



Translation

Damned City, Dumb King

Translation of Bhartendu Harishchandra's play *Andher Nagari Chaupat Raja*¹

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Translator's Introduction: The play begins with a guru and his disciples reaching a city for alms. To the level of his utter surprise, the disciple comes across a strange custom in the city. Everything from vegetable to sweets, and all products of daily use are sold at the same price, one *Taka* per unit. The guru senses something reckless here, and decides to move away, yet the disciple wants to enjoy the economical spree around. Via a series of comic events the play takes a strange turn where he is to be hung at the orders of the king. The Guru eventually saves the disciple with his wise plan. As a satire on the autocracy and irrational behaviour of administrative system, the play has been a good favourite across the time. *Andher Nagari* (1881) is a seminal play in Hindi literature and culture. The text offers quite rich connotations with thought provoking and popular appeal simultaneously. Innumerable performances of this play are seen in institutionalized and popular theatres. Being a literary classical of Hindi literature, it enjoyed popularity among the people.

¹ Source Text –Harishchandra Bhartendu Bharatbhushan. *Andher Nagari Chaupat Raja: Taka Ser Bhaji Taka Ser Khaja*. Compiled by the editor of *Kshatriya Patrika* Ku. Babu Ramdeen Singh and published by Babu Ram Ranvijay Singh. Bankipur: Khadgvilas Press .1914.

English Translation:

Dedication

None stands worth respect, just by holding a position so,
Such beings deserve honour who for others' interest go.

Those in selfish motive show up a swan yet in raven job,
demeaning others, they flourish, and prove dominance so.

Though so stand the ways of the world, truth finally wins,
If not in the world, the sham had to face Yama's blow
albeit.

A being aligning the other in pain, stands a gem in human
form,
Eating, drinking and inhalation go even with dog, swine,
frog and bellows.

The same I performed, for quite so long, continued, yet
wakeful now, towards the progression of the values of
Vedas, Bharat Desh and cow.

One who keeps truth as possession, giving up slyness,
shapes the ending days,

It brings kingly state, the chanting of Almighty, the truth
brings all praise along.

Scene: One

Town's Outskirts

(Mahanthaji enters with two disciples, singing)

Chorus: Chant the name of Rama¹, the name of Rama,
name of Rama, O bro!

¹ Here used in the sense of Almighty

Ganika¹ attained redemption and Geedhi² too,
it all by chanting so.
The name of Rama alone makes everything run,
The want of Rama's name, just leaves all undone.
Chanting Rama's name made a visionless Surdas³
as the great name, the poet's poet.
And there Tulsi, a prig –existence
found on the wide stretch,
turned great Tulsidas-just Ram's grace!

Mahantha: *Bachcha*⁴ Narain Das! The town looks pretty charming from a far. Go and see, if some alms are attained, we make offering to Thakurji⁵. What else to do, you know!

Narain Das: Guruji Maharaj! By the grace of Narayan⁶, the town, of course, looks very pretty. Should the alms too make the same pretty amount, it be a pleasant substance!

¹ Ganika was a reputed courtesan with a nasty and sinful life in past. DevarshiNarada, taking pity on her, went to her house and gave her a parrot with a directive to teach him regularly the (inverted) Name of the Lord. This exercise raised her to the status of a great devotee of God. Ganika attained emancipation while teaching the parrot. (Kohli, Surindar Singh, ed., *Dictionary of Mythological References in Guru Granth Sahib*, 1993). More references on Ganika may be referred at <https://www.sikhnet.com/news/bhagat-maalaa-story-ganika-part-xx>

² Geedhi was a bird catcher. He also achieved salvation by chanting the name of Almighty.

³ A great Hindi poet, philosopher and musician.

⁴ A young person.

⁵ Used, fondly, for Shri Krishna

⁶ Used for Vishnu, in the sense of the Almighty

Mahantha¹: Dear Gobardhan Das, move westward, Narain Das will take the eastern track. See, if eatables obtained, the offering to Shaligram²ji be made.

Gobardhan Das: Guruji! I shall fetch sufficient alms. Fortunately, people appear fairly well-to-do and rich over here. You need not worry, at all.

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Mahantha: You ought not to be too greedy, My child! Yes, mind it,

Greed is the root of sin, greed uproots the worth,
never stoop to greed, it finally leads to hell.

(all depart singing)

Scene: Two

Market

Kabab Vendor: Kabab! Tasty and spicy! Take heap of Kabab: only *taka-a-ser*. Spicy – many apuffs –Kabab-tasty and spicy. Twice licks the lips- who takes its taste; and many a pang of repent he has to make –who fails to take. Take Kabab, take the stack of Kabab, that I sell *taka-ser*.

Ghasi Ram: *Chanejorgaram*³

¹ The principal sage

² Shaligram is regarded as the non-anthropomorphic representation of Lord Vishnu

³ Warm crispy grams.

Ghasiram busy in roasting gram, in his sachet carrying all enterprise.

The gram gnarls crispy-cue, and the monsieur want for the mouthful.

Maina tastes the grams: chants all praise for the snacks well made,

Young Gafooran eats the gram, and shuts the scopes for else –whatsoever.

The Bengali gentlemen, in their loose-fit loin cloth, have a favourite gram-taste-bud.

Weaver eats the gram-shaking the chin hair of and on,

The bureaucracy when eats the gram-levies double tax just *en masse*.

Hot gram, *Chane Jor Garam taka-a-ser*.

Orange Seller: Hey buy orange-take orange Come on, orange from Silhaut¹,

Orange from Butwal²! Orange from Ram Bagh³, Orange from Ananda Bagh⁴!

Lemons turned into orange; not enamoured of my husband, I got bedewed-oh yea with a paramour, I forgot!

Take orange! Hey, take orange!

Lemon! Sour lemon – Sweet lemon!

*Rangtara*⁵, and Orange, the *Santara*.

¹ Name of place

² Name of place

³ A place

⁴ A place

⁵ Connoting orange, In Hindi, orange is called *Santara*. In popular usages *Rangtara* gives the assonance of *Santara*.

Come and take the both hands full, lest you should repent over the spoilt milk, nothing but rubbing the palms. *Taka a Seer-Narangi*-the Orange.

Halwai¹: *Jalebies*²! Hot and tasty. Take all sort of sweets here; *Sev*, *Imirti*, *Ladoo*, *Gulabjamun*, *Khurma*, *Bundiya*, *Barfi*, *Samosa*, *Peda*, *Kachauri*, *Dalmoth*, *Pakodis*, *Ghevar*, *Gupchup*, *Halwah*- the *Halwah's Halwah*- *Mohan Bhog*³, *Kachauri*⁴ the *Moindaar*⁵ roasted, and *Halva* –the *Kachaka*,⁶ and soft *Chabhaka*⁷. Softened in butter purified, indulged in sugar –solution-fully indulged –*chabhachabh*! Come on! Have *Bhure' Ladoo*⁸! One who tastes repents, and so does the one who fails! *Revri*⁹ hard- *kadaka*¹⁰; *Papadi*¹¹-crunchy-the *paraka*. Halwai-the sweet meat seller – such a big they have their clan which embraces three dozen casts. Likewise, the inmates in Kolkata's Wilson fort, we here live in Andher Nagri – the misruled town.

¹ The sweet seller

² A popular sweet in north India, dessert

³ A kind of Halwah

⁴ Also pronounced as Kachori, Kachauri, KachodiKatchuri, it is a spicy foot item popular in various parts of India including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Bengal and Orissa

⁵ A special method of preparation.

⁶ A very typical Banarasi popular /slang expression giving a sense of palpable eating of some soft item which is swallowed in one go. Onomatopoeic expression.

⁷ A very typical Banarasi popular /slang expression giving a sense of palpable eating of some crispy-soft item which is swallowed in one go. Onomatopoeic expression.

⁸ A variety of sweet

⁹ A variety of sweet

¹⁰ Crunchy

¹¹ A variety of sweet

Every item fresh-just *tar-otaza*¹! take *Khajja*², the *Khajja*,
Taka-a -ser Khajja!

Kunjarin³: O, hello! Take coriander leaves, methi-the
fenugreek, spinach, purple amaranth, melde, water spinach,
noniya, kulfa, kasari gram, and mustard plant's leaves.
Take marsa! Take brinjal, sweet guard, potato, smooth
guard, radish! O hello, take one and all! Arui, Banda,
Smooth guard, Sooran, Ram Taroi, *Taroi-Murai*!

O hello take one and all!

Hello! Gentleman! Come and take ginger, chilly,
vegetables garlic, onion, raw mangoes!

Take falsa, khirni, mango, guava, lemon, sweet beans, and
gram plant's pods!

We welcome in same mood- both good and bad,

May he be a Kazi⁴, be he a Paji⁵.

Masses here do approve, Vegetable – *taka-a-ser*.

Come on, take! Indian taste-fruits and plum!

Mughal⁶: Almond, pistachio, nuts, cashew, raisin, *anjeer*,
squash, aalobokhara, chilghoza, apple, peer, bihi sarda,
and grapes!

Such is nation I am from, where the Britons got trounced⁷.

In vain you did your resources exhaust!

The Indians shine-*laka -lakk*⁸,

¹ Fresh and natural

² A sweet cake

³ A woman vendor of vegetables and fruits.

⁴ Here used in the sense of a judicious person

⁵ A mischief-monger

⁶ Here refers to Afghani dry fruit sellers.

⁷ Here refers the Anglo-Afghan wars

⁸ Folk expressions of shining clothes

We rough tough – just *bumbak, bumbak!*

Dry fruits! Dry fruits, each item, *taka-a-ser*

Churan Seller: Wonderful Amalveda ² *Churana* -
Krishnamurari³ loves it to taste,

My *Churan* is digestive – just *Pachlona*⁴, relished by
Shyam Salona⁵

Churana quite tasty here, having tango citric taste.

Whosoever does my *Churan* taste, nowhere else does he
makes a gait,

Indian *Churan* it is called, Britain's enrichment its aim
installed.

The day since India saw this *Churan*, aired eroding force
and pelf.

Vigorous, since this *Churan* stands; it vanquishes all
Titans,

The *Churan*h its Daal Mandi⁶, prostitutes there, freely eat
Just with the simple taste of the *Churan*, the personnel
digest double of the graft.

Even the theatre artists taste this *Churan*; and never take a
winkin bringing the duplicate.

Moneylenders eat the *Churan*, and never qualm in
digesting the sum principal.

The *Lalas*⁷ do eat the *Churan*! Yea, they suffer from
chronic indigestion.

¹ A slang expression almost absurd. Here giving the sense of
good looking.

² A kind of lemon

³ The mythological meaning –Shri Krishna.

⁴ Digestive

⁵ Used for Shri Krishna

⁶ A red-light area, with brothels

⁷ Refers to business class in Indian folk tradition.

The *Churan* fascinates the editors; who are hard in concealing facts.

As the Sahibs eat the *Churan*, they digest the whole Hindustan,

Just taking this *Churan*, the policemen digest rules and commands.

O, hello! Take the *Churan* amass -- it is sold *taka -a- ser!*

Fish-selling woman: Take fish, buy it buy!

Taka, the rate of fish on sale!

Million dollars tender bosom, tempts the customers one and all,

The glance as a fish succumbs to the charm's web, at maiden glance,

As a fish out of water, is the lovelorn. He just pines for a glance to cast.

Jaatwala (Brahmin): Buy caste, of course, caste! *taka-a-ser* caste! Give me a *taka*, see, I instantly sell my caste. For a *taka*, I turn a washer man from a Brahmin, and for a *taka*, the *vice versa*. And for *taka*, can make a system as you want for a *taka*, prove falsehood as truth, and for a *taka* Brahman turns Muslim, and Hindu to Christian turns. For *taka*, sell religion and prestige, and for a *taka* stand for some witness false. For a *taka*, see sin as noble deeds, and call grandpa to some skate. The Vedas, the religion, the prestige of the clan, truth, fame everything *taka-a-ser!* Now splurges everything *taka-a-ser*, every precious commodity *taka-a-ser!*

Grocer: Come on, buy *taka-a-ser* every item, you see flour, pulse, fire-wood, salt, the clarified butter, sugar, spice and rice, everything *taka-a-ser!*

(*Gobardhan Das comes forth and noticing the vendors' call looks much exulted with a thought of eating everything*)

Gobardhan Das: Hey grocer! How much for a *ser* of flour?

Grocer: Just a *taka*.

Gobardhan Das: And rice?

Grocer: One *taka*!

Gobardhan Das: And, sugar?

Grocer: Just a *taka* for a *ser*.

Gobardhan Das: And *Ghee*- the clarified butter?

Grocer: Just *taka* for a *ser*.

Gobardhan Das: Oh really, each and everything a *ser* for a *taka*.

Grocer: Of course, sir, why should I lie?

Gobardhan Das: (*Approaching to the Kunjarin*) Hey! Vegetable's rate?

Kunjarin: Holy man! One *taka* for a *ser*. Sweet guard, radish, coriander, chilly, green leaves, every item here – *taka-a-ser*.

Gobardhan Das: Wonderful! It's lovely, so pleasant! *Taka-a-ser* for each vegetable!

Wow! (*Approaching a sweet grocer*) Hey, sweet seller! How you sold the sweets?

Sweet-Grocer: Babaji! *Laddoo, Halwa, Jalebi, Gulab Jamun*, all items here they fare, at the rate of *taka-a-ser*.

Gobardhan Das: Really! It's fantastic. What a pleasure! Good fellow! I hope you aren't joking. Are you sure, each and every item *taka-a-ser*!

Sweet-Grocer: Yes Babaji,! This is the way; this town moves on: each commodity is sold *taka-a-ser*!

Gobardhan Das: Gentleman! How the town known for?

Sweet-Grocer: *Andher Nagari*¹, the *Damned City*

Gobardhan Das: Who rules it?

Sweet-Grocer: *Chaupat Raja*²- the dumb king!

Gobardhan Das: Lovely!

Damned city, dumb king!

Taka-a-ser vegetable: *Taka-a-ser* Khaja, the sweet thing.

(*sings it in rhyme and in ecstasy sounds puff the arm pit, like a trumpet organ*)

Sweet-Grocer: Babaji! Buy something, if any shopping you intend!

Gobardhan Das: *Bachha*³ ! I have attained seven paisa in alms,

Give me three and half a *ser* of sweets in lieu.

The Guru and the disciples both shall get fully satiate,

having this much.

(*The Sweet-Grocer weighs the sweets. Babaji (Gobardhan Das) departs, eating sweets and singing the Andheri Nagri....*)

(*Curtain falls*)

¹ It is a typical translation. Hindi expression is given, and simultaneously the English version follows.

² It is a typical translation. Hindi expression is given, and simultaneously the English version follows.

³ A fond expression of the Sadhus to the devotees and other people

Scene: Three

Forest

(*Mahantha and Narayan Das enter from a corner, singing "Ram Bhajo"....*) Gobardhan Das comes from the other corner, singing *Andher Nagari, the Damned City-Dumb King*)

Mahantha: Dear Gobardhan Das! What alms did you manage today? The bale shows bulky!

Gobardhan Das: Revered Babaji! Quite enough edible; sweets -three and half a *ser*.

Mahantha: Let me have a look, *Bachcha*. (*Opens the package and absorbs into it*) Wonderful my boy! Where from have you begotten so much of sweets? Which good soul has struck you?

Gobardhan Das: Guruji! I got seven paisa in alms and have bought this much sweets by it.

Mahantha: Is it so my child! Narain Das had already talking appraised -- everything is sold here for *taka* a *ser*. But I haven't believed it *Bachcha*. What town is this, my boy! And, who rules over it- where *taka* is the standard for a *ser* of vegetable and the same for a *ser* of *Khajha*- the sweet.

Andher Nagari Chaupat Raja:

Taka-a-ser Bhaji, taka-a-ser Khajja;

yes, a damned town dumb king,

Taka-a-ser vegetable and a taka for a ser of sweet thing.

Gobardhan Das: A damned town, dumb king,

Taka a seer vegetable, and Taka for a ser of sweet thing!

¹ The title song.

Mahantha: My child, it is unwise to stay in such a town, where *taka* is the scale for a *ser* of vegetable and the same for a *ser* of sweet thing.

Couplet: Where camphor and cotton give similar glance

Never make abode in such a state, whatsoever the stance.

Where cuckoo and crow are treated same, and the same depiction the idiot and wise make,

Pearl is kept like a pomegranate seed, and no description of good ever heard,

Never stay in such a land, be the affluence there as the showers of gold,

staying here warrants nothing but woe, even the soul would weep here.

So, *Bachcha*, move from here, even if tones of sweets even come free of cost, of what use does it stand? Staying here, even for a movement is taxing.

Gobardhan Das: Guruji! There is no such a country all across the world which offers full meal in two *paisa*. I won't budge leaving this pleasant town. At other places, the whole day's wandering even doesn't provide belly full stuff. Moreover, many a times starvation turns the resort even! So, I have decided to live here only.

Mahantha: Look my son! You will repent eventually!

Gobardhan Das: By your grace, I'm sure of my smooth sail. No adversity would flutter. I would rather say you too consider staying here?

Mahantha: No way, I won't stay here for even a moment.

Find worth in my advice, otherwise you should repent. I am leaving now, but, keep my words, if you feel a pinch anytime, do remember me in adversity.

Gobardhan Das: Good bye Guru ji! Grateful obeisance! Of course, I'll remember you every day. Once again, I request you to stay over here.

(The Mahantha departs with Narain Das. Gobardhan Das is seen eating sweets.)

(Curtain falls)

Scene: Four

King's Court

(King, Minister and the attendants are seated at their assigned places.)

First Attendant: *(loudly)* Have the betel leaf, Your Majesty!

The King: *(coming out of the opium eater's paradise, startles and sets to move)* Sorry, Soopnakha has come! My Goodness! *(sets running)*

Minister: *(Holding the king by hand).* No, Your majesty! No.

He requests you for chewing the betel leaf.

The King: Bloody scoundrel! Frightened me so, in vain, Minister! Let him bear the blow of hundred whips.

Minister: But, Your Majesty! How come is he at fault? Had, the betel leaf vender not given him the *paan*¹, he would not have requested you to have it.

The King: Well, let the betel-leaf vendor; suffer the blow of two hundred whips.

Minister: But Your majesty! You haven't frightened hearing the request of having *paan*. The name of *Soopnakha*; has frightened you. She must be penalized.

¹ Betel leaves prepared and used as a stimulant.

The King: (*in trepidation*) Again the same name! Minister, you are so mean. I shall complain to the queen that you perpetually wish for getting me a co-wife. (*addressing the attendant*) Attendant! Attendant! A peg of wine!

Second Servant: Have it your majesty! Your majesty, have it!

(*makes a peg of wine pouring it from a Surahi pot*)

The King: (*makes faces while drinking*) Bring more of it! (*Behind the curtain someone yells. Clamour of 'help me, help me'*) Who's shouting? Go, catch and bring to me.

(*Two attendants turn about catching a complainant*)

Complainant: Take pity, Your majesty! Take mercy! Shower justice from your grace.

The King: Shut up. Such a justice you will sense, that even Yama would hesitate to dispense...

Speak up, what happened?

Complainant: Your majesty! The wall of Kallu *Baniya*, crumbled down, and my goat collapsed having crushed under it. So, Your Majesty! Pray you!... My Lord! Render justice, please.

The King: (*To attendant*) Move at once, and arrest the wall of Kallu *Baniya*, at once.

Minister: Your Majesty! The wall can't be arrested and summoned over here.

The King: Well, then arrest any relative whosoever, brother, son, friend or the lover even.

Minister: Your Highness! The wall is made of brick and lime etc. It has no kith or kin.

The King: All right, arrest Kallu *Baniya*¹, then.

(The attendants rush off and come back capturing Kallu Baniya)

O, hello *Baniya*! Why has his *Larki* (daughter), sorry *Barki*², collapsed crushing under your wall.

Minister: *Bakri* (goat), Your majesty, it is not *Barki*³

The King: Oh yeah, why has the goat died?

Come on, speak up, otherwise you would be hanged.

Kallu: Your Majesty! I am not guilty. The mason built such a weak wall, that it got crumbled down.

The King: Well, leave this *Mallu*⁴, and bring forth the mason. *(Kallu goes away. The mason is brought in cuffs)*
Aye filthy Mason! What caused his goat's death?

Mason: Your Majesty! I am not the cause. It's the lime-worker who made the mixture poor enough for the wall's crumbling down.

The King: Well, call this mason, no, no, get him out and call that Lime master. *(The mason is ousted and the Lime master is fetched.)*

O, bloody vendor of catechu, betel nut and lime. What caused his *Kubari*'s (*Bakri*)⁵ death?

¹ *Baniya* is derived from the Sanskrit word *vanijya* (merchant). *Baniya* is the cast of people who indulge in trade/business/commerce.

² Goat

³ Absurd expression

⁴ The intoxicated king mispronounces the name. *Mallu* used here for *Kallu*

⁵ Absurd expression, just to bring in, laughter .

Labourer: Your Majesty! I don't stand guilty at all. The *Bhisti*¹ supplied water in excess, and it made the mortar weak.

The King: I see, drive away Chunni Lal, and arrest the water carrier, the *Bhisti*.

(the Lime-master is ousted and Bhishti the water carrier is brought)

Hey, water supplier *Bhishti*-- the *Kishti* (convoy) of the Ganges and the Yamuna!

Why had you supplied so much of water that the goat fell down and the wall got crushed beneath?

Bhishti: Your Majesty! This slave is not at fault. It is the butcher who'd made a *mashak* – the leather water bag such a huge one, that stored plenty of water.

The King: Well, kick out the indiscreet *Bhishti*, and bring forth the Butcher, the water bag maker. *(They oust the Bhishti and fetch the Butcher)* Hey indiscreet, made you made such a bag which made the wall fell, and caused the goat crumbled?

Butcher² (*Kassai*): Your majesty! The shepherd sold such a hefty sheep to me, just for a *Taka*, that an extra-large water-carrier got made.

The King: Well then, kick out the Butcher and summon the shepherd.

(Butcher is ousted and the shepherd is brought forth.) You, the sugar cane-leaf-shepherd! Why have you sold such a big sheep that the goat died?

Shepherd³ (*Gadiria*): Your Majesty! I am not the culprit. There was the fleet of *Kotwal*⁴, the police officer that way, I missed the size of sheep, under that glimpse's sway. I am not at fault, my Lord!

¹ *Bhisti*--mixer/grinder man, (formerly in India) a water-carrier

² *Kasai* in Hindi/Urdu

³ *Garadia* in Hindi/Urdu

⁴ A police officer, keeper of law and order in city

The King: I see, turn him away, and present the *Kotwal* under arrest at once (*The shepherd is ousted and the Kotwal is brought.*) Hey *Kotwal*! Why you led your fleet in such a grandeur which caused the shepherd's fright enough to sell such a big sheep...yes, that *Kallu Baniya* got crushed down dead as the goat crumbled.

Kotwal: Your majesty! I haven't committed any offence. I was marching just for administering law and order.

Minister: (*Aside*) A great mess! I am afraid; this block head would ordain for hanging up the entire citizen of the town or order the town to be burnt into ashes. (*Addressing Kotwal*). Such is not the case. Just appraise, why had you passed that route with such splendour?

The King: Oh Yes. Why had you passed through so splendidly through that route that the goat crushed down dead?

Kotwal: Your Majesty!

The King: No, way, no Majesty. Just hang the *Kotwal*. The court is adjourned.

(*The attendants take away Kotwal in cuffs, and the other side the King departs with the help of the Minister*)

(*The Curtain Falls*)

Scene: Five

Forest

(Gobardhan Das appears singing)

Raag Kafi¹

A damned city, and dumb, there, king. *Taka-a-ser* vegetable, *taka -a-ser* sweet.

Good and bad all sail same; the pimp and *Pandit* in the same game.

No esteem, no prestige of the clan, all folk exhibit the same form.

Neither claim nor question of caste, chanting the name of Almighty, leads to Almighty!

Wife and prostitute just same stand here, and the same here treated goat and cow.

Truth loses all claims, and the rogues get the best acclaim.

Suave lips send sordid heart – dispense in court a greater part.

A *bonafide* statement here reprimanded, truth is perished and false rewarded,

Where million voices stand just dumb, such a nexus the profligates make.

Should it be the nasty heart, let the brighter hues surface.

Just is unjust and unjust just, in the King's case it does reflect.

Content lost yet form does last, bureaucracy here gets all the bliss.

The kingdom observes a pandemonium big, the king as if in exile exists.

¹ The *raga Kafi* is an important raga of Hindustani classical music

No respect for the cow, Brahmin and the Vedas, as if a demon becomes the king.

No difference in good and bad as if, the eternal knowledge's intent.

A damned town and the dumb king, *Taka-a-ser* vegetable: *Taka-a-ser* sweet thing.

(Relaxes and relishes sweets)

Guru ji, in vain, has forbidden me to stay over here. No matter, the town is bad, but of what avail does it come to me? Why should I get panic? I am not in the civil services that could make a concern me. For me-- relishing sweets daily, and singing the glory of God.

(Eats sweets)

(Four policemen arrest him approaching from four sides)

Policeman One: Hey, get up...have got inflated eating sweets; now your life gets over today.

Policeman Two: Babaji, Come on! Invoke your God.

Gobardhan Das: *(looks fallen)* What a calamity! Good fellow how have I offended you; so, you're arresting me?

Policeman One: No matter, you have applauded or offended. Hurry up, and ruin yourself on the gallows.

Gobardhan Das: Gallows! O my goodness! You mean to be hanged? To whom have I robbed, that gallows for me? To whom have I killed -for which the capital punishment?

Policeman Two: You are too obese, so you got selected for gallows.

Gobardhan Das: What! Hanging for just being bulky! What a mockery of justice! Oh no, no kidding with hermits!

Policeman One: Once you will swing on the gallows, everything will come on board. Come on follow us, lest we should drag you along.

Gobardhan Das: Gentleman, why do you deprive an innocent of life? How will you justify it in the court of God?

Policeman One: We're to follow the orders of the King. To the Great Superior, we aren't accountable. The King will answer Him. We just execute the royal will!

Gobardhan Das: Even then gentleman, why are you hanging a saint? Tell the matter of the fact.

Policeman One: In fact, the *Kotwal* was ordered to be hanged yesterday, but his neck was so slender that the hanging rope could not get fit around it. The king ordered to finding a fat man for hanging. We pleaded the king, after all, someone or the other is to be hanged for the offence for killing the goat, otherwise justice would not get administered. That's why we are taking you to gallows, to hang in lieu of *Kotwal*.

Gobardhan Das: Don't you find some other fat man in the town that you're hanging an innocent *Fakir* like me?

Policeman One: Two reasons are there, firstly nobody in this town could grow fat in the dread of the king's justice, secondly if someone else comes our way, anyhow, he would make such an excuse that the foolish King will turn hanging us. Moreover, the worst sufferers in this regime are the good souls. Hence you will bear the brunt, and be hanged.

Gobardhan Das: O God, save me! I am being killed without a cause. What an extreme misrule! I didn't follow my preceptor's advice. Hence, I fall a prey to this mess. Come my Guru! Where you are? Come and save my life. Guru ji I am going to be done for, in vain.

(Gobardhan Das cries and the Policemen take him away in cuffs)

(The curtain falls.)

Scene: Six
Cremation ground

(Four policeman enter taking Gobardhan Das in cuffs)

Gobardhan Das: Oh, dear me! Just see, they hang the innocent me! Please adhere to morality, Gentlemen. What would you get hanging a guiltless me? Oh, leave me! Please! Please! *(Bewails and strives to escape.)*

Policeman One: O! Shut up! Paste your lips. How could the order of the king be reversed? These are your last moments. Remember you God, and remain quiet. In vain you're fluttering much. Silence!

Gobardhan Das: Alas! I didn't heed upon my Guru's words. Guru ji has forbidden me to staying in such a town, and this I ignored. Oh no, why to think of an escape when the town itself is misruled, and the king depraved. Oh, isn't there a single good soul in the town who could save this hermit! Guru ji, where are you? Save me, Guruji... Guruji...*(Wails bitterly. The policemen drag him)* *(Guruji and Narain Das appear)*

Guru: Gobardhan Das. My child! You're in this condition!

Gobardhan Das: *(To Guru ji with folded hands)* A goat collapsed under a wall so they're hanging me. Save my life, save me Guru ji!

Guru: My child, I already warned you, not to stay here in this town, you didn't heed upon.

Gobardhan Das: I didn't obey you, and the result is here. I'm yours. There is no one else who could save me. I'm yours! No one else for me! *(Groveling at the feet, cries)*

Mahantha: Don't worry. God is great! *(Frowning upon the policemen)* Listen; let me impart the last lesson to my disciple. Just step aside. Look, if you won't follow me, you'll meet ill omens and bad fortunes.

Policeman: Well Maharaj, we are stepping away, please preach him.

(The policeman steps afar and Mahatma speaks something in the ear of Gobardhan Das.)

GobardhanDas: *(Expressingly)* Well, Guruji, I will gladly accept the rope then.

Mahantha: No, my son. Let me accept.

Gobardhan Das: No, Guruji, I will.

Mahantha: No, my son, let me! Why don't you understand despite all my persuasion? I have grown old, let me have the bliss.

Gobardhan Das: There's no question of youth or age for going to heaven. You're enlightened. How come the rise or doom in deeds affects you? I'll take gallows! *(So, they argue, the policemen stand stunned glancing one another.)*

Policeman One: What's it up, bro? I am unable to make it out.

Policeman Two: Even I can't make out, what amalgam?

(The King, Minister and the Kotwal arrive)

The King: What's a fuss of it?

Policeman One: Your majesty! The disciple says that he should be hanged and the Guru claims it for him. The truth is under cover.

The King: *(to Guru)* Come on Babaji, why do you want to be hanged?

Mahantha: King! It's due to the auspicious phase, whosoever will die at this time, shall depart directly to heaven.

Minister: Well then, it's me who will hang on the rope.

Gobardhan Das: Me, yes me, I am ordered to be hanged.

Kotwal: I will do. It's me; the wall fell down because of me.

The King: Silent, you all shut up! Who is holier than the King, for this God sent moment? Hurry Up. Help me with the hanging rope! Hurry up, soon!

Mahantha: If neither vision, nor wisdom sustains, no rule and civic values remain,
the doom comes there at its own, just like this kingdom doomed.

(People take the King on hanging plank)

(The Curtain falls)

Work Consulted

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