakula. He proves it through his viraha songs when Krisna left for Mathura and the milk maid had to count their days in sorrows and loneliness. On the other hand in his Virakti Songs Madhabdeva has only given importance on the dasyabhava (sense of a servant to the Master Lord).

Besides Bargits Madhabdeva also composed a type of lyrics called the bhatimas. Bhatimas are
the praising songs but all based on devotion to higher authority. This authority is sometimes the supreme Lord, sometimes the king of that time and sometimes his guru Sankardeva. As such Madhabdeva's bhatimas can be classified into three different classes like i) deva bhatima - glorifying the supreme Lord Krisna, ii) raja bhatima - glorifying the then king under whose shelter he could render his sincere service to Vaisnavism iii) and guru bhatima - glorifying his only guru, the great guru Sankardeva.

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Damodardeva flourished in the North Eastern part of India and showed the path of liberation to a larger section of people of this area than any other saint. Biographers have however, not mentioned any work of his own but it is true that he inspired many of his disciples to write books. As an efficient leader Damodara led the revolution of reformation by establishing Neo-Vaisnavite religion and engaged his disciples and devotees in composing literary works of their diverse capacities. For this he established religious institutions to educate the common people on the line of reformation. For this mission he selected Patbasi as the apostolic centre. There he lived and acted as the key counsellor of all the works produced by his disciples at his direction and guidance. In Patbasi saint Damodara was the Sun in the sky and his devotees the lotus in the lake. He dazzled like the Sun and made the devotees blossom like the lotus. At Patbasi he had discourses with the twelve disciples as regards
the nature of Reality which have been named as "Damodar Vyakhyan" by Krishnananda, a close disciple of his. In that sense Damodardeva was the composer of "Damodar Vyakhyan" though not the writer of it. He took Bhattadeva as his close second and as another Damodara, the apara Damodara who mostly wrote for him. Bhattadeva acted as the 'Press' for publishing Damodardeva, the manuscript. Like the unique 'Manikanchana Sanjoga' of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva this history making union between the two luminaries made the mission of Damodardeva a hundred ways successful. The other dependable hand of Damodardeva was his scholar disciple Gopal Mishra. Besides, a galaxy of saintly personalities namely Santadeva, Bhagawandeveda, Banamalideva, Vamsi Gopaldeva, Kapildeva, Arjunadeva, Valadeva, Narayanadeva, Madhava and Paramananda glittered around the Master to whom he spoke and they wrote. In a sense Damodardeva was the planner and designer of most of their works without his name as the composer. However, none can deny his contributions to literature and religious education though he did not take pens and papers for the purpose. He asked Bhattadeva to write the complete Bhagawata in Assamese prose for the benefit of
the common people including the women, children and the lowest Sudras. The imagination of writing in prose at a time when there was no instance of the kind is an example to what extent Damodardeva had contributed to the Assamese literature and mass education. His plan for educating the women and the Sudras with the prose Bhagawata was no inferior to modern democratic modes of education like 'education for all' and 'Continuing education' or distance education as suggested by the 1986 New Education Policy of India.

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1 "Stri Sudra Sisu samaste bujai"
   - Ram Rai Das : Gurulila
   (Ed. by K.N. Pathak, Patbaushi Satra, Barpeta, 1904 Saka ) pp. 150
Harideva was a teacher of the mass people. He wanted to educate every one with the common knowledge of the holy books including that of Bhagawata Purana. So he gave more importance in teaching reading than writing. He also was not so much interested in writing a lot of books. He only explained the theories of Bhagavata to the common people in the simplest and sweetest language which was directly helpful to uneducated ordinary house-holders. Ramakrishna Parama Hansha was also in the same opinion that it is not a must that any preacher should write books on his own philosophies. Verbal discussion and explanations did much more than writings in this respect. However, besides oral translation of Bhagawata he encouraged his disciples to write and he also wrote a few books for the generations to come. Amongst them biographers can only mention two most valuable published works of the sage namely Baktirasa tarangini and Sarana Siddhwant with fourteen devotional songs of deepest philosophy of life. They also like to imagine some more
unpublished and yet to be available works by the guru which have been either lost or destroyed or kept hidden unknowingly. The following brief note will introduce the author Harideva in his scholastic mode of writing for both the learned few and the common mass.

(i) **Bhaktirasa Tarangini** : Hariguru's Bhaktirasa Tarangini is a unique resource of the Vaisnavite society of the North East of India. He starts the book with a hymn of his own and completed it in thirteen stabakas of stories and description from Bhagawata Purana, Padma Purana and Kalki Purana on the greatness of Visnu. At the end of each stabaka he mentions the name of the book as 'Bhaktirasa Prabahini' though people call it Bhaktirasa Tarangini, a name given by the author only at the end in Gita Mahatmya after the main chapters. At the end of each of the thirteen main stabakas he says "The Stabaka of Bhakatirasa prabahini by Sri Hari­deva Sarma, son of Ajanava ends." 1

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1 "Ajanavatmaja Sri Harideva Sarma nirmita Bhaktirasa prabahinyang" - Bhaktirasa tarangini by Harideva. (concluding line) (Undated)
The opening stabaka of Bhaktirasa tarangini starts with the replies of suta to Jaimini's queries regarding the ways of achieving liberation in the Kali age. Suta prescribes the listening of the activities of Visnu and about His greatness as the only remedy from sufferings of Kali dominated worldly pains.

The supreme Maha Visnu is the soul creator of all Gods and Goddesses and all good and evil. He is Brahma - the Lord of creation, He is Visnu - the Lord of Preservation. He is Rudra - the Lord of Destruction being created by Him from His Right, Left and Middle respectively as the symbols of the three great relative concepts satta - raja - tama. Now Jaimini asks Vyasa how the universe was in total destruction (mahapralaya) under the great seas of water where the supreme Lord had his endless sleep. To this reply Vyasa also extends his explanation to Jaimini with the great qualities of a perfect Vaisnavite and the result of reading and listening to those qualities. He explains the necessities of the Kriya Yogu and adds to it the modes and methods of worshipping Visnu. He prescribes the month of Magha, the hours of morning and evening and the days fifth, eleventh and seventh

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of the Full Moon fortnight (magha masa, pratah Sandhya, sukla panchami, ekadasi, Saptami) as the best time for worshipping Visnu. He also advises to keep the sound Hari (Hariddhwani) in utterings, the sense of Hari (Hari-bhava) on the head and the image of Hari (Harimurti) in the heart at all the time. At the end the author gives a clear description of the Kali Age to conclude the book.

(ii) The other book of Harideva worth mentioning is Sarana Siddhwanta in twenty substantial precised stabakas that respectively deal with:

1. The qualities of a guru (guru Lakshanam)
2. The qualities of a disciple (Sisya Lakshanam)
3. Directives of initiation (Sarana nirmaya)
4. The ways of initiation (diksha Lakshanam)
5. Chanting the names of Hari (mantra japa nirmaya)
6. Ways of devotion (bhakti nirmaya)
7. Results of listening (Sravanam)
8. Uttering and reciting the best names of Hari (Kirttanam)

1 Sri Sri Haridev Jyoti - Ed.by Cont'd.. 165/-
Dr. S.N. Goswami, 1988, pp. 24
9. On remembering the names of Hari (Smaranam)
10. Submission at the feet of Hari (Pada Sevanam)
11. Modes of worshipping Hari (Puja archanam)
12. Methods of saluting and moving around Hari (bandanam)
14. Friendliness with Hari (Sakhyam)
15. Surrendering of self (atmanivedanam)
16. Importance of listening and uttering the name of Hari in the Kali Age (Kalau Sravana Kirttanayoh sresthatwa)
17. Importance of the name of Krisna (Krisnanamah Sresthattwam).
18. Ways of liberation (moksha nirnayah).
19. Qualities of Bhagawata (Bhagawata lakshanam).
20. Results of association with the devotees (satsanga falam).

(iii) Amongst his fourteen devotional songs many are with deepest philosophy of life as stated respectively below.

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1. In the first he compares Brahma, Visnu and Hara as the three clods (udhanas) of a support for pots (chauka) where desire is a large cooking vessel (thali). Suka and Sana-tana, the great sages with the perfect knowledge of Bhagawata act as the two holders (sopatis) for holding the hot cooking vessel (thali) and Narada is the ladle (pakabari). The wise preachers are the necessary water and their association is the rice for being cooked with the devotee - fuel. The listening and chanting (Sravana Kirtana) are the tasty curry (byanjanas) with which you can eat to your heart's content. Thus you enjoy all the selected eatables of the Gita and Bhagawata.

2. The second deals with the importance of the association with the wise.

3. The third speaks of the Lord Hayagriva Madhava of Hajo.

4-5. The fourth and fifth songs address to Lord Visnu in prayer.

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6. The sixth defames all the bodily limbs as the hindrances on the way to Hari as all of them want the best things for their own satisfaction making the way to Hari longer and more troublesome.

7-8. The seventh and eighth songs speak of the value of the name of Hari.

9. The ninth is a unique metaphor where the time (Kala) is the fisherman to catch fish (the ignorant human beings) with the fish hook of earthly pleasures. Pride is the neck of the fish hook and worldly desire is the rope. Temptation is the bait (topa) with the life time as the float of fishing (Punga). The ignorant ordinary human beings (bhakti hina jana) who are the foolish fish in the sea of mortals' world (ei bhaba sagare) to eat the hook quickly as the food are the unfortunate victims in the hunting sport (maya) of Kala, the time.

10. In the tenth song Great Krisna is a
little cowherd boy going to the bank of Yamuna for feeding his cows.

11. The next is a precaution against the teachings of inefficient preachers who are only profit making shop-keepers in the bhakti market to sell duplicating jewels under imitating seal of Hari.

12-14. The last three, the best three with the Vaisnavite philosophy are a complete surrender of self to the supreme God.

(iv) Biographers want to say of three other unpublished works of his namely Gitasar, Sampurna Bhagawata and a play Ramabhiseka but any of these are not available at present.

(v) Besides, they imagine possibility of more songs and padas or works of other forms by the great writer for which perhaps Sankardeva called this contemporary writer Vedacharya Harivyas to mean that he knew all the Vedas and widely spoke and wrote on the line.