

# RELIGIOUS IMAGE IN MADHAVA KANDALI'S RAMAYANA AND BHANUBHAKTA'S RAMAYANA

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**ABSTRACT** --*Ramayana is one of the great epic among the two Indian epics. It is composed by Valmiki in Sanskrit. Ramayana is embedded in every stage of the life of Indian society. Also, Ramayana is embedded in social rituals, folk-traditions, religion, dances, music and literature of the people of different caste-tribes of India. The popularity of Ramayana by Valmiki has increased so much that it has been translated into all the regional languages of India. Now it is also being translated into various languages of the world. Madhava Kandali of Assam has translated the verses of the Valmiki's Ramayana to Assamese language in 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In the entire North-East India, Kandali's Ramayana was the earliest Ramayana that was composed in the regional language. In between 1840 to 1853, Nepali poet Bhanubhakta Acharya of Nepal has composed the Nepali Ramayana. It is the translation of Sanskrit 'Adhyatma Ramayana'. Despite the disruption of five century, there is much similarities and dissimilarities between the both Ramayana.*

**Keywords**--*Ramayana, Kandali, Bhanubhakta, Assamese, Nepali, religion, reflection.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

'Rama Katha' (the tales of Lord Rama) has deeply impacted upon the Indian national life. The tales of Rama has flowing through the various language, literature and culture of India. The Rama Katha, that was running as a ballad on the base of oral tradition has bound collectively under the epic Ramayana by Valmiki. But simultaneously the orally speaking tradition of Rama Katha among the people was continuing with the epic one. From 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. with the development of Modern Indian Aryan Languages, the Ramayana or other related literature has started composing with the help of preceding tales of Rama. After getting the skeleton of the main source of Ramayana by Valmiki which was written in Sanskrit, the writers in later period have started including new contents in various circumstances. In 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Madhava Kandali has translated the verses of the Valmiki's Ramayana to Assamese language. Kandali's Ramayana was the earliest Ramayana in the entire North-East India that was composed in the regional language. Nepali poet Bhanubhakta Acharya has composed the Nepali Ramayana in between 1840 to 1853. Bhanubhakta's Ramayana was the translation of Sanskrit 'Adhyatma Ramayana'. In the both Ramayanas, the both great poets have tried to reflect the socio-economic images of their own society.

## II. LITERARY REVIEW

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A few articles and books has published in Assam, Sikkim (India) and Nepal separately on Madhava Kandali's Ramayana and Bhanubhakta's Ramayana. These are – "A comparative study of the Ramayana of Madhava Kandali and that of Goswami Tulsi Dass" by Mamoni Raisom Goswami, "The Ramayana of Madhava Kandali : A Linguistic Study" by Lilawati Saikia Bora, "Bhanubhakta Acharya : His life and Selected Poems" by Jayraj Acharya etc. Now it is seen that there has not been done any research related to our proposed subject yet.

### **III. AIMS OF THE STUDY AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

Both the Ramayana in regional language have become signatory of their respective society, literature and culture in different time from historical point, both the Ramayana have equal importance. Through this study, both the Ramayana's background may glare and besides that some other relevant side may come to light. The religious life that reflected in the both Ramayana, which can be established with comparative view would be an important side of studying the subject. The comparative analysis of drawing the religious image that reflected in both the Ramayana will impact on literary, academics, religious life or social side etc.

### **IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

With the advancement of time, Valmiki's Ramayana was translated to different Indian Regional Languages like Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Nepali etc, moreover Rama Katha was composed in different languages. Amidst literature, the attitude of contemporary society reflected. Valmiki's Ramayana also get fundamentality in some sectors on different author's hand by impacted from contemporary social influences with the passage of time. This fundamentality is seen in different version of Valmiki's Ramayana in subsequent periods. But here the discussion will be based on Madhava Kandali's Assamese Ramayana and Bhanubhakta Acharya's Nepali Ramayana's analysis by drawing the images of religious life or religious beliefs with examples. In the range of subject presentation the academics and religious side of both the Ramayana's would be find out and besides that, there will be a try to search out the importance of both the Ramayana in present context. The study area is selected purposively. Purposive selection of the area is due to the fact that no studies have been conducted in this area on this topic.

### **V. SOURCES OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY**

The study will be done by mainly in analytical and descriptive method and comparative method will also be used whenever needed. Data will be collected from both primary and secondary sources. As primary data we have chosen both Assamese and Nepali Ramayana and as secondary data we have chosen related books, journals, articles, soft copies included web pages, pdf files downloaded from websites. The study is fully based on the primary data and the secondary data also used whenever needed.

### **VI. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

Madhava Kandali was the first poet of Assamese Ramayana literature. Among the Indo-Aryan Languages of North India, Madhava Kandali has translated Valmiki's Ramayana to Assamese. It can be assumed that Kandali was a Brahmin by caste. Kāvīrāj Kandali ye āmākese bulivaya Kariluhu sarbajana budhe Rāmāyan supayāra Sri Mahāmānikya ye Barāha rājāra anurudhe. <sup>1</sup>

That means, Madhava Kandali was called the Kaviraj (king of poets) and he had translated the sweet-verses of Valmiki's Ramayana by the request of king Baraha.

From the information subjects to Barahi King Mahamanikya and from the base of linguistic view point it is certain that he was a king from 14<sup>th</sup> century and reign over middle Assam or Nagaon region. In his royal court, the king of poet famed poet was Madhava Kandali. Kandali had announced that he composed Seven Kandas (chapter or parts) Ramayana. Sātkānda Rāmāyan Padabandhe Nibandhilu Lambhā Parihari Sāroddhrta. <sup>2</sup>

That means, Kandali has translated the summary of all the seven parts of Valmiki's Ramayana in seven parts. But now only five parts of Kandali's Ramayana is available. Those are Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kiskindhya Kanda, Sundara Kanda and Lanka Kanda. Presently derived Madhava Kandali's Sapta Kanda (seven parts) Ramayana's Aadi Kanda (First part) and Uttara Kanda (post part) were composed by Madhavdeva and Sankardeva.

“Currently, there are three types of text or edition available in India (a) Gauda Text (b) Deccan region's Text (c) West-Northern region's Text.” <sup>3</sup> All these texts slightly differs from each other scholars like Satyendra Sarma, Sashi Sarma have opined that Madhava Kandali have followed East Indian or Gauda Text to compose Assamese Ramayana. Satyendra Nath Sarma has written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of his book Ramayana Itibritta that Valmiki's Ramayana is consist of Seven Kanda (Chapter), 500 articles and 24 thousands slokas (couplets), on the contrary, Madhava Kandali has translated the complete Ramayana by Valmiki in about seven thousands four hundreds eighty verses.

Bhanubhakta was born in a well-to-do Brahmin family of the Ramgha village of Tanahu District that was situated 130 KM West side from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. We know that Nepal is India's neighboring country. There are various opinion about the time of Bhanubhakta Acharya's birth. According to Motiram Bhatta, the first biographer of Bhanubhakta, in 1812 A.D that is 29 Asadha, in 1869, Vikram Samvat he was born. Editor of 'Bhanubhakta Ramayana', Surya Bikram Gyawali mentioned in the preface of the book that Bhanubhakta was born on 29 Asadha, 1971 in Vikram Samvat which is 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1814 A.D.

Though Bhanubhakta never mentioned about his date of birth and year, even the place he born in his compositions, but in a poem written in 1853 A.D. (1910 in Vikram Samvat) he mentioned that-

‘cālis barsha bhayā ma putra pani ek mātrai cha ātha barshako’ <sup>4</sup>

That means, Bhanubhakta have stepped into 40 years, but his son is one and only eight years old. This specification indicates that his birth time was about 1813-14 A.D. (1870-71 in Vikram Samvat).

Bhanubhakta's grandfather Krishna Acharya was an eminent scholar. According to his grandfather advice, Bhanubhakta came to Kashi Hindu Vishwavidyalaya of India for about 6 years to study Sanskrit Prakarana (Drama), literature, Astrology, Arithmetic, philosophy etc. Towards the end of his life, Bhanubhakta choosed rural, household life, priest and composing poetry as his workplace. He died in 1868 A.D. (1925 in Vikram Samvat).

Bhanubhakta Acharya was the writer belonged to the preliminary era of the Nepali poetry (1770-1780 A.D. (means 1827-1857 in Vikram Samvat) It can be said that the initiation of Nepali literature happened in his hand. Bhanubhakta had established the orally spoken neglected Khaskura dialect (Nepali) by common Nepali people into the Nepali literature. His erstwhile poets composed literature in Sanskrit or Sanskritised Nepali language. Common readers or listeners find these compositions tough to understand. Bhanubhakta had slipped away from the tradition and started composing in Khas dialect. Indeed his compositions were accepted as their own literature by almost all readers listeners. “Bhanubhakta received the honor of ‘Adikavi’ for being the poet who actually writes poems by understanding the inner essence of poetry.”<sup>5</sup>

Bhanubhakta Acharya’s first and main recognition in his Ramayana. He translated the synopsis of Adhyatma (spiritual) Sanskrit Ramayana was composed by taking the Rama’s story of Valmiki’s Ramayana and added philosophical and devotional doctrine on it. There is no proper information received about the composer and composing year of this Ramayana. According to some scholars it was composed in 13<sup>th</sup> century.

It is mentioned that, the both Ramayana discussed above are translated books. Comparing to the fundamental composition, in translated compositions translator get less chance for reflecting the religious image of contemporary society. In spite of that, talented, intelligent, religious and socially responsible translators skillfully try to reflect the images of contemporary religious life. Because they are concerned that the images of contemporary religious life reflected on their readers heart will be helpful to create the relationship between writers and readers for that particular literary works. Fortunately, both Madhava Kandali and Bhanubhakta Acharya are influential religious and social responsible poet and translator. Both of them had translated Ramayana to their respective regional languages from Sanskrit for the people of that contemporary society who did not know to read or write Sanskrit. That’s why both the translators have tried according to their capacity to keep the relationship with the main source Sanskrit of their various sides of religious life to bring it to light.

Through region, one can access the information about the thinkings, ideology, activities, behavior and customs of a society. On the other hand, through the prevailing religion, we can know about mental stage and reforms and ideology of a society.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century Assam, there was a thin trend of Vaishnavism flowing along with Shiva-Shakta means of religion in the society. This Vaishnavism got extended with the leadership of saints like Sankardeva, Madhavdeva in the later time. In the essays of Hema Saraswati’s ‘Prahlad Charit’, Haribar Bipra’s ‘Babrubahan Yuddha’, ‘Tambradhvaj Yuddha’, Madhava Kandali’s ‘Ramayana’, we found the proof of flowing the Vaishnavism in the Pre-Sankara era in the 14 century of Assam.

On the other hand, in the contemporary society of Bhanubhakta, Bhakti trend got importance. In the Nepali poetry, the critiques have divided into three eras such as First era (Early age), Middle era and Modern era. Giving importance to Middle era, the Bhakti trend has divided into three types.

- (a) Krishna Bhakti trend,
- (b) Rama Bhakti trend and
- (c) Nirguna Bhakti trend

Among the tri-flow of devotion, the publicity and spreading of devotion to Rama has been possessing the Nepali social life. Lord Rama is the savior of the poet belong to Rama bhakti trend. The base book of their Rama Katha was-“Adhyatma Ramayana” (in Sanskrit language). That’s why in Bhanubhakta’s composition, the glory of

devotion to Rama (Rama bhakti) is found from all side. Of course, Bhanubhakta has taken Rama bhakti as main thing, though somewhere he mentioned about Krishna or Vishnu, Shiva, Lakshmi, Durga etc Gods and Goddesses.

**Worship of Lord Vishnu or Vaishnavism :** The worship and acceptance of Lord Vishnu is Vaishnavism. It is one of the major Hindu denomination. Vaishnavism also called Vishuism. It considers Lord Vishnu as the Supreme Lord of this Universe. In Vaishnavism, Dashavatara (the ten incarnation) of Lord Vishnu such as Lord Krishna, Rama, Hari Narashimha, Kalki, Parshurama etc. considered to be a avatara (incarnation or form) of Lord Vishnu. One cannot assume Madhava Kandali is free from the influence of Vaishnavism after seeing some devotionally glorious verses of his Ramayana.

Madhava Kandali's Ramayana, we found a thin impact of Worship of Lord Vishnu or Vaishnavism. While discussing about Kandali's Ramayana's religious side, at first we can point out the Vishnu puja performed by Kaushalya narrated as in Ayodhya Kanda. Rama after following his father's promise, taking the decision of exile, came near to his mother asking for farewell and saw mother worshipping Lord Vishnu.

Vishnuka pujante dekhilanta nija māvaDui bhāi mili pranāmila tāna pāva. <sup>6</sup>

That means, Rama saw that his mother was worshipping Lord Vishnu. Both Rama and Lakshmana honored their mother touching her feet.

From this description, one can assume that there was a trend of Vaishnavism flowing in the contemporary society. Besides that, at the end of every chapter of 'Kandali's Ramayana' the verses 'Bola Ram' (call Rama Rama), 'Bola Daki Ram Ram' (call by shouting Rama Rama) support the statement.

On the other hand, Bhanubhakta has mentioned in his Ramayana about the worship of Vishnu to specify it clearly that Rama is also the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. After receiving the boon of Lord Brahma, Ravana became extremely oppressive and started torturing deities like Indra and all others. Then the deities went to Lord Vishnu requesting for relief from such atrocities. Saba Indrādi ti Vishnuka hujurmā pauci sharanmā payyā

Yasa Rāvan kana māri deu Bhagavan ! bhanyā ta binti gayya. <sup>7</sup> It means, Indra and other deities arrived near Lord Vishnu and requested falling on his feet to kill Ravana.

Again Bhanubhakta shows that Kaushalya was busy in worshipping Lord Hari (Krishna) when Rama went to inform about his ensile to his mother. . . . Rāmachandra māi thyai gayāKaushalya pani bhaktile Harijikā dhyamā rahyāki thiyin. <sup>8</sup>

**Worship of Lord Shiva or Shaivism :** The worship and acceptance of Lord shiva is Shaivism. It is also a major Hindu denomination and it believes Lord Shiva as the creator and destroyer of the world.

There is lot of description about the worship of Lord Shiva or Shaivism in Kandali's Ramayana. According to Upendra Chandra Lekharu, there was huge continuation Shiva Puja (worshipped to Lord Shiva) during the time of Kandali and that's why the thoughts of Shiva was acquiring the psyche of more than half of his brain. Notably, in the Kandali's Ramayana more than sixty times, the name of 'Shiva' was mentioned. In Ayodhya Kanda, the followers of Rama as yogi was chanting 'Shiva, Shiva and the opium pouch carried by them proved the existence of Shiva community. Similarly, in the reference of various supplementary through examples the name of Shiva and Parvati are found. Mukhe Shiva Shiva sumarante āt Palāilā yata tapasi. <sup>9</sup>

That means, chanting the name of 'Shiva', all the Ascetics went away. Again, Kandali has mentioned that

Bhaktibhāve tushiyu Shankara Deva HariSatvare āsibu mai banabāsa tari. <sup>10</sup>

It means, worship Lord Shiva (Shankara) with true devotion and successfully return from exile. On the other hand, as Rama bhakti and Krishna bhakti, Shiva bhakti- a tradition of Shiva religion was also running in the contemporary society of Bhanubhakta. There are lots of references about Shiva Puja in his Ramayana. In the Sri Yuddha Kanda, there was mention of establishment of Shiva Idol by Rama. Shiva bhani Raghonathle murti thāpyā tasai tā. <sup>11</sup>

In the entire Ramayana by Bhanubhakta, the glory of Rama bhakti is spreading. The activity of establishing the statue of Shiva by Rama, the root of Rama bhakti has presented the importance Shiva Puja in the contemporary society. Bhanubhakta has mentioned about Shiva Puja in other in various context.

The monster Kaalmeji intriguingly tried to make Hanuman late when he went to bring Sanjeevini (in Hindu mythology, a cure-all plant which can reverse even death) medicine for Laxmana. Kaalmeji was disguising as a sage and offering Shiva Puja to deceive Hanuman. Yogi jhai bhai Kālanemi Shivako puja bidhānle gari Kun ritale Hanumāna lai thagula bhannyā irādā ghari. <sup>12</sup>

It means Kaalmeji was worshipping Lord Shiva disguising as yogi (sage) with the intention of deceiving Hanuman. Mentioning of such references proves that, at that time people have deep faith on Shiva Puja. Otherwise Kaalmeji can worship other Gods and Goddesses. On the basis of people's believes over Shiva Puja, he was confirmed that Hanuman would come after seeing such pujas. Besides that, Bhanubhakta has mentioned about Shiva-Parvati in various contexts. Bhanubhakta has composed his Ramayana by mixing it with philosophical thinking's and that's why he glorified Rama bhakti or about Rama in every part of the Ramayana

**.Worship of Shakti or Shaktism :** It is an another major Hindu denomination. Shaktism is based on a doctrine of energy, power, the eternal goddess. In Shaktism, the metaphysical reality is considered metaphorically a woman and Shakti is regarded as the Supreme godhead. There are many goddesses such as Kali, Parvati, Durga, Bhuvaneshvari, Chandi, Chamunda etc. whom considered aspects of the same Supreme goddess in Shaktism.

In the Kandali's Ramayana, along with the Vishnu Puja and Shiva Puja, the information of Shakti Puja are also found. The reference of 'Chandi Devi'(Goddess Chandi) are found in his book various times. In the Lanka Kanda, Rama told that he would worship Goddess Chandi by beheading Ravana before his spy Akasara.

Dasha shira chediboho Rana Chandi pujiboho Ravana huibeka balidāna. <sup>13</sup>

That means, by worshipping Goddess Chandi, I (Rama) will cut off the ten heads of Ravana and sacrifice it in front of the goddess.

Moreover, before entering into battle ground, Brajramatra performs Chandi Puja. In various references, through the examples of comparing Sita with Chandi, the Chandi's references are initiated.

Nārāyana pāshe yena Lakshmi DeviHarara kolāta Chandi. <sup>14</sup>

In the war, Ravana has given the message of Rama-Lakmana's death to Sita after Indrajeet lockup Lakshmana with Nagpash (Snake rope), Sita went to see her husband and brother-in-law and started worshipping goddess seeing them senseless. Rāmata adhika mora Gosanita sneha. <sup>15</sup>

It means, I (Sita) have more devotion and affection for Goddess than Rama.

In Bhanubhakta's Ramayana in search of worships of Shakti, we found that, Kaushalya worships Lakshmi Devi and Durga Devi for that happening any disruption hearing about the decision of the king of appointing Rama as the Prince of Ayodhya in Ayodhya Kanda. Yasmā bighna kadāpi parna na diyun Lakshmi ra Durga bhaiKaushalyā pani yo bicār gari tanhā garthin puja deviko. <sup>16</sup>

It means in this kind of great occasions for happens any disruption Kaushalya offers puja to Lakshmi and Durga Devi.

From this kind of description of Bhanubhakta, one can know that in the contemporary society there was a trend of pujas, specially Lakshmi and Durga Puja was running.

**Worship of other Deities :** According to Hinduism, there are total of 330 million deities are worshiped. In various ancient texts like Vedas, Puranas etc. mentioned about the deities and their worships.

In Kandali's Ramayana, he has described about the pujas and prayers afford to the Fire God, Saturn, Moon to get their grace. Aganika pujilā akshata tila durbe. <sup>17</sup>That means, it remains intact by worshipping Fire God (Agani or Agni Deva).

Again Kandali has mentioned in an another verse as : Shanaiswara bhaye sabe sarbaswa tejayaSomagraha nāme phul pātaku nedaya. <sup>18</sup>

It means, everyone gave up everything because of the fear of Shani (God of Saturn). No one gives a leaf in the name of Somagraha (Moon).

In the result of religious beliefs, people wear guard shell and chant mantras to get protection from danger. This side has been initiated in Kandali's Ramayana.

Devatā pujiya Devi kari samāpatiMangala karilā mantra japiyā samprati. <sup>19</sup>

The main motive of composing the above essays in accepted as the outcome of continued religion and religious beliefs. These have represented contemporary society and reported the statement 'Kavisava nibandhaya loka byavahāre' (the poets compose their poetry by paying attention to the needs of the people) by Kandali. On the other hand, in Bhanubhakta's Ramayana, except for the deities mentioned earlier, there is no mention of worship of other deities.

In this way, Madhava Kandali and Bhanubhakta has reflected the religious image through their Ramayanas.

## VII. FINDINGS

After studying the religious image of both Ramayana, we came to these findings :

(a) The religious rituals, traditions and customs of their own society have specially reflected by the both poets in the both Ramayana.

(b) Both poets have drawn the image of devotional life of their contemporary society in their Ramayana.

(c) There is much similarities have reflected in the both Ramayana about the worships to God.

(d) Kandali translated his Ramayana to Assamese directly from Valmiki's Ramayana. But Bhanubhakta translated his Ramayana from 'Adhyatma Ramayana' in Sanskrit - a philosophical and devotional edition of Valmiki's Ramayana.

(e) Spite having various similarities and dissimilarities, both Ramayana are glorified by their own qualities.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Valmiki first propagated the tale of Lord Rama as Ramayana in the folk society. He expressed the first sloka of the world as "Mā Nishād Pratisthām tvamagamah shāshvati samā" from which he inspired to composed the whole Ramayana. So he is called 'Adikavi' (the earliest poet). Same way, Madhava Kandali is called 'Adikavi' in

the context of Assamese literature. Because he is first translator of Sanskrit Ramayana in regional Assamese language. Bhanubhakta Acharya also called 'Adikavi' as he composed the poetry by understanding the inner essence of poetry. Bhanubhakta composed his Ramayana after five century from the time of Kandali's Ramayana. But both Ramayana has a lot of similarities. The culture of Assam (India) and Nepal are primarily based on Vedas, Upanishad, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Economic, Matrimonial, religious, educational etc. in various reasons, a placid communication between India and Nepal is continuing from the prehistoric age. In our discussion, we noticed that the both Ramayana are glorified by their own qualities. The social consciousness of both poets Kandali and Bhanubhakta is very serious. Presently, the impact of globalization has drawing various language, literature, culture near to each other. In this context, it becomes important to analyze what kind of composition of Ramayana is going on in regional languages.

## **IX. LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD**

No study can covers all aspects of a research problem. Finally, the research done by us is not the only and completed research. "Religious image of Madhava Kandali's Ramayana and Bhanubhakta's Ramayana" is a vast subject in research. There is every possibility of study in this subject in future also.

## **X. AUTHOR'S NOTE**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The author have not received any kind of financial support from anyone for this study or publication this article.

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5. --- : (223)
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