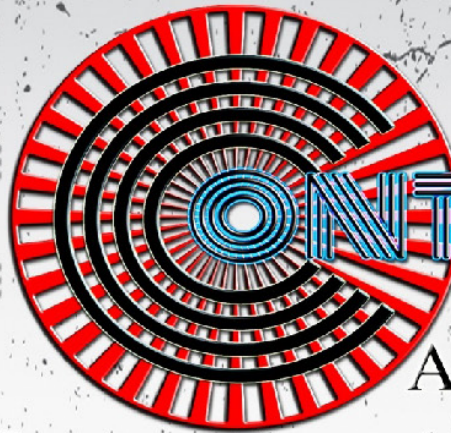


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TRANSLATION

Short Story

Chotto Meyer Budhi (Intelligence of a Little Girl)

Sukhalata Rao¹

Translated by Snigdha Bardhan²

Two brothers set out to travel the country. One of them was poor and the other was rich. Both the brothers had one horse each, the poor one had a mare and the rich brother had a vigorous horse and also a hackney carriage. At night they stopped to take rest at one place.

At night the poor brother's mare gave birth to a colt. The new born colt rolled down under the rich brother's hackney carriage. The next day, morning the rich brother awakened the poor brother and said, 'Wake up, wake up brother. Look what kind of young is born of my carriage.'

The latter rose and after seeing this incident, he said, 'Can a car give birth to a kid?' It must be my mare's colt.

- 'If it were the kid of your mare, you would find it near your mare.'

In this way they started quarrelling with each other. They ultimately went to court for justice. The rich brother bribed the judge.

Where will the poor fellow get the money? He told only the truth.

At last the incident reached to the king. The king called two brothers and said, 'At first, I shall tell you four riddles and you will answer them. The riddles are – which is the fastest? What is the thickest? What is the softest? And what thing is the dearest to all?'

The king granted three days for them to think. He said, 'On the fourth day, you should answer the questions before me.'

Thinking awhile, the rich brother went to his god-mother for consultation. God-mother patted him and asked, 'Why are you looking so sad?'

The king has asked me four riddles and has also granted me a time of three days to think over them.

- 'Let me listen to the riddles.....'

- 'First, which is the fastest and most powerful in this earth?'

- 'Is it a riddle? No doubt our horse is speedy. As soon as it is whipped, it starts running with a huge speed just like whirl wind and it can catch a rabbit.'

- 'Second is: what is the thickest in the world?'

- 'Our piglet is very fat. It is so fat at the age of two that it cannot stand up.'

- 'Now, the third- what is the softest thing in the world?'

- 'Oh! Where is the difficulty? Nothing is as soft as feather bed.'

- 'Last riddle is: what is the dearest in this earth.'

- 'There is no doubt that my grandson Ivanuskai is the dearest.'

- 'Pranam, god-mother. Now I have known what to say to His Majesty.'

What did the poor fellow do? He returned home weeping. His seven years old daughter was standing near the door. He had none, except this girl. The girl asked, 'Why are you crying, dad?'

- 'Oh! What else shall I do but crying? King asked me four riddles. I would never be able to answer his questions.'

- 'Say, what the riddles are?'

- 'The riddles are - which is the fastest and powerful? What is the thickest thing? What is the softest? What thing is the dearest?'

- 'Dad, you will say to His Majesty- wind is the fastest and most powerful too. Soil is the thickest, because it supplies the food to every living being. The softest is the man's hand because when a

man lies, he keeps his head on them. And the dearest thing in the earth is slumber.’ The girl answered.

Three days later, two brothers appeared to the king. Hearing their speeches the His Majesty asked the poor brother, ‘Are these answers yours or somebody else’s?’

-‘Majesty, I have a daughter of seven years who told me these answers.’

-‘Oh! If your daughter has enough intelligence then, you give her this silken thread and ask her to make a flower-designed towel within next morning.

The poor brother returned home with the silken thread and with a gloomy face. He told his daughter, ‘It is the news of great adversity. Majesty asked you to make a towel with this thread for him within next morning.’

The girl answered, ‘Don’t think, dad.’ Then she broke the rod from the broom and she offered that to her father and said, ‘Give this rod to His Majesty. He would make his workers prepare a loom from this rod. I shall weave the towel in that loom.

Poor brother gave the rod to the majesty and said to him what the girl said.

Then the king gave him fifty eggs and said, ‘Give these to your daughter and say that she must hatch these eggs and she will give me the young ones within next morning. The poor brother returned home with a very gloomy face. Each day new trouble comes. He told his daughter to hatch the eggs as per His Majesty’s order.

-‘Don’t feel sad, dad.’- answered the girl. She boiled the eggs and kept them aside for the snack in the afternoon and dinner at night. Then she advised her father to ask His Majesty, ‘Say majesty that to feed the chicks it is necessary to provide they corn .Popcorn seeds must be sown and harvested within a single day, otherwise chicks will not peck a single grain.

Being amazed and perplexed His Majesty challenged the little girl with the last question. The Majesty told her father to tell his certain conditions- she might come wearing dress or not wearing a dress. She might not come on foot or not on horse. She should not provide me a gift but would gift me one.

The poor brother thought, ‘Alas! Can she do such a queer job? All have gone.’

But the seven years old girl said, 'Don't worry. You buy for me a living titlark and a wild hare from hunters.

Next day, at dawn the girl left her own cloth and wore a fish net. Then she took the titlark in hand and set out to go to the palace sitting on the back of hare. At the door of the palace she met the king.

The girl paid her regards to the king and said, 'I have brought this gift for you?' Then she stretched her hand to present the bird to His Majesty. No sooner did the girl gift it to the king, it flew away.

- 'Ok, ok; what I said, you have done all. Well, you are poor, how do you maintain your livelihood?'

- 'Dad catches fish on dry land; he does not keep net in river's water. I bring the fishes putting in my clothes. We cook *Suruya*³ with that. It tastes well. You will also like it.'

- 'Foolish girl, who gets fish on dry land? They stay in water.'

- 'Oh! The wise king, where did you see a carriage bearing a child? Mare can bear a young, not a carriage.'

Then the majesty became glad and gave the colt to the poor brother.

Footnotes

1. Sukhalata Rao (1886-1969) was a Bengali social writer and children's book author. She was born in Kolkata in Bengal province of British India. She was the daughter of Upendra Kishore Roychowdhury, and sister of Sukumar Roy. She graduated from Bethune College, Kolkata. Later she had a career in teaching. She got married to Dr. Jayanta Rao of Cuttack. Shukhalata then founded the Shishu-o-Matri Mangal Kendro (Centre for the Welfare of Children and Mothers). She also established the Orissa Nari Seva Sangha. She was given the Keiser-e-Hind award by the Government of India in 1956 for her book *Nije Pora*. Shukhalata was the editor of *Alok*, a newspaper. Her writings include children's stories, and fairy tales. Her books include *Galpa-ar-Galpa*, *Galper Boi* (1912), *Aro Galpa* (1916), *Khoka Elo Beriye* (1916), *Natun Para* (1922), *Natun Chhora* (1952), *Bideshi Chora* (1962), etc.
2. I express my gratitude to my English Teacher Manasi Halder who gave me the opportunity for taking up this translation as a part of my English Project Work. I also express my gratitude to Sadhan Bannerjee, Subhadip Ganguli and Pallab Saha. But for their help to improve my translation could not have been completed.
3. *Suruya* - a type of sweet