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## Popular Values In The Songs Of Kanakadasa And Purandaradasa: A Note

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**Abstract:** The paper tries to trace the allusions to the popular values as they get discussed in the songs of Kanakadasa and Purandaradasa the two luminaries in the realm of the Haridasa Literature in Kannada. While discussing them some short biographical sketch of both the saints is also offered. History of Haridasa Literature is also offered at a glance. Both the saints in particular and the Haridasas in general dreamed of a society consisting of devotional, pious and value-based population. Though, the sole aim of the Haridasas was the attainment of moksha they underscored the importance of values especially the popular once in the life of men.

**Keywords -** Haridasa Literature, *moksha*, devotion, values, piousness, superstitious attitude, ostentation, criticism.

The revolution caused by the *Sharanas* in the 12<sup>th</sup> century against the contemporary beliefs and ritualism was the first of its kind in Karnataka. Though the tone of protest against ritualism and other social evils that were sucking the very sap of society like leeches, was there among the predecessors of Basavanna and Allamaprabhu, it assumed fervor only during their days. During the days that followed because of the lack of able leadership and unsuitable political atmosphere it became dormant. After a gap of two hundred years or so, there was another wave of reaction or rebellion against the social inequalities, assertion, superstitions and spurious life style. It was Haridasa movement. Though, there are many Haridasas, the eye piercing names among them are Kanakadasa and Purandaradasa. It is an accepted belief that *dasya* or servitude to God is a way to realise Him. this kind of adherence was popularized by these two personalities.

Kanakadasa's previous name was Thimmappanayaka. He was born in a shepherd family at village called Bada in Haveri district. Like Pampa, another great poet of Kannada Literature, who lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, he too was a poet and a fighter two-in-one. He was a Provincial ruler (*Dandanayaka*). At a moment of fight, he was greatly affected and moved by the loss caused to lives and lineages. He renounced the rulership and went to Hampi. There he became a disciple of Sri Vyasarayaswamy and was initiated into the *dasa* cult.

Purandaradasa was a contemporary of Kanakadasa and Vaikunthadasa of Beluru. Sri Vijayadasa who was a close disciple of Purandaradasa and who received the signature (*anikita*) by Purandaradasa praises and signs in praise of his *guru* in number of *keertanas*. This Vijayadasa adduces the name of father of Purandaradasa as Varadappanayaka and he also introduces that Purandaradasa belonged to goldsmith community. However, there are number of anecdotes as regards the birth of Purandaradasa. His lineage and birth are deified and it is believed that Purandaradasa was an *avatar* of sage Narada. According to the legend, once the sage Narada entered the abode of Lord Vishnu (*Vaikuntha*) and sang melodiously before Him of His greatness. Lord Vishnu was pleased highly and said to the sage to ask for a boon. Immediately the sage Narada

appeals to sport with him constantly not leaving Him even for a moment. Promptly Lord Vishnu promised that this wish of the sage would be fulfilled in *Kaliyuga*. Accordingly, the sage Narada was born in a town called Purandarpura or Purandaranagari as Purandaradasa. There he grew up, attained puberty and married a beautiful girl and lived happily for some time. Then there was a dawn of the feeling of renouncement in him. He pilgrimaged to Hampi, met Sri Vyasarayasyamy and was initiated into *dasa* cult. Afterwards he composed innumerable *keertanas* which are imbued with devotion to Lord Sri Hari. The Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa are regarded as the pillars of *dasakoota* which was founded by Sri Vyasarayasyamy, with an intention of popularizing the teachings of Madhwacharya who was the founder of school of dualism. Madhwacharya gave more importance to *bhatkti* and knowledge. His teachings were in Sanskrit language, Sri Vyasarayasyamy felt that these teachings of Madhwacharya that were in Sanskrit language must be Kannadised. Hence, he founded the *dasakoota* and dreamed of popularizing the teachings of Madhwacharya in Kannada language.

The Haridasas composed the *keertanas* on various occasions. The *keertanas* were well worded songs wherein music, meaning and devotion were twisted together. Usually the Haridasas were the worldly persons but retired from the worldly activities and surrendered completely to Sri Hari. They kept on wandering from place to place. Therefore, various types of worries bothered them. In order to overcome these worries and direct their own mind towards Sri Hari through devotion and guide the people around them they composed such songs. Usually the theme of such songs was the praise of Sri Hari, His supremacy and His love for the devotees. While doing this they dreamed of an enlightened society free from bigotry, superstitious attitude etc. They reiterated the importance of devotion, virtuosity, piousness and inculcation of values to elevate one's self from the mundaneness of working, eating, losing and living. An attempt has been made in this paper to gather the views and attitudes of Kanakadasa and Purandaradasa towards life values as they get reflected in their *keertanas*.

The series of *karmas* (actions) performed by one put the cycle of births and deaths into motion. It is only by performing good *karmas* the soul has gained the human body. Body is always ephemeral whereas soul is eternal. There exists a bondage of body with the universe with each births. The soul being immortal must be liberated from the cycle of births and deaths. The Haridasas held the view that salvation (*moksha*) is the ultimate aim of human life. Hence, it is essential to have revelation of God and attain *moksha*. But when the soul after crossing innumerable lives of reptiles, creatures, pests and insects obtain this human body by the influence of the instincts of previous lives is likely to be carried away by the wantonness. The Haridasas warned human beings again and again to tread on the path of righteousness and devotion. They advised human beings in the following words;

Don't speak ill when you get power  
and don't strut selfishly when riches come  
be happy, take refuge at the feet  
of the truly rich Lord Adikehsava.

(Jackson, 186)

This does not mean that the Haridasas shunned the worldly life completely. When born in the world it is quite natural that human beings come into contact with woman, wealth and the earth and develop attachment with them. The Haridasas held the view that the immutable attachment to these three elements, is not advisable. There should always be attachment to these things under the shadow of detachment. Man must withdraw his mind from the worldly pleasures and invest it immutably in the glorious feet of the Lord Sri Hari in order to attain salvation. Here are the words of Purandaradasa:

Like the lotus floating in impure water  
 We should live in the world with love  
 We should sing the name of Rama  
 The one who provides whatever we need

We should swim and we should win

Like the nut of cashew fruit  
 Live in the world easily deatavhable  
 One should not be graspy and greedy  
 Devotees following valiant Krishna.

(Jackson, 105)

The Haridasas always held the view that Lord Hari is the supreme and all things both animate as well as inanimate act according to Hill will. Whatever happens in our life is always according to the will and wish of the God as this world and life happens to be His. We must become humble enough to accept whatever befalls us, good or bad. Believing firmly that everything is the will and wish of God and we must not be caught into the illusory attraction of this world. We the human beings are endowed with the discretionary power as well as the power to act. Actionlessness is also a kind of sin. Whatever action we are given with we must master the art of performing it with a sense of detachment and disinterest. Therefore, Purandaradasa says:

Whatever has happened all has been for the best  
 It's become a rich opportunity for serving further, Sridhara.

(Jackson, 79)

Richness and poverty are not the deciding factors of one's life. They are mere appearances. The land that one has acquired, the heaps of gold or wads of notes one has amassed do not take one even a step nearer to *moksha*. One who is supposed to roll in utter penury if one turns away from the path of devotion and divinity in spite of one's Being immensely rich. Therefore, Kanakadasa again and again advices:

O man, trust not this world and body ephemeral  
 Try hard and do penance to gain pleasure eternal.

Earn not land and earn not riches  
 Earn not you the heap of sins that clutches.  
 O mind accomplish the eternal home and be titled,  
 With the repeated prayer the lotus-navelled.

(Vaidya, 63)

Thus, the Haridasas underscored the importance of devotion and pious life in the life span of man as a member of society. The piousness and morality in life are not bestowed upon its members by the society itself, on the contrary they must be consciously emulated and accomplished.

The Haridasas being the constantly itinerant community came across many superstitions, discriminations and spurious life style. They declared that salvation is accessible to all without any discrimination of caste, creed or color and even gender. They held the view that devotion and intrinsic value are important companions on the path of *moksha* or revelation. They criticized the external observances and

ostentatiousness continuously. They reiterated the importance of enlightenment from within. To attain enlightenment immaculate contemplation on Lord Sri Hari is the only way was the strong belief of the Haridasas. Here are the words of Kanakadasa against the kind of discrimination:

Don't say you and I o silly man,  
Realise yourself with the knowledge of *atman*.

...

You have travelled through various lives since past  
When in the womb of dirty water, you were cast,  
You came to this world through the womb passage,  
How can you boast of any clan and lineage.

(Vaidya,69)

And in another song Kanakadasa speaks the same out:

Don not quarrel over caste  
Do you know the source of your caste?

...

Is not the water the mater of all matter?  
Do you know the caste of water?

(Vaidya, 119)

The Haridasas inveterately hated the ostentatious conventional observances of *pooja* and *path*. They observed their contemporary society very keenly and kept on commenting on the orthodoxy and hypocrisy critically. They attached importance to inner purity, the purity of mind rather than the outward physical purity and the kind of inequality and untouchability which were attached to it. They kept on commenting and criticizing the kind of practices which were attached to some observances and rituals. They believed strongly, “true religion consists of only the morals of silent practice of the principles sans any show. Man must unravel the source of desires and eradicate them. He who prays upon the God that resides in one’s own body need not fear Yama- the God of death.” (Iyengar, 116-17) As Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa were the disciples of Sri Vyasarayaswamy of Hampi and stayed in his mutt the other high caste disciples of guru hated them inwardly because the holy man loved these two glowing personalities very much though they belonged to the goldsmith caste and the shepherd caste respectively. Perhaps the kind of insult based on the caste differences that was hurled upon them in the mutt might have prompted and aggravated this feeling in them and sharpened their sensibilities. Therefore, they said that such kind of outward purity is really meaningless. Wearing the pure cloth and three holy *namas* on several parts of the body which is stuffed with envy, ill-will, hatred, rancor, anger, selfishness etc. was really a meaningless practice. Hence, they criticized such spurious practitioners in harsh language like the thrashing staff. Here are the lines of culled at random from their *keertanas*:

Really chanting the name fingering the rosary beads  
 You hang a veil down over your face  
 Inwardly you unveil and enjoy that woman's face  
 You want to pose as a great renunciate  
 Really you are mostly a great hypocrite  
 This is just belly *vairagya*.

(Jackson, 145)

Likewise, Kanakadasa also splits out his anger in still more acid words:

Are all those who hold *teertha* hallowed beings?  
 Are all those *Bhagavatas*, who do not make their life worth living?  
 Are all those, who hold their nose and take a dip  
 Into water, who reading the scriptures holy,  
 Hoping to enjoy others' wives secretly,  
 Swerving from the code of ethics, the Brahmins godly?

...

Are those mere wearers of cloak and disguises true *sanyasis*  
 Who deftly use languages and wear saffron dresses;  
 Without renouncing the worldly thought and desires  
 Without tracing the stem and system if desires?

(Vaidya, 116)

Thus, the Haridasas display their creed of social reform. The salvation becomes attainable only when man emulates the qualities enumerated by the Haridasas who held the view that man and humanity are above everything anything. The essence of their teaching is realization of the egalitarian society consisting of the members whose aims is piousness and eternal joy. Therefore, their works became popular and people oriented and humanity centered. Though, the ultimate aim of the Haridasas was attainment of *mukti* or *moksha*, though they taught devotion and devotional attitude they did it by entwining it with their worldly experiences based on philosophy. They tried to guide the humanity and set it on moral and value-based track. Therefore, even to this day the songs composed by the Haridasas are found on the tip of the tongue of common people whether literate or illiterate. If one follows the path paved by the galaxies of Haridasas it is not only the improvement of one person but also of the whole society.

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