



Translation Literature in the Cooch Behar State: The Reign of *Māhārājā* Harendranaryana

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At the beginning of the sixteenth century *Māhārājā* Visva Simha founded an independent Kingdom at *Kāmatā* in North East India. With the establishment of the independent State he helped in blossoming the wave of *Āryan* Culture and Sanskrit Literature. So during his reign and the reign of his son *Māhārājā* Naranaryana the *Pundits* began to practice of translating the Sanskrit literature it became to be enriched day by day during this period. But since the time of *Māhārājā* Lakshminaryana this trend of translation works began to be deemed. When Haranderanaryana became the king of the State after the demise of *Māhārājā* Dhairyendranaryana in the nineteenth century the practice of translating Sanskrit literature reached at its apogee. Even the translation work became the pioneer of the creation of independent literary style of the period.

Māhārājā Harendranaryana basically took the administration as the king of the State of Koch Behar in 1801. He himself had a great knowledge in *Pārsi*, Sanskrit and Bengali. Besides he was very efficient in music and art. He reigned about a long period of 53 years. As he was greatly attached with translation works he himself composed many works and translated number of Sanskrit works in Bengali besides his administrative activities. Not only he, but all the pundits who came in the State of Cooch Behar contributed very much in this respect. Under his patronage their efforts in this context of creation of literary works and translation works turned the period as a golden period of literary activities in the State particularly in respect of translation literature.

However, the trend of translation literature of the *Kāmatā* State flowed in three branches: 1. Translation of *Purāṇas* including the *Bhāgavatas*; 2. Translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and 3. Translation of the *Mahābhārata*. All these three trends of translation literature also flourished during the time of the *Māhārājā* Harendranaryana. Efforts have been made here to highlight over all these three branches of translation literature under the patronage and reign of *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan.

In respect of translations of the *Purāṇas* it has been found that *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan himself translated the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇas*. However he did not complete translation of the middle volume of the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇas*.

So we get the incomplete manuscript of the translation. At the end of the manuscript in *bhaṇitā* he described about different Gods and Goddesses, especially about the Goddess *Kālikā*. He composed it in verse following the *payār* and *tripadī* rhymes. He also eulogized Goddess *Kālikā* at the beginning of *Uttarkhaṇḍa* of *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* through 23 letters' trend of rhymes.¹

The '*Uttarkhaṇḍa*' of *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* (*Puthi* No. 22) was composed in Sanskrit language during the time of *Māhārājā* Visvasimha. *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan himself translated it in Bengali. Even he mentioned the date of composing of the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* (*Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa Uttarkhaṇḍa*, *Puthi* No. 22, *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan).²

When the *Māhārājā* started for *Bārāṇasī* in 1836 A.D. he had began to translate the *Skanda Purāṇa*. However, he could not complete the work. So he invited *Dvija Kirttichandra* of *Mithilā* and directed him to complete the work.³ In the *Brahmottora* Part of the *Skanda Purāṇa* he mentioned the purpose of his involvement in translation of that work. There he wrote that this was done for the better understanding of the work for the common people about the poems. He wrote that:

“Skandapurāṇeka bhāṣābande śūracan I
Kabir sakal loke bujhan kāraṇ II
Prākṛta mānabe tāre nā pāre bujhite I
Emate bāsanā kari bhāṣa biracite II”

(The *Skanda Purāṇa* has been composed in such a way that the Poets only can understand the meaning, the Common people cannot understand it, and so this is being translated)⁴

The *Māhārājā* Harendranarayana also translated part of the Sanskrit *Padma Purāṇa* which is known as the '*Kriyāyogasāra*'. The manuscript of this work has been preserved in the North Bengal State Library. It was published in printed form by *Sarat Chandra Ghoshal* in 1328 B.S. from the *Cooch Behar Sāhitya Sabhā*. It seemed that *Māhārājā* Harendranarayana could not complete this work also. His name is seen only in the first to fourth chapter of this work. Most probably the remaining portions had been completed by the court poets. This has been noticed during the discussion in this respect there is another translation work in manuscript form on *Padma Purāṇa*. The *Puthi* number is also same (*Puthi* No. 20). This manuscript is also preserved in the North Bengal State Library, *Cooch Behar*. This was composed in 1168 B.S. in the Bengali *Mont of Asada* by *Baidyanath*. However, it seems that some of the parts have been composed by *Narayandev* as it is mentioned in the introductory phase.

Another poet of *Cooch Behar*, *Ramlochan Sharma* wrote another text entitled '*Kriyāyogasāra*'. It is regarded older than that of the *Sarat Chandra Ghoshal*. However, the subject matter of this work is different. Mainly the 26th chapter of the *Padma Purāṇa* has been translated in this work.⁵

Now we may come to the second trend of the translation work that is the translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* during the time of our discussion. A tendency of translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* literature under monarchical patronage was seen first during the time of *Māhārājā* Harendranarayana. Prior to that there were individual efforts of translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* but that was very less than that of the *Mahābhārata*. But under the patronage of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan there were simultaneous efforts of translation of the complete *Rāmāyaṇa*. There were twenty five poets in the court of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan and the *Māhārājā* himself was engaged in the work with them. Regarding the cause of this composition he mentioned that

‘*Śrī Harendranaryan prabandha kailā racan Devabhāṣā Mānuṣī Bhāṣā*’

(Sri Harendranarayana composed essays from the language of the God to the language of common people.)⁶

Here it has been tried to indicate the language of the common people as the ‘*Mānuṣī Bhāṣā*’. It may be said that the *Māhārājā* who was affectionate to the subjects choose this language taking consideration of the common people of the State of Cooch Behar. The *Māhārājā* himself translated the *Sundar Kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The collections of this work have been kept in the North Bengal State Library, Cooch Behar in the form *Puthi* No. 60 and *Puthi* No. 65. In this work at first it is mentioned in the introductory portion that at the time of second day of *Kṛṣṇa Pakṣa* in the month of *Agrahāyaṇ* on Monday when the Surya Dev reached at the *Bṛ̥scik* the translation began. However, there is no mention of the year here. The *Puthi* No 60, the first one is written on the basis of the portions from the first chapter to 69 chapters. The second *Puthi* began from 40th chapter. So it is found that the same chapter is also in the two *Puthis*. But in comparative discussion it has been found that in the same chapters of the two *Puthis* there were many exceptions in curriculum. It seems that after the composition of the first *Puthi* the second one started from the 40th chapter by the *Māhārājā* Harendranaryana. In this respect it should be mentioned here that the second *Puthi* was published by S.C. Ghoshal under the name of “*Sundar Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*.” in Bengal 1339 BS from the Cooch Behar *Sāhitya Sabhā* in printed form.⁷

Here it should be added that though the theme of the two translations on the *Uttarkāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* during the time of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan were same there was difference in description. So, some think that the whole of the *Kāṇḍa* was not translated by the *Māhārājā* in same period.⁸ Harendranarayan applied taral payār, ekādaśī chanda and laghu caupadī in the composition of the *Uttarkāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The citations may be given in this regard:

Example of taral Payār:

“*Ār tār śudhubbār bathśabda cāy I*

jaladaninada sama samgaḍ karāy II

Example of ekādaśī chanda:

“Cintā kari hār̥dya nija antare/langul darśan karen pare II”

Example of Laghu Choupadi:

“Cikur lambita, Caraṇ Chumbita Hāila Nisthalita, tār takhan I

Āsi Sacakita mati maracita pālā prithibita teji sadan II”

He in his work gave introduction of Krittivas and Madhavkandali. There is no bhaṇitā in Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa. So here the originality of his writing is seen. He gave this introduction in two ways: the first one was in four or six lines and the second one in ten, twelve, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen lines. One example from each is being cited here:⁹

Example of Laghu Bhaṇitā:

“Iti Śrī Sundarkāṇḍe Vālmiki-Praṇita I

Laṅkādahe sarganām rasāmay gīt II

Caturtha panchās sarga hāla samāpan I

Vala Rām nāam mana bhariyā vadan II

Śrī Harendra Bhupe kara Rāma kṛpāmay I

Tāribe śamandāy ithe nāhi bhay II

Dīrgha Bhaṇitā:

“Iti Śrī Sundarkāṇḍe Vālmikiracan I

Laṅgurdipan sargag hāla samāpan II

Triti pañcaśata sargag hāla birām I

Teja mana āna kāma japa Rāma nāma II

Dina hoy kṣaya āgunaya samannita I

Tabhu durācār mana māthāya mohita II

Bibhog-bijog bāñchā kakhana nā hobe I

Dine dine āsā mana birddhi se hābe II

Kabe hena hobe labe mukhe Rāma nāma I

Atahapara bujhi mana karma bate Rāma II

Jāhōk tāhok rōk se kathā akhān I

Samayata bismaraṇ nā hābā mana II

Śuna Rāma kṛpādhām āmi mandamati I

Chay ṛpubaśe āmi abasā saṁprati II

Tomar se ichā michā ākṣep āmar I

Nijaguṇe Jā kara ebār guṇādhār II

Śrī Harendrabhūpe kay Rāma dayāmaya I

Antime hṛdaye jena hāo uday II

Māhārājā Harendranarayan followed both Kṛttivāsa and Vālmīki in translation of the Rāmāyaṇa. However, in most of the part he gave trace over the original work and in this respect he became very successful. However, in some places he included his own. For example shelter taken by Vibhiṣaṇ, taking away power of Hanuman etc may be mentioned. In this respect Sarat Chandra Ghoshal wrote that “*Māhārājā* Harendranarayan made efforts of translation in the original form. But being unable to realize the real meaning in many places the translation turned into other way. *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan in many places followed Kṛttivas in translation. But the specialty of his translation was the effort to follow the original one so far as possible.”¹⁰

Another aspect may be noticed in this context. Harendranarayan not only himself remained engaged in this translation work. Besides his involvement about seventeen poets translated the Rāmāyaṇa under the patronage and financial support of the *Māhārājā*. However, most of them are missing now with passing of time. Among them the names of Rudradeva, Raghurama, Brajasundar, Saradananda, Satyananda, Srinath Dvija, Lakshiram are available in the record. The social features of the time have been reflected in their works. However, they gave trace more over Valmīki Rāmāyan in translation.¹¹

However, in context of the situation the poets translated the summary somewhere and sensationally somewhere. In case of necessity the narrations, descriptions had been summarized. For example the incidents of War in *Laṅkā Kāṇḍa* of the Rāmāyaṇa had been changed and shortened. On the other somewhere it has been described in explanation. For example the incident of ‘*Bālivadh*’ and ‘*Sītā-Aṅgusā Saṁvād*’ may be mentioned. However these changes did not happen on the basis of any particular law or rule.¹²

Another feature of this translation work was the prominent presence of ‘*Karuṇrasa*’ in the Rāmāyaṇa whereas in the translation works during the time of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan ‘*Śṛṅgār rasa*’ was more prominent. In describing beauty of Sita, Melancholy of Rama in absence of Sita, describing of the māyā of Suparnakha etc. reflect more *Śṛṅgār*

rasa than Karuṇa rasa. This proved the originality of their compositions. The poet Rudra Deva translated the 'Aranyakāṇḍa' of the Rāmāyaṇa. Here he proved his originality describing the life history of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan, his administration besides the description of the events of Ramchandra. Again the court poet Raghuram composed *Rāmkaṭhā* in the form of Gōḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. Before going to the exile in forest when Ram had come to Kaushalya for seeing off then the mourn blessings of a Bengali mother became original than the original text. So, though there the gravity of the original Rāmāyaṇa could not be maintained the court poets of the Cooch Behar State could make a separately original trend of literary writing.¹³

During the reign of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayan most of the translation works were based on the Mahābhārata. The *Māhārājā* himself translated four Parvas of the Mahābhārata in Bengali. They are Sabhā Parva (76 No. Puthi), Aiśik Parva (Puthi No. 73), Śalya Parva (Puthi No. 80) and the Śānti Parva (Puthi No.29). Among them the first three have been preserved in the North Bengal State Library and the Śānti Parva has been preserved in the Cooch Behar Sāhitya Sabhā. It is thought that the translated Śānti Parva was mainly based on the "Preta Upākhyān" of the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata. The Number of the Patras are 1 to 13. In the introductory phase it is mentioned that-

“Iti Śānti Parva preta upākhyānanāma I

Adhyāya birāma sabe bala Rāma Rāma II

Samānta hāla kathā śuna sādhujana I

Pada biracila Śrī Harendranarayana II”

So this introductory phase is the proof of that Hrendranarayana translated the Puthi No. 29 named the Śānti Parva.¹⁴ It is known about that Hrendranarayan translated Śānti Parva. But he did not compose it himself only. The pages from the beginning to the 27th was translated by Dviya Joydeva, Harendranarayan translated from the page 28th to page 149th and the pages from 150 to 182 were done by Dviya Vrajasundar. (Dipak Kr. Roy, p. 134). There is no much information about the ancestry and residence of those poets. But it is certain that all of them became engaged in the translation works under the direction from the Maharaja Harendranarayan. The first poet of the *Sabhā Parva*, Joydeva was the court poet of the *Māhārājā* Harendranarayana. He began his work in the ideal of Byāsdeva, ulogisation of the Devi and with Rājpraśasti.

Another poet of Sabhā Parva, Poet Brahma Sundara described the incidents of humiliation of Draupadi in the court of the Kauravas in his own style. The incident of the Sabhā Parva was presented by the poet following the original one so far as possible. Duryodhan, noticing hesitation, afraid and confusion on the part of the Pāṇḍavas sent Duhśāsan to bring Draupadi forcefully in the Court. Being fearful Draupadi tried to take shelter among the in-house women. (Sabhā Parva, Puthi No. 76, p. 159/Ka). Again when Duhśāsan made Draupadi to stand like a maid in front of all of the Court...”

Dvija Raghurama, the Court poet of the Mahārājā Harendranarayan first translated the Mahābhārata. On request the Mahārājā he translated Bhiṣma Parva, Śānti Parva and the part of the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata. He followed Vyāsdeva in original. Another translator came to be known during his time in the court of the Mahārājā named Dvija Vaidyanath. On request of the Mahārājā he translated Moṣal Parva, Śānti Parva and the part of the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata. In all these three translations the description of the nature had been given much importance. However, the date of these compositions is not known in particular. Only in the introductory part of the Śānti Parva the date has been mentioned. “Sobhana...”¹⁵

In 1771 A.D. Dvija Lakshmiram translated Bana Parva and Karna Parva. It is known from a Puspika of the Karna Parva that he also translated the Shalya Parva of the Mahabharata. Like the others he also followed the geata Saga Byasdeva. However the originality is also reflected in it. It may be mentioned here thus:

“Sanjay vadati tathā”¹⁶

The Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata was translated by the five poets following the direction of the Mahārājā Harendranarayan. Among them the most important was Dvija Mahinath. He translated most of the difficult portions of the Vana Parva. He did not mention details of his ancestry in his work. Even he did not mention the names of his father or mother and of his early residence. It is known that on the direction of the Mahārājā he also translated the Aśvamedha Parva. The date of its composition was 1754 Śaka Erā or 1832 A.D. We come to know many more poets who wrote the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata such as Madhabananda, Manohar Dasa etc. However, there is no mention of Madhabananda in any of the introductory part of the Vana Parva. Dvija Valarama did not translation more than some parts of the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata. From the introductory part it comes to know that he was Brhamin by caste. We get the name of Dvija Ramanath after 311 pages of the Vana Parva. At the beginning of his writing the eulogisation and respect to Vyāsa deva were mentioned. Another important poet in the line of translation of the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata was Dvija Paramananda. It seems that he began to translate the Vana Parva first.

He was *Pundit* in Tarkaśāstra (Logical science). At the beginning of the Vana Parva he mentioned a list of the chronology of the *Mahārājās* of the Cooch Behar State from Visvasimha to Harendranarayan. It is very important source for the history of the State of Cooch Behar. Not only had this he described the different aspects of the State and its geographical condition. He described the nature of the State in a part of the Vana Parva.

Another Court Poet during the reign of the *Mahārājā* Harendranarayan was Kirti Chandra who translated the *Āśramik Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. From the ‘Devi Vandanā’ of Goddess Kālī it seems that he was the follower of the Shākta sect. The last translator of the State of Cooch Behar during the time of the *Mahārājā* Harendranarayan was the Poet Madhav Chandra. Within eighteen pages he completed the “*Svargārohan Parva*” of the *Mahābhārata*. He translated the Parva in 1754 Śaka Erā. It should be mentioned contextually that Ananta Kāndali translated the *Rājsuya* part of the *Mahabharata* from the court of the Cooch Behar State. However, under patronage of which monarch he composed it cannot be known.¹⁷

After the scrutiny of all the translation works during the reign of the *Mahārājā* Harendranarayan it can be realized that some kind of unity came into being between the Sanskrit language and the Bengali language during this time. Not only is this it also clear that the regional language of the time also took place greatly in the literature of the time. In the translations of the *Purāṇas* through the various *purāṇic* narratives and sub-narratives the *Purāṇa* literature could be spread among the common people very easily. After the sixteenth century for a long 200 years the practice of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was stopped. During the reign of the *Mahārājā* Harendranarayan in the nineteenth century the practice of the *Rāmāyaṇa* began in new way again under his direct supervision. Within a very short time by the initiative of the *Mahārājā* the translation work on the *Rāmāyaṇa* became completed. With this the social background of the period also became reflected. Last but not the least important is that almost all the Parvas were translated during this time. The process of poetic writings based on the different narratives of the *Mahābhārata* was also initiated. It is doubtful whether there was so vast practice of the *Mahābhārata* prior to that. So, it can be said undoubtedly the period of the *Mahārājā* Harendranarayan may claim as the golden period of the translation work.

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