CHAPTER II

THE EMERGENCE OF MAHAPURUSH SRIMANTA SANKARDEVA AND HIS CONTEMPORARY ASSOCIATES
CHAPTER II

(A) THE EMERGENCE OF MAHAPURUSH Srimanta SANKARDEVA

(a) Birth and childhood.
(b) School days.
(c) A House holder.
(d) A Writer.
(e) A Reformer.
(f) A Devotee.
(g) A Guru.
(h) An incarnation.
(i) The Last hours.

* * * * *
Srimanta Sankardeva was born as a human being with date and time of birth, lived as a complete man with sufferings and comforts, worked as a determinant worker with success and failures and at last at a time died a mortal death. Still he was not a man in the ordinary sense, he was a human God in the earth and amongst the people. Despite of controversy about the date of his birth he was born of Kusumbar Bhuyan and Satysandha in the middle of the 15th century at Alipukhuri near Bardowa in the district of Nowgong in the famous Bhuyan family. He lost his mother five days after his birth and was reared up by his good grand
mother Khersuti. Upto twelve years he was a naughty boy, fond of playing rather than study, lived an open air life in the field and by the river playing and swimming, fighting with animals and being away from home as an uncontrolled boy.

He played simple games with his fellow mates, performed difficult activities and took the risk of adventures, caught deer and birds, swam across the mighty Monsoon river Brahmaputra in the month of Bhadra (August-September) and was strong in built, extremely handsome with commanding personality and power of unique leadership. His father Kusumbar Bhuyan was a busy man and had no time to look after his son. To some biographers again, his father died when he was quite a child. It was Khersuti, his grand mother, an old house-hold woman to be his mother and father, his guide and servant, the nurse and the teacher. Twelve years have passed. The old grand mother, the best counsellor of his, reminded him about the fame of his scholastic family. She shed tears before Sankardeva repenting that he was the only illiterate in the noble and famous Bhuyan family - ' a fool is born in the

Cont'd... 48/-
family of scholars'. It touched his heart in due time and he submitted to the decision that he should read and express his consent like an obedient boy, like a learned man. An auspicious day was fixed to admit him in the Tol, which was a Sanskrit school and the only kind of institution for education of that time. He started his student life in the Tol of Mahendra Kandali, a Brahmin scholar and teacher and Principal of the institution. Very soon Sankardeva showed his talents and earned his name as a devoted student. He was perhaps the first Sudra to get the 'deva' title which the Brahmins only could have. A fine story is there about his acquisition of the title 'deva' from his teacher. After the class hours, one day other boys went out and he was sleeping in the room. Sun rays fell on his brow and a serpent was extending up its hood over his head to protect it from sun shine. Mahendra Kandali saw the whole scene, asked other boys to see it

Cont'd.... 49/-

---

and immediately could realise that the boy was not an ordinary boy. He offered him the 'deva' title (to Sankara) and started calling him Sankardeva.

A spontaneous talent showed itself when he composed his first poem 'Karatala Kamala' just after learning the alphabet. A little mention is found about his subjects of study, though Daityari Thakur, a dependable biographer of his, mentions only chapters on Grammar and then only his natural and automatic expansion of knowledge towards all branches of education even including sociology and social Science. Kathaguru carita lists his subjects of studies to cover all branches of Indian literature. His 'Harichandra Upakhayana' is a remarkable verse work while he was in school. He was not addicted to ordinary ways of early life though he was not completely away from these. A pioneer of education and religion he was a sufferer husband and a responsible father. He married and lost his wife quite in early age. He had to work as both the mother and the father of his only daughter Manu. He also advised his dear devotee Madhabdeva to marry for a complete life and then to perform his other duties.

Cont'd... 50/-
for his desired better life. He succeeded in adventures, suffered failures, had to hide for saving his life, spent time in search of safety places for living - but at all time he kept himself busy in studying and preaching. As an educationist he read and wrote and spoke firmly and boldly to establish what he had in him. As a responsible house holder, as a good administrator he kept his family in peace and happiness. Manu, his only daughter was born and the mother died a year after unluckily. He himself reared the daughter and married her to Hari, a young Kayastha and thus performed the duties of a father. He advised but did not force. At first he requested or rather advised his devotee Madhabdeva to marry his daughter, but when the great devotee refused he did not try to force him, for marriage. He had to perform the administrative functions of a Bhuyan after his father as the heir. But as a ruler he was either unsuccessful or uninterested. He handed over his administrative responsibilities to one Jayantia Daloi and another Madhab Daloi and set out for long pilgrimage at the age of 35 for 12 years with 17 companions including his Guru Mahendra Kandali. This time he visited almost
all the sacred places of Northern and Southern India. After 12 years he came back home, loaded with the first hand knowledge of Vaishnavite theology, mode of worship and prayer, management of institutions, specially religious institutions as well as the centres of learning. With this he felt his life to be completed. But his friends and relatives began to force him to take the charge of Siromani Bhuyan and to marry again. He had to please them all at first so as to please others in the end. Accordingly he took the charge and married Kalindi at the age of 48. Very soon he removed his residence from Alipukhuri to Bardowa and set his life on a new shape, a life of devotion and prayer, a life of religion and education and reformation. At Bardowa he decided to set up a sacred centre of learning known as 'satra' and erected a prayer house for all common people known as a 'namghar'. This kind of 'namghar' was not only a centre of meeting and prayer for the mass people but also a place for community singing and trial of offences. He spent a good number of years there at Bardowa. But in the mean time political disturbances started with the neighbouring Kachari king and his subjects and he had to change his residence

Cont'd.. 52/-
from Bardowa to Dhuahata in the Majuli island on the river Brahmaputra. Here he met with two important incidents to mark his life thereafter. One was the unique meeting (manikanchana Sangjog) with the famous Sakta scholar Madhabdeva who later became the Vaishnava, the second greatest after Sankardeva and the other was his encounter with the Ahom king Suhengmung. The jealous Brahmins of that time could not bear the unique success of Sankardeva and reported the king about him as to be supporting an unorthodox and antivedic religion and there by misleading the people.

The king was angry and Sankardeva was summoned to the court to argue with the vedic Brahmin scholars where he did and defeated them and got off from the trial rather with credit. But this added fuel to the fire. The Brahmins devided plans after plans against him and he felt he was not safe in the Ahom territory. Accordingly he left for Barpeta, a place in the present Barpeta district after division of the district of Kamrup. At that time of course that area was also under the Koch king of Cooch Behar. However, he started a new life at holy Barpeta and there too he established a satra and built a namghar and began propagating his faith. He regained a peaceful life. He

Cont'd.. 53/-
He accepted an atmosphere of studying and writing besides teaching and thinking. If not most, the major portion of his songs, dramas and Kavyas were composed here. He met most of his best companions and dearest disciples here at Barpeta. His best acquisition was Bhabananda, who later on came to be known as Thakur Ata. Brahmin disciples like Damodardeva, Harideva and Ananta Kandali were also taken into his fold here. From here only at the age of 97 he set out for his second pilgrimage along with his 120 devotees extending upto Puri in about 1550 A.D. and returned within six months and immediately he resumed his regular customary works. He earned growing popularity on the one hand and invited a fresh hostility from the Brahmin priests on the other. But still the saint was in a better position for he had in the mean time somehow gained the support of the king Narnarayan through the king's brother Chilaraya at first and by his own talents at last. Once again at the king's court Sankardeva established his superiority over Pandit Kabichandra Dwija of Navadvipa in a scholarly confrontation.

He had his last Journey from Patbaushi to the capital and at this time he stayed for one night at
Ganakakuchi with Madhabdeva where he nominated the later as his successor to the apostolic seat. There he wrote his Ramvijaya Nat, his last work, at the request of Chilaraya. Now his end was fast approaching and his long eventful life came to an end suddenly in Cooch Behar in the month of Bhadra in 1569 A.D. As a divine soul he could understand the call of his departure and called his devotees and told them that he was ill and his end was sure and near:

- Sankare bole bani bhakatak matiani oi,
  Hai Hari Narayan Narayan O,
  aji mor dehar nai bhal he bapugan
  suna sabe mohora bachan – 1

- Lokageet

Thus lived and suffered, died and defeated Sankardeva, an ordinary man who on the other hand

Cont'd. 55/-

1 Jana priya Kamrupee Lokagit, 1995, pp. 39
Ed. by Sailendra Narayan Goswami
wrote and thought, acted and taught as a divine force. His genius and personality was so great that people of all classes offered him a position of God, Lord Vishnu. His contribution to different branches of education, religion, literature, culture, music, language and reformation is unique and lasting. He taught through the satras and organised through the namghars. To educate people he had to do a lot including composing kavyas, writing plays, translating Sanskrit Bhagavata and Puranas acting roles, and making musical instruments. His Dasam-skandha Bhagavata as the 'Dasama' is his unique work and the 'Kirtana' is his simplest and sweetest translation of the Bhagavata. Besides other works he composed the Bargeets which are the noble songs in the real sense. "The Bargeets reveal Sankardeva as a scholar, a poet, and a passionate devotee". 1

The great guru was also the inventor of a class of one-act play known as the Ankiya nats in

Cont'd. 56/-

1 Sarma, S.N. : The Neo Vaisnavite Movement and the satra Institution of Assam, 1966 (Ch.1) pp. 17
Brajabali language. He introduced classical ragas in his songs and recognised equality of all classes at the spiritual level. His well devised satras were no less than modern residential schools and the Namghars were rather more useful than modern public halls.

Thus Sankardeva had given Assam a new life and new shape. 'Rulers have come and gone and their kingdoms perished in the dust, but Sankardeva's state endures and broadens in the general heart of men, his power survives'. 1 His is the most celebrated name in Assam. He was really the most worthy son of God who is also regarded as an incarnation by section of Assamese people. He was a versatile genius, a good administrator, a religious teacher and a leading social reformer. He was all, and all was in him - a painter, a musician, a scholar and above all an ideal Assamese of a long past.

Cont'd... 57/-

1 Kakati, B.K. * The Vaisnava Saint of Assam, 1960, (Ch. 1).
The unique few lines of the guru bhatima on Sankardeva will perhaps be the best way of offering proper homage to the great saint.

'Jaya guru Sankara Sarba gunakara
Jakeri nahike upama'
"tohari carana renu sata koti
bareka karoho pranama"

Which means :

"Glory to guru Sankara,
The source of all virtues,
of whom there is no parallel,
The pollen of his feet,
A hundred crore times,
Let us salute". 1

1 Guru bhatima, by Madhabdev
Biren Das : Nam Prasanga Pranali (Ed.)
Asomi Prakasan, Panbazar, Gauhati, pp. 82
THE EMERGENCE OF MAHAPURUSH MADHABDEVA

(a) Birth and childhood
(b) Father Govindagiri
(c) The Sakta Madhaba
(d) Meeting with Sankardeva - A Manikanchan Sanjog
(e) Service to Sankardeva and to Vaisnavism
(f) Sufferings and Reformations
(g) The Last Days

***   ***   ***   ***
Mahapurush Madhabdeva, the right hand disciple of Srimanta Sankardeva was born in a Kayastha family in the Dark Moon first day midnight of 1490 A.D. (1411 Saka) at Narayanpur in the district of Lakshimpur. He was the son of Gobindagiri alias Barkanagiri (by his second wife) who migrated to the eastern Assam from a place known as Bandaka, somewhere in Rangpur district of present Bangladesh.

Gobindagiri settled at Tembuwahi in the district of Nagong and married Manomati (or Manu) a cousin of Sankardeva at the advice of his friends like Ramrai and Ketaikha. But for the fear of the Ahoms (and to some biographers of the Kacharis) of that time he had to flee with his pregnant wife. On the way in a jungle at night he was robbed of all he had including the clothes. In the morning he went to bathe in the nearest Brahmaputra river and fortunately met one Harisinga Bora, an official of

Cont'd... 59/-
the Ahom king with his boat. Harisinga came to know all of the happenings of Gobindagiri and asked him to be in his boat with his wife. The chief boatman of Gobindagiri who was also known as Ghagari Mazi (he being from the village Ghagar) was also very kind to the new friends. Accordingly Gobindagiri and his wife accompanied them to Borar tol (the residential campus of Boras) in Barbali village at Barnarayanpur in the district of Lakhimpur and here Madhabdeva was born to the expectation of all. After a few years, when Madhaba grew young and Gobindagiri became weak of sufferings and poverty after the death of Harisinga they had to move for a new place, to the place of Ghagari Mazi where they were warmly accepted and fed with "fish and meat in both the meals". There they stayed for many years and Madhabdeva's sister Urvashi was born there. At a time when both Madhaba and

Cont'd... 60/-

1 "Matche mangshe duyobela karanta bhojan" - Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva aru Sri Madhabdeva Carit - by Daityari Thakur ; Edited by H.N. Dutta Barua, 1989, pp. 41.
Urvashi, the brother and sister attained their ages for marriage they had to move to a place of their community and relatives and arrived at Tembuwahi again. Here Urvashi was married to one, Gayapani of Hokorakuchi and leaving the mother with Urvashi the son and the father went to Gobindagiri's former residence at Banduka. Here Madhabdeva met his step brother Damodar by his father's first wife Anuchita and stayed there in calm and peace. At Banduka Madhabdeva was taught the kayasthika profession with other subjects like prose, poetry, Sanskrit, Law and Justice. He also studied vyakarana, nyaya and tarka under the learned scholar Rajendra Adhyapaka. In the mean time his father died and Madhabdeva with his brother Damodar performed all cremational rites and rituals. For a few days he stayed there and then came

Cont'd... 61/-

1 "Ano sastra jata gadya - padya - Sanskrita nyaya - tarka - niti sikila samprati" Daintyari Thakur & Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva aru Sri Madhabdeva Carit, Edited by H.N. Dutta Barua, 1989, pp. 48
back to Tembuwani with the information of his father's death. The mother received the saddest news to start her widow life. Until then Madhabdeva was a sakta and believed in worshipping Gods and Goddesses. He also believed in sacrifices by killing birds and animals in the name of Goddess Sakti. But at the same time his brother-in-law Gayapani had been a disciple of Sankardeva and had taken the new name Ramdas. The Vaishnavite Ramdas could not bear that his relative Madhabdeva should remain a sakta, a worshipper of Goddess Durga with animal sacrifices. He decided to bring a change to Madhabdeva's ways of belief. One morning Ramdas took him to Sankardeva's place to talk and discuss. The talk turned into an endless debate with the exchange of reasons after reasons for 'many hours since morning' and none

Cont'd... 62/-

1 "Prabhatara para tini par beli gaila"
Daityari Thakur: Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva aru Sri Madhabdeva Carit, Edited by H.N. Dutta Barua, 1989, pp. 61
could defeat any one. At last Sankardeva made the last attack with his deepest philosophy "water (pour water) on the root of the tree and the leaves and the branches will get (it)".  

At this Madhabdeva had to bow down before him. Immediately he could realise that he was wrong and so he decided to be a disciple of the great guru. This unique meeting of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva has been termed as "Manikanchan Sangyog" by the great Assamese Rashtra-raj Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua. He could realise the truth - to worship Gods and Goddesses with sacrifices is against the pleasure of the almighty. It is like wearing clothes and ornaments in place of eating when one is hungry. Next day Madhabdeva took initiation to Sankardeva. Henceforth Madhabdeva

Cont'd.. 63/-


2 B.C. Sarma : Manikanchan, 1989;
Introduction, P. 1
became the right hand disciple of Sankardeva and the two Gods united in one place and existed as Manikanchan.

He began to be more and more attracted by the teachings of Sankardeva on the supremacy of one God which is the "ek dev" and that of the one name i.e. "ek nam". He began to ignore all the physical needs and earthly pleasures of life and thereby wanted to remain unmarried. All his friends and relatives including the guru Sankara tried best to make him marry but he was firm in what he had decided.

Sankardeva tried to plead against his decision and suggested him strongly to have a wife who would be like a rampart in the battles of life, but Madhabdeva counter replied that he wanted to fight without to make him a great warrior - a maharathi. Sankardeva was satisfied, he felt him to be a part of his and one without the other was incomplete. The 'bandhava Madhava' (friend Madhava) was really a

Cont'd.. 64/-
'bahrar po' (a son who could increase everything) to Sankardeva and these two became his mostly common and dearest address to Madhabdeva. ¹

On the other hand Madhabdeva also accepted Sankardeva as his great guru and a friend. Philosopher and guide. Madhabdeva became unavoidable in all his personal affairs, domestic guidance and literary works. The dearest disciple was his nearest associate in eating and sleeping, in teaching and thinking and in writing and speaking. At that time the Ahom king engaged the Bhuyas in guarding elephants in one side with the warning that if any elephant is to flee by any side the guards of that side would be beheaded. Unfortunately it happened that elephants fled by the side of the Bhuyas and as a result many were imprisoned in the bank of Messagarh Pond and many were beheaded in the Jerenga Ground. Madhabdeva with Sankardeva's son-in-law Hari Bhuyan were taken by the king's men to royal court for trial where Hari was beheaded and Madhabdeva was left as he had none to shed tears after him. At this Sankardeva decided to leave the

---

¹ Dr. M. Neog; Sri Sri Sankardev
Chandra Prakash (7th Ed), 1987, pp. 67
kingdom of such an inconsiderate king and left for Kamata Kingdom along the river Brahmaputra. Madhabdeva also associated his guru with the other disciples. In this journey he showed an example of sympathy towards two of his fellow disciples by allowing them to come into his full manned boat by throwing two boxes of his belonging. The party arrived at Chunpora of Barpeta in present Barpeta district and Madhabdeva lived there for about a year with his co-devotees. He then took to live at Baradi at a distance and used to come for daily prayer to Chunpora. Here he made friendship with a great merchant Bhabananda Sadagar who was initiated by Sankardeva and later known by the popular name Narayan Das Thakur Ata. At the same time he lost his mother and he shifted to Ganak Kuchi with his brother-in-law Ramdas.

At all the time he was under the guide and advice of Sankardeva. He obeyed Sankardeva in all matters except in one which was the advice of his

Cont'd.. 66/-
marriage ... "I will do all you say only one I cannot obey". Thus Madhab Deva was strict to his unenjoyed celibacy, the abhukta bairagya and he was declared to be the powerful lion in the forest of mortals. Sankardeva was rather pleased to see his unmoved decision in the matter and he submitted to it rather immediately. Madhabdeva was nominated by Sankardeva to hold this religious inheritance after his death and even his dearest and eldest son Ramananda was also not recommended. Rather the guru advised his son to take anything he wanted from Madhabdeva upon whom he bestowed all he had. And after Sankardeva's...  

---

1 "Madhaba bolanta bakya samasta karim, ekaguti bakya matra bapa nakarim."

2 "Bala parakrama sakti bhaktipantha ..... sabe ase Madhabat"-
Daityari Thakur - Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva aru Sri Madhabdeva Carit, Edited by H.N. Dutta Barua, 1989, pp. 207
death Madhabdeva took all the responsibilities of preaching and spreading of Vaishnavism in Assam in the line of his guru. Besides he had to take responsibilities of his guru's family by visiting it at Patbaushi once a week or a fortnight. 1

Madhabdeva lived for twenty eight years after Sankardeva and during this period he strengthened the faith of Vaishnavism and systematised its organisational aspects. He selected a few leading disciples to carry on the religious activities in different parts of the country through satra institutions. They were twelve in number popularly known as "bara bhakats" - the twelve devotees who were (1) Gopaldeva (2) Mathuradasa (3) Vishnu Ata (4) Padma Ata (5) Kesavacarana Ata (6) Ramacarana, (7) Srihari (8) Govinda Ata (9) Lakshmi Atai (10) Padhiya Madhava (11) Vanshi-gopaldeva and (12) Adhyalia Jadumani. 2

Cont'd... 68

1 "Janta athe pakshe Madhaba apuni"

2 Satyendra Nath Sarma : Madhabdeva, 1985, pp.15
These twelve principal apostles appointed by Madhabdeva carried the torch of the Vaishnava faith and movement to different parts of Assam by establishing satras and propagating the teachings and ideals of the faith amongst all sections of people. For a good number of years Madhabdeva lived at Sundaridiya and then for an unpleasant incident he shifted to Barpeta. Here he built a beautiful shrine and constructed the satra. He had to face a group of opponents who complained the king Raghunarayan against Madhabdeva. In the face of the false complaints against him and their responses by the eastern king Raghunarayan he was compelled to cross eastern border in search of a favourable atmosphere in the western Koch kingdom ruled by king Lakshmi-narayan. The king cordially welcomed him and settled him at Bheladuar at a distance of a few miles from the capital granting him full freedom of propagating Vaishnavism in the kingdom. Here too he could not satisfy all including one high royal official named Virocana. However, he succeeded at last with his arguments in favour of his faith and creed. He was held in high respect and his religion was accepted by many of the

Cont'd..69/-
royal members. Vaishnavism was declared as the king's religion - the religion of the state. For the remaining few years Madhabdeva lived a peaceful life of liberty and religious pursuits. He had his last breath with the last sacred name of God in his lips in the month of Bhadra of 1518 saka, (1596 A.D.).
(a) Birth and Early Days

(b) An Incarnation

(c) Divine Initiation

(d) Association with Sankardeva

(e) The Chief Disciples and Their co-operation with the Guru.

(f) Sufferings - Domestic and Political

(g) An organiser

(h) Last Days.

*** *** *** *** ***
Damodardeva visited the earth in 1488 A.D. and left it in 1598 A.D. after a period of long 110 years. He belonged to the line of sage Gautama. He was an incarnation for preservation and spread of Sanatana dharma and to save the humanity from earthly sufferings. His father Sadananda was a Brahmin house holder of the village Ratneswar on the North of Gadurachal near Hajo. His mother Suchila was also a perfectly pious lady and an ideal house wife. His two brothers Sarbeswar, the eldest and Ratnakar, the next were born in Ratneswar village, but in the mean time Sadananda made a friendship with Sankardeva and went to establish himself there in Nalancha, a village to the South and near to Bardowa in the district of Nowgong. Thus Sankardeva and Sadananda began to live together in close touch and as co-operating friends.

Sadananda used to go to Sankardeva on each fourth or eighth day and Sankardeva also went

Cont'd.. 71/-
to his house from time to time and thus they were very happy. 1

One night as Suchila went to sleep with the prayer to her husband she had a dream towards the night end. In the dream a Brahmin came and asked for shelter to stay in her. 2

Cont'd. 72/-

1 Kabi Ramrai Das : Gurulila, Edited by Khagendra Nath Pathak, 1904 Saka, (Patbaushi Satra, Barpeta)

(a) "Atha chari dine Sankarara Pase yai."
pp. 16, para 18.

(b) "Kon dine Sankareo tana grihe yanta dekhi Sadananda ati harish labhanta"
pp. 16, para 19.

2 Kabi Ramrai Das : Gurulila, Edited by Khagendra Nath Pathak, 1904 Saka, (Patbaushi Satra, Barpeta)

"Rahibaka sthana khujilanta"
pp. 14
She was surprised to have the dream and told it to her husband in the morning. Sadananda knew that it was the signal of lord Krishna's birth in his house and asked the wife to remain silent about the unique dream. Suchila conceived and gave birth to her third son. On hearing the news of the birth of a son of his friend Sadananda, Sankardeva remembered the past story and was happy. He came to Sadananda's house and uttered the name 'Damodara' and as such advised his friend to keep his son's name as Damodara.

"Mora mukhe ashileka nama Damodar Damodara nama hauka tomara putrar" 1

- As the word 'Damodara' came out from my mouth let your son's name be Damodara. The story regarding the birth of Damodardeva goes as follows - Sankardeva was the Lord Siva and Damodardeva was the Lord Krisna when bhakti was fully in vogue on earth - on the mairttya. As a result people had direct

Cont'd.. 73/-

1 Kabi Ramrai Das
Gurulila, Edited by Khagendra Nath Pathak,
1904 Saka, (Patbaushi Satra, Barpeta)
pp. 17 (Sloka 108)
liberation without worshipping any God. At this, Gods were afraid and directed Lord Siva to keep the bhakti hidden from earth and to establish different worships to please different Gods. Accordingly the bhakti disappeared from earth and people began to worship Gods and Goddesses for the fulfilment of their ambitions. Now Siva realised that it was for him that the people had to go astray. So for removing his sin of hiding bhakti Lord Siva performed the chanting of thousand names of Bishnu. At this Bishnu or Krisna appeared before Siva and asked him to incarnate as Sankara in the kali age and assured him that he would also incarnate as Damodara after him. So Siva became Sankardeva, the son of Kusumbara and Bishnu became Damodardeva, the son of Sadananda respectively in the kali age. Absurdly the same name Damodara was also suggested by the Science of making Horoscope which showed that the name should begin with letter D. Sankardeva himself was also present on that auspicious occasion.

Thus Lord Krishna took the human form and as a human child he began to grow and live the life
of an ordinary Brahmin. At eight years he was given the sacred thread with gayatri, the chief Vedamantra. He also used to go to the house of his father's friend Sankardeva, sometimes with the father and sometimes alone. Slowly he began to develop a special attraction towards the activities and personality of Sankardeva. He read under the learned Adhyapaka Kalapa Chandra Bhattacharyya in the traditional manner of that time and became well versed in all sastras, Vedas and Upanisads. Besides his teacher, he had an institution which enabled him to be recognised as a Sadguru - a real preceptor and saint in the galaxy of scholars in the court of the king Parikshit Narayan of Vijay Nagar. At 17 years of age Damodardeva married and his father died. His oldest brother Sarveswar had no son, his wife died and on the way to pilgrimage he also died on the bank of the Ganges. He had to live with his widow mother and the other brother. His other brother Ratnakar had two wives and three sons and it was a big poor family which the two brothers had to manage. A few years later Ratnakar died and at the death of her second son his mother, out of extreme sorrows also
died. In the mean time Sankardeva had to escape from the Asom Rajya, the then Ahom Kingdom to Kamrup under the then Koch Kingdom for an offence against the Ahom King Chuhunmg, in matters of 'Catching Elephants' \(^1\) and began to live at first in Chunpora and then in Baral chung. The associate Damodar did not like to live alone there in Nalancha and after six months came down to Kamrup with his nephew Mukunda to live and work with Sankardeva.

On his way to the Koch Kingdom he stayed at Ratneswar, the village of his father for some days and used to go to the temple of Hayagrive Madhava daily to recite and interpret the Bhagawata there.

There in the temple, it is said, he met the Vishnu messenger Narada in the guise of an ascetic (Sannyashi) under whom he had his initiation

Cont'd... 76/-

---

\(^1\) "Catching elephants" leading to Bhuyan Chasing Movement" has been described in detail in Chapt II (a).
(diksha). At the same time a section of biographers, specially those of Sankardeva, wants to show that it was not the divine Narada but the human Sankardeva who initiated Damodardeva at Patbaushi in the formal way of sarana. Whatever the difference of opinions regarding his initiation and guru may exist, that he was a perfect Vaishnavite and a whole hearted Vishnu devotee had no point of question or doubt. The former section of biographers, specially those of Damodardeva, wants to make the truth still more established by showing that the devine guru in the form of a Sannyashi died there and after this he met Sri Chaitanyadeva on the Barahkura in Hajo on the later's way to Jagannathdham. They also add that at the time of Chaitannyadeva's meeting with Sankardeva at Navadwipadham, the former gave the later a copy of Krishnakatha Sakhita and said, "The Truth I tell you is that this book does not concern anything of you. Of course it can serve the purpose of Damodara and so I tell you to give it to him". 1

Cont'd..77/-

1 Kabi Ramrai Das

Gurulila, Edited by Khagendra Nath Pathak, 1904 Saka, (Patbaushi Satra, Barpeta) pp. 29 (Sloka 194)

"eto pustakata ye tomar Karyya nai awashye ihaka dibe Damodar thai."
Of course no biographer of Sri Chaitanya-deva has shown his visit to this part of Assam in any occasion. However, after his meet with Chaitanya he went to Nandagram and lived there for three days and then to Gayajan and lived on the bank of a beel for some days. There in Ramraighat he met Ramarai and heard that Sankardeva was living at Baral sung. He also managed a plot of land at Biashpara and began to live there. This Biashpara or Byashpur was later on popularly known as famous Patbanshi. Here after a few days Damodar's wife died just after the birth of a daughter and the daughter also died after the mother. Being relieved from all household burdens he started dedicating his life in service of Lord Vishnu with his chief disciples and on his own way of devotion. He had the same close relationship with Sankardeva and Sankardeva also loved and respected him most. To Sankardeva, Damodardeva was undoubtedly the form of "Agni-dwija-Salagram" 1 - the Fire God, the

Cont'd...78

1 Kabi Ramrai Das :
Gurulila, Edited by Khagendra Nath Pathak,
1904 Saka, (Patbaushi Satra, Barpeta)
pp. 24 (Sloka 166)
Reformed Brahmin and the Lord Vishnu in the stone form. On the other hand to Damodardeva also Sankardeva was the honey to be mixed with the Bhagavata milk to make the bhakti nectar (amrit) the most tasteful.

The biographers of Sankardeva are also all in one opinion that the great Guru Damodardeva was a perfectly established Vaishavite Guru and that Sankardeva had himself nominated Damodardeva to initiate the Brahmin disciples on his behalf. But they want to show that his Guru was Sankardeva and Sankardeva loved him most perhaps next to Madhabdeva.

In his later life he preached both the Nigama (Deduction) and the Agama (Inductive) procedure of Sadhana and it was the direct result of the Narada episode. Narada the divine sage of mythology is said to be a Synthesiser between two opposite principles and always appeared whenever there was an indecision regarding problems, leading to happy

Cont'd... 79/-
solutions. We all need a proper guide as the Guru in the spiritual science and in the same way Damodaradeva had one and that was Narada. That the divine spirit acted as the guide of a mortal being like Damodara was not impossible if Vyasdeva in the Badarikasrama might be guided by the same divine sage to write the Bhagawata. He made Patbauri the apostolic centre of his mission and decided to settle there permanently. Near him at Varalchung lived Sankardeva as his friend, philosopher and guide. A long line of devotees began to come to see him and bowed down to his majestic personality. Amongst the others Ramraya, the younger brother of Sankardeva came to his fold of doctrine. At this time the guru wanted to establish a Satra and to give it a formal shape as a seat of Vaishnavite culture. For this purpose he purchased a plot of land from Ramraya exchanging a tola of gold and established the proposed satra and developed it to a formal and complete institution. There he was supported and assisted by twelve

Cont'd.. 80/-

1 Tola - a weight of a rupee coin of gold equivalent to 1/80 th of a seer (apox. one kilogram)
chief disciples who also stayed in the satra with him chanting the glory of the name of God. The twelve disciples (bare Sisya) were Visnudasa, Payonidhi, Paramananda, Ratulcharan, Madhu, Krishnananda, Ramananda, Hari, Raghunath, Jagannath, Rambdas and Ramraya.\(^1\) Ramraya in the Gurulila on the life and activities of Damodardeva compared the saint amongst his twelve devotees with the Sun amongst the stars in the sky and the lotus in the lake. Like the sun he dazzled and like the lotus he blossomed. He had discourses with the twelve disciples regarding the nature of Reality and they were noted down by his disciple Krishnananda and was named as "Damodardeva Vyakhyan".\(^2\) At times Hari-deva from Maneri (not far from Patbausi) and Sankardeva from Baralsung also joined the discussion on religious topics and enriched the holy meets.

Another learned Sanskrit Scholar Sri Sri Banikanta Nath Sarma Kabiratna Bhagawat Bhattacharyya, popularly known as Bhattadeva also met Damodardeva at Patbausi being attracted by his majestic personality and his way for the search for Reality.

---

1 Gopal Misra ; Ghosa Ratna, Cont'd.. 81/- Ed. by Nannarayan Dev Goswami, Pub. by Smti Saroj Prava Devi, 1976, pp. X
2 Ibid, pp XI.
Immediately at the first sight he surrendered himself at the feet of Damodardeva, who took him to be his close second as another Damodara or the "apara Damodara". This union added to the success of Damodara's mission to the greatest extent and it counted no less than the unique meeting of Sankara and Madhava at Dhuvahata or that of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda at Dakshineswar. Then came Gopaldeva, another great scholar under his feet who was equally competent with Bhattacharya. Besides, a galaxy of saintly personalities Santadeva, Bhagawandeva, Banamalideva, Vansi Gopaldega, Kapildeva, Arjundeva, Valadeva, Narayandeva, Manohara and Paramananda glittered around the Master. The guru initiated all of them to his fold and advised all to establish satras at their own native places, which they did accordingly and after the death of Damodardeva they became the heads of these satras respectively.

Damodardeva loved peace but he could not always live in peace. Like all other great idealists he had also been often troubled by his opponents. Then Patnausi was within the Kamapitha of Kamrupa under

---

1 Gopal Misra * Ghosa Ratna Ed. by Narnarayan Dev Goswami Cont'd. 82/-
Pub. by Saroj Prava Devi, 1976, pp. XII
the reign of king Parikshit Narayan, Grandson of Chilaraya, the Military commander and brother of king Naranarayana. Once Kameswara Giri, a Tantric ascetic (Sannyashi) and Sivavara an astrologer (daivajna) spoke ill of Damodara to the king. They said that it was Damodara, the Vaisnavite leader to influence subjects to have given up the tantric form of worship. It was he who objected worshiping of Durga in Autumn and as a result of this there would be a great disaster in the Kingdom and natural calamities like draught and flood and epidemic etc. So the king decided to take action against Damodara by promulgating an order that either he should worship the Goddess by offering sacrifices or he should leave the kingdom at once for the welfare of the people. He sent messengers to summon Damodara. Damodardeva knew it was his time for leaving Patbauri and advised his disciples to carry on his mission, asked Bhattadeva to write the Bhagawata in prose for the benefit of the common people. Thus the guru started for Vijay Nagar, the then capital of king Parikshit Narayan with sixty Vaishnavite celibate disciples. At first he had to lodge at the hermitage
of Kamakhya Girl who was constantly at back mailing against Damodara. Then his disciples took him to the house of a poor Brahmin named Veduwa Vipra who was a follower of Chaitanya cult of Bengal Vaisnavism from where he had to attend the king's court. There in the court assembled a great reputed scholars, intellectuals, scholarly Brahmins, Sannyasis and many top ranking nobles against whom he had to face questions. To them he answered from Vedas and Vedantas in pin-drop silence. Throughout his arguments he forbade the worship of many Gods and Goddesses by offering sacrifices. He only argued in favour of eternal happiness by worshipping the one supreme Reality. Many were his opponents and amongst the few admitters of his were one Vagish Bhattacharyya and another Yadumani Chakravarty. However, in the house of Veduwa Damodardeva attracted many people including women and the queens. During his few days' stay in Veduwa's house, one day the king on his return from hunting saw the gathering people including women in Veduwa's house and came to know that they were under the
influence of Damodara. Kameswar Giri, the Tantric ascetic immediately took the chance against Damodara and made the king pass an order that Damodara should depart from the kingdom very soon. Damodardeva took it as a blessing and with his former sixty disciples and the new followers he started to Cooch Behar. And immediately after his departure the kingdom of Parikshit Narayan was invaded by the Muslims and was captured. Damodardeva walked for three days and crossed the boundary of Parikshit and entered the land of Cooch Behar. He spent the first night there in the house of Laksana. Next morning Laksana became his disciple with his family and kept the guru at his house for a week. After a week's stay at the house of his new disciple Damodardeva came to the capital of Lakshmi Narayana, son of Naranarayana. The King had been suffering for a long time and had lost the hope of cure, but at the advent of Damodardeva he got miraculously cured from his prolonged illness. The news of the King's miraculous cure spread in the Kingdom far and wide and people from neighbouring places gathered there to be his devotees. The number of his devotees in the capital began to increase day
by day and at last the guru wanted to leave the crowded city for unbearable disturbance. So, the king constructed a cloister for the guru in the outskirts of the city and named it as Damodar Dham. There he stayed with all his devotees practicing the nine kinds of devotion (Navadha bhakti), exposing scriptures and holding religious talks and intellectual discourses. Damodara remained there up to his last breath in 1598 A.D. and after his death the satra was called Vaikuntha Pura the Heavenly abode.

Cont'd. 86/
(a) Birth and Early Education

(b) Death of father, Mother, the only sister and the only son.

(c) Divine Initiation

(d) Life and learning at Pilgrimage

(e) Devotional Life and Divine Activities at Bahari and Maneri.

(f) The Miracle Last Hours.
Harideva, popularly known as Hari guru was the eighth generation of Narottama, a Brahmin scholar when Kumar Bhaskar Barman the then king of Kamrupa met him in Banaras and brought to Kamrup to offer the charge of a newly established tol at Ashwaklanta. Then his forefathers used to live at Bahari of Kamrupa. His father Ajanabha was a great Sanskrit scholar who taught pupils in a tol there. Then he came to Ashwaklanta as the teacher of the Tol there. In the mean time two Brahmins Nityananda and Sadananda from Narayanpur came in search of an efficient Sanskrit scholar for a tol of their own and found Ajanabha at Ashwaklanta.

They took him to Narayanpur and gave him the charge of their tol. Harideva was born there at Narayanpur in 1426 A.D. (In the month of Bhadra, on the 5th day after the Dark moon night i.e. on Sukla Panchami, Aslesha Nakshatra, Thursday,

Cont'd.. 87/-
after eighteen dandas of the day). From his very childhood Harideva seemed to be a sincere devotee of Lord Krisna. Lord Krisna, being pleased with his devotion, it is believed, appeared before him and took the flowers and offerings of his worship. At nine he was given the sacred thread and taught the Panini Grammar by his father in his own tol for four years while Gobinda Pandit gave him the primary education. At his sixteen his father died and mother also performed the rituals of Sati by entering the sacred fire of her husband. His only sister Subhadra was only six at that time. The two orphans - brother and sister had to live hard lives. In 1442 A.D. the

Cont'd.. 88

1 Mahapurush Sri Sri Haridev Kirttan : by Damodardev Goswami (559 Haridevabda ) pp. 23

2 Sri Sri Harideva Namamrita, by Sarala Devi, 1992, pp. 9 Sl.No. 15. "Pathdan arambhila Govinda Pandit".
then Ahom king Chenfa got a report that Harideva prohibited people to eat rice carried from one place to another which was against Hindu religion. It was reported that the subjects specially the soldiers were becoming weak day by day for this prohibition. It was supposed to be a reason of the defeat of Ahom soldiers in a battle against the Nagas. The king was angry to receive the report and sent Bhima and Huma, the two messengers to bring Hariguru to him. Harideva knew that his end came. He asked them to sit outside and directed Udar Govinda to bring areca nuts and betel leaves (Tamil pan) with the signal that he should flee away with his sister Subhadra immediately. Udar understood the guru's signal and took away Subhadra without being seen by the king's messengers. Soon after this Harideva also went in only to see why Govinda was so late and there inside the room he also disappeared miraculously. The king's messengers were astonished at the experience and went back in despair. Hariguru took the Vasudeva Lakshimarayana Vigraha and the bone - ashes, the last remains of

Cont'd..89/-
his parents and fled to meet Govinda and his sister in the nearest wood. He met them there and on the next day making a floating boat with the banana trees all started for Kamrupa. There in Kamrupa he first came to Ashwaklanta where his father's tol was, visited the temple and offered pindas.

It is said that the moment he entered the temple of Janardana the door closed itself, a white clothed ascetic (Sannyashi) Janardana in guise appeared to initiate him and the door opened again in the same way. Then he went to Hajo to visit the famous temples of Hayagriva Madhava and Kedara. Here he met Khagara Hali, a true devotee and initiated him at his humble request. He left Hajo for Puri by a boat being accompanied by an unknown old Brahmin (Sannyashi) who accommodated him at puri in the house of Vishwambhar Mahapatra. There after he did not know about the Brahmin (Sannyashi). It is believed that some divine power (may be Hayagriva) appeared before
Hariguru to guide him in disguise. In the temple of Lord Jagannatha, his sister Subhadra, while in deep meditation in direction to the Lord, fell down on the floor to have her last breath. It is believed that her sacred soul met the Lord to mix with Him. After five days he left Puri for Baidyanath, Gaya, Kanchi, Prayag, Vrindavana and on return again to Kanchi. Here in Kanchi he stayed at the house of Hara Lal Panda and being directed in the dream at night started studying Vedas under one Sraddhananda Acharyya. During his Vedadhyayana period there one fourteenth night of the Dark Moon (Krishna Chaturdashi), while he was in meditation to Lord Siva, he had a dream for a direction to keep in fast the next day and in the mid of night to follow the instrumental sound which would come from the bank of the river Ganges. He did accordingly and really at that time he heard the sound of a dombaroo which he followed. There on the bank an ascetic (Sannyashi) came down from the wood apple tree (bel), gave him a gold Krishna-Kavas, touched on his head and blessed saying that he would live for 140 years and die on
the same Dark Moon when the Kavas disappears. With this the ascetic (Sannyashi) disappeared on the spot.

After completing the Veda study at Kanchi he again went to Puri where he was directed in dream to recite the main Bhagavata continuously for five years in the temple before the Lord Jagannatha. Next morning four chief Pandas of the temple came together to tell the same dream they had also dreamt at the same time. Accordingly Harideva started reciting the main Bhagavata of the temple before the Lord and continued to complete it in five years. At the end he was conferred upon the title of Bhagavatacharya for his successful recitation and meaningful explanation of the Bhagavata Purana. Then he went to Navadwipa in search of deeper knowledge and at last to live in his own place Bahari of Kamrupa, where within ten days his devotees built a temple for him, established the idol of Lakshminarayana and planted the Panchavati forest there.

At Bahari he began to live with his six principal disciples - Khagara, Govinda, Thaneswar,
Bartati, another Govinda, and Pathathi. Here he was at first troubled by twelve scoundrels (bara Khat) who had only one prostitute as their common wife. They were Bamana, Kamala, Sana, Ramdas, Patia, Guna, Ramanath, Balpak, Pagala, Haridas, Hari and Bhola. It is said that these twelve were the great demons of Lord Krishina’s time. They were killed by the lord in different occasions to be born in the Kali Age in the sacred soil of Kamarupa and for getting liberation at the initiation of human Krishna who would incarnate in the form of Harideva.

"angse ami janamibo tomasaka uddharibo mukutika labhiva pachata". 1

---------------------

- I will be born there as a part of me for your liberation, which you will get later on.

Cont’d... 93/-

---------------------

1 Mahapurush Sri Sri Harideva Kirttana - by Damodar Deva Goswami (559 Haridevabda) pp.72
One day, however, Harideva went to the house of the twelve scoundrels to try them. At the time the beautiful young prostitute threw a glance at his eyes as a welcome to his equally young and beautiful body. In return the guru had an angry look at her and she fell on the ground senseless. At the miracle sight the twelve scoundrels were much afraid and they all fell on Harideva's feet after which they were excused, initiated and accepted as the most beloved disciples and followers of his.

Then in 1460 A.D. he had married Tilottama, daughter of Janarddan Vipra. After four years he left Bahari (or Bahati) for the bank of Kalati (Kaladi) for the reason that there were only few guests to receive which he did not like at all. He wanted to have guests always to receive at his house as a domestic law and he believed that feeding guests is a unique worship which had no equals.

"annar saman aan nahi ke dan,
 bahati gramat nahi atithi Sajjan" 1

1 Mahapurush Sri Harideva Kirttan - by Sri Damodaradeva Goswami, (559 Haridevabda) pp.76
Here at Kaladi he built a temple, established a Vishnu Vigraha and maintained a big flower garden for worshipping and his son Damodara (1471 A.D.) and his two daughters Bhubaneswari (1467 A.D.) and Banamala (1475 A.D.) were born. Bhubaneswari was taught in the line of her father and she developed a high attitude to devotional life. She decided not to be bound by the bondage of marriage which might be a bar in the way of devotion. She remained unmarried and at last took the responsibility and dignity of the head of the Maneri satra. She was perhaps the first woman in the history of Vaishnavism in Assam to have such a post of the kind. Damodara died unmarried, while Banamala was married to one of Hariguru's chief disciples named Gopinath.

Hariguru had the divine spirit in him and he proved him a super human in many occasions. One day while he was coming to the place of Sankardeva to recite the Bhagavata he met a tiger on the way. He imagined the tiger to be a form of the Lord Vishnu who appeared before him out of love and threw his garland to the head of the tiger. Strangely enough the

Cont'd. 95/-
fierce tiger bowed down his head and went away. On another day he met a wild buffalo. In the manner he thought it to be a form of Vishnu and threw his garland to its horns and it ran away to the jungle. Hariguru had always borne the idea that any earthly form, living or non-living is a form of Lord Vishnu to any true Vaishnavite. And this doctrine of his uplifted many of his dearest disciples including Gopinath, his son-in-law to the Godly Position.  

Cont'd. 96/-

1 Sri Sri Haridev Jyoti - Ed. by Dr. S.N. Goswami, 1988, pp. 36.
- Gopinath became famous as Jagannath, after a miraculous incident. One Gangadhar Dwija suffered from an incurable disease (skin whitening) and started for Puri to visit the temple of Jagannatha. On the way, one night he dreampt that Lord Jagannatha asked him not to come to Puri for an idol Jagannatha, rather he should go back to the living Jagannatha at Baniakuchi who lived there in the name of Gopinath. Accordingly he went back to Baniakuchi, met and told Gopinath what he had dreampt, took initiation under him and miraculously after a few days he recovered. Since then people began to call Gopinath as Jagannatha.
Again one day the guru had to go through the paddy field of one Dhanukata of the village Palasadi. Dhanukata saw that some one was going through his paddy and he cried at the guru who that blind was to destroy his paddy. The guru did not know of it that Dhanukata in the same moment could not see anything, became blind and lay on the field. After a little while Sankardeva came and saw him, asked him the reason, advised to pray Hariguru to pardon and he did it very politely. Hariguru looked at him with his nectar eyes (amrita nayana) and Dhanukata got back his sight. Since then the wicked Dhanukata became a devotee Dhanukata of the guru.

One day it happened that twelve learned Brahmins who bore the pride of vedic knowledge came in search of a true guru. They took a tola (little less than 1/80 th part of a Kilogram) of poison to offer any able guru to eat and digest. They had decided to be initiated only by such a poison eater guru and with the purpose they went to Sankardeva at first. Sankardeva finding it to be impossible on his part, sent them to the Brahmin guru Damodardeva. Damodardeva replied that he had never been the

Cont'd.. 97/-
Nilakantha Mahadeva and suggested them to go to the senior guru Harideva. Harideva also at first refused them to take the risk but at their repeated request he consented at last. He thought that the poison was a sacred gift from the holy Brahmins and as such it came to him from the lord Vishnu. He was immediately directed by some unseen divine guide to declare - As a Vaisnavite I must accept any offer from a Brahmin.

"Brahmanara dan Karibo grahon
mahantara Ajna aache". 1

He brought salagrama jal (Sacred Water of Salagrama's bath), Vipra Pado-daka (Feet washing water of the Brahmins) and Ganga jal (3. holy water of the river Ganges). He took the tola of poison and made three parts of it. He ate the first part with the Gangajal (3), the second

Cont'd..98/-

1 Mahapurush Sri Sri Harideva Kirttan - by Sri Damodardeva Goswami, 559 Haridevabda, pp.94
with the Vipra Padodaka (2) and finished the third with the Salagrama jal (1). He fell down senseless and was lying as if dead. The twelve Brahmins were afraid that they killed a Brahmin and thereby committed the greatest sin. After a little while he got back senses and rose up. The Brahmins all bowed down at his feet and prayed him for initiating them. But Hariguru refused them all for the reason that they had tested a guru and thereby they lost the obedience to him. Being disappointed all the twelve Baladeva, Barguru, Bangshideva, Saruguru, Haricharan, Jadumani, Narayan, Gopinath, Santadeva, Bhagawan, Bhattadeva and Gopal went back. But on the way eight of them changed their minds and decided to go back to the guru with a fresh request. This time also the guru refused them all and they went back again. On the way four of them Haricharan, Jadumani, Narayan and Gopinath had a mind to come back to the guru for the last request. Now the guru changed his decision and thought that they had been tested enough repeatedly.

Cont'd..99/-
for being kept into his fold.

At first they were advised and tested for a long period of one year and then initiated serially as Narayan at first, then Haricharan and Jadumani and Gopinath at last. Before initiating he married his daughter Banamala to Gopinath and sent him to Baniakuchi to establish a satra there.

In the mean time Hariguru's name spread far and wide and it reached the king's court of Behar. The guru's cousin Puroshottama Bhattacharyya, author of the Ratnamala Vyakarana was then a court scholar of the Behar king Naranarayan. The king sent Puroshottama to Maneri satra of Kamrup to fetch the guru. Harideva responded to the call of the king, who then took initiation under the guru and established the Haripur satra on the river Torcha. After a few years he came back to Maneri to meet his end. One hundred and forty years passed over his life and the predicted Dark Moon night awaited him for the last meet. The Krishna Kabach disappeared, he

Cont'd.. 100/-
knew of his last hours on earth, bade fare well to his disciples and up flew his soul to Heaven. It was the Dark Moon (Amabashya) of the month of Jestha of the year 1566 A.D.