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A Comparative study on the *Raghuvamśam* and the *Sābin Ālun*

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ABSTRACT

The great epic *Rāmāyaṇ am* is one of the ancient and prominent treatises of the world literature, which flows the origin of Indian culture and civilization. The main objective of this composition is to spread out the human ethics through the incidences of social life. The central character of the *Rāmāyaṇ am* is Rāmacandra, the supreme-being or incarnation of the lord Viṣ ṇ u, who is the son of king Daśaratha of Ayodhyā. Although, by virtue he is authoritative, but all the human feelings and behaviours are clearly expressed through the heroic character Rāmacandra. The heart-touched character Rāma and life story of Rāma flourished to the common society from the origin text of the *Rāmāyaṇ am* composed by Ṛ ṣ i Vālmīki. For the reason, the admiration of the whole story and dynamic characters of the *Rāmāyaṇ am* have a great impact in the midst of common ethnic groups of India as well as South-East Asia. The *Raghuvamśam* was composed by *Mahākavi* Kālidāsa, which is originally based on Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇ am*. The story of the *Raghuvamśam* is so renowned in Sanskrit literature, as it is borrowed from the great epic *Rāmāyaṇ am*. The *Rāmāyaṇī* literature is conventionally transformed into various Oral-traditions and Folk-literatures. Simultaneously in the first part of 14th century, Mādhava Kaṇ ḍ alī had composed the *Kathārāmāyaṇ a* in Assamese language. With the influence of the *Kathārāmāyaṇ a*, the Kārbi, one of the prominent tribes of Assam, had initiated a great living Oral tradition in *Kārbi* language on *Rāmakathā*, known as the *Sābin Ālun*, i.e., The Broken Song. Significantly, in the *Sābin Ālun*, Rāmacandra is characterized as a very common person of *Kārbi* society. There royalism of Rāma, who belongs to the Raghu dynasty, is not found here. Therefore, it signifies the socio-cultural transformation of the *Rāmakathā* from Indian Classical literature to Ethnic literature. An elaborate study of the diverse manifestations of the *Rāmakathā* tradition is essential to identify its significance as well as influences in a society. This research paper is a humble attempt to know about the depiction and integration of the origin story from the main stem of Indian classics to the ethnicity, which inspire for the depth study to identify the interpretation of the traditional folk tales.

1. Introduction

According to the Indian tradition of literature the *Rāmāyaṇ am* is very closer to the Mythology. The *Rāmāyaṇ am* is the first ornate poetry, which is called the *Ādikāvya* and the composer Ṛṣ i Vālmīki as the *Ādikavi* of the ancient Indian literature. The great epic *Rāmāyaṇ am* is an immense classic literature of India, where the Indian cultural heritages are described. In India, the countless exhibitions of the *Rāmakathā* give a picture of the amalgamation of unity in diversity. Basically, the life history of Rāma and the contemporary socio-cultural scenario are depicted by Vālmīki in the *Rāmāyaṇ am*. The integrity of the values and ethics of Indian philosophy have also a social importance. As the life story of Rāma has played an intense role in the life, thought and culture of the Indian heritage, this classic tradition has been retold in numerous ways of literature to the values and ethos of diverse communities. That is why, the *Rāmāyaṇ ī* literature is called the Universal literature of the world. It is said that the story of *Rāmāyaṇ a* is being relevant till the end of the time -----*kuru rāmakathā pūṇ yāṁ ślokabaddhāṁ manoramām/ yāvat sthāsyanti girayaḥ saritaśca mahītale// tāvadrāmāyaṇ akathā lokeṣ u pracariṣ yati/ yāvadrāmasya ca kathā tvat kṛ tā pracariṣ yati// tāvaduda dhamadhaśca tvarṇ mallokeṣ u nivatsyasi//* (*Rāmāyaṇ am*, 1.2.35-37) In the later period, by the influence of the Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇ am*, various scholars composed and translated their works on the basic concept or the subject-matter of the epic *Rāmāyaṇ am*. Thus, there are many compositions or the folk traditions observed with the interpretations and socio-cultural transformation of the origin *Rāmāyaṇ am*. However, the *Rāmāyaṇ am* was written in Sanskrit language, but now-a-days the *Rāmāyaṇi* literatures have found in various regional languages of India, viz. Kashmiri, Tamil, Bengali, Hindi, Assamese, etc., and also in the other countries of the South-East Asia; which have varied form of their own social tradition and culture.

In Assam, the story of the *Rāmāyaṇ a* is well-known from an early period. During 14th century, the most distinguishing poet of pre-Vaishnavite period of Assamese literature, Mādhava Kaṇ ḍ alī had written *Saptakāṇ ḍ arāmāyaṇ a* based on the Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇ am*. Among the seven kāṇ ḍ as or chapters of the *Saptakāṇ ḍ arāmāyaṇ a*, the two kāṇ ḍ as was missing and in the later period, Saṅ karadeva and Mādhavadeva, the great reformers of Assam, had composed that to complete this *Rāmāyaṇ a* in Assamese. Again, Krittivāsa's *Rāmāyaṇ a* in Bengali, Kāmbāna's *Rāmāyaṇ a* in Tamil, Tulsīdāsa's *Rāmāyaṇ a* in Hindi, etc., are the prominent treatises influenced by the *Rāmāyaṇ am* of Vālmīki.

Among the various poetical works of the classical Sanskrit literature, the *Raghuvamśam*, one of the five court epics composed by *Māhākavi* Kālidāsa is highly influenced by the *Rāmāyaṇ am*. In this work, the hero *Rāmacandra* and his *Raghu-dynasty* has described as an ideal manner. On the other hand, the *Sābin Ālun* is the most significant Oral literature of *Kārbi* tribe of Assam, which is considered as the *Rāmāyaṇ a version* of the *Kārbi* people. In the *Sābin*

Ālun, i.e. the Broken Songs of Sābin, influenced by the *Rāmāyaṇ am*, which depicts the story of Rāma and the ethnic socio-cultural scenario of *Kārbi* tribe, one of the prominent indigenous groups of Assam. The Assamese society is emerged with the assimilation of the ethnic community into Aryan Sanskritisation. It makes the multicultural society of various folk traditions based on the *Rāmkaṭhā* in Assam, which reflects their socio-cultural values and ideals to be explored.

2. Objectives

- (i) Make a comparative study in manifestations of the *Rāmkaṭhā* Tradition of the *Sābin Ālun*, the Oral Folk tale of *Kārbi* community of Assam and the *Raghuvarṁśam*, one of the five Mahākāvya of the Classical Sanskrit literature.
- (ii) Analyse the significance of the *Rāmkaṭhā* and their socio-cultural influences.

3. Methodology

This is an analytical and descriptive type of research paper. The findings of this research study are based on the primary data and secondary data. Different works based on the *Rāmāyaṇ am* and the *Rāmkaṭhā* are the primary source of data for the study purpose. After the data collection the descriptive analysis of this study has been done.

4. Literature Review

A wide range of literature is available based on the *Rāmāyaṇ am* and the *Rāmāyaṇ ī* literature. But, as the traditional folk tales are to be explored yet, the selective books are taken into account, viz. *Desh aru Bideshar Ramayani Sahityar Adhyayan* written by Trailokya Mohan Nath, *The Rāmāyaṇ a, its Impact on life & culture* edited by Dr. Bibha Bharali and Priyanka Sarmah, *Ramakatha Ashrayi Asomiya Sahitya* written by Dr. Dhruvajyoti Nath, *Complete works of Kālidāsa* edited and translated by M. M. Prof. Rewaprasada Dwivedi, etc. are reviewed to understand about this research topic.

A brief note on the *Raghuvarṁśam*

The *Raghuvarṁśam* is one of the five court epic poems, i.e. Mahākāvya, the eminent creative literary work of Sanskrit literature written by *Mahākavi* Kālidāsa, the greatest master-mind of Sanskrit poetry. This great literary work is based on the *Rāmāyaṇ am* of Vālmīki. The *Raghuvarṁśam*, has a brief description about the solar dynasty called *Raghuvarṁśam*, who ruled at Ayodhyā. Here, the life stories of the twenty nine kings of this solar race are mentioned. Among them, Dilīpa was the first king and Agnivarṇ a was the last one. Again, the great kings, Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja and Rāma are the most famous kings of the solar dynasty. Among these, *Rāmacandra*, the incarnation of lord Viṣ ṇ u, is the most eminent king and the hero of the *Raghuvarṁśam*.

The poet Kālidāsa has scholarly depicted a clear picture of the family belongs to king Raghu. There are nineteen sargas or cantos in the *Raghuvamśam*. The ancestors of Rāma, viz., Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja and Daśaratha have been represented from the cantos one to nine. The *Rāmakathā* is described from the tenth to the fifteenth cantos and the story of the *Rāmāyaṇ am* has been briefly painted here. There is not found any difference about the well-known life story of Rāma. Again, the life stories of the descendants of Rāmacandra are stated in the cantos sixteen to nineteen.

In the tenth canto of the *Raghuvamśam* it is stated about the birth of Rāma; so that name of this canto is *Bhagavadavatara*. Then in the eleventh canto called Kumāraniveśa, Rāma and Lakṣ maṇ a went to the hermitage of sage Viśvāmitra and killed many demons. Afterthat, the marriage of Rāma with Sītā, the daughter of Mithilā king Janaka, was described. In the twelfth canto, Rāma was exiled for fourteen years and during that Rāma killed Rāvaṇ a. Then they back for Ayodhyā. The thirteenth canto is known as *Rāmapratyāgamana*, the journey of Rāma from Laṅ kā to Ayodhyā by air is described here. *Sītāparityāga* is the fourteenth canto of the *Raghuvamśam*. The fifteenth canto is called *Svargārohaṇ a*, in which we have seen about the end life of Rāma and Sītā, the two ideal personalities of the great epic of the *Rāmāyaṇ am*.

The *Raghuvamśam* significantly contributes in the Classical literature to uplift the Indian cultural heritage. The heroism and idealism of the empires belonged to the solar dynasty has been scholarly painted by Kālidāsa.

About Sābin Ālun

The *Sābin Ālun* is the lyrical folk tale tradition of the *Rāmakathā* among the *Kārbi* people, one of the famous ethnic tribe of Assam. This oral tradition of the *Rāmāyaṇ a* version has its own characteristics and style, which is sung by the old knowledgeable person of *Bey clean*, sub-division of *Kārbi* tribe in a ritualistic cultural event related to the god Hemphu. Rāma and Lakhon, the two prominent characters of this *Rāmakathā* are worshiped as gods of them.

The *Kārbi* tribe is belonging to *Mongoloid* group and linguistically they belong to the *Tibeto-Burman* group. They have not own script, so that they use to write in *Roman alphabet* and *Assamese*. But, they used to speak their own *Kārbi* language.

There is no such proper composition of the *Sābin Ālun*, because it is basically the Oral Epic of the *Kārbi* tribe. Hence, it is introduced by many scholars that *Sābin Ālun* is influenced by the *Kathārāmāyaṇ a* of Mādhava Kaṇ ḍ alī as well as *Kṛ ttibāsī Rāmāyaṇ a*. Again, the people of *Kārbi* community themselves argue that the *Sābin Ālun* is composed, when some *Kārbi* people were followed the Hinduism. It is also believed that the *Kārbi* ancestry introduced from the Kiṣ kindhā king *Sugrīva*, who helped Rāma to defeat Rāvaṇ a in the *Rāmāyaṇ a*.

The term *Sābin Ālun* means The Broken Songs or The songs of Sābin. The *Sābin Ālun* is also wellknown as *Rām-Lakhon Ālun* among the Kārbi community. Here, *Ālun* means the songs. It is the traditional narrative version of the myth of Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa; conventionally in Kārbi society, they are renamed as Rām, Sintā Kungrī and Lakhon. There are several versions of the *Sabin Alun* singing among the Karbi people. There is a version for two days and night. Another very short version exist. The oral version of *Kārbi Rāmāyaṇa* has compiled *Premakanta Mahanta* named ‘*Sabin Alun: Karbi Ramayana*’, published by *Diphu Sahitya Sabha* in 1976. Again, *Samsing Hanchehas* edited *Sabin Alun*, published by *Axom Sahitya Sabha* in 1986. The *Sābin Ālun* edited by *Samsing Hanche* was translated into English by the renowned person *Dr. Phukan Chandra Phangchoin* 2002. The first word of the songs of the *Sābin Ālun* as follows- ‘*On bong rup Sabi Lori/ Aphrang Damtang- Rani/ Recho Dosoroth Longki/ Mito bang Kethaomrensi/ Ajan Ave Aser Serli/ Cheron Sing Kan Throl Throksi/ Tank bong rup Sabi Lori*’. It means- ‘So goes the songs of Rama and Lakshmana/ that in the days of Yore/ King Dasaratha ruled the earth/.....etc.’ (*The Rāmāyaṇa, its Impact on life & culture*, p. 55-65)

Here, in the *Sābin Ālun*, there are numerous renovations, inclusions and interpretations of Kārbi tradition and culture are found. It is notable that the character of Rām is created by the god Hemphu to kill the demon king Rāvaṇa. But, Rām is not the incarnation of god Hemphu. Again, Sintā Kungrī (Sītā) is skillful in weaving cloths. She helps her father Bāmonpo (Janaka) in Jhum fields. Thus, this Kārbi version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* denotes the acceptance, flexibility of native observation and ethnicity. Because of this, the *Rāmāyaṇī* literature has glorified the Indian culture.

The life story of Rāma is depicted in the *Sābin Ālun*, according to the traditional interest and social value of the ethnic Kārbi community, which is significantly influenced by the *Rāmāyaṇam* of Vālmīki. Here, the characters of the *Rāmāyaṇam* are renamed as follows- Rām (Rāma), Lakhon (Lakṣmaṇa), Sintā Kungri (Sītā), Darham (Daśaratha), Bāmonpo (Janaka), Hulimot (Hanumān), Rābon (Rāvaṇa), Sābin (Śūrpanakhā), etc. And the royalism of the origin *Rāmāyaṇa* is not observed in the *Sābin Ālun*. Rāma is clearly painted as a common human being of Kārbi community, who goes to field for their livelihood, etc. But it also be noticed that, because of various oral traditional versions of the *Kārbi Rāmāyaṇa*, there may be contradictory subjects in the *Sābin Ālun*.

5. Significance and influence of the *Rāmāyaṇī* literature

There are several significant features have been observed in the *Sābin Ālun*, the oral folk tale of *Rāmakathā*, which has new dimensions in the *Rāmāyaṇī* literature. It signifies the socio-cultural transformations of the *Rāmakathā* from the Indian Classical Sanskrit literature to Ethnic tradition of *Kārbi* tribe. The hero *Rāmacandra* is personified as an ideal king of Raghu dynasty in the *Raghuvamśam*. According to *Sābin Ālun*, Rām is directly created by god

Hemphu, the supreme god of Kārbi, to kill the demon king Rāvaṇ a. Rām and Lakṣṇa are depicted together as the heroes of the *Sābin Ālun*. The *Kārbi Rāmāyaṇ a* has a metre of its own called *Lori* and the whole *Sābin Ālun* is composed in this metre; whereas, the *Raghuvaṁśam* is composed in several classical metres, viz., anuṣ ṭ up, triṣ ṭ up etc. One stanza of *Sābin Ālun* starts with the rhyme *Obong Sabi Mir Lori*.

There are great significant features of the *Sābin Ālun* have been observed in this study. The contributions of Aryan civilization have flourished into the ethnic folklore having poetic values. According to *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇ a*, Rāma is described as a part of lord Viṣ ṇ u of Hinduism, which is not accepted by any *Indo-Mongoloid tribe*. But, besides their own indigenous religion Rāma is accepted as an ideal-being of Kārbi people of Assam by chanting the *Sābin Ālun*.

6. Conclusion-

The variations of the *Sābin Ālun* are the remarkable factors of socio-cultural transformations of the great epic *Rāmāyaṇ a* of Vālmīki into the folklore version of the *Rāmāyaṇ i* literature. Again, the *Raghuvaṁśam* of Mahākavi Kālidāsa also the prominent one where Rāma is the greatest king of *solar dynasty*. Although, the comparative study about the characters of the *Raghuvaṁśam* and *Sābin Ālun* have been tried, but there is not found so many dissimilarities among this two. The basic concepts of the *Rāmakathā* of these two works have based on the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇ i* literature. In this context, it has to be mentioned that though the subject matter is influenced by the origin story of Rāma, the Kārbi community has used to explain the Rāma story according to their own native culture and tradition. That is why, it signifies the value of ethnicity in the Indian Heritage. To explore the heights of excellence of the *Rāmāyaṇ i* literature, we should study on this topic which carries the social transformations from classics to the Ethnicity.

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