

The Translation of Madhavadeva's Pimparā Gucuwā Nāta

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www.tributetosankaradeva.org feels proud to present before the readers the English translation of the delightful 'Pimparā Gucuwā' (Removal of Ants) playlet of Madhavadeva. The translation is by Dr. Satyendranath Sarma, the distinguished scholar and literary historian of Assam. It is from 'Madhavadeva' (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi; Makers of Indian Literature Series; 1985), one of the first works in English on the life and works of the Saint. A list of works on the life and literary creations of Madhavadeva is also incorporated.

“The lyrics of Madhavadeva have become a part of the religious life of Assam and a source of solace to distressed hearts for over four centuries. His plays delight and instruct both the lay and the learned.”

Pimparā Gucuwā ‘Removal of Ants’

A complete translation of the above named play, minus its verse portions which are meant to be sung in appropriate rāgas, is given below. The verse portions are metrical renderings of the prose dialogue and Sutradhāra's commentaries.

The play commences with the entry of the Sutradhāra who, after his usual dance, recites the *nāndi-slokas*. The verses are taken from *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛita* of Lilāsuka-Vilvamangala. The verses are quoted in original.

- (a) Kastvambāla Balānujastvamiha kim
manmandirāsankayā,
buddham, tannavanita Kumbhavivare
hastam kimartham nyasah /
Kartum tatra pipilikāpanayanam suptāh
Kimudbodhitāh /
bālā vatsagatim vivektum iti
sanjalpan Harih pātu vah //

Who are you, boy? – The younger brother of Balarāma. Why are you here? Mistaking it to be my house. That is all right but why have you thrust your hand into the

butter-pot? To remove the ants there. But why have you awakened my sleeping child? To enquire about the movement of my calf. Let that feigning Hari protect us.

(b) Vadane navanitagandhavāham
vacane taskaracāturidhurinam
nayane kuhakāsrūnāsrito
yascarane komalatāndavam kumāram //

He who bears the smell of butter in his mouth and in speech the cleverness of roguish sallies and sheds false tears in his eyes and whose feet are rhythmic with graceful dance – let that boy be the refuge.

[There are slight differences in the reading of the northern and the southern recensions of these verses]

(On entering her house a *gopi* finds **Kṛṣṇa** inside it)

Gopi Who are you in my house, O boy?

Kṛṣṇa You do not know me? I am the younger brother of the redoubtable Balarāma.

Gopi I see, you are the younger brother of Balarāma; I have now realised. But why have you come here?

Kṛṣṇa O my lady, I have come here mistaking it to be my home; I have lost my way.

Gopi O Kṛṣṇa, you have come here by mistake, there is nothing wrong in it. But why are you putting your hand into the pot of butter?

Kṛṣṇa You have found a great fault indeed: **Ants are eating up the butter in the pot. I am trying to remove them.**

Gopi You have done me a great service, O Kānāi, but may I know why have you awakened my sleeping child?

Kṛṣṇa Oh milkmaid, I herded cows with your son today. I have not been able to trace one of my calves. I woke up your son to enquire about the calf.

Gopi O Kānāi, you are a very clever boy. Having eaten my butter you are now telling all sorts of lies. If you had not taken butter, then how is it that your mouth smells of butter?

Kṛṣṇa O milkmaid, you are indeed a very hard-hearted woman. Unable to check your tongue you ate butter; now out of fear of your husband you are

shifting the blame to me. Who cares for butter in your house? As if never having tasted butter, I have stealthily come into your house to eat butter! Listen, O hard-hearted woman, you are the real thief, because the smell of butter comes from your mouth.

(Here the poet comments through the Sutradhāra: “Oh Nārāyana, being the Guru (guide) of all arts, why have you cheated a poor woman by recourse to lies?”)

Sutradhāra O sympathetic audience, having heard the above remark of Kṛṣṇa, the *gopi* found she had no ready reply to make. Being very much ashamed of the accusation, she at last said:

Gopi O Kānāi, I cannot cope with you in verbal duel. I shall do whatever possible by narrating everything to your mother.

Sutra So saying she called all the milk maids of the place and lodged her complaint against Kṛṣṇa with Yasodā.

One gopi O mother Yasodā, please listen to the tale of misdeeds of your son Kānāi at our houses. Curd, milk and butter nothing is safe in our houses on account of your son. Kṛṣṇa, who with his companions, loots them.

Second gopi O Yasodā, I cannot exhaust telling the misdeeds of your son. Having stealthily eaten all my butter Kṛṣṇa broke the container also.

Third gopi O mother Yasodā, I caught Kṛṣṇa red-handed stealing butter, but he silenced me by his clever deceptive repartee. I feel ashamed to utter those things which he said. There is no end to his misdeeds. Your son’s deeds are beyond our endurance.

Yasodā O son, henceforth you must never go to the houses of the *gopis*. I am fed up with these accusations of your misdeeds. Your father Nanda is the king of all the cowherds and I am his wife. Born of such illustrious parents you have become such a naughty boy: What is there that does not exist in our house? Milk, curd, butter, sweets or anything else? Have I deprived you of these things? Have you not ever tasted these things? Like the son of a beggar you move about in the hamlet in search of food: I shall teach you such a lesson today that you will not venture anymore to go to the hamlet of the cowherds.

Sutra O mother Yasodā, whom you are chiding? He is the soul of the world. You want to control Him Whose orders are humbly carried out by Brahmā, Rudra and other gods: This is not proper.

Kṛṣṇa O mother, you must not rebuke me. I have tolerated enough of insults and accusations. Now, listen to my words: what grievous offence did I commit

by breaking a worthless pot, a matter of insignificant monetary value? When you could not tolerate that much loss, could you tolerate any really important loss on my account? You behave in such a way as if you are the daughter of a great noble. O mother, you had been a childless woman till your old age, and I removed your disgrace of being called a barren woman by becoming your son. Knowing your hard-heartedness I did not take my birth during your youth. Even an ordinary woman understands the feeling of her son, but you, in spite of being an old woman, failed to realise the feelings of your son. You have branded me as a butter-thief throughout the world. What more harm is left to be done? Being the son of the King of cowherds I am eking my livelihood by tending cows through deep and thorny forests. I could not endear myself to my mother even by undergoing such hardship. Although I have been calmly tolerating all these insults and infamy, I am considered a naughty boy! I shall no longer tolerate insults at your hands. I shall go to Mathurā of king Kamsa. Then all your pride and vanity will be gone and you will cry over my absence.

(Madhava says - “O my Lord, do not say any more harsh words, your mother will be very grieved. Not to speak of ordinary mortals, the gods know not the bounds of your inscrutable power. O Lord of lords, I bow down crores of times at your feet.”)

Bibliography

Madhavadeva's Works:

There are several popular editions of Madhavadeva's works. Editions consulted are noted below.

(1) *Ankāwali* : Contain 21 plays written by Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva, Gopaladeva, Ramacarana Thakur, Daityari Thakur and Bhusana Dwija. It is compiled and edited by K.R. Medhi with a long introduction in English. Gauhati, 1950.

(2) *Ankiyā Nāta* : Contains 15 plays by Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and Gopala Ata; edited by B.K. Barua and published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati, 1940.

(3) *Bargita* : Lyrics of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, published by H. Datta Barua, 1950.

(4) *Bhakti-ratnāvali* : Published by H.N. Datta Barua, Nalbari, 1949.

(5) *Janma-rahasya* : Edited and published by H.N. Datta Barua, Nalbari, 1948.

(6) *Nāmaghosā* : Edited by M. Neog, Gauhati, 1962.

(7) *Nāma-mālikā* : Published by Aharuram Atai, Barpeta, 1936.

(8) *Rājasuya kāvya* : Published by Datta Barua Company with an introduction by K.R. Medhi, Gauhati, 1949.

(9) *Sri Sri Madhavadevar Vākyāmrita* : It is a compilation of all the works of Madhavadeva, edited and published by Purnachandra Goswami, Golaghat, 1959.

[(10) *Mahāpurusa Madhavadeva Vākyāmrita* : It is a compilation of all the works of Madhavadeva, edited and published by Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha, Guwahati.]

Assamese works on Madhavadeva's life and works:

Early Works:

(1) Dwija, Ramananda, *Gurucarita*, a biographical work primarily dealing with the life of Sankaradeva and containing materials on Madhavadeva also.

(2) Lekharu, U.C. (ed.) *Kathā-gurucarita*, a voluminous prose work of the eighteenth century, depicts the lives and activities of Sankara, Madhava and their junior contemporaries. Published by H. Datta Barua, Nalbari. 1952.

(3) Thakur, Daityari : *Sankaradeva-Madhavadevar Caritra*, a work of the first half of the seventeenth century devoted to the exposition of the two great Vaisnava reformers. Edited by R.M. Nath, 1947.

(4) Thakur, Ramacarana, *Sankaracarita*, edited and Published by Haliram Mahanta, 1925. This Ramacarana is generally believed to be the father of Daityari Thakur, but recent research has tried to prove that this was a different person from the father of Daityari who was the nephew of Madhavadeva.

(5) Dwija, Bhusana, *Sri Sankaradeva*, a seventeenth century work containing much information about Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva.

It may be noted that there is no separate biography exclusively dealing with the life and activities of Madhavadeva in early Assamese literature.

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(1) Bezbaroa, L.N., *Sankaradeva Āru Madhavadeva*, 1964 (2nd edition).

(2) Neog, Dimbeswar, *Asamiyā Sāhityar Buranji*, Jorhat, 1957.

(3) Neog, Maheswar, *Sri Sankaradeva*, published by B.N. Datta Barua, 1951.

(4) " ", *Asamiyā Sāhityar Ruparekhā*, Gauhati, 1962.

(5) Das, Arjuna Chandra, *Mahāpurusiyā Dharmar Pancaratna*, Barpeta, 1971.

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(3) Kakati, Banikanta, (ed.) *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, Gauhati University, 1953.

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