CHAPTER IV

MĀDHAVADEVĀ, THE POET-LYRICIST AND PLAYWRIGHT
His excellence as a poet and the profundity of his lyrical sensibility:

In sheer versality of genius, Madhavadeva can only be compared to Sāṅkaradeva. No other Indian of those days could claim an equal status with Sāṅkaradeva or Madhavadeva in scholarship and versality. Shaped under the inspiration and ideals of the saint-poet Sāṅkaradeva, Madhavadeva's literary career was beset with various hurdles. Starting on his literary career during the lifetime of his guru, Madhavadeva carried it forward to its final flowering after his guru's passing away. This ardent devotee, who followed his guru, as shadow does the body, confined his choice of subjects to those which suited the desire and selection of his guru during the early phase of his literary career. In his translation works also he followed the path indicated by his guru. Sāṅkaradeva had so much of confidence in the abilities of Madhavadeva that he left to the latter the responsibility

1. *KGC*, p. 151
2. ibid., p. 257
3. ibid., p. 225
of even those literary compositions which he would have done himself.

A poet as well as a lyricist, Madhavadeva was also a popular singer. On various occasions he would compose and sing lyrics and ghosā-verses as and when his guru desired him to do so. Both from the points of view of objects and expressions, his lyrics and ghosās possess a unique quality. Even though he was a devotee and a religious preacher, he was eminently successful as a poet-artist and a lyricist as well. There is room for belief that his lyrics won greater popularity than even those of Śaṅkaradeva. Free from any complexity and toughness of subjects, most of his lyrics proved easily accessible to popular understanding and appreciation. Even a complex theory of Vedantic philosophy or a highly significant message of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa and the Gītā found its easy and simple expression in Madhavadeva's lines.

We have ample evidence of his poetic abilities in his poetical work entitled Rājasūya-kāvyā and the ghosās contained in the Nāmaghosa. As a poet of the bhakti cult, Madhavadeva's genius find its brightest expression in his Nāmaghosa. The touching note of absolute surrender at the feet of the Lord has transformed his religious verses in the Nāmaghosa into a set of fine poetic utterances. By the use

4. KGC, pp. 123, 126, 211
of an ornate style, the poet has been able to create the effects of variety in the Adikānda Rāmāyana, the Rājasūya-kāvyā and in a few ghoṣās of the Namaghosa. His lyrical compositions also have acquired an added beauty because of the use of rhetorical devices.

His dramatic compositions bring out Mādhavadeva's distinct literary genius. He did not follow the dramatic technique of his guru Śāṅkaradeva; in his dramatic pieces he followed his own individual method. These playlets of a shorter duration are known as jhumurās. These jhumurās had a special appeal for the common people because of the lyrics which enrich them. Their prime attraction, however, was the portrayal of the fascinating character of child Kṛṣṇa.

Of the many compositions by Mādhavadeva, his Adikānda Rāmāyana, Rājasūya-kāvyā, Janma-rahasya, Arjuna-bhanjana nāt and numerous gīts and bhatimas were written during the life-time of Śāṅkaradeva. Of the other writings, which were composed at the directions of his guru but were completed only after the death of the guru, we may mention his Namaghosa and Bhakti-ratnāvalī. These important works were composed while he was at Sundarīdīya. Following the demise of Śāṅkaradeva, when Mādhavadeva had to shoulder the heavy responsibility of the Order by propagating the faith and managing the religious organisation, he composed many more lyrics and dramas as a medium of religious propaganda. These drew innumerable converts into his Vaisnava fold.
because of their artistic appeal.

Mādhavadeva's literary life was beset with various troubles. He almost had no opportunity to devote himself undisturbed to his literary pursuits under royal patronage. It was only late in life that he won appreciation from the Koc rāj minister, Virūpakṣa Qāji of Koc Behār by composing the book Nāma-mālikā at the latter's behest. During the period 1595-96,\(^5\) when he was at Koc Behār he gave the final shape to his Nāmaghosā. During the same period he also availed himself of the services of Ramacarana Thākur in bringing together the various scattered sections of the Kīrtana-ghosā.\(^6\) Even though the last phase of his life was passed in a mood of comparative peace and tranquility, the major part of his literary career was plagued with many worries and anxieties. Sometimes while hiding himself from royal wrath and displeasure he had to compose his religious works by staying in a cow-shed.\(^7\) There were occasions when because of the evil word of his adversaries he had to cut short his works to which he had devoted himself with all concentration of mind.\(^8\) Even while shouldering the heavy burden of proselytisation and the organising of sattrā institutions, he succeeded in keeping alive a literary-

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5. Neog, Intro. Śrī-śrī Mādhavadevar Vākyāmṛta
6. KGC, pp. 651-652
7. ibid., p. 297
8. ibid., p. 297
cultural atmosphere around him by devoting himself to the
tasks of composing lyrics, directing dramatic performances:
and translating the scriptures whenever and wherever he
found the opportunity to do so.

His works:

Mādhavadeva's works can be classified under the
following heads-

1. Works of philosophical nature:
   (a) Namaghosa
   (b) Bhakti-ratnāvalī
   (c) Janma-rahasya
   (d) Nāma-mālikā

2. Narrative renderings:
   (a) The Rāmāyana, Ādikānda
   (b) Rājasūya-kāvya

3. Plays:
   (a) Cor-dharā
   (b) Pimpara-gucowā
   (c) Bhojana-behār
   (d) Bhūmi-letowā
   (e) Arjuna-bhanjana

4. Bargīts:

5. Bhaṭīmas

6. Plays of Mādhavadeva's authorship:
   (a) Bhūsana-harana
   (b) Rasa-jhumurā
(72)

(c) Kotorā-khelā
(d) Brahmā-mohana
(e) the Dhyāna-varṇanā part of the Kīrtana

7. Plays found mentioned in the old caritas and attributed to Mādhavadeva:
   (a) Govardhana-yātra
   (b) Nṛsimha-yātra
   (c) Rāma-yātra

8. Compilation and editing:
   (a) Compilation of the Kīrtana
   (b) Editing of Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyana

Songs of Mādhavadeva:

Mādhavadeva was a poet and a lyricist. In diverse places and under varied circumstances he composed more than a hundred songs. It is known from the caritas that Śaṅkaradeva had instructed his disciple Mādhavadeva how to compose songs. Śaṅkaradeva himself had written twelve score of lyrics of which only 3/4 are extant, the rest being destroyed by fire.

Bargīt is the name given in later times to these songs of Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. They number altogether 191. The term bargīt, literary means "great songs" i.e., solemn.

10. KGC, p.271
songs or songs celestial or songs of the Lord, composed in a serene language. Similar songs with similar language, rāga and tāla composed by any poet other than Sānkaradeva and Mādhavadeva are not universally known as bargīt. There are many such songs written by Rāmacaraṇa Thākur, Yadumānideva, Gopāla Ātā of Bhavānīpur, his daughter Padmapriyā, Śrīrāma of Āhatguri, Aniruddhadeva and a few others, which also are called bargīt by some people as well as in some sattras of their respective following. But this is not generally accepted and there are many who are extremely opposed to such usage. Thus, the term bargīt has become a special title to a special group of religious lyrics of Sānkaradeva and Mādhavadeva only.

It is not known when the term bargīt first came to be used. The poets themselves probably did not use this name. But there is a belief among a section of the people of the Order that when Mādhavadeva completed his book of lyrics under the instruction of Sānkaradeva, he named the songs bargīt as suggested by his revered guru. These lyrics are always 'great' in subject-matter and poetical beauty. They deal with the theme of Lord Kṛṣṇa "the crown jewel of all beings". They are free from the touch of śringāra rasa or sentiment of conjugal love.

Generally the lyrics of Mādhavadeva contain vātsalya rasa.

11. Svarārekhāt Bargīt, p. 15
12. ibid., p.15
or the sentiment of filial affection. According to the *carita*, there are six *rasas* in the barī which are not different themes, and not *rasas* in the accepted meaning the term. These are *līlā* (divine sports of Viṣṇu as descent on earth, mainly in the form of Kṛṣṇa), *paramārtha* (knowledge of the Supreme), *vināśa* (separation from Kṛṣṇa in the hearts of Yaśodā and the milkmaids), *vinākta* (detachment towards worldly objects), *caura* (Kṛṣṇa's playing the thief and stealing milk-products from milkmaids' houses), *cāturī* (Kṛṣṇa's cleverness and repartees to the charges of naughty acts). Also to one view the songs concerning *līlā* are divided into 3 groups containing the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's riding on (jāgan), his pastoral sports (khelā), his going to the grazing ground with cows (calan) and his dancing (git).

The songs of jāgan are known by the name, *jāgālī* (heraldic songs). These songs present a beautiful picture of Yaśodā's calling up Kṛṣṇa in the early morning. Her love for the child and Kṛṣṇa's preparation to tend the cows are the main subject-matters of these lyrics. The following lyric is a fine example of the heraldic song.

\[
\text{teja re Kamalāpata parabhāta nīnda teri chanda nakha pokho utha re Govinda rajanī vidūra diśa chavali varana timira pheriyā — hāja navira kīrana}
\]
Leave off the morning sleep, O consort of Govinda, let me see thy moon-like face. The night off and the horizon hath beamed up. The beams of the sun break through darkness. The lotuses are blue-suzi and black bees are flying around. Women of Vraja are churning milk while singing thy glories. Jāma and Sudāma are calling thee by thy name; look, Balaram hath got up and is coming. Randa hath gone to Javan, the milkmen have left with the herds of cattle. Rise up, O Gopāla, thou hast to tend the cows. Have cream and butter, take the horn, pick up the whip, hold the flute. Untether the calves early in the morning, for the (mother) cows are bellowing. Lord Madhana, O mother, what penances hast thou endured that thou hast the Master of the three worlds as thy cowherd.

The songs of calan present a picture showing Kṛṣṇa dressed in beautiful attire and accompanied by three cowherd boys, going to Vrajabhāna to tend the cows. He gladdens...
sweet music with his fine-shaped lips and steals glances with a sweet smile.¹³ His walking is more graceful than the elephant's. His charming dark body and pleasing appearance create great joy among his mates.¹⁴

The songs of khelan are the descriptive pictures of Krsna's playing games and sports. The charming child plays with his mates in different amusing ways. They play hide and seek, chase one another and call the cows by their names through the flutes.¹⁵ Their songs and sounds of amusements fill Vrndābana with reverberations.

The songs of nrtya are about the dancing of Krsna. Dressed in yellow garments, the dark-blue boy dances in glee. His dark-blue hair is beautiful with peacock's feather. His gold ornaments dazzle and sweet sound comes out from the jingling anklets with each of his dancing steps.¹⁶

Bhojana-behārār gīt is another variety of songs depicting Krsna's pastoral sports. These songs are used by Mādhavadeva in his playlet, Bhojana-behār (pastoral picnic). They illustrate the acts of Krsna's dancing, singing and eating cooked rice, curd and butter in Vrndābana. Bhūsana-hararānār gīt (songs of the stealing of the ornaments) are other songs of a playlet, attributed to Mādhavadeva, of the

¹³ Bargīt No.112
¹⁴ ibid., No. 100
¹⁵ ibid., Nos.107, 116,110
¹⁶ ibid., Nos.101, 105, 109, 114
same title. These songs describe the cleverness of little Kṛṣṇa. Radhā, a milkmaid, took off all ornaments from Kṛṣṇa's body when he lay unconscious in sleep under a tree. Radhā gave the ornaments to Yaśodā and told about the carelessness of Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa returned home with his naked body, Yaśodā interrogated him about the ornaments. The accused child at once found out a way and told his mother that a milkmaid persuaded him to eat some sweetmeat, the eating of which caused him to go to sleep all at once. When he was in deep slumber, that milkmaid stole away all his ornaments. The wicked child made Yaśodā believe that Radhā was the milkmaid, who had stolen his ornaments. Yaśodā scolded Radhā and drove her away.

There is no scope of erotic sentiment in Madhavadeva's lyrics. Therefore, we do not find Radhā as Kṛṣṇa's consort in his songs. Radhā, again, appears in only five songs of Bhūsana-harana, where she is none but an ordinary milkmaid. Her relation with Kṛṣṇa is free from madhura bhāva. It is the relation of a sister with her naughty and quarrelsome little brother. Madhavadeva's songs on Radhā-Kṛṣṇa relation are illustrative of filial sentiment only.¹⁷

Dadhi-mathanar git (the songs of churning butter out of milk) is another section of songs with the filial

¹⁷. Kakati, Purani Asamiya Sahitya, p. 49
sentiment. Eight songs in his play Arjuna-bhañjana or Dadhi-mathana are counted among these. These songs reveal the cunning of child Krsna and establish him as the Lord of the three worlds at the same time.  

The character of mother Yaśodā and her little naughty child Kṛṣṇa are superb attractions in Mādhavadeva's lyrics. With her soft heart Yaśodā is a loving mother, but due to the troubles caused by her naughty son she has to turn into a strict one. As an innocent child Kṛṣṇa comes to the lap of Yaśodā and demands butter and curd. He rises up early in the morning when the mother calls him. Yaśodā dresses her beloved child in beautiful attire and with kisses sends him to tend the cows in Vṛndāvana. After the day's playing and dancing with his mates, the tired child returns home, sometimes with complaints that he has to face so much of trouble in Vṛndāvana. In one song of cāturi rāsa the picture of Kṛṣṇa's complaining to his mother is superbly attractive:

"'Mother! I shall not take bath to-day' said Hari to Yaśodā, 'I was roaming in the forest in search of the cows and my whole body is scratched by thorny grasses. If I go for bath, the scratches on my body will burn at the touch of water. Listen, mother, I shall not

18. Bargīt, Nos. 155, 156
19. ibid., No. 154
20. ibid., No.145
eat anything this evening, I shall simply go to bed.' Hearing her son's words, the great lady was touched with affection; tears came down from her eyes. She said, 'Listen, my child, take your bath. Do not weep, you the son of a poor woman like me as you are! I shall rub the finest butter on your body and shall bathe you with cool water; your body will not burn; it will be soothed. You will eat sweet-meat after bath.'

'Sayeth Mādhava: O Hari, I have a little protest to make: how can the body of Brahman get pricked?'

This attractive character of child Kṛṣṇa is the main feature of Madhavadeva's songs. In this respect Mādhavadeva's lyrics are comparable only to some lyrics of Surdās, in which the poet describes Kṛṣṇa's act of stealing butter.

A philosophical note forms an undercurrent of each lyric of Mādhavadeva. There is a sense of wonder in the songs at the Supreme Being's turning into a cowherd. In some songs the poet himself turns into a philosopher and warns men about the transitoriness of human life. According to him, Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, the four-armed Lord, who is worshipped by Brahmā, Śiva and other deities. He is ever blissful and giver of final release. It is due to Māyā's interference, that men do not know Him.

21. Surdās, pp. 59-60, 78
22. Bārgīt , Nos. 99, 103
23. ibid., Nos. 23, 24, 32
In the ocean of beings, the helpless \( \text{jivas} \) are eaten by crocodiles of anger and lust and disturbed by whirlpools of sorrows and sufferings.\(^{24}\) Mādhavadeva suggests to them the name of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as the only boat to overcome that ocean.

There is a reflection of Bilvamangala's \( \text{Kṛṣṇakarnāmṛta} \) in some of Mādhavadeva's songs. In the song 'Suna lo pandita' an echo of Bilvamangala's work (v.43) is found. The initial verse of the \( \text{Kṛṣṇa-stotra} \) resembles the following picture of Mādhavadeva's song 'rājatu nanda rājakoj jandana',

\[
\text{Kārtika-mayūra puccha śohe śire}
\]
\[
\text{mani giri gairika raṅje śarire}
\]

Two of the best songs of Mādhavadeva, viz., 'Govinda cintahu vāla Gopālam' and 'Kampita Mādhava naye jhurāi' appear very much to be mere reflections of the Stotra (v.5 and v.23).

The bhaṭimās (panegyrics) are another class of songs composed by Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva. Sankaradeva's bhaṭimās are quite large in number, because each of his drama has more than one bhaṭimā. Mādhavadeva puts only one bhaṭimā in the beginning of his playlet Bhojana-behār. He has not added any other song of this type in his other

\( \text{Bargīt, No. 10} \)
A bhatima is a song or saying of a bhat (Gkt. bhatta), a panegyrist, whose profession is to sing the glory of the king or nobles or other men of influence. Sankaradeva's bhatimas can be classified into three divisions — nātakīya-bhatima (dramatic panegyric), deva-bhatima (eulogy of God) and raja-bhatima (panegyric of the king). Madhavadeva added a fourth division — guru-bhatima (panegyric of the preceptor). His bhatimas are mostly deva-bhatimas. Madhavadeva did not write any raja-bhatima. His guru-bhatima is a very fine piece of writing.

The bhatima of his playlet Bhojana-behar is similar to his bargīt (puwār git) in its subject-matter. It describes how child Kṛṣṇa leaves his bed and the mother makes him ready to go to Vṛndāvana.

The deva-bhatimas of Madhavadeva centre round the four-armed God and His different incarnations, specially Kṛṣṇa - the cowherd boy. The Lord's splendid beauty and kind nature and the glory of His holy name (vayane Hariko nāma milai cāri padārtha pāi) are announced by these songs.

25. A bhatima is found in the play Kotorā-khela.
26. Bhatima, No.9
27. ibid., No. 7
28. ibid., No.2
29. ibid., No. 5
The guru-bhāṭīma is superb in composition. It is a bright picture of Śaṅkaradeva's physical beauty and mental wealth. In this song Śaṅkaradeva is described as a partial incarnation of Lord Nārāyaṇa, the saviour of beings. Madhavadeva describes the beauty of his preceptor in the same way as in which he describes the beauty of his worshipful God (Iṣṭadeva). God and guru are identical for him. There is nobody who could stand with Śaṅkara, the highly virtuous one - , Madhava says. He again elaborates his guru's beauty thus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{daraśīta sundara} & \quad \text{gaura kalevara} \\
\text{yaicana sura parakāśa} & \quad \text{raṇjana jākerī} \\
\text{sakala savaśad} & \quad \text{darasane pāpa vināśa} \\
\text{vīne āṅga bhūsana} & \quad \text{pekhi susobhana} \\
\text{gahana gambhīra dhīra mati} & \\
\text{āyata kamala} & \quad \text{nayana bara sundara} \\
\text{vayana chandakahō jyoti} &
\end{align*}
\]

(His reddish-white body, resembles that of a deity, so beautiful to look at. His pleasant appearance destroys the sins of people who have a look on him. Without any ornament on his limbs, he looks elegantly embellished, majestic and steady is his mental disposition. His eyes are large and wide like lotus-petal and the face bears the brightness as the moon.)

This lyric can be said to be a picture of Śaṅkaradeva's variegated character. It expresses the guru's
Lyrical beauty of bargīt and bhatima:

Madhavadeva’s bargīts and bhatimās are excellent in their lyrical beauty. The lively picture of Kṛṣṇa as an innocent small child is the main attraction of these lyrical compositions. Though these are religious songs, their text is as fine as any good poetry. The presentation of the subject-matter, the poet’s capacity for selecting the appropriate diction, his good sense and genial humour make every lyric of his so beautiful. They are made more beautiful with the application of proper similes and allegories.

Madhavadeva loves to meditate upon bāla-Gopāla, the child cowherd. The Lord’s childish pranks and physical beauties are primarily the theme of his lyrics. The infant stage of Kṛṣṇa is picturised in these lyrics thus:

"Hari is sleeping in a precious couch. His eyes are as large as lotus petals. He takes hold of his lotus-like hands and puts them into his lotus-mouth, as if to know the secret - why the great sages leave aside nectar and drink the nectar of his lotus-feet, he now drinks the nectar of his own feet with great joy and curiosity. "

scholarship and wisdom and tells of the fame as a poet. His kind nature and love for his followers also find mention. Madhavadeva’s respect, love and gratitude for his guru find their expression through this bhatimā.
"Sayeth ādava: the playing of the child is itself an ocean of nectar-juice."

The beautiful songs of ādavadeva describe every natural act of a grown up baby. Sometimes he does not wish to drink milk and sometimes weeps without any cause. With his soft feet the child practises walking; with his sweet voice he calls the mother. The following lyric presents the fine picture of a loving mother and her sentimental child. Yasoda has to be strict to control her naughty son, but Krishna looks very rough at this to his mother. He says:

"Don't scold me, Oh mother! The insult thou hast been inflicting on me time and again have I borne with great endurance. What a trifling jar, that thou considered a great property, have I broken. On that plea alone nothing was spared of me, and taking me to be a rogue of a thief thou fastened me with the cowl tethering ropes. This tiny offence thou, Oh consort of Kansa, did not bear; what more wouldst thou tolerate? People now have known thy behaviour and by the very actions what nobility of family to thou belongest. Thou didst so many sacred penances and sacrifices, and great acts of benevolence, but to no effect - thou remained a barren woman. I removed that blame of thine by my birth from thy womb. Even then thou hast put so much of strictures on me! Knowing thee to be the most cruel, I was not born during thy youth, but chose to be brought forth in thy old age. Even

30. Jeraft, No. 135
31. ibid., No. 136
lay woman knoweth how to treat her own son, but thou, even becoming old, dost not know that much. My blame spreads all over; what hard hast thou left not done for me? In spite of suppressing all good elements, thou adjunctedst to me the name butter-thief. Being a prince, I earn my livelihood as a cowherd, when I have to tread over fearful and unsurpassable jungles; even then I could not satisfy thee. Who could dare satisfy thee and how? Tolerance is good, sayeth all; and quarrel ariseth when the just thing is spoken out. Inspite of my bearing all your scolding and rebuking alas! I have been held guilty! I shall flee away to Madhupur, the domain of Kamsa. Then wilt thou have to repent, and all thy vanity shall perish."

"Hari, whose sportive illusion is not compassable even to Brahma and Hara, playeth tricks. Sayeth Madhava, - Blame no more, Oh Lord, Thy mother is sore afflicted (at thy words)."

This universal characteristic of a child, with all his sullenness and innocent cunning, imparts remarkable beauty to Madhavadeva's lyrics.

Madhavadeva's bargīts are unique in giving fine pen pictures. Krsna's physical beauty is colourfully described in many of the lyrics. Krsna is so beautiful that even Kamadeva, the god of love and beauty, covers his face out of shame, feeling himself inferior to Krsna.32 Krsna's dark body with the yellow dress looks like dark cloud with

32. Bargīt, No. 66
lightning. In one lyric the bluish-dark body of Kṛṣṇa glittering precious ornaments is compared to the blue which stars twinkle. His finely shaped hair, decorated with plenty of flowers, reminds one of a blue hill. His face is splendid like the lotus of the autumn season, locks that fall down on his forehead with each of his dancing step are comparable to the black bees coming to lotus in search of honey. In a beautiful song the lyricist says:

"Everybody says that Kāṇāi is black; but in reality he is not black, he is deliciously bluish-dark. Whoever is able to find a simile of Kṛṣṇa's beauty? He is love-incarnate to all the milkmaids. He himself is only equal of his elegance."37

Mādhavadeva used similes and allegories as in Sanskrit classic literature and of his predecessors like Mādhava Kantāḷi and Pānchārāḍeṇa. Some of his important descriptions are - (a) The eyes are compared to lotus petals, and hands and feet to the lotus flower; (b) Yaśodā and other milkmaids are compared to cātaka or bird which is believed to drink moonlight) and (c) ...

33. Lārāṭ, No. 68
34. ibid., Nos. 108, 109
35. ibid., No. 108
36. ibid., No. 116
37. ibid., No. 66
face is compared to the moon; (c) The dark body of Kṛṣṇa is compared to pieces of cloud; the yellow garment to lightning playing on clouds; (d) His hands are as soft and greenish as the root of lotus; (e) His hands are as tender as the little body of Vāsuki, the king of snakes; (f) His teeth are as white and fine-shaped as the buds of Kunda and are as bright as ruby; (g) Kṛṣṇa's eyebrow are so beautifully bent as the bow of Kāmachāla (Cupid); (h) Tears rolling on the eyes of the Boy God are compared to dew drops dripping from the lotus leaves; (i) Majestic are his movements as those of an elephant.

Madhavadeva's songs are rich with the appropriate use of metaphors. Two such examples are -(a) The world is a dense forest where all beings are moving around like deer. Time comes as a hunter to kill them. All the deer are surrounded by the net of illusion and are bitten by the dogs of lust and anger. (b) The worldly life is an ocean where all beings float in helplessness. They are swallowed by crocodiles and alligators of anger and lust. Whirlpools of sorrows and sufferings destroy them. In such a wretched position Hari's feet is a real boat to cross the ocean.

Namaghosā:

The Namaghosā, the greatest monumental work of Madhavadeva's literary life, is one of the principal 'four
scriptures' (cāri puthi) of the Vaiṣṇavas of Assam. This book is popularly known as Ḫāzāri-ghosa, i.e. 'the book with a thousand verses'. An excellent combination of philosophy and music which is equally rich in its literary merits. Some of its verses are as enjoyable as fine pieces of poetry. It is known from the caritas that Śaṅkaradeva advised Mādhavadeva to compose a book of love and devotion with all the teachings of the Vaiṣṇava faith incorporated in it. Following this advice, Mādhavadeva composed some of its verses during the life-time of Śaṅkaradeva, but was able to give it the final and full shape in his old days when Śaṅkaradeva was no more. Enriched with the religious instructions of Śaṅkaradeva and different scriptures, the Namaghosa was also a product of the spiritual experiences of Mādhavadeva's eventful life. He had made use of the quotations in his book in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish the quotations from his own reflection on them. He appears to have had such an insight into the śāstras as could enable him to use whatever he wanted from them and to blend them with his own. Mādhavadeva himself told his followers that he would be always spiritually present in the Namaghosa and so instead of appointing another person as his successor, he left this scripture to be regarded as his proper spiritual successor.40

38. KGC, p. 278
39. ibid., p.290
40. KGC, p.314; Daityārī, v. 1566
The Namaghosa elucidates that the chanting of the name of the Absolute One is the only means to please and propitiate Him and obtain his grace, and hence the scripture has been named the Namaghosa, i.e. the repetition and reciting of names. The nama means the name of Brahman in the forms of His different incarnations endowed with all the attributes that can be conceived of in the range of human knowledge and experiences. The ghosa means a short poem. Hence Namaghosa means chanting of the Name Divine.

The philosophical aspects of the Namaghosa are based on the Vedanta. The consecrated formularies of the Mahapurusiya Vaisnavism of Assam, such as, revelations through incarnations, idea of divine grace, the supremacy of devotion over knowledge and ritualism, the fortuitousness of devotion, the precedence of sravana and kirtana, the efficacy of good companions, the surrender to one God and faith in one Absolute through the rejection of polytheism—have been magnificently explained in diverse ways in different places of the Namaghosa. Another significant strand of the book lies in the incorporation of numerous hymns in praise of the master, i.e. Śaṅkaradeva, whom Madhavadeva placed almost on the same pedestal as Lord Viṣṇu. Apart from all these distinctive qualities, what makes the Namaghosa a book of abiding magnificence is the sincerest expression.
finged with melancholy of the idea of devotion in terms of master-servant relationship.

The sources of the Nāmaghoṣa:

We cannot name any particular scripture as the only source of the Nāmaghoṣa. It is not a complete translation of any Sanskrit scripture. Of these one thousand verses contained in the Nāmaghoṣa, the origin of only about four hundred or five hundred verses can be traced, and these Sanskrit verses underwent the process of recreation in Mādhavadeva's writing. His intimacy with the subject and his genius for poetic expression have made every rendering as good as an original work. More than half of the verses of the Nāmaghoṣa are his own compositions, which are beautiful as well as touching because of the magic touch of his profound emotion and creativity.

The names of scriptures, from which Mādhavadeva took the matter of some of the verses, are according to Maheswar Neog's edition of the work, which cites the original Sanskrit verses, the Bhāgavata-purāṇa (61 verses), the Bhāgavata bhāvārtha-dīpika of Śrīdhara Svāmī (9 verses), the Bhagavadgītā (19 verses), the Bhakti-ratnakara of Sāṅkaradeva (10 verses), the Brhadnārādiya-purāṇa (6 verses).

42. Neog, Intro. Śrī śrī Mādhavadevar Vākyamṛta
43. Kakati, Purani Asamiyā Sahitya, p.49
Brahman and jīva:

In the opening verse of the Nāmāghosā worship is offered to that Lord Yadupati who is the crown-jewel of all heads but is at the command of His own devotees. In vivid names and forms He incarnates in the world. Madhavadeva takes a detailed discussion of the glories of His different incarnations and thus establishes Kṛṣṇa or Visnu as the Pūrṇa Brahman who is the cause of the universes. He is
anādi (beginningless) and ananta (endless). The jīvas are nothing but the parts of Him. In one verse Mādhavadeva says:

\[
\text{tumi nitya nirañjana nārāyaṇa} \\
\text{āmio amśa tomāra} \\
\text{tayu sevā-cora pāyā mahāmāya} \\
\text{muhile mana āmara}\]

(Thou art eternal and free from falsehood, O Nārāyaṇa: ye are Thy parts. Finding that we were neglecting devotion to Thee, Mahāmāya hath charmed our mind.)

He is the only conscious power (caitanya śakti) over the inert universe (jaḍa jagata). All the jīvas, including Brahma, are subservient to His power of māya. He is above both prakṛti and puruṣa. There are two kinds of puruṣas: one who is subordinate to prakṛti is the jīva and the other, who taking prakṛti under him, creates the universe, is the Īśvara. The Nāmagnosā says, "Mādhava, the controller (niyantā) of prakṛti and puruṣa and Hari, the soul and great friend of all (beings)."

Until a jīva comes out of the noose of prakṛti's power, he cannot identify himself as a part of the Supersoul. Jīva can be released only when it attains knowledge through love of God.

45. v. 273
46. v. 659
47. Bhāvārtha-dīpikā, I, II 26.3
48. v. 405
Maya:

Maya is the mysterious power of God with the help of which He creates, maintains and destroys the universe. Maya conceals God and holds the objects of attachments (āsāra visaya) unto the individual self. This is done by Maya through its powers of āvarana (concealment) and viksepa (projection). Maya is jada (inert) and controlled by the Lord. The Namaghoṣa says, 'know you verily, Maya and all else are inert. Hari alone is the true and conscious Lord. This is the ultimate truth ascertained.'

Maya is difficult to get rid of (dustara). It brings vagaries (nigraha) to jīva with its deceptive attributes (kapāta guṇa). Jivas have to move in the circle of rebirth until they come out of the influence of Maya. When it destroyed, they find themselves as parts of the Brahman which means release. To overcome Maya, the grace of the Lord is necessary. According to the Namaghoṣa, the individuals are the subjects of Maya's torture who do not possess sincere devotion to the Lord. Madhavadeva sings praise - 'O Hari, seeing me turn away my face from Thee, Maya hath bewildered my mind. Now O Hari, it is up to Thee.

49. Bhāṣ, II.649-f, avastuka dekhawaya vastuka ḍvari, sehise mohora māyā jāna niṣṭā kari
50. v. 205
51. v. 368
52. v. 184
53. v. 73
to bestow Thy grace so that I can remain in the service of Thy feet.  

He, who sings the name of Hari taking refuge in His feet, receives the grace of Hari and gets over maya easily.  

Mukti:

The next stage on overcoming maya is mukti (final release). It is an extremely blissful stage. When an individual identifies himself with the Brahman, he enjoys the state of final beatitude in his life-time. He is called jivamukta. The mukti that is attainable after the dissolution of the body is the videha mukti. Videha mukti is classified into five kinds, out of which the Namaghosa oftenly speaks of the sālokya mukti (final release with the opportunity of living in the celestial abode of the Lord). In this kind of mukti a devotee gets the opportunity to worship the Lord through śravaṇa and kīrtana (listening and singing His name). Says the Namaghosa - 'sing the name of Hari in the company of the devotees and ensure attainment of Vaikuntha.'
Bhakti:

Mādhavadeva says, "I bow down to the devotee who has no desire even for final beatitude. I pray for that devotion which is full of ineffable bliss. I adore such Lord Yadupati as is the crown-jewel of all heads as it the command of his own devotees." 57

After studying one thousand verses of the Namaghosa one can realise that Mādhavadeva had placed bhakti (devotion) in a higher position even than muktī. Bhakti is the most effective means to attain liberation. It is superior to ānō (knowledge) and karma (ritual). The Namaghosa explains, "Devotion to Hari saveth the soul of its own accord and doth not expect help from anything else. Knowledge and rituals cannot save one until devotion is generated." 58 Among the nine kinds of devotion, śravaṇa (listening to the glories of Lord’s names and deeds) and kīrtana (singing His praises) are given the highest place in the Namaghosa. The music of kīrtana gives great pleasure to the devotees. One who constantly chants the name of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Hari, does not count even liberation for anything. 59

He, whose nature has taken the form of singing the names of

57. v. 1
58. v. 200
59. Śaṅkaradeva, Kīrtana, Prahlād-carita
60. v. 236
Rāma and Kṛṣṇa becomes Hari's and Hari becomes his.\(^{61}\)

A distinctive feature of the Namaghosā is the proclamation of the glory of the guru Śaṅkaradeva. With heart, full of gratefulness, Mādhavadeva remembers his guru with deep respect and humility. He has placed Śaṅkaradeva almost on the same pedestal as the Lord and has offered him a higher position even than that of other deities. In one of the verses of the Namaghosā it is said that "The holy name of Hari has been hidden away so that the worship of other gods may continue among men", so said and rejoiced all the deities. Śaṅkaradeva having revealed the Harināma-dharma has smashed the pride of these gods.\(^{62}\)

A guru according to Mādhavadeva is as merciful as the Lord. Both the Lord and the guru possess the same quality of egolessness (ahāmkārahīna) and are easily satisfied with their own propensity. They think only of the benefit to others.\(^{63}\) With all these special qualities, Mādhavadeva said, Śaṅkaradeva alone is the ideal guru. The poet devotee exclaims - "Verily, verily do I say, I have no other great guru than Śaṅkara."\(^{64}\)

After the expiry of Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva had to face a kind of loneliness. He had to experience so much

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\(^{61}\) v. 196

\(^{62}\) v. 113

\(^{63}\) v. 681

\(^{64}\) v. 375
of adversities and mental agonies such as - the absence or proper management in the propagation of the Faith, the strong opposition of some sections of people at every step of his work, the misfortunes of Śaṅkaradeva's widowed wife and daughter-in-law, etc. Braving all these hurdles and mental sufferings, he had the sacred memory of his guru as the only solace. For this reason he could not tolerate a single word of disrespect to Śaṅkaradeva. Whenever any such disrespect was shown, the calm and quiet devotee, Mādhavadeva, at once turned into a strong challenger who would rebut every wrong statement of the oppositions with absolute confidence in his own faith. Considering the generally grave and pathetic tone of the verses, the 'Ninda' section appears to be an exception in the Nāmaghosa. In this section the saint uses rude words in a biting manner as if to give fitting replies to his adversaries. He even likens the gossipy-critics, who speak ill of the Vaiśnavas, to village pigs as they constantly purify the saints by their criticism just as the pigs purify the village. Mādhavadeva realises the fact that there are some people who introduce themselves as guru only to earn their livelihood. They also proclaim themselves as scholars though they know nothing of the scriptures. The saint remarks that people who, forgetting all the meritorious acts of Śaṅkaradeva, worship other person as guru, are

65. vv. 292-293
66. v. 295
so very dull-minded. He makes an attack upon the so-called gurus in this verse: "Some men are so unscrupulous in respect of food and sexual enjoyment. They have fallen from their caste and prestige yet they go about in the garb of Vaisnavas. They only spoil the Vedic mode of living."

The Nāmaghosa is rich in literary beauty. Its verses are beautiful with the touch of Madhavadeva's deep and soft sentiment and the reflection of his great personality. An anguished tune is the main touching element in the Nāmaghosa. Madhavadeva's dāsyā-bhakti (devotion of a servant to the Lord) finds its expression through different verses of the book which are neat specimens of beautiful poetry. The poet-devotee addresses the Lord with such attributes as priya ātma (the beloved soul), parama devatā (sovereign deity), sakhā (the friend) and Iṣṭaguru (the absolute master), but finally calls Him his nātha (the master) and svāmī (the master) and dedicates himself as the selfless servant of the Lord. He recognises Lord Viṣṇu as the Super Blissful and says:

Hari tumi ānanda sindhu
hāmu bhikharī māgo eka vindu

(Thou art the ocean of happiness, O Hari! as a beggar pray for a drop from that ocean).

67. v. 294
68. v. 901
Out of sincere devotion he complains, "Merciful, speak out, what harm would be caused to Thee, if Thou take me as Thine own servant!"

A principal element of Namaghosa's literary beauty is Madhavadeva's application of similes, allegories, metaphors and other figures of speech in an attractive way. His writings bear a fine touch of ornamentation in the traditional classic style of Madhava Kandali and Sankaradeva. Some beautiful verses of the Namaghosa may be mentioned here: (a) Singing Madhava's praise and glory has been compared to a lion in the forest of virtues. Just as the roaring of the lion makes frightened elephants run in panic, the singing of Krsna's glory makes sins and passions run away from one's heart. (b) Devotion to Hari gives immense joy and peace to mind. This has been expressed with the help of metaphors. Hari bhakti and the peace of mind that springs therefrom have been compared to a lake representing the feet of Krsna. The singing to the praise and glory of Krsna has been compared to the songs of swans in the lake. (c) Caitanya (all conscious Isvara has been compared to the sun and avidya (nescience) has been compared to the darkness of black cloud. 

69. v. 804
70. v. 105
71. v. 211
72. v. 345
lotus feet of Krsna have been compared to a cage and the mind of the devotee to a gander.\textsuperscript{73} (e) Bhava (the state of being) has been compared to a well,\textsuperscript{74} āśā (hope) has been compared to a river,\textsuperscript{75} Kali yuga (the iron age) has been compared to a snake of which the only cure is the nectar of Rāma-nāma.\textsuperscript{76}

In different places of the Nāmaghosa, Mādhava-deva makes comparison of the Lord's physical beauty with lotus. Every object related to his priyatama ātmā (the beloved soul) reminds him of nectar. To him, "the name of Rāma drops ambrosia."\textsuperscript{77} Anything he speaks of the Lord becomes attractive with the touch of his sincere love and devotion.

The Rāmāyaṇa, Ādi-kānda:

Mādhavadeva's rendering of the Ādi-kānda of the Rāmāyaṇa and Śāṅkaradeva's version of the Uttarā-kānda were composed for a particular purpose. This purpose was to preserve the Assamese version of the Rāmāyaṇa composed by Mādhava Kandali, the greatest poet of the pre-Śāṅkaradeva era, from being usurped by Ananta Kandali, a contemporary poet.
scholar of Sankaradeva's times. Most probably, Ananta Kandali sought to pass that great book in his own name in a slightly modified form. Like the other versions of the Assamese Rāmāyana, the original copy of Mādhava Kandali's Rāmāyana was also possibly of five kāṇdas, although some opinions suggest that the Ādi-kāṇda and the Uttarā-kāṇḍa of the same had been lost. Ananta Kandali's attempts perturbed Śankaradeva and the poet-saint entrusted his talented disciple Mādhavadeva with the responsibility of composing the Ādi-kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana, and he himself composed the Uttarā-kāṇḍa, thereby rendering the Assamese Rāmāyana complete seven kāṇḍas.

Mādhavadeva, who is always delighted in singing the playful activities of child Kṛṣṇa has done a lively translation of the Ādi-kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyana which includes descriptions of Rāma's childhood. Mādhavadeva's version of the Ādi-kāṇḍa, Rāmāyana, though based on Vālmīki's Rāmāyana, shows traces of influence of the Padma-purāṇa as well. The rendering of the Rāmāyana by these two personages is of special significance, because, in the case of Śankaradeva, all his works except Rāmayījaya nāt and one bargīt, and in the case of Mādhavadeva, all his compositions except three lyrics and Rāmabhāonā, not available to-day, are centered round the character of Visnu-Kṛṣṇa. In the case of Mādhavadeva,

78. KGC, p. 151
79. SHT, p. 194
the translation has acquired greater significance because of the fact that among all his works which are free from any doubts about authorship, only in Ādi-kānda, Rāmāyana we find the use of a bit of śṛngāra rasa.

The original text on which this Ādi-kānda Rāmāyana is based is the Bala-kānda of Vālmīki's Rāmāyana. Mādhavadeva has translated the original poem in an abridged form. Without having the original divisions into sargas, he has covered the matter included the 77 sargas of the original text within the compass of 1491 verses. He has compressed a few sargas into one or two verses only. He has also completely left out some of the episodes. At the same time, it is also found that, in certain cases, he has expanded one or two episodes to an extent even exceeding the length in their original version. In such cases, he has shown his originality as a poet. For instance, we may refer to the episode relating to Rṣyasṛṅga. In Vālmīki's Rāmāyana we do not find any reference to the incident of Nārada's advising King Lomapāda to observe jajñā for the benefit of having a son; this has been added by Mādhavadeva. The passionate behaviour of the natis (dancing girl) in the presence of Rṣyasṛṅga has also been elaborated to greater details than what we find in the original. In the presentation of the episode on Parasūrāma also Mādhavadeva has shown his originality. In both the Bāla-kānda, Rāmāyana and the Ṛgveda-purāṇa, Parasūrāma's anger has been attributed to a single
cause which was his quest for an able opponent. Madhavadeva, however, has assigned three causes: (1) the breaking of the bow of his guru; (2) the search for an able opponent; and (3) his ill-feeling towards Rāma for adopting the name "Rāma".

In the Ādi-kānda, the whole story of the Rāmāyaṇa has been briefly narrated. In this part of the Rāmāyaṇa the poet narrates the story from the first poetic utterance of the Vālmīki's lips to the coronation of Rāma. As a translator, Madhavadeva's genius has added a special beauty to the Ādi-kānda. Some of the descriptions have become very lively. For instance, we may refer to the descriptions of Rāma and Laksmana's battles against the Kings (verses 1232-1321), Parasurāma's wrath (verses 1393-1452), Sītā's beauty (verses 938-1032), etc. As in Śankaradeva's Uttarā-kānda, here, too, Rāma has been glorified more as a human being than as a divine character. In translating the original description of Rāmacandra's childhood and adolescence from the Bālakānda, Madhavadeva has portrayed the hero as a gentle, graceful and strong personality, absolutely obedient to his guru. Adorned with poetic qualities, the Ādi-kānda Rāmāyaṇa has been so enriched with similes that it favourably compares with the remaining five kāndas of the Rāmāyaṇa by Madhava kandali. Through his version of the Rāmāyaṇa Madhavadeva has done a great thing by compiling the present.

The two centos of the Rāmāyaṇa as rendered by Śankaradeva and Madhavadeva have served to beautify the
ends of the Assamese Rāmāyana like the two embroi
dered fringes of a wrapper, and the admonitions (upadeśa) as
grafted by Madhavadeva are its woven flower-patterns as if
were. These precepts were aimed at propagating the glory
of and devotion towards Rāma as the incarnation of Lord
Visnu and incorporating the Rāmāyana within the Vaisnava
literature. In their attempts to recreate the Rāmāyana
along the lines of Vaisnava ideals, Madhavadeva and
Sankaradeva have claimed Rāma as an incarnation of Lord
Visnu. The Ādi-kānda has elaborately presented the theme
of how the Supreme Being, being pleased with the songs of
devotion sung by the gods, incarnated Himself as Rāma. In
the concluding verse of his Rāmāyana, Madhavadeva has
confirmed the Vaisnava ideals in the Ādi-kānda by declaring
that Lord Kṛṣṇa, the queller of Kāṁśa, Putanā and Aghāsura,
Nārāyana the saviour of Ajāmila and Rāma the friend of the
monkeys of the forest are but the manifestations of one
God.

Rājasūya-kāvya :

Madhavadeva's Rājasūya-kāvya is mainly based on
theme of the sacrifice in the Bhāgavata, Book X. The original
Bhāgavata-purāṇa was translated by Sankaradeva with his

80. KGC, p. 151
81. vv. 567-587
associates. Ananta Kandali translated the last part of the Book X, but his work did not satisfy his guru as in Kandali's work revelled in description of battles and did not have ample treatment of the theme of Bhakti. Therefore, to fulfil his guru's desire Madhavadeva composed this kavya where the main emphasis was on the glory of devotion. Sankaradeva himself composed two kavyas, Rukmini-harana and Kuruksetra\textsuperscript{82} with the Krsna lore.

Though the kavya is mainly based on the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, the poet utilizes other scriptures also. He said that the verses of the Bhāgavata are like nectar, which with the mixture of verses of other scriptures will be most delicious.\textsuperscript{83}

The purpose of the kavya is to establish Krsna as the total incarnation of Narayana. With this view the poet describes how Krsna helped His devotee Yudhisthira to perform Rājasūya yajña (a sacrifice performed only by the monarchs to the celebration of which all his tributary kings are invited), killed Jarāsandha, the obstinate king, and freed the kings imprisoned by him, and also killed Śiśupāla in the midst of a huge gathering and made successful the coronation of Yudhisthira.

\textsuperscript{82} KGC, p. 265
\textsuperscript{83} Rājasūya-kāvyā, v. 11
Though the poet follows the original verses of the Bhāgavata, his originality comes out in certain parts of the kāvya. For example, the description of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's royal court (Sudharma sabha), the picture of His coming to Indra-prastha with His followers and the story of Śiśupāla's early life have been elaborately presented in the kāvya.

On the other hand, he has dropped some of the original descriptions like that of the story of the infant Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Jarasandha.

Three main purposes of the kāvya are - (i) to establish the glory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the full incarnation of the Supreme Self; (ii) to assert the glory of all-out devotion; (iii) to assert the propriety of worship of one Deity.

The whole story expresses the idea that Kṛṣṇa is the fullest incarnation of the Supreme Self. This idea has been emphasised by the utterances of Nārada, Uddhava and Sahadeva. The Lord Himself proclaims His Supremacy in these words:

Ever-blissful, Supreme Truth and ever-existent
I am. The universe manifests itself in the manifestations of myself. I am the direct cause of creation, existence and destruction of the universe. The beings can overcome their ignorance by means of devotion to me. I am untouched by the peculiarities of the world and I am the Supreme Lord other than prakṛti.

84. Rājasūya-kāvya, vv. 31-32
Nārada praises Kṛṣṇa: "Thou, the Supreme Lord, createst, keepest and destroyest the universe with Thy own illusion. The false world which is full of illusions appears as real being born out of Thee. O Hari, Thy illusion is infinite, inconceivable is Thy glory."  

Kṛṣṇa is established as the ever merciful Lord who is kind towards his devotees. He in His youth, had killed the demon Śāṅkhaśūda, and set the milkmaids free. He untied His parents by killing His wicked uncle Kāṃsa. In His incarnation of Rāma, the same Lord had killed Rāvana to remove the miseries of Sītā. In the same way He released the king of elephants from the mouth of the crocodile.

Like his Nāmaghūṣa, the Rājasūya-kāvya of Mādhavadeva announces the glory of devotion and, in some places gives it a higher place than final release. The imprisoned kings bowed to Kṛṣṇa while saying:

"The life after death, karma-phala (effects of good and bad actions), heaven - these are pleasing only to the ears; in reality there also exist the hurdles like arrogance, jealousy, etc. In the transitory human life - which is the abode of diseases, we do not desire for pleasure in life and in the life after death. We only desire for Thy mercy, so that, while moving in the circle of birth and death,

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85. Rājasūya-kāvya, vv. 109-110
86. ibid., vv. 157-158
we can remember Thy lotus-feet. This is all that I seek from Thee. The Vedas also conclude that it is the Super fruit of Thy mercy.”

The Lord’s mercy is easily attainable through sincere devotion. A devotee can get anything from Him as he wishes. He is the giver of salvation. The merciful Lord gave Śisupāla, the wicked king, who was Visnu’s parīṣada in former life, ‘sarupya-mukti’ or emancipation with the same shape as of the Lord. People, who dedicated their souls to the service of the Lord can come out from the circle of rebirth and get ‘sāyujya-mukti’ or release with the opportunity of living in the same world with the Lord.

Yudhisthira and his brothers tied Kṛṣṇa with their love and devotion. So the Lord helped them in the rājasūya yajña and made Yudhisthira the monarch of the Jambudvīpa. The kings, who were kept in prison by Jarāsandha, were devoted to the Lord. So He killed Jarāsandha and freed the kings. Thus the glory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the full incarnation of the Paramātma, Brahman, is proclaimed through the verses of the Rājasūya-kāvya.

The main doctrine of the neo-Vaiṣṇava faith is... the worship of one Deity has been glorified through the kāvya. Kṛṣṇa is worthier of worship than Brahma, Maheśvara...

87. Rājasūya-kāvya, vv. 422-423
88. ibid., vv. 640-643
89. ibid., v. 705
Indra and all the other deities. He is the eternal Lord of the universe. All the scriptures and all types of religious sacrifices find their place at His feet. Brahmā and are worshipped by all. But they too say: 'Krsna is the Isvara of crores of crores of universes, we all are subordinate to Him.' They even sip the 'pādodaka' (holy water sprinkled on the feet of the Lord or any venerable being).

Generally we find Madhavadeva handling with love and devotion the character of Krsna as a child or as a stripling. In the Rajasuya-kāvya the story centres round Krsna’s latter life, when He was the responsible ruler of Dvāraka. The little naughty child of Madhavadeva’s lyric and dramas here turns into a diplomat and a statesman, described as an ideal ruler who takes decisions on critical problems of state after holding discussions with his ministers. He is an ideal householder too. Affectionate to His wives, sons and servants, Krsna is the source of pleasure for His friends and an eye-sore for His enemies. With the application of appropriate similes and allegories the poet describes the splendid beauty of Krsna, and his descriptions finely illustrate his poetic abilities. In the kāvya we find two beautiful pieces of description. One

90. Rajasuya-kāvya, v. 560
91. ibid., v. 569
the picture of Krsna's splendid royal court, the order b
• • •
the elaborate description of Krsna's coming to Indrapras...
with His men. The battle between Jarāsandha and Bhīma is
narrated here in a very attractive way. The fighting of two
great warriors, their anger and prowess, the excitement
and disappointments of the spectators all are presented in
vivid manner. But the fine example of the poet's creative
powers lies in the depicting of the character of Śisūnāla
with jealous and angry speeches in his mouth. The speech,
natural for a quarrelsome person, remind us of the dialogue
of Śacī and Satyabhāma in Śaṅkaradeva's Pārijāta-harana-gaṇa.

Bhakti-ratnāvalī:

In the Sanskrit Bhakti-ratnāvalī, the compiler
Visnupūrī does not disclose his identity. He only concludes
each chapter of his book by speaking of himself as
Srimad puruṣottamacarṇārangāravindakārpaṇakarandaṃvinduprongilavivekatairabhuktaparamahamsa. From this one can only guess
that his guru was named Puruṣottama and the land of his
birth was known as Tairabhukti or Tirhut in the province of
Mithilā.92 As regards the place and time of composition of
the book, it has been mentioned in the last three ślokas of
the book that "mahājajna-sara-prāna-śaśāṅka-gaṇite", i.e. in
1555 Śaka era the book together with Kānti-mālā commentary.

92. Prastāvīkam, Bhakti-ratnāvalī
was completed in the company of Maheśā at Hari-mandira in Varanasi. The writer has also indicated that while composing the book he lived alone, away from his guru and disciples and also from his own place. According to Farquhar, Visnupuri was a follower of Mañhava. He hailed from Tirhu and possibly belonged to the second half of the fourteenth century.

In its Assamese version, the book Bhakti-ratnāvalī came to be popularly known as only Ratnāvalī. There is a saying in Assamese, "Ka buliba nājāne, Ratnāvalī pagne" (Devoid of the knowledge of the alphabet, (one) dares read Ratnāvalī), indicating the weighty nature of the book. The book is regarded as the best introduction to the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata. Visnupuri has chosen to call it Bhakti-ratnāvalī, that is, a garland made of the pearls of bhakti. His book consists of thirteen chapters which are: Bhakti sāmānya-nirupanam, Bhakti-hetu-nirupanam, Bhakti-bhedā-nirupanam, Śravaṇa, Kīrtana, Smaraṇa, Pada-sevāna, Arcana, Vandana, Dāsyā, Sakhyā, Ātma-nivedānām and Śaraṇānām.

The book purports to sing of the greatness of sarana dharma (devotion to the One), justifies sat-sangha (association of the virtuous) and describes the significance and greatness of the cult of bhakti.

93. v. 13; trayodāsa viracanam
94. R.L.I., p. 302
The Bhakti-ratnāvalī found its way from Varana to Assam in the hands of a brāhmaṇ scholar, Kanthabhusāna by name, belonging to Hajo (Maguri). Kanthabhusāna was the son-in-law of Śaṅkaradeva's family priest, Pāmarāma guru. Visnupūrī's disciple, Brahmānanda, sent the book, which he had received as a gift from his guru, to Śaṅkaradeva after he had heard of the extraordinary scholarship and genius of the latter from Kanthabhusāna. Together with the book, he also presented Śaṅkaradeva with a few self-composed ślokas, each purporting to be his obeisance to devotees, the team of bhaktas, the directions, and Śaṅkaradeva, respectively, through the good offices of Kanthabhusāna. Later on, Madhavadeva composed four ghosas on these four ślokas. Śaṅkaradeva felt delighted on receipt of the copy of the Bhakti-ratnāvalī and he advised his disciple Madhavadeva to read the book closely. When both of them had found that the book dealing with the concept of Bhāgavata-bhakti also brought in the subject of eka-sārana at the very end, they felt even more delighted. This was so because the book virtually carried the essence of the neo-Vaisnavite religion of which they were the advocates. Śaṅkaradeva left the translation of the Bhakti-ratnāvalī into Assamese to be done by his favourite disciple, Madhavadeva. The latter, how...

95. Daityari, v. 705
96. KGC, o. 223
97. ibid., p. 224
could not perform the task assigned to him during the lifetime of his guru. After the expiry of his guru, he undertook this work while he was staying at Sundarīdiyā. Initially, he devoted himself to the task when he was living with Rāmacarana Thākur. When he finished translating the first three viracanas, he was assailed by mental conflict. He was unhappy because of the taunting remarks passed on his work of translation by one of Sānkaradeva's cousins, Māthiā by name, who also happened to be his known adversary, and, therefore, he handled the latter parts of the book with considerable brevity. This explains the fact that, compared to the hearty elaboration in the early part of his book, the translation of the latter ten chapters appears rather mechanical. Had it not been so, the book would have been a greater and more impressive creation.

Mādhavadeva's version of the Bhakti-ratnāvalī consists of the rendering of twelve hundred and eight ślokas. The original book had been composed by combining the essential tenets of the bhakti cult as enshrined in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa with the explanatory notes of the Kantimāla. While translating, Mādhavadeva had, by and large, followed the original. Only on occasions, where explanations became necessary, he made his own additions. He has divided the thirteen chapters of the book as follows: Bhakti viracana.

98. KGC, p. 297
Satsaṅga viracana, Bhakti viśeṣana viracana, Śrāvana
viracana, Kīrtana viracana, Smarana viracana, Paṇasevya-
viracana, Arcana viracana, Vandana viracana, Ąsya viracana,
Sakhya viracana, Ātmanivedana viracana and Sarana viracana.

Of all the works by Mādhavadeva, it is in the
Bhakti-ratnāvali that we find the most elaborate discussion
on the nature of bhakti, the nature of bhaktas and the
efficacy of good companions. This discussions are made on
the basis of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa.

Janma-rahasya:

The Janma-rahasya (the secrets of incarnation) is
a small work of Mādhavadeva containing less than three
hundred verses. This was composed by him in the early stage
of his literary career. It was Cilārāya, the commander-in-
chief of King Nāranārāyana, who offered the Janma-rahasya99
to Śaṅkaradeva and requested him to translate it for his
queens.100 According to Bezbaroa,101 Cilārāya's wife,
Bhūbanesvari, asked Śaṅkaradeva to make a book for her with
descriptions of the cause of creation and dissolution as its
subject. Śaṅkaradeva took the scripture to Barpeta and

99. KGC, p. 256. No such work as Janma-rahasya, in Sanskrit, has been noticed anywhere.
100. Daityāri, v. 868
advised Madhavadeva to translate it. With his encouragement, the latter completed the work and was highly praised by his guru for his neat composition.  

The story of the *Janma-rahasya* is based on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Although the *Katha-guru-carita* mentions one *Janma-purāṇa* as the source book of the *Janma-rahasya*, this book remains untraceable. The *Janma-rahasya* deals with the cause and effect of the ten incarnations of the Lord. The incarnations are the Matsya (the Fish), Kūrma (the Tortoise), Varāha (the Boar), Kṛṣṇa (the Man-lion), Vāmana (the Dwarf), Parasurāma (the axe-man incarnation), Halirāma (the Plough-man incarnation), Śrī Rāma, Bodha and Kalki. There are detailed descriptions of all the incarnations and their activities. Descriptions are made in the line of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. One notable feature of this book is that Madhavadeva mentions the name of Halirāma in giving the list of incarnations, but gives description of Kṛṣṇa's various activities instead of Halirāma. More than half of the verses of this book are about the activities and glories of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa.

The *Janma-rahasya* seems to be an original work rather than a work of translation. It has a reflection of Madhavadeva's own feelings and experiences. It gives a picture of the society of that time. The unhealthy atmosphere that...  

102. *KGC*, p. 252
covered the society with different religious practices.
created annoyance in the heart of Madhavadeva. His determination to propagate the religion of love and devotion to establish Krsna as the only worshipful deity finds its expression throughout this book.

Nama-mālikā:

The Nama-mālikā is a work of translation by Madhavadeva. The original book in Sanskrit was a composition by some brāhmans at the order of Puruṣottama Cājapati. It was at the request of Virūpākṣa Qāji that Madhavadeva undertook this work. It is, however, clear from this statement that he found no pleasure in rendering this work in verses. As he puts it - "This insipid (niranathuka) work is so disorderly. Whoever will be satisfied by making verses of it? Yet I have undertaken the task at the request of Virūpākṣa Qāji - to work on it in accordance with what my mind makes of it."

The book is a collection of quotations from various Purāṇas, Bhārata, Smṛtis, and Āgamas. It seeks to establish the glory of the name of Visnu-Kṛṣṇa. With vivid examples the book praises Lord Kṛṣṇa's Name and proclaims:

103. Nama-mālikā, vv. 6-7
104. Daityari, vv. 1508-1510
105. Nama-mālikā, v. 10
only His name can save people from all sins and sufferings. The chanting of the holy Name is the only way to spiritual liberation on the Iron Age. All religions are inferior to the kīrtana (recitation) of Hari's nāma (name). Even without any kind of holy dips, penance and gifts, by chanting only the Name one can attain to final salvation.

The name of Śiva or Rudra is also mentioned as a source of final salvation. Hari and Hara are given here the same position, for Hara is admitted as the devotee of Hari. It is said that with the recitation of the Name 'Śiva' all sins are purged. The names of sixty-two books are mentioned in the Nāma-malikā, from which quotations are used. These names include Āgama śāstras also, which may be the cause of dissatisfaction for Mādhavadeva. In the conclusions to the book Mādhavadeva proclaims the glory of King Laksminārāyana and Virūpākṣa Qājī and extols the book calling it the 'essence of all the scriptures'. The books which have been used as the source books in the Nāma-mālīka are as follows:

1. Brahma-purāṇa
2. Padma-purāṇa
3. Viṣṇu-purāṇa
4. Śiva-purāṇa
5. Agni-purāṇa
6. Bhavisya-purāṇa
7. Brahmavaivarta-purāṇa
8. Linga-purāṇa

106. Nāma-mālīka, vv. 22-29
107. ibid., vv. 465–468
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<td>Gautamī(ya)-tantra</td>
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Dhyāna-varnana:

In the Kīrtana-ghosa of Saṅkaradeva is included a section, Dhyāna-varnana, which is ascribed to Mādhavadeva. This is a small poem containing about twelve-seven verses. It describes the method of meditation on the Lords' physical beauty in an attractive way. The language is expressive and lively.

Mādhavadeva's plays:

Mādhavadeva's literary life was shaped on the model of Saṅkaradeva's. He followed the ideal of his guru, propagating the neo-Vaiṣṇava faith through songs and plays. Nine plays are attributed to Mādhavadeva. There is a belief current among the sattriya people of there being bāra nā[108]. (twelve plays composed by Saṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva). Modern critics allot six plays to Saṅkaradeva and six to Mādhavadeva out of these bāra nā[108]. Three other plays are considered to be spuriously linked with the name of...
Mādhavadeva. The dramatic compositions attributed to th
saint, therefore, may be grouped as follows:

A. Plays which are unquestionably Mādhavadeva's -
   1. Arjuna-bhañjana (Breaking down of the Arjuna tree)
   2. Gor-dhāra (Capture of the thief)
   3. Pimpara-gucowā (Removal of the ants)
   4. Bhūmi-letowā (Rolling on the ground)
   5. Bhojana-behār (Pastoral picnic)

B. Plays with doubtful authorship of Mādhavadeva -
   1. Bhusana-harana (Theft of the ornaments)
   2. Kotora-khela (The play of kotora)
   3. Rāsa-jhumurā (Play of the rāsa)
   4. Brahmany-mohana (The riddle of Brahmā)

C. Plays found mentioned in the old caritas and
attributed to Mādhavadeva but not traced -
   1. Govardhana-vātrā
   2. Nṛsīṁha-vātra
   3. Pāma-vātra

To the five plays of the first group, Mehta
had added Govardhana-vātra of the third group to complete
the list of six plays by Mādhavadeva out of the bāra nāyikā.
But this play could not be traced and it is a matter of
controversy whether it was actually a play or only an

utsava (festival). Without examining the text, āyatra could not be counted among the dramas of Madhavadeva. The play Bhusana-harana is more akin to Madhavadeva's style in its subject-matter and presentation of Krsna's character. Therefore, to complete the list of the six plays, we should count them as:

1) Arjuna-bhañjana
2) Gour-dhara
3) Pimpara-gucowa
4) Bhojana-behar
5) Bhumi-letowa, and
6) Bhusana-harana

Sources of the plays: the influence of Bilvamangala:

When we consider the sources of the themes of the short plays of Madhavadeva, the name of Bilvamangala spontaneously comes to our mind. Nothing is known about Bilvamangala with certainty. His life and identity are shrouded in the mist of legends. The South Indian tradition is that he belonged to the Tamil or Malayalam country. Kerela tradition connects him with Muktishala (now Mukkttalai) in Malabar on the Bharati. After taking to sannyasa at the age of twelve, he is said to have lived sometime in the Vedari hill in the Krishna district of...
Andhra. There are some other stories which connect with Calicut and with the foundation of the temple of Padmanābha at Trivandrum in Travancore. Bilvamaṅgala is supposed by some authors to be a Viṣṇusvāmī ascetic, but from the name of his generally acknowledged guru, Somagiri, others believe him to be a giri ascetic of Sankarite daśanāmi Order. His time is also controversial. Winternitz places him in the eleventh century, and A. Ramakrishna Kavi between 1060 and 1350 on the basis of citations in works ascribed to him. Farquhar gives an probable time to be in the fifteenth century. The tradition makes him the disciple of Padmapādācārya and founder of the Natuvile Madhom sect of Trichur. Some authors try to find out three Bilvamaṅgalas, the being the author of Krṣnakarṇāmṛta and disciple of Padmapādācārya; the times of the second and third Bilvamaṅgalas have been roughly put by them between 1100 to 1300 and the seventeenth century respectively.

111. R.L.I., p. 304
112. ibid., p. 304
114. ibid., p. 178
115. R.L.I., p. 304
the mention of Bilvamāṅgala in the old biographies of saints of Assam also. According to Rāmacarana's Sāṅkara-carita, Bilvamāṅgala's native village should lie somewhere between Gaya and Puri.  

The works of Bilvamāṅgala found circulation over all parts of India under different names. In Bengal it is Bilvamāṅgala Kośa-kāvyā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa-stotra; in Western India it is Vāla-gopālastuti and in South India it is famous as Kṛṣnākārnāmṛta, which goes under the authorship of Līlāśūka. It is not known when and in what form Bilvamāṅgala's works entered Assam. The religious movement initiated by Sāṅkaradeva created an atmosphere of love or bhakti poetry. He and his disciple, Mādhavadeva wrote a good number of lyrics and plays and Mādhavadeva fully utilized some parts of the Kṛṣṇa stotra in his works. But there is no trace of evidence to believe that Sāṅkaradeva himself ever knew the poet. The name of Kṛṣṇākārnāmṛta and its author Līlāśūka seem to have been unfamiliar in Assam at that time. This work of Līlāśūka was carried by Caitanya (1486-1533) himself to Bengal and it had great influence on the erotic-religious mysticism of Bengal. But Mādhavadeva, who outlived Sāṅkaradeva, did not utilize the erotic aspect in his songs and plays. He only concentrated on the child-God aspects of Kṛṣna as picturised in the

117. vv. 456-458
118. Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-kh., IX 304-305
Among the plays of Madhavadeva, Cor-dhara, Pimpara-gucowā and Bhumi-latowa are directly the dramatization of verses from Kṛṣṇastotra. In his play Arjuna-bhaṇjana five verses of the stotra are utilized either as nāndi or in the development of the plot. The text of Pimpara-gucowā is completely based on the verses of the Kṛṣṇastotra. The name is apparently a translation of the word pipilikapānayanam in Bilvamangala. The play begins with the verses numbering 20 and 130 of the stotra, as found in Assam and as has been edited and published by Maheswar and these were meant to form the nāndi to be recited by the sutradhāra, and the story is developed out of the context of these verses. In this play the dialogues centre round the stealing of butter (as suggested in v. 20 of the stotra), with songs of the same line. Madhavadeva developed a beautiful dramatic situation on the verses of the stotra with the appropriate mixture of creations of his own imaginative originality. His lyrics also bear the stamp of a deep influence of the Kṛṣṇastotra.

The ślokas of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa also are found in the playlets of Madhavadeva. In the play Arjuna-bhājak an influence of the Harivamśa is distinct. But, considered as a whole, he was more fond of the Kṛṣṇastotra than the Bhāgavata-purāṇa in selecting materials for his short plays.
His dramaturgy:

Mādhavadeva's dramaturgy greatly differs from that of Śankaradeva. It resembles neither the Sanskrit dramas nor any Indian theatre of local variation of those days. Mādhavadeva's literary and cultural activities were the results of the devotion and inspiration he had in Śankaradeva. He followed his guru's path in composing lyrics and narratives; but it is astonishing that he did not try to follow his guru's style in his play.

Mādhavadeva's plays are generally called jhumurā, though the terms nat and yātra have also been used with reference to them in some quarters. These musical and comparatively short plays were the unique compositions of Mādhavadeva. Unlike the full-fledged dramas of Śankaradeva, these short plays gave more importance to aesthetic pleasures than to the propagation of child Kṛṣṇa's divinity. It is clear that Mādhavadeva, like his guru, used his plays as the medium of propagation of his religious faith, but his innate genius for characterisation and presentation of the theme artistically cover that intention below the surface.

The dramaturgy of Mādhavadeva can be analysed in the following manner:

119. KGC, pp. 314, 351, 354, 400
(a) The jhumurās consist of dramatic presentation of little episodes or familiar, domestic situations. They do not cover a long story. The development of a plot and the use of sub-plots are absent in these short plays. Due to their shortness the five junctures of a classical drama are not exhibited in the jhumurā.

(b) The sources of Madhavadeva's plays are Bilvamaṅgala's Kṛnastotra and a few verses of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa. He did not use a full and long story of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa or Harivamsa as did his guru.

(c) Bhatimās, which is a main characteristic of Śankaradeva's plays, is rarely used in the jhumurās of Madhavadeva. Except one bhatimā in the playlet bhojana-behrā, he did not use any bhatimā in his plays.

(d) Madhavadeva did not write any Sanskrit sloka for his plays. The slokas he used were quoted either from Bilvamaṅgala's hymn or from the Bhāgavata-purāṇa. The number of slokas in the middle of the story are three in Arjuna-bhaṇjana, one in each of Cor-dhara, Bhūmi-letowā and Bhojana-behrā.

(e) The heroes of Sankaradeva's dramas are Kṛṣṇa and Rāma at their young age. But Madhavadeva always introduces child Kṛṣṇa as the hero of his playlets.

(f) The predominant sentiments in Madhavadeva's play are hasya (mirth) and vātsalya (filial sentiment).
and vīra (the erotic and the heroic) sentiments are not found in the recognised plays of Mādhavadeva.

(g) Mādhavadeva's plays are rich in female characters of which the most attractive one is the motherly character of Yasodā. No heroine is presented opposite Kṛṣṇa.

(h) The language used in Mādhavadeva's plays is Brajabuli or Brajavalī-bhāṣā like in the plays of Śaṅkaradeva. But Mādhavadeva's language is simpler and richer with the use of more Assamese words than are found in his guru's works.

(i) The jhumūras are predominantly musical in character. Speeches are made sweeter with songs bearing the same meaning.

Origin of the name jhumūra:

The term jhumūra is applied to the shorter ala of Mādhavadeva only. Nothing is known with certainty about the origin of the word jhumūra. In one of his plays Mādhavadeva himself used the terms aṅka or jhumūra. Only in the Arjuna-bhaṅjana he had applied the term yātrā to . The word jhumūra is a rare one in the old caritas. Daityārī applies this name to the play Dadhi-mathana (Arjuna-bhaṅjana) of Mādhavadeva. The Kathā-guru-caritā,

120. v. 1286
121. p. 354
except the mention of the name Rāsa-jhumurā, does not use the term jhumurā to Madhavadeva's other plays.

The Saṅgīta-dāmodara 122 describes a music form called jhumuri, which has an erotic subject, should be sweet and may not follow metrical rules very strictly. The word jhumuri is found in Vidyāpati's song; 123 where it means a type of song sung by women. There are three kinds of dances of women in Mithila, viz., jhijhari, jhurujā and jhumuri which are accompanied with songs. Among these dances jhumuri is a dance of erotic sentiment presented by girls of young age. 124 In some parts of Uttar Pradesh there is a dance called jhumur which is generally accompanied with songs of erotic sentiments. In Bengal jhumur is a musical piece consisting of questions and replies of two parties. It is generally erotic in tone. A fine example of it is the Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana of Baçu Chandidāsa. 125 A lot of jhumur songs are found in Maithili, Bhojpuri, Avadhī and some other dialects of Hindi language. These are always sung by women in the form of chorus. The oldest mention of the word jhumur is found in

122. The Indian Stage, Vol.I, p. 92; Dr Neog (SIT, 1945) mentions that this word jhumari has been found as sumari in one manuscript copy of the Saṅgīta-dāmodara.
123. Vidyāpati Thākur's Padavali, p. 478
124. Sarma, S. N., Prabandha-cayana, p. 83
125. ibid., p. 84
caryā-song of Sarahapāda\textsuperscript{126} where it means 'joy' or 'rejoicement'. In Assam jhumuri is an eight syllable metre in Vaisnava poetry. The name of Sangītaka, mentioned in the Sangīta-dāmodara, is given by some critics as the source of the jhumurē.\textsuperscript{127}

Among the Sanskrit upa-rūpakas there is a type called Gosthi which is very primitive and represents one of the cowherd dance of Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{128} It is consisted of nine or ten Prākṛt heroes and five or six beautiful heroines. The plot should be imaginary and not very noble. The sentiment should be erotic.

It is a matter of much doubt whether the jhumurē of Mādhavadeva have any relation with the jhumari, jhumur, jhumur or jhumar. Their probable relation with either gosthi or sangītaka is also a matter of controversy. The play Kotora-khela resembles to the jhumur dance drama of Bengal. But this play has a doubtful authorship and it may be a later-day composition of some unknown writer. The genuine plays of Mādhavadeva do not bear any touch of the erotic sentiment. But they are full of songs and dances of women characters. It may be surmised that after the name of Rāsa-jhumurē, his other plays slowly came to be known as...

\textsuperscript{126} Magadh, K.P., Mādhavadeva: vyaktitya aur krtitva, ...
\textsuperscript{127} ibid., p. 69
\textsuperscript{128} Mankad, Types of Sanskrit drama, p. 205
jhumuras. But this conclusion greatly depends upon the originality of Rāsa- jhumurā. The Kathā-guru-carita mentions the name of Rāsa-jhumurā and Rādhā-rāc. If this particular play with the character of Rādhā in it, can be counted as genuine play of Mādhavadeva, the word jhumurā can be believed as given by Mādhavadeva himself.

Another explanation may be given in this way: as in Sanskrit dramaturgy rūpaka means the longest play, upa-rūpaka means the shorter plays, or, as the metre jhumur is shorter besides the metre lecārī, likewise the term jhumurā was given to the plays of Mādhavadeva, which are smaller in comparison to Sānkara-deva’s dramas.

The language of the plays:

Mādhavadeva composed his plays in Brajābuli or Brajāvalī-bhāśā, the sacred language of the Kṛṣṇa cult of Eastern India. Like Mādhava Kandali and Sānkara-deva, Mādhavadeva used Old Assamese in his narratives, but chose Brajābuli for his plays. This language was the outcome of the influence of Maithili literature on Assam. From the beginning of the 14th century there can be traced continuous line of development of Maithili literature, which attained its highest perfection in the hands of poet Vidyāgati (c 1350-1450). A poetic language, certainly artificial in
its nature, developed in the hands of the poets of Mithila and Bengal from the 14th century onwards. This artificial language came to be known as 'Braja-buli' in Bengal and 'Brajāvalī-bhāṣā' in Assam. It is a kind of Maithili mixed with Bengali in Bengal and with Assamese in Assam, and some earlier Apabhramśa and contemporary Western Hindi (Brajbhasā) forms. A section of critics try to prove the Brajāvalī dielect as directly originating from Avahatta and consider it to be an original language. They consider Sānkaradeva as the first known poet of this language who wrote his song "mana meri Rāma caranehi" in 1488. They say that in connexion with Mithila Assam had developed the Brajāvalī-bhāṣā and its artificiality is greatly emphasized by scholars. The use of Brajabhāsā was a case of direct participation of a common literary life in Eastern India. The dialect of Braja is supposed to have some connection with the classical Sanskrit drama.

129. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Intellectual and Spiritual links with the rest of India through literature in Assam : the Brajabuli or Brajāvalī diālect. The Banikanta Lectures, 1954*, p.61
130. ibid., p.61
131. Sānkarī Sanskritī Adhyayana, p. 73
132. Sukumar Sen, *A History of Brajabuli Literature*, p. 28
133. S.V.L.C.A., p. 28
In the writings of Śankaradeva and Madhavadeva a Kamarūpī ring is very much distinct. Assamese words and idioms are more available in Madhavadeva's works than in Śankaradeva's. As a whole, the songs and dialogues of his plays are in a greater degree nearer to spoken Assamese. Among the songs in his plays these songs, "Par jagata pati" (Arjuna-bhaṇjana), "Bhūmi luti kānde Gopināth" (Bhūmi-letowa), "Gopāla sunare bāba" (Bhūmi-sunara), "Kānu sāje sāje" (Bhojana-behar), and all the songs in Pimpūra-gucowā are free from Brajabuli touch. The other songs in his plays are some of the finest compositions in Brajabuli mixed with Assamese.

In grammatical rules Madhavadeva generally followed his guru's Brajabuli, which differs from the language of old Assamese literature. Though he used some forms of grammar in his songs which are not found in Assamese also. Madhavadeva had a good stock of Assamese words and idioms in his plays. The dialogues used in his plays are rich with Kamarūpī words (lāg, lāgal, kati, ...) and conforming to the style of rural and spoken Assamese - "maṭita thekasāi thaiyā", "rēga cārāla", "dhuvātē kauvālā", "cāra-padoka", "curūṇī".

135. S.V.L.C.A., p. 74
136. Neog, intro. Śrī Śrī Madhavadevar Vākyāmṛta
The Brajabuli of his plays is full of active expressions:

"Hamata rose bagara gave lange mati" (Bhumi-letovā)

"Kona cara puratana kalasa bhāṅgala, kadā cuika dhana hāni kayala, tāheko gave nāhi sahala, ēra ki sahaba?" (Cor-dhara)

"Parama sukomala bāli, Padma-gandhe bhramara akula karice. Padmaka beḍā bhramare guñjare .......... Āsā ahite bhojana karoho, pānī piyā kāṣata vatsasava caroka." (Bhojana-behārī)

"Ohi buli Yaśoda govali savaka theṅgaṇa diya khedaikaho āpona āncore Kṛṣṇaka dhūlā jhāri buke bāndhi kole kari badane cumbana diya parama ānande āpona pṛhe āni śītala jale snāna karai pancāmṛta bhojana karāvala." (Cor-dhara)


The characters of Kṛṣṇa and Yaśoda:

Of all the characteristics of Mādhava-deva's jhumurās, the two characters of Kṛṣṇa and Yaśoda form the main attraction. The other characters, besides the two, are secondary. The primary sentiment of his drama—mirth and filial affection—has been revealed through these two.
characters. Among the characters in his jhumurās the main ones are - Kṛṣṇa, his cowherd friends, Nārada, Handa, the two sons of Kuvera and passers-by. Among the female characters, that of Yaśodā is the most prominent. Although there is Pohini's character in one play it is only secondary.

As painter of the character of Kṛṣṇa, Madhavadeva has shown a rare dramatic skill and genius. A few songs of Surdās, the saint-poet of the North, resemble Madhavadeva's songs and dramas in their characterisation of the child God. Madhavadeva's Kṛṣṇa is marvellous combination of childlike innocence and supreme personality. Like Kṛṣṇa - the hero of Sankaradeva's dramas, the small boy of Madhavadeva's jhumurās cannot at first sight be recognised as God incarnate. The Kṛṣṇa of Madhavadeva's plays bears all the natural traits of a human child. His supernatural power has been indicated only in the case of his having delivered the two sons of Kuvera by way of breaking the twin Arjuna trees and in the event of the rope falling short while Yaśodā tried to bind Kṛṣṇa with it. Madhavadeva's Kṛṣṇa is a shrewd child. His presence of mind and smartness of conversation is surprising. In matters of temper and sentiment he is like any other boy.

137. Arjuna-bhañjana
138. Surdās, pp. 58, 59
139. Arjuna-bhañjana
brought up in parental indulgence. He goes to the cow-keepers hamlet, silently enters someone’s habitat to stealthily eat butter there. If caught red-handed, he lies and sometimes charges the house-wife herself as the cause of butter. When caught while putting his hand into butter-pot, he pretends removing ants from it. In the eyes of other milkmaids he is the shrewdest of the herd but to his mother he appears to be just a simple child. He dances before the milkmaids after taking butter and befooling them with words, but as soon as he faces his mother he begins to weep and get himself enthroned in her lap. He is expert in complaining about the milkmaids to his mother. The clever child even deceives his mother by his enticing words. The mirthful scenes he creates for his mother are presented in the drama, Bhumik-latowa (Rolling down on the ground). The Krsna of the drama dhojana-behar (Pastoral-picture) is fond of frolic. He enjoys picnicking, dancing and singing along with his companions. Just like an ordinary human child, this Krsna is fatigued after anxiously searching for his missing brother and friends:

To-day’s feast has been beset with great danger, Where have all my brothers gone?

140. Cor-dhora
141. Pinpara-ucowa
The best example of the creation of the vīra-sentiment of mirth through the innocent but clever lover Kṛṣṇa is to be found in the drama, Pimpāra-gucōva (the removal of Ants). Kṛṣṇa - sad and sentimental at the reprimand he has received from his mother, is a child as familiar as well as endearing. His smart talk holds forth his sharp intelligence.

Though the jhumurās have depicted Kṛṣṇa as a child character full of delightful mirth and frolic and amusingly wicked wits, Madhavadeva, however, has not forgotten to indicate that this clever boy is but the universal form of the Supreme Godhead. The divinity of Kṛṣṇa is as frequently proclaimed in the jhumurās, as has been eloquently done in the dramas of Saṅkaradeva. The expression of divinity is found in the introductory and concluding sīlokas of the jhumurās and in some utterance the Sūtradhāra, Sāñcī or Rohini. Excluding these and excepting the drama of Arjuna-bhaṭṭācārya there is - in the rest of the jhumurās no indication of the divinity of Kṛṣṇa in his deeds. The poet-dramatist seems to be pleased with the human aspect of Kṛṣṇa as a naughty child thief. In Arjuna-bhaṭṭācārya Kṛṣṇa himself indicates his playing a sporting role out of grace for the devotees:
I only eat the offerings made by the non-devotees. But it is out of grace that I, by way of standing, accept the offerings of the devotees.

Again the divine status of Krsna has been expressly stated in the following speech:  

I am the master of the crores of universes, and the Supreme God of all gods like Brahma.

The Supreme divinity of Krsna has also been proclaimed by the utterances of Narada and the sons of Kuvera - the other supernatural characters in the jhumur.

In the hymn, sung by the twin sons of Kuvera, it has been said:

Thou, the unstained, the container of the universe, Thou God incarnate for deliverance, Thou dost liberate people revealing delightful sports. I become the servant of Thy lotus-feet, kindly destroy my prevailing desires. Let there be Thy names and admiration in my utterances, let there continuously flow in my ears holy talks on Thee, let my hands remain engaged in doing Thy works; let my mind be at rest in remembering Thy feet and let my head remain worshipping Thy feet.

God, the master of the three worlds, has revealed Himself in the form of an ordinary cow-keeper's son, and

142. Arjuna-bhanijana
143. ibid.
this is His full incarnation. Narada says: 144, "Oh my Lord, I could not find Thee searching throughout the seven Vaikunthas (seven holly abodes - where there is no cause for diffidence). I did not get at Thee while looking out Thy Ananta-sayya, 145 Oh my Master, after searching for Thee throughout the three worlds - I traced the sign of Thy feet on the banks of the Yamuna."

Mādhavadeva, after painting the pictures of delightful childlike sports of the Lord, who cannot be realised through the knowledge of scriptures, has advised: "Forsake the forest of the Vedas beset with the three gunas. Recognise the Brahman in the milkmaid's house."

The characterisation of Yaśoda is one major attraction of Mādhavadeva's playlets. In none of the jhumurās characters like Sītā, Rukminī, Satyabhāma, etc., were characterised either as love-sick, love-lorn or sentimented, as are to be found as in Śaṅkaradeva's dramas. Yaśoda, the main character of Mādhavadeva's jhumurās is the universal mother incarnate. Among the dramas of Śaṅkaradeva, the mother character of Yaśoda is found in the Kāli-damaṇa. Like Śitā or Rukminī, Yaśoda is also fond of Kṛṣṇa, but this affection is expressive of deep filial affection. A poignant fit is

144. Bhọjana-behār
145. ibid.
146. Bargīt
affection or motherly love is her characteristic feature.

The engrossing character of Yasodā both as a queen and a housewife has been fully revealed in the jhumurā, arjuna-bhañjana. As a responsible housewife — being able to completely rely upon maid-servants, she herself undertakes to churn the curd. Through her conflict with Nanda her ego as the mistress of the household and family has been expressed:147 "I am the householder, my right extends over every household affair."

Her authority over all other milkmaids is explicit. But her deep affection for her son overshadows all these other concerns. Her humming words while looking over Kṛṣṇa playing during her churning is very touching: "Oh my darling Kṛṣṇa, you are the Supreme God of the crown of men-folk, you are the crown of my head, ornamental seven-stringed necklace (sātsārī), my earring and bracelet of the hand."148

Just like an ideal mother, Yasodā does not hesitate to punish her dear son in case he does anything wrong. Besides reprimanding Kṛṣṇa for stealing butter from the houses of milkmaids - she warns him with physical punishment like beating.149 Her irritation is natural...
like any other mother's - when she loses her patience on hearing from others complaints against the son. Sometimes Yasoda appears to be a simple, ignorant mother. She loses her sense of justice many times due to her excessive affection. At moments like these she accuses the complaining milkmaid in return and takes Krishna in her lap.150 Yasoda, when she engages in soothing Krishna by taking upon herself all the blames, appears to us as a very attractive character.151

Yasoda very much loves to awake Krishna kissing in the face in the morning and sending him for cow-tending after proper dressing and decorating.152 Although the clever child vexes his mother in all possible ways, describing to her the troubles he has to undergo while cow-tending and threatens her that he will flee away from the tortures to the city of Kamsa - yet for Yasoda, Krishna is an apple of her eye. The spectacle of Yasoda bemoaning on the bank of the Yamuna - while looking out for her son who has gone out in the morning and has yet not returned even by evening-fall, is a very touching one. Her lamentations before other milkmaids:153

150. Cor-dhara
151. Bhumile-towa
152. Bhojana-behar
153. Cor-dhara
What do you ask me - an unfortunate woman? I got Kṛṣṇa as my son as boon of God due to many virtuous observances. That my dear son, Kṛṣṇa, went out in the morning to play. Now it is that afternoon is over, and he has not yet returned; how will my life survive at the loss of my dear son who has not been found?

In Yasodā - the concept of universal motherhood is revealed in its full blossom. Her deep affection is poignant and strong that even the Lord of the three worlds had to submit in obeisance to her in the humble form of a cow-herd.

Arjuna-bhaṅjana (Breaking down of the Arjuna trees):

Arjuna-bhaṅjana was the first drama composed by Madhavadeva in about 1538 A.D. while he was at Gaṇākūṭa. At that time Śaṅkaradeva was alive and played the role of Nanda in this play. Madhavadeva himself played the role of Upananda. Another popular name of this play was Dadhimathana. Both the terms Yātra and Jhumura were applied to it.

154. S.V.L.C.A., p. 97
155. Neog, intro. Śrī Śrī Madhavadevar Vākyāṁṛta
156. Daityārī, v. 1286
157. The concluding speeches of the sūtradhāra in the play Arjuna-bhaṅjana.
158. Daityārī, v. 1286
The story of this drama is taken from the Bhāgavata-purāṇa (X. 9-11) and the Hari-vamśa (ch. 6.). The following verses of Bilvamangala's Kṛṣṇa-stotra were: 

(a) ghoṣasya mohosāvamānaya mitho-guṇena
   madhya babandha jananī navanīta-coram

(b) naksatramitra navanītakaṇāvākiraṇam
   baksasthalodaramagocararamagamanam, etc.

(c) paramamimampadesamadhyadhvam
   nigamavanesu nītaṃta caraksinnah, etc.

One day Yaśodā was churning milk and Kṛṣṇa was playing in front of her. As Yaśodā rebuked the milkmaid, the child decided not to allow her churn and demanded a suck. While giving a suck to Kṛṣṇa, Yaśodā saw the boiling milk overflowing the pot. She hastily put down the child and ran to the oven to attend to it. At this Kṛṣṇa became angry. He pelted a stone at the churning pot and spoilt the milk. Then he began to eat fresh butter and threw portions of it to the monkeys assembled near by. Yaśodā saw the broken pot and the spoilt milk she became furious and went in search of Kṛṣṇa. Again she saw the scene of Kṛṣṇa and the monkeys. The lady chased Kṛṣṇa with a stick in her hand and after a time she was able to catch him. Then she tried to tie him up with a rope, but found the rope short by two fingers' breadth. She attempted
again and again, refusing all requests and pleas of the ladies assembled there, but could not tie Krsna up. She added extra rope but still found it as short as before. Child-God became sorry at the labour of Yaśodā and allowed her to tie him up with the rope. After tying him with a mortar Yaśodā left the place. Krsna then began to move passing in between two Arjuna trees close by and dragging by force the mortar behind him. In so doing he broke the trees which fell to the ground with a tremendous noise. From these Arjuna trees came out the twin sons of Kuvera, Manigrīva and Nalakuvera. They had been in the form of trees due to some offence made to Nārada, the divine seer. The sons of Kuvera bowed to Krsna and praised Him as the Parama purusa and the primal cause of the universe. After they had gone Nanda found Krsna in between the broken tree with the mortar tied behind him. He took the child and rebuked Yaśodā for becoming so heartless. The couple, Krsna and Yaśodā, had a quarrel regarding the issue.

This drama is enriched with eight songs. It is the longest among Mādhavadeva's plays. The dominant sentiments in his plays are pathetic and marvellous. The act Krsna's eating butter with the monkeys is most humorous. The dialogues of Nanda and Yaśodā remind us the quarrel of Śacī and Satyabhāma in the Pārijāta-harana drama of Saṅkaradeva.
Cor-dhara (Capture of the thief):

This playlet is a dramatization of the following stotra:

kundakridā vigalita ghanasveḍā mugdāhanasmriti
kascit drṣṭah kuvalavadalasyāmalah kopi śāśaḥ
dṛgyante vair pathi pathi vyākula nandavat
ārīre ārīre tapanaduhitaḥ Kṛśnamānyayaḥ

Madhavadeva had invented and incorporated the story of theft of butter in it.

A milkmaid found Kṛṣṇa inside her house, who was stealing butter. She at once shut the door and called all the milkmaids to capture the thief. Meanwhile Kṛṣṇa's companions also came by his shouting. Then, being the stronger party, Kṛṣṇa dragged the woman, pulling her at the hem of her garment and declared that he was not the thief; he had been playing with his mates in the street. The milkmaid is the actual thief, Kṛṣṇa complained, and threatens her to hand her over to Yaśodā. Thus cornered, the milkmaid withdrew the charge against Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa would not leave her until she gave him some butter. She agreed to give butter provided Kṛṣṇa dances before them. Then she gave butter and Kṛṣṇa began to dance. At home Yaśodā was awaiting anxiously for her son as it had already reached midday. She went out in search of him with tears in her eyes...
eyes. When a milkmaid told her that Krsna was dancing joyfully in the house of a cowherdess, Yaśodā became cheerful. She took Krsna with her and hearing Krsna's complaints against the gopīs, spoke some hard words to ... Pimparā-gucowā (The removal of ants): 

The name of the play is apparently a translation of the word pipilikāpanayanam in Bilvamaṅgala. The play begins with the stotra verses 20 and 130 meant to form Nāndi to be recited by the sutradhāra, and the story is developed out of their contents. The dialogues round about the stealing of butter (as suggested in v. 20 of the stotra) till the middle of the play. Translation of Bilvamangala stotra is found in the first song of the play (sung by the chorus). The stotras are:

(a) kastavia bāla balanujastvanihe kim manmandirāsakayi
budham tat navanīta kumbhavivare hastām kimamtha
nyāsa
kartum tatra pipilikāpanayanam supta kimudhovīrta
bāla batsagatirvibektumuti sanjalān harin pūta va
(b) vadane navanītagandhavaham vacene taskaracātīruka
nayane kuhakasrunasrīto yascarne kūnola tāmcavan
kumāra

The first also occurs in Braja-vihāra kāvyā of śrīdhara Svāmī. In Madhavadeva's translation both the

159. Ś.V.L.C.A., p. 99
slokas are combined in one nāndi song which is sung by the chorus.

A cowherdess questions Kṛṣṇa, when she finds him in her own room, - "Who are you in my house?"
Vanamāli replies - "I am the younger brother of Balarāma."
She asks - "I understand. But what made you here?"
Nārāyana replies - "I entered here mistaking it for my house."
The milkmaid again asks - "I believe, but why have you put your hand into the butter-pot?"
Hari answers - "It is not a crime. I did so to remove the ants from the butter-pot."
The milkmaid says - "It is very well. But why had you awakened my sleeping child?"
Kanu replies - "I have awakened him to enquire about my missing calf?"
The milkmaid questions - "O wicked Kanu, why your face smells of butter?"
Kanu replies - "O milkmaid, it is your face that smells; you are the thief."
The milkmaid found no answer. She with other milkmaids took Kṛṣṇa to Yaśodā and accused him of theft and mischief.
Yaśodā rebuked Kṛṣṇa and warned him not to visit any milkmaid's house in future. Kṛṣṇa was offended and threatened his mother to leave her house for ever.
Bhumi-letowa (Rolling on the ground):

This play is a dramatisation of Bilvamaita's following stotra -

nitam nava navanItam
kena ca pitam payah kva me murali
iti sanudriya lunthanatam
bhumau bālam namami gopālam

Krṣna was stealthily eating and drinking out-

and milk inside the room. He suddenly saw Yaśodā appearing and hurriedly turned down the pots, concealed his flute, himself rolling on the ground began to cry. Yaśodā enquired what was happening. Krṣna, with tears in his eyes, reported to his mother that he had to face three misfortunes at once. Somebody stole away his milk and butter as also his flute. The charming child continued to cry rolling on the ground and the helpless mother tried her best to pacify him. She said, "It is your monkey that stole and ate the butter. Why are you rolling on the ground being angry upon me? Your tender body is all covered with dust, I cannot tolerate this. Do not cry, dear." Yaśodā promised to give him fresh butter a little later. But Krṣna did not agree to wait for a moment, he insisted on having them then and there. She had to give him the butter set apart for offering to God. On getting it Krṣna began to dance.
Bhojana-behār (Pastoral picnic):

The story of this play is taken from the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, X.12.

Krṣna arranged a picnic in Vṛndāvana. He with cowherd friends took rice and curd with them and joyfully went to the pasture with their cows with them. On the beautiful bank of the Yamunā they had amusements by singing and playing. While they were taking meals, sitting in the form of a lotus taking Krṣna at the centre, then Krṣna went out in search of their cattle. Finding nowhere he came back and found the boys also gone. Krṣna had concealed the cowherds and the cattle to examine Krṣna's divine power. Krṣna, like an ordinary human child, began to cry.

The play abruptly terminates at this stage. The concluding portion of the story is found in the play Brahmā-mohana, which seems to have originally formed a part of Bhojana-behār.

The dramas attributed to Mādhava-deva:

Bhūṣana-harana (Theft of ornaments):

The source of the play is unknown. Medhi suggests it to be a spurious work and suggests the suspected part.
(Bhusana-haranar gīt) of Madhavadeva as its source. But its language and characterisation are akin to Madhavadeva's genuine plays.

Rādhā, a milkmaid, finds Kṛṣṇa fast asleep under a Kadamba tree. She takes off his ornaments and hands them over to Yāsodā. When Kṛṣṇa returns home with his bare body, Yāsodā asks him about the ornaments. The accused milkmaid once finds a way and tells his mother that a milkmaid persuades him to eat some sweetmeat, after eating which becomes unconscious, that his head began to reel and he falls down asleep on the road. When he is in deep slumber, that milkmaid steals all his ornaments. In accuse Rādhā of theft. Yāsodā abuse Rādhā and turns her off.

Here the character of Rādhā is very attractive. She is not the consort of Kṛṣṇa. Her relation with Kṛṣṇa, as Kakati points out, is almost the relation of a sister with her younger brother.

Brahma-mohana (The riddle of Brahma):

This plot is taken from the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, X. 12-14.

Brahma steals away the cattle and the courier and keeps them in a cave. Then Kṛṣṇa, to delude him, 160 S.V.L.C.A., p. 100

160. S.V.L.C.A., p. 100
161. Purani Asamiya Sahitya, p. 49
the forms of the missing boys and the cattle. Nobody knew
the fact and the normal life of Vraja goes on as usual.
After a year, Brahma sees in Vrndabana the same group of
boys and the cattle. Being puzzled, he examines the cave
where he conceals them and finds them there also. Later he
sees each boy and cattle in the form of Visnu. Bewildered
in this way Brahma falls unconscious. When he opens his
eyes he sees Krsna in front of him in the usual form of
cowherd. He bows down on Krsna's feet and asks forgiveness.
After that the cowherds finish their deserted meal and
return home.

Pasa-jhumura (Play of the rāsa):

This play is based on the rāsa story of the
Bhāgavata-purāṇa. It bears the influence of Sankaradeva's
Keli-copāla also. 162

Rādha wishes to have Krsna's favour. Krsna
gives no attention to her pleas because as he has taken her as his special favourite, leaving other gopīkas behind,
dares to ride on his shoulder. Thereupon Rādha falls down at his feet and asks for forgiveness. She worships him as the cause of the universe.

This musical play consists of four songs and a

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little dialogues. Apart from Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, the third character is the Sāngī, who has only one speech in this play.

Koṭorā-khela (The play of koṭorā):

The source of this play is unknown. Kṛṣṇa is playing with his friends on the bank of Yamunā. Then Rādhā, along with some cowherdresses, goes towards Yamunā hāṭ (market). Kṛṣṇa and others intercept and attempt to take down their pots of curd, milk and sweets. They demand ferry-toll, saying Kṛṣṇa is the ferryman and toll-collector. On this absurd demand the cowherdresses turn back and attempt to cross by the Vathurā. There also the cowherds make the same demand. Finding no way out the milkmaids give the boys the sweets, and Kṛṣṇa and his mates begin to dance.

One panegyric and four lyrics are found in this play. One writer takes the story to have reflected Surdaśa's Dādi-dāna-līlā and Nārāyaṇa Bhatta's Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-vilāsa in it. But the folk-story of toll-collection by Kṛṣṇa is very common. It is particularly celebrated in Bengali poetry.

163. Madhavadeva: Vyaktitva aur Krtitva, 1
His place in Assamese literature:

In the history of Assamese literature, the Vaisnava age has a special importance. During this age, the versatile literary genius of Śankaradeva and Mādhavadeva enriched the Assamese socio-literary scene in diverse ways. In Mādhavadeva’s religious and literary life his guru Śankaradeva played a vital role. It was at the behest of his guru that Mādhavadeva set on the tasks of promoting the Vaisnava faith and composing Vaisnava songs and verses. But such was his scholarly and poetic genius that he easily acquired a status equal to his guru. In literary creativity, he appears at places even to have overshadowed Śankaradeva. The works of Śankaradeva and Mādhavadeva together from the most valuable products of Assamese literature. Though each particular work by them has its own value, Mādhavadeva’s literary works have some extraordinary special qualities. Because of those qualities, Śankaradeva’s works found their way into the very heart of the literate masses. Even an illiterate person with limited understanding could have a taste of the literary appeal of his compositions. His Namaghoshā deserves to be placed on the same level with any piece of world literature of the first rank dealing with religion and philosophy. Here in this book one does not know how to distinguish a piece of translated śloka from a piece of original versification.
The whole work seems to be the spontaneous overflow of emotions arising from his very heart. Had he composed only the Namaghosa, Madhavadeva's name would have left its indelible mark in Assamese literature. In sheer lyricism the book is incomparably rich. Subsequently there were others who followed Madhavadeva by composing similar works as Na-shosa, Ghsa-ratna on the model of Gagan the Namaghosa but the latter remained unrivalled. Though the Bhakti-ratnavali lacks the fervour of Namaghosa, yet it too, is immensely valuable in the domain of Assamese literature because of the all India reputation of its original. As an example of concise and lucid rendering of a tough subject, the book deserves to be regarded as a model.

By contributing his jhumuras and gits to Assamese literature, Madhavadeva has earned a place of distinction. He is the only writer of this type of short plays, known as jhumuras. In comparison with the plays written by Sankaradeva, the jhumuras are of greater merit and appeal. There were many who modelled their drama on Sankaradeva's plays, but there were few who wrote another jhumura on the model left by Madhavadeva. His lyrics are greater in number and more delightful than those of Sankaradeva. By depicting the vivid pictures of Krishna's playful childhood and Yasoda's maternal affection in...
manner as yet unsurpassed in both his lyrics and kāvya.

Mādhavadeva has evinced his brilliant genius. No other poet, except Surdās and Mādhavadeva, could depict Kṛṣṇa's frolicsome childhood with such excellence. He did not occupy himself with the portrayal of the boyhood of Kṛṣṇa's childhood only, but he also depicted the playful deeds of Kṛṣṇa, but Mādhavadeva devoted himself solely to the portrayal of child Kṛṣṇa. Excepting in kāvya and one or two lyrics, in all his other works, Mādhavadeva's Kṛṣṇa is a child. In the whole range of Assamese literature, a child character like this is a rarity. Whenever one thinks of Mādhavadeva, one remembers his jhumuras and lyrics visualising the love and affection the chastisements and pranks between a mother and a son.

As a literary artist and playwright, Mādhavadeva was fully aware of the psychology of his devoted audience. That is why he has been able to present the Vedantic philosophy in such a lucid manner that simply by listening joyfully to the rāgas and rhythms of his songs even an illiterate listener could grasp that philosophy almost unconsciously. Even a man devoid of the knowledge of scriptures could participate in a discussion on the scriptures by quoting from his lyrics. The jhumuras of their limited scope could also fulfil the same purpose.

164. Surdās, p. 78
Though these literary works were meant to serve as a medium of religious propaganda, they are an excellent source of entertainment and artistic delight. Composed in a language which is more accessible than the language of the Sankaradeva dramas, and using such colloquial words as are familiar to the village audience, and their performance being limited to a short span of time without causing any monotony, these jhumurās of Mādhavadeva are still enjoyed by the audience—both learned and illiterate.