

# A TRIBUTE TO MADHA VADEVA 'SRI SRI MADHAVDEVAR SMRITIT PUSPANJALI'

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For the original document in Assamese,  
[http://atributetosankaradeva.org/SriSriMadhavadevar\\_Smritit\\_Puspanjali.pdf](http://atributetosankaradeva.org/SriSriMadhavadevar_Smritit_Puspanjali.pdf)  
For more information on the Life and Works of Madhavadeva,  
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The advent of men, ready to sacrifice their all for the sake of ideology – even their lives, unhesitatingly – has been happening epoch after epoch, irrespective of time and clime. These are the men who are the path-finders for the general mass of people; it is they who are cherished in their hearts, ever remembered by the people as the Great Men or the Mahapurusas. The birth of Sri-Krishna, the Buddha, Socrates, Christ, Muhammad and others was for the welfare of the human race. To realize this great objective, in Assam also, the frontier-land of Bharata - the birth-place of so many great souls - there was the advent of Srimanta Sankaradeva, Sri Sri Madhavadeva, Sri Sri Damodaradeva and other saints.

The personality of our discussion is Mahapurusa Sri Sri Madhavadeva. His life-time may be divided mainly into three periods:- (1) from the time of his birth up to his surrender at the Feet of his Guru Srimanta Sankaradeva (1489 AD-1522 AD); (2) from his accepting Sarana (initiation) from Srimanta Sankaradeva down to the Great Departure of Srimanta Sankaradeva (1522 AD-1568 AD); and (3) from Srimanta Sankaradeva's Departure to the Departure of Sri Sri Madhavadeva (1568 AD-1596 AD).

Sri Sri Madhavadeva's self-abnegation was so great that no trace of His birth-place, descent, even the name of his own father, is visible in his writings. Generally, it is held that Govindagiri Bhuyan, his father, was also well-known by such other names as Dighalpuriya, Barkanagiri, Mahodara, etc. In Bāndukā (also Bandukā), Rangpur district of present-day Bangladesh, Govindagiri was born. A son by the name of Damodara was born to his first wife, Anucita, at Banduka itself. On the death of his wife a few years later, Govindagiri, handing over all responsibility to Damodara, went to Kamarupa and, reaching Bardowa, home to the Siromani Bhuyans, had acquaintance there with Srimanta Sankaradeva who got constructed houses, etc. for him at Tembuani (Bardowa) and, marrying off to him, Manorama, daughter of one of His own uncles, arranged for his stay there. It is this Manorama who is the mother of Sri Sri Madhavadeva.

At the time of Manorama's maternity, Govindagiri, feeling apprehensive of the political situation, left Tembuani for the North Bank (of the Brahmaputra), stowing away all his valuables in a *dola* (palanquin) borne by eight bearers. While resting on the way, both

(Govindagiri and Manorama) fell asleep and the *duliyas* (palanquin-bearers) made off with all the goods. However, by a stroke of luck, Harisinga Bara Ujir, a royal officer of the Ahoms, cruising up the Brahmaputra, homeward bound, happened to meet the shelterless Govindagiri and, after listening to all that had transpired, took away husband and wife along with him and offered them shelter in his own *Tol*. It is while staying at this shelter of the Ujir that, in 1411 Saka (1489 AD), **Sri Sri Madhavadeva** was born. Place of birth – Ujir’s Tol, Rangajan.

The Ujir passed away; there was famine in the country and Govindagiri, with wife and son Madhava, vacated Rangajan and, in the midst of many a trial and tribulation, finally put up at a place called Ghagara, in the house of Ghagari Maji, a former acquaintance of his. During this stay at the Maji’s place, a daughter named Urvasi was born. Upon her attaining marriageable age, Govindagiri left the abode of the Maji and reached Bhandari Dubi and, there, gave away Urvasi in marriage to one Kayastha youth named Ramadasa Bhuyan (Gayapani). Some days later, arranging for Manorama to stay with her daughter and son-in-law’s, Govindagiri, taking Madhavadeva with him, went to his former place, Banduka. There, he got Madhava admitted in the *Tol* (residential college of learning) of Rajen Adhyapaka and thus arranged for his education.

Within a short time, Madhava, apart from acquiring proficiency in the regular *Kayasthika vritti* (skills of a Kayastha) of accountancy and book-keeping, also studied Nyaya (Logic), Tarka (Science of Reasoning, Dialectics and Debate), Vyakarana (Sanskrit Grammar) and the scriptures like the Mahabharata, etc. Meanwhile, at Banduka, his father passed away; after completing the funerary rites of his father, Madhavadeva, after a few days, left for Bhandari Dubi and broke the news of his father’s death to his mother there and offered consolation to his grief-stricken mother. Through the efforts of brother-in-law Ramadasa, the union of Supreme Vaisnava Srimanta Sankaradeva and hard-core Sakta Madhava then occurred and there was intense debate between the two for several hours [see [The Great Debate](#)]. Madhava began to offer the arguments of Pravritti Marga (Path of Subsistence) with a view to demonstrate the superiority of the worship of multiple gods and goddesses, rites of animal-sacrifice in *puja* (procedural worship) etc. To demolish this view, Srimanta Sankaradeva began citing proofs from Nivritti Marga (Path of Release), of the utter failure of Pravritti Marga [in breaking the cycle of transmigration] and the Supreme Greatness of the worship of the one and only Brahman, the all-pervading **Visnu ‘God Himself’ Krishna**. It is said that, at the end, Srimanta Sankaradeva uttered one *sloka* from the Bhagavata: -

yatha taror\_mula-nisecanena trpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasakhah  
pranopaharac\_ca yathendriyanam tathaiva sarvarhanam\_acyutejya  
(4.31.14)

“On worshiping Krishna, all devatas derive  
satisfaction in mind,  
just as, on watering the root of a tree,  
all its branches and sub-branches are nourished.

Just as a tree does not obtain any nourishment when water is poured on its branches or  
flowers or leaves,

so also, know that, worshipping separately, the devas are not satisfied.

Take the case of a hungry man whose heart is craving for food.

If now that person wears rich garments and decorates his exterior with ornaments and flowers and cosmetics;

even after such decoration with clothes and ornaments, there is no happiness for his indriyas (senses).

As long as he does not take his meal,  
there is no satisfying his prana (vital air).

On eating food, all are satisfied (nourished) -  
vital air, mind, the senses.

In that very manner, know that on worshipping Hari,  
all devas are satisfied, always.”

Hearing this *sloka*, Madhavadeva was overwhelmed. The very next moment, he prostrated before Srimanta Sankaradeva, accepting Him as Guru, and taking Sarana (initiation) the very next day, Madhava transformed into ‘*Badhar Po*’ **Sri Sri Madhavadeva**, the ‘*prana-bandhava*’ (Soul-Friend) [of Sankaradeva]. According to the *caritakaras* (biographers), this union of Sankara and Madhava is known as the ‘*Manikancana Sanyoga*’ – (literally,) the ‘Union of Gem with Gold’. Madhavadeva, at this time, was a young man of thirty-two.

The second phase of Madhavadeva’s life began. Regularly attending the daily prayer-services (*prasangas*), coming to the Guru [everyday] from his brother-in-law’s house, became the chief activity for Madhavadeva. The decision to remain life-long celibate is also of this period. Carrying out the Guru’s instructions and service to the Guru – these two ideals he made his life’s ideology.

Due to neophyte Madhava joining in the prayer-services daily, there was an upsurge of devotional activity (*Nama-Kirttana*) in entire Dhuwahata [Majuli] and the entire place began to reverberate with Nama; in every household, *prasangas* began to be held. Madhavadeva had a very sweet and mellifluous voice and was an expert musician. It was here (at Dhuwahata) that he, by composing his ‘Guru Bhatima’ (Panegyric of the Guru), made the belief firm that Srimanta Sankaradeva was the saintly manifestation of God; and [consequently], many new people got attracted to this Neo-Vaisnava Faith and began embracing the religion.

Witnessing the increasing popularity of Nama at Dhuwahata and its drawing huge gatherings and the interest and participation [in the faith] of newer and newer batches of people, the hostility of the sacerdotalists and the wrath of the royals fell upon the Bhuyans and using elephant-catching as a ruse, an order soon arrived from the royal house, asking the Bhuyans to catch wild elephants; unfortunately, [during the operation] the enclosure on the Bhuyans’ side collapsed and the elephants escaped. The Bhuyans fled in fear and the royal despatchers imprisoned both Madhavadeva and Hari, the son-in-law of Srimanta Sankaradeva; in the trial, Hari was given capital punishment but Madhavadeva was exempted from death penalty since he was an *udasina* (bachelor). It was due to all these reasons that Srimanta Sankaradeva took the decision to leave the

Ahom kingdom and proceed to the Koch kingdom. In the meantime, Madhavadeva also, having secured release from the Ahoms' house-arrest, joined with Srimanta Sankara Guru. The party comprising Madhavadeva, Ramadasa and others left Dhuwahata by boat and passing Kalakata, Khagarikata in succession, reached Kaliabar Kapalabari (Batpabari) and stayed there for about six months; and it was at Kapalabari that Madhavadeva's mother passed away. Finding the place to be unhealthy, they again rowed down and reached Barpeta's Palandi and Cunpora. Sri Sankaradeva remained at Patbausi and Madhavadeva, along with Ramadasa, stayed at Baradi. After staying for three years at Baradi, Madhavadeva shifted to Ganak-kuci. Here, at Ganak-kuci, Madhavadeva stayed for eighteen years (possibly from 1550 to 1568 AD).

While staying at Patbausi only, Srimanta Sankaradeva, in 1550 AD, went for His second religious tour, and Madhavadeva also had gone along with the Guru. It is while traveling with Him (Srimanta Sankara Guru) that Madhavadeva had moved, composing impromptu Ghosas (verses) and Kirttanas (songs) and Borgits (devotional lyrics). On his return from the tour, he wrote also, apart from the Nata (drama) 'Arjuna Bhanjana', Janma Rahasya, the Adi-Kanda (of the Ramayana), Rajasuya, Bhakti-Ratnavali and other works, a number of Ghosas and Bhatimas.

When Sri Sankaradeva left Patbausi for the last time, he stayed for one night at Madhavadeva's Ganak-kuci. In 1568 AD, the Great Departure of Srimanta Sankaradeva took place at Kochbehar. Leaving out a few months from the end, Sri Sri Madhavadeva had remained with Sri Sri Sankaradeva as His very shadow.

That only Sri Sri Madhavadeva is the successor of Srimanta Sankaradeva – this declaration [of Srimanta Sankara Guru] was conveyed to the assembly of the public by Srimanta Sankaradeva's eldest son, Ramananda. After this, Ramadasa left Ganak-kuci for Sundaridiya and Madhavadeva stayed at Patbausi, attending to the needs of the Guru's wife. When some persons spread slander against the *udasina* Madhavadeva, he felt hurt and supplicated to the Guru's wife for permission to leave for Kochbehar. The Guru's wife, however, instead of allowing him to go to Kochbehar, asked him to proceed to Sundaridiya. As a result, Madhavadeva came to stay at Sundaridiya.

While at Sundaridiya, Madhavadeva received much assistance and service from nephew Ramacarana Thakura. Here, besides composing many verses of the **Nama Ghosa** and capturing the imagination of the masses through several plays (*bhaonas*) and playlets (*jhumuras*) such as Nrisimha Yatra, Cordhara, etc., Sri Sri Madhavadeva endeavoured to establish a permanent foundation for **Eka-Sarana Nama-Dharma**. Here, there was the gathering of many Vaisnavas like Budha Ata, Vamsigopala and the others.

Sometime in the middle of this period, Madhavadeva had to leave Sundaridiya and come to Barpeta. At Barpeta, he had a **Kirttana-ghara** constructed and made arrangements for holding the prayer-services (*Nama-Kirttana*) and staging the dramas. Here also, at Barpeta, as a result of the many reviling words spread by the sacerdotalists, at the order of Koch king Raghudeva Narayana (1580-1603), Madhavadeva was kept in confinement for six months, and, at the end, found 'not guilty' and sent back to Barpeta. The priestly

antagonists were not pacified; finally, entrusting Mathuradasa with the responsibility of Barpeta, He again went to Sundaridiya. And, again, the order came from the royal quarters, to vacate Sundaridiya and leave for Hajo. Three months had to be spent on the shores of the Brahmaputra and six months, in Hajo. Finding that at Hajo, the number of people going to the shore of Sri Sri Madhavadeva far exceeded those visiting the temple of Hayagriva Madhava and suspecting further royal infuriation [in future], He decided to abandon Kamarupa and go to Kochbehar and, taking with Him four Bhaktas and a Brahmana named Bhrigu, He crossed the river Sonkos and stationed himself at Bheladanga, the former residing-place of His Guru Srimanta Sankaradeva.

It is at Bheladanga that he got collected all the chapters of Srimanta Sankara Guru's **Kirttana** composed at different places and compiled it in its present complete form and also completed the Nama Ghosa. On the request of minister Virupaksa Kaji, Madhavadeva translated the Nama-Malika. The opposing party gradually grew active in Kochbehar also. [But] The Raj-mata (Queen Mother), the royal wives, princesses and many other royal officials accepted the faith of **Eka-Sarana** and took initiation. Finally, in the end, when the King (Laksmi Narayana) himself prayed for Sarana from Madhavadeva, then, acting on the example of His Guru Sankara, Guru Madhavadeva ended His earthly *lila*.

Madhavadeva has declared Srimanta Sankara Guru to be the '*Sarvagunakara*' (The Mine of All Qualities). [But] Madhavadeva is also the reservoir of all qualities. According to the description of Gopala Ata of Bhavanipur: -

“tiniyuga bhoila sesa kali bali paravesa  
lokaka pidila ghora pape |  
susi nile atma tattva bhoila loka unamatta  
puri mare samsarara tape ||  
lokara kusala hetu bhoilanta barisa ritu  
milila Sankara rupe Hari |  
Madhava gambhira megha barasila abicheda  
Harinama jala jagabhari ||”

“The three *yugas* had passed; the mighty Kali (Iron Age) arrived and tortured the people with extreme sin.

Atma-tattva (knowledge of the self) was sucked away and, [as a result] all people became like mad, scorched by the heat of material existence.

For the world's succor, Hari came in Sankara's form - the rainy season, as it were, - and Madhava, the deep cloud, showered down without a break, inundating the world with the flood of Hari-Nama.”

In the propagation of **Eka-Sarana Hari-Nama Dharma** (The Path of Sole-Refuge in Hari), Mahapurusa Sankaradeva is the 'rainy season' while it is only Madhavadeva, the 'deep cloud' Who, by the continual showering of the rain of the Lord's Name, has

flooded the earth with Hari-Nama. Forthrightness is the marked feature of Mahapurusa Madhavadeva. Let us have a look at one of His Borgits: -

ধ্ৰুং-           ৰে মন সেৱহু    হৰিকহু চৰণা  
                  নিকটে দেখহু নিজ মৰণা |  
দেখত হৰিকহু    চৰণ শৰণ বিনে  
                  নাহি নাহি ভৱ ভয় তৰণা ||

পদ-            চাৰিবেদ পুৰাণ    যত ভাৰত  
                  গীতা ভাগৱত চাই |  
ওহি সাৰ বিচাৰ            কয় ভাষত  
                  হৰি বিনে তাৰক নাই ||  
সনক সনাতন    মুনি শুক নাৰদ  
                  চতুৰ বয়ন শুলপাণি |  
সহস্ৰ বয়ন আদি গাৱত হৰিগুণ  
                  সকল নিগম তত্ত্ব জানি ||  
কৃষ্ণনাম যশ            পৰম অমিয়া বস  
                  গাৱত মুকুত নিশেষ |  
পৰম মুৰুখ মতি            কহয় মাধৱ দীন  
                  শঙ্কৰ গুৰু উপদেশ ||

dhrum –       “re mana sevahu    Harikahu carana  
                  nikata dekhahu nija marana |  
dekhata Harikahu    carana sarana bine  
                  nahi nahi bhava bhaya tarana ||

pada -        caribeda purana    yata bharata  
                  Gita Bhagavata cai |  
ohi sara bicara            kaya bhasata  
                  Hari bine taraka nai ||  
sanaka sanatana    muni suka Narada  
                  catura bayana sulapani |  
sahasra bayana adi    gavata Hariguna  
                  sakala nigama tattva jani ||  
Krishnanama yasa    parama amiya rasa  
                  gavata mukuta nisesa |  
parama murukha mati    kahaya madhava dina  
                  Sankara Guru upadesa ||”

O my mind! Attach yourself to the Feet of Hari  
Do you not see your death approaching?  
Look, apart from refuge at the Feet of Hari,  
There is no securing release from the fear of the world. [Refrain]

Looking up all scriptures –  
Four Vedas, Puranas, (Maha) Bharata and Gita-Bhagavata,  
Only this is the considered opinion, the Essential Truth  
That, apart from Hari, there is no Savior.

The sages Sanaka, Sanatana, Suka and Narada  
Four-headed [Brahma] and the trident-wielder [Siva],  
Thousand-hooded [Ananta] and all others sing Hari-Nama  
Knowing the substance of all *nigamas* (Scriptures of Release).

The Name and Glory of Krishna, the supreme ambrosial fluid,  
Is sung even by the masters of liberation  
Extremely foolish-minded Madhava says,  
This is the teaching of Guru Sankara.

The two Mahapurusas are one inseparable soul; if there was anybody who could know Sankara Guru in entirety, it was ‘*Badhar Po*’ Madhavadeva. Madhavadeva has drawn our attention to the following facts as the *upadesa* (Counsel; Teaching) of Sankara Guru – (1) That there is no other way to release from the fear of worldly existence save and except Sarana (Sole-Refuge) at the Feet of Hari; (2) That the *sara-vani* (essence) of all scriptures – the four Vedas, Puranas, Mahabharata and the Gita and Bhagavata – is that, apart from Hari, there is no other Savior; (3) That [even great gods like] Brahma, Rudra, [and great accomplished sages like] Narada, Suka and the Four Siddhas, knowing the substance of the Vedas to be the Praise of Hari, engage in the singing of the Name and Glories of Hari, and (4) That even the *muktas* (liberated ones) sing the Name and Qualities of Hari, finding It to be of the nature of Supreme Nectar.

The *Nama Ghosa* of Sri Sri Madhavadeva is the *nonpareil* creation of the Mahapurusa. The supreme stature of this Book may be realized from one single instance only. Who would be the successor of Mahapurusa Madhavadeva; once, the devotees, in the presence of Mathuradasa Budha Ata and the others, had brought up this question before Sri Sri Madhavadeva. The Mahapurusa pondered deeply over the question and declared the name of the ‘Book of Name’ (*Nama Ghosa*). In the words of Daityari Thakura: -

“*yisava laksana guru paibaka lagaya /  
si sava guru paibe nahikaya ||*”

[*Those qualities of guru-ship which are required to be found;  
gurus endowed with those (qualities) are not to be found.*]

At the same time, He also made a declaration:-

*“dekha ghosa puthikhani amara achaya /  
sabe kahi acho yiba kahibe lagaya //  
tahara arthaka yiba jane bujibeka /  
sehijane jana laga paibeka amaka //  
ghosata samasta mora bala buddhi yata /  
yara yara bhagya ache bujibe samasta //”*

*[Look, there is this Ghosa book of mine,  
There I have said all I have got to say.  
The one able to understand its meaning,  
That one, verily, will meet me.  
Energy, intellect, my all are in the Ghosa,  
The fortunate ones will understand everything.]*

Just as the **Bhagavata** scripture is the *vangmayi-murti* (Word-Image) of Bhagavanta (Krishna), so also are the **Dasama-Kirtana** and the **Ghosa-Ratnavali** the *vangmayi-murtis* of Srimanta Sankaradeva and Sri Sri Madhavadeva respectively.

Regarding the *Nama Ghosa*, the view of Sahityarathi Laksminath Bezbaroa is long remembered: -

“People may call me a brag, they may call me blind; let them, I have no sorrows. But nobody can plug my mouth if I proclaim, open throatedly, that, let alone India, till today, such a scripture is not to be found in *any* of the civilized nations of the world, which may be placed alongside this Ghosa *sastra* of ours, on the same pedestal. It is the spring of pathos-suffused prayer from the inmost recesses of the heart of a devotee immersed in God consciousness, having sold himself in body, mind and speech to the Supreme Spirit. Not only that, it is the spontaneous outpouring of a tribute of Supreme Bliss rippling forth from the heart of the devotee, at the Fearless Feet of the personified form of that Feeling of Sheer Joy Who is beyond the ken of imagination and yet Who is composite purely of Consciousness, Existence and Bliss.”

In sum, it may be said that the Nama Ghosa, for Mahapurushism and Eka-Sarana Hari-Nama Dharma, is the Gita Sastra. It would prove more fruitful for us if we began our study of It asking not what is contained in this Sastra but, rather, by asking what is not (contained). The use of the first two words of this Sastra – ‘*muktito nispriha*’ (‘indifferent even to salvation’) – is striking. To crave for wealth, progeny, enjoyment, riches, etc. for this life and the many delights of heaven for the next, is the very nature of humans and then there is this group of gentlemen going by the name of ‘purohit’ (priest) also in society who would fain extract a good amount of dough by providing assurances of easy availability of those comforts.

People fulfilling their duties out of a sense of duty alone are very rare at the current time. People executing their tasks in aspiration of material and spiritual enjoyments and benefits, or in fear of material and spiritual loss, are more in number. Greed and fear –



these are the two motive forces driving people. On the other hand, the *Ghosa* is encouraging us implicitly to be '*muktito nispriha*' so that, reposing body-mind-word and everything thought to be 'mine' at the Feet of the Lord, we could be truly *niscinta* (free from all worries). The second great gift for the masses is – freedom from the shackles of *Varnasrama Dharma* (religions that split people up into different castes and assign different duties based on one's caste and/or one's station in life). But here there is a condition – one should become Lord Krishna's '*dasaro dasa tana dasa*' ('servant of the servant of the servant'). Such is the supreme ground for fostering the spirit of unity among all humans – rich or poor, knowledgeable or ignorant, sinning or innocent, caste or outcast – under the umbrella of a single organization.

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[Although we have tried our best to faithfully adhere to the original, we admit that it is impossible to convey the spirit of the original in the case of writings of this stature. As such, our translation is most imperfect and we seek forgiveness from all, including the author, for any lapse on our part – *translator*]

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