



## Dasa Literature: Culture, Conflict and Co-ordination

*Dr. Venkatagiri Dalavai*

Assistant Professor, Dr. R.C. Hiremath Institute of Kannada Studies,  
Karnatak University, Dharwad, (Karnataka State), INDIA

(Corresponding author: Dr. Venkatagiri Dalavai)

(Received 22 September 2017, Accepted 15 October, 2017)

(Published by Research Trend, Website: [www.researchtrend.net](http://www.researchtrend.net))

**ABSTRACT:** In broad sense two different types of views were expressed in Dasa literature, namely, Vyasa classical religious group literature, is based on the philosophy of Veda Vyasa Maharshi (sage) and the other one is Dasa folk literature group. Though there are differences of opinion regarding the basic tents and concepts. But in general these two views are considered as Dasa literature. If it is so, which group is considered as the main root cause for the formation of the Hari Dasa literature? Then why there is an internal cold war between these two groups. It is more feasible to know which one is more prevalent among the different sections of society. What are the factors that lead to the religious co-ordination of the Madhvacharya Philosophy? What the religious repercussions of the two sections above the religious co-ordination? How Dasa's got full support from the society and what was their major role in culture. This paper tries to focus on culture and equality dimension during Dasa period.

**Keywords:** Dasa Literature, Vyasa classical religious group, Dasa folk literature group, Dasa period, Co-ordination of the Madhvacharya Philosophy, Hari Dasa literature

### I. INTRODUCTION

In course of human development, during Vedic period the humans were nature worshippers. Manu has started the Varna system, namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. Later period Panchama Varna came into existence. Thus in Hinduism caste system came into existence. In due course of time the religious founders from different parts of India emerged with different views.

In broad sense two different types of views were expressed in Dasa literature, namely, first one is Vyasa literature and second one is Dasa literature. Vyasa classical religious group literature based on the philosophy of Veda Vyasa Maharshi (sage) and the other one is Dasa folk literature group. Though there are differences of opinion regarding the basic tents and concepts. But in general these two views are considered as Dasa literature only. If it is so, which group is considered as the main root cause for the formation of the Hari Dasa literature? Then why there is an internal cold war between these two groups. It is more feasible to know which one is more prevalent among the different sections of society. What are the factors that lead to the religious co-ordination of the Madhvacharya Philosophy? What the religious repercussions of the two sections in the above religious co-ordination? How Dasa's got full support from the society and what is their major role in culture, how they attracted the attention of the rulers to solve the problems of the common man through devotional Keerthans, are some of the highlighting features in the forth coming pages.

The main difference between the two views, that is the classical one is more rigid in relation to its basic ideology and values because they are Sanskrit scholars and the other one is emerged from the folk level of the society and is liberal in the sense that it is developed from the masses, represents the other side of the same coin. It does not mean that the former is not having any kind of moral and devotional attachment towards the other and vice versa. The views expressed by the Vyasa religious group are not strictly generated either from the organization of any religious body. This section is originated neither keeping through the genealogical line of the spiritual mentor of Sri Purandaradasa by name Sri Vyasaraya as a focal point. But to some extent we can agree that the root cause for this spiritual branch may be from the Sri Veda Vyasa Maharshi (sage) who belonged to the period of Vedic time. In this way the writings and preaching of most of the Sanskrit scholars who mainly followed Sri Vyasaraya are

familiarly known as Vyasa religious group. These Sanskrit scholars have disgraced the other section of the same religious co-ordination. This distinction is clearly visible through historical sketch of the Sri Veda Vyasa Maharshi (*sage*). Which is the best example for this citation? The author of this book Somanath even does not mentioned the name of the spiritual mentor Sri Purandaradasa. In due course of time efforts were made to bring the fame and name of the Dasa literature through the contributions of second wing of spiritual Dasa group. In one way we can agree that these two views are two sides of the same religious co-ordination.

Dasa's (spiritual preachers) selected the native or local language as their medium of religious co-ordination (V.A. Divanachi, 1972). Whereas the scholars of the Vyasa religious group considered the salvation and the culture were traced through the main language of Sanskrit. The efforts made by Sri padarajaru, Sri Vyasrajaru and Srivadirajaru in Kannada language through the devotional hymn contributions could not gave proper justice to the Hari followers. In their writings they were unable to bring down the criticism of Hari Dasa poets (V.A. Divanachi, 1972). Thus, this distinction finally leads to the fraction in the religious co-ordination and took the shape of Dasa literature.

These two groups were determined to stick on to the principle of Madhvacharya Philosophy. They never gave up their support to both the religions that is own religion and other's religion. In this angle the main contribution of Hari Dasa literature is note worthy. It attracted the native people and it is the blend between the local people and the religion inter linked through devotional hymns. They criticized and tried to stop the practices such as performing the Yajna and Yaga, reading the sacred religious texts of Vedas and Puranas, performing the prayers, observing the rituals such as fasting, conducting the religious pilgrimages to the sacred temples of Sanskrit Gods and Goddess which were encouraged by the classical religious group. They condemned such orthodox religious practices and religious traditions. When they come across the anti devotional activities, they strictly revolted against the "priest activities and priesthood". Some religious beliefs and practices which are beneficial to the local people they supported them saying that they are very much essential for culture survival, through the devotional songs in the way of oral traditions like folk songs, folklore and folktales. They tried to bring the communal peace and equality among all people, linked between the God and local people, may be a scholar and an ordinary lay man. Thus the Hari Dasa literature mainly relied on the principle of religious and devotional co-ordination and tried to bring equality in cultural aspects and expressed their displeasure whenever and wherever they come across injustice to the native people.

As already expressed about the differences between the two groups, the time has come that they openly started criticizing one another through the devotional songs. It was mainly seen between the keerthans of Sri Kanaka Dasa and Sri Purandara Dasa. Usually the criticism was based between the Sanskrit poets and lay men, but now it is in different angle. There is an open fight between the two local devotional preachers and it is publicly seen on the open plat form of *bhakti* (devotional) songs. In case of Purandara Dasa, he is explicitly criticized Kanaka Dasa, whereas Kanaka Dasa used to expressed his feelings with so much pain in the heart and in a indirect way of referring the local proverbs of the society. The former used to show his anger through his hatredness and do not feel the stress and strain of the other.

The golden era of the Hari Dasa literature was, the period during the time of Kanaka Dasa and Purandara Dasa. Kanaka Dasa was praised as the poet of the Golden era and it lead to the criticism by the other section of the same group. He wrote the religious text of "Ramanadyana Charitha" and stand as a role model for his followers. He has focused that the god is in-favor of the poor and it was shown them through the devotional songs. Thus in the preaching of Hari Dasa literature, Sri Kanaka Dasa stand as a pillar in the religious co-ordination. In this article his writings and the views are expressed in the form of devotional songs and are limited to them only.

Dasa's (folk scholars) never tried to insist on their own ideology, but followed the footsteps of the great philosopher, Sri Madhvacharya. They understood the philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya and explained it to the local people in local Kannada language. They did not touch upon the Varna system and even not made efforts to break it through their religious spiritual co-ordination. They do not belong to any one of the Varna system.

This statement is clear with following devotional hymn of Sri Purandara Dasa who clearly understood the philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya and explained the religious reformation of Vaidikam and Vaishavism (V.A. Divanachi, 1972), which is as follows;

Vaidika mathadalli nadedavendu tavu  
Vaishava bettu kottaru kelavaru  
Vaisnava mathadalli nadedavendu tavu  
Vaidikam bittukottaru kelavaru

The above stanza clearly shows that some people those who were the followers of Vedic religion left their religion and joined the other sect of Hinduism known as Vaishnavism, because they thought that their preacher was a follower of Vaishnavism. Similarly Vaishnava people thought that their religious founder was a follower of Vedic religion and hence they left their religion and joined the sect of Vedic religion.

Some folk scholars, (Dasa's) made efforts to bring the equality among the Varna system and hated the principle of un-touchability, purity and pollution concepts. That is why they rejected the religion of Vaishnavism followed by the Sanskrit scholars and the local rulers and moved towards the faith of Shaivism by way of praising the god of Shiva and chanting the hymns of Tarakamantram, which is as follows explained by Sri Purandara Dasa:

*Hari para devatha emba gnanave gnana  
Hari yadigalanaiduva mukuthiye  
Hari virahitha gnana mithyagnana  
Hari virahitha mukuthi mathina mukuthi  
Hari para siri madwacharyare gurugalu.*

The above hymn clearly depicts that Hara (Shiva) religious founder was Sri Madwacharya and he was a follower of Shaivism. The supreme god is only Lord Shiva and the Shiva knowledge is the only religious knowledge and the followers are the true followers of the Hinduism. These concepts are openly deliberated by the preachers of Shaivism through Hara literature and criticized the followers of Sri Hari (Vishnu) and the religion of Vaishnavism.

Dasa literature does not belonging to any single religion. It contains a mixture various concepts and principles observed by the multiple followers of Hinduism. After knowing the facts and figures of the basic tenets of any religion, we may say that "there is unity in diversity" found in the Dasa literature.

Dasa literature is ready to face the challenges and compromises based on the debates of the culture of the society through the religious co-ordination. The followers of Shiva, (Hara Dasa's) are very simple people and follow the simplest way of life. They consider the triple philosophy of not taking the loan, not encouraging the loans and not provoke to have wealth. Whenever they face the difficult tasks they take the name of Shiva and say Hara Hara. They surrender to the god and say that they are the slaves of the god that is Dasyaru. The following stanza depicts the simplicity of life and the sweetness of voice, the Shiva followers and the preachers of Shaivism.

*Grasa vasagalige illavendu ninana  
Besarisi beda bandudilla  
Sathi sutharugala sahithavagi  
Hitadinda irabekambudilla.  
Saalavayithendu sambala enage  
Saaladendu bedi bandudilla.  
Odavegalilala odyanagalillalendu  
Odavenendu bedibandudilla.  
Aagabeku rajyabhogagalenagendu  
Eega naa bedibandudilla.*

The above devotional recitation narrates that the followers of Shiva never aspire for any buildings or bungalows for their happy married life and lavish living. They do not want the loans for their survival and never expects the favour from you oh, god. They do not have aspiration for jewelry and do not ask for any favour. They never have a dream for the royal life and they do not have any such kind of intension to lead the royal life style. The following recitation highlights the humbleness, simplicity and humanity of the Dasa's.

*Duritha rasiya bidusu  
Dussangavannu kedisu  
Nirutha nennavarolage sukha padisu  
Pamavachana nudisu  
Sanmargadalli nadisu  
Paramarahasyadupadesa kudisu  
Kanda kandadella kamalanabhana murthy  
Undu uttidella vishnupooje  
Tandatanadada varthe parijathana keerthi  
Hidida hata pooraisaladu Hari Sankalpa  
Nadedaduvudella theerthayathra  
Sadagaradallistude Shrisanagne.*

The above stanza explains that please leave the wealth. Avoid the bad companionship. Satisfy what you have with you. Always recite the name of god. Go in a right direction. Learn the secret of success. What you see any object is the idol of god. Whatever you eat is your worship of god. Whatever you learn is the blessing of the god. Determination is your goal. Whatever way you move is your pilgrimage. Leading a simple life is the order of the god.

The words expressed in the Keerthana are not the jokes, but the way of life of a Dasa's, Shiva follower. He not only preach but show to the public that how to lead a life in practical sense. For him society is the laboratory and the life is his practical class. Thus the followers have such kind of humanity and role model to the society. They themselves have imbibed one culture. What they have inside the mind is also outwardly express to the public in their day to day life. They condemned the outwardly nature, unwanted worship of rituals and practices through the medium of devotional songs and folk tales. These things are explained in the following stanza by Sri Purandaradasa.

*Gootu naamava hodadudugumadu thambige hididu  
Gutanchu duthara madiyannuttu  
Datukalika naa darayolagelage baralenna  
Bootakatana noodi bramisadiri janare.*

This stanza enlightens the selfness through the reaction of devotional songs. This is the essence of the Hari dasa literature. All the requirements of society are imbedded in the culture. Sri Kanakadasa explains it in the following way:

*Hasidu bandavarige asanaveyalu beku  
Shisuvige palemenniyaninisabeeku  
Hasanada bhoomiyanu dhareyareyalu beku  
Bhasa kotta balike nigaviralu beku  
Ollyava nanendu balu hemme padabedi  
Baalve shiravendu neenu nimbi kedabeeda  
Doratana bandaga kettuda nediyalu beeda  
Siri banda kaalakke balu marayabeda.*

The above hymn explains that those who are hungry feed them. We should rear the child during the childhood. To irrigate the land we must plough it for the greenery. Do not provoke that you are a good person openly. Do not believe that the material life is eternal. When you became king do not do harm to the poor. Do not forget the past when you become rich.

The facts reflected in the devotional song are seen through the preaching's of Lord Budha in his preaching of eight principles. They are true belief, right decision, good suggestion, correct attempt, right duty, speaking truth, right thinking, perfect life, and self styled sketch of determination. These principles are meant for the right living and good directions of the society. These principles are strictly followed by the saints and sages. There is no need to see them, but they showed their way of life in a right path. It is assumed that Sri Kanaka dasa has followed the path of Lord Budha. It is seen in his preaching and way of life. His way of life and devotional attitude is depicted in the following way:

*Hinde enna baidavarella chandagerali  
Munde enna baidavarella anandadindirali  
Kundu ittivarrella duduri katti alali  
Samy bandu oddannarana bhattada gadde belayali  
Enna noodi chituke hodadu nakkavarige  
Kanyadanada phala bandu tottalvarige  
Enna nodi tala hodedu nakkavarige  
Saalaudeepa hachida pahal odalagalaavarige  
Janara olage manabhanga madabedavarega enna  
Jeenu thuppa Sakkara oota agalavarege  
Hani baradanthe madu lokada janarige  
Samy gyana bhakthi mukthi koodu kanaka avarege.*

The meaning of the above *keethana* (song) of Sri kanaka dasa wishes that the future generation should happily lead their life. The upcoming generation should be good. Those who are wealthy should be kings. Those who have land be prosperous. Those who lead the life of inhuman have the sweet dishes of honey. Oh god gives them righteous way of life for the human beings.

Sri Kanaka dasa has depicted his way of life through the sketch of Halumatha (Caste) culture being an insider of the society. What is the use if you do offerings to god, when you do not respect your parents who have brought up from the childhood? This is the emotional reply given by Sri Kanaka dasa to the activities of Sri Purandaradasa and to the learned Sanskrit scholars of the classical poets of Vyasa religious section. With this one can expect how the cold war was hidden in the Dasa literature. This also exhibits the internal dissatisfaction among the dasa scholars. This distinction clearly visible between Sanskrit wing and the folk wing in dasa literature. The displeasure was expressed by Sri Kanaka dasa in the stanza as “kurula janangalu chirakala eruvanthe karuva mugidu varava beduvenu” in his prayer. He even stressed the folk to read the Vedic literature and understand the concepts of Vedas and lead a right life and culture.

#### *Internal Criticism versus Outwardly Criticism*

It is more relevant to discuss the two aspects, one is spiritual level and other one is material level. In broad sense the Dasa literature is categorized into classical and folk religion. When we speak in terms of Hari Dasa literature the two Dasa Scholars who were focused in this study are Sri Kanaka Dasa and Sri Purandara Dasa. They deliberately criticized each other in materialistic way and devotional sense.

At material level they started their arguments by taking the existing ruling of the kings and in devotional level they criticized the religious aspect. The classical religious group (Vyasa Koota) is focused the kings during their period and the folk religious group (Dasa Koota) represented the rural masses and common people. Sri Purandara Dasa’s directly criticized the Vaishnava religion and their followers in the following way:

“Pindamdadologina gandana kanade mundeyaradavaru Panditharalla”.

In another keethana he said that

“in tha thodugu munda gandarigennu Vaishnava Sallusuvude”.

*“Ganda mesa bolisikondu guddu namava thedikond  
Addadiddi mudra gala badedi kondinnu  
Dodda dodda mathugalanadi doddavarendeli konba  
Bhaddi dhagadi makkaliginnu Vaishnava salluvude”.*

Even the dress pattern, their life style and their appearance were openly criticized by the Shaiva preachers, especially Sri Purandara Dasa’s. They referred to the Vaishnavites as Pagaluveshagallu. They even degraded their religious knowledge and equated their knowledge with the common people. They were never considered as learned scholars.

The rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire stand at one side of the religion and their religion was called the classical religion and they followed the religion of Vaishnavism. It was clearly depicted in terms of the history of Vijayanagara period. They were looked down by the followers of Shaivism followers, especially Sri Kanaka dasa who criticized the loop holes of the Vijayanagara rulers. He pin pointed the draw backs of the local government in the following Keerthana:

*Kaduvaa veerarige kaasu kuduvarilla  
Hariharara poojagalu hagaranagaladavu.*

The Shaiva spiritual followers through their keerthana openly criticized the kings that the wealthy people are leading the life by way of spending lavishly on the gold, diamond, pearls jewelry and they do not have money to pay to the soldiers who were the security forces of the kingdom. They do not have even courtesy to pay their salaries to the military army, who stand for the development of the kingdom by way of sacrificing their lives. They even criticized the Vaishnava gods as follows:

*“ninakku ninna hengekku ninna namada bavundiddare saaku  
Aaru badukirayya Hari ninna nimbi  
Thoru jagadolalu obbarannu kane”.*

The Shaiva preachers and followers do not hesitate to criticize the local rulers face to face. This is the character of the saints who were living in the open field of the temples expressed their humanity through devotional songs. They always expressed their thoughts independently. Thus the Haridasa’s stand as bridge between the king and local people and fight for the right cause and equality.

The above facts are shown in the following keethana was expressed by the saint Sri Purandaradasa.

*Lolalotte ella lolalotte  
Aane, Kudure, Onte lolalotte  
Balu seena bhandaravu lolalotte  
Manviyara sanga lolalotte  
Dodda shonisanembudu lolalotte  
Muthu, Manikya lolalotte  
China, chatra, chamara, dwaja lolalotte  
Suthagala kooote lolalotte  
Mathe uttama prabhutva lolalotte*

Not all Dasa's belong to the group of Bhagavatharu, but in the present context Sri Kanaka dasa and Sri Purandara dasa fall in this category. The speciality of the Bhagavatharu is that they will give equal respect to all gods irrespective of either Vishnu Incarnations or Shiva. For example the Vishnu Incarnations such as Lord Krishna, Lord Rama are given same devotional merit at par with the Shiva god. The Vishnu is as equally meritorious with the Rudra Devaru known as Shiva. They even chant the greatness of Shiva as "Shiva darusa nanagayithu kele mahashivarathriya jagarane".

There are so many contexts wherein the saint Sri Purandaradasa whole heartedly expressed devotional pleasure through Shiva keerthane as follows:

"chandrachuda shivasankara parvathiramana ninage namo  
Ramana ninage namo".

In another context the god (Somasekhara) himself told to his wife (Bhama) to chant the following mantra praising the Lord Vishnu.

"Ramamantrave japisu hai manava"

Ultimately one can get salvation through the blessings of Lord Shiva ( Rudradevaru). Thus so many places both the gods Vishnu and Shiva are equally praised by the followers of Harihara Dasa's.

Since fourteenth century to the present day we may say that the golden era of Haridasa literature was the period of Vijayanagara kings. In such period they never hesitate to bring forth the facts of the life irrespective of the kings or the local people. For them the rulers, the courageous soldiers or the wars was just like the bubble on the water. Thus Hari dasa literature stand as a mile stone to the native people in respect to culture, criticism and equality.

#### **Foot note:**

1. During Vedic period the humans were the nature worshippers. They used to worship the sun, moon, trees and stone, etc. It is only after the Manu, who brought the Varna system and Hinduism came into existence. Accordingly Sri Sankaracharya introduced the religious co-ordination of Vaisnavism and Sri Sankaracharya came with religious philosophy of Shaivism. Later on Sri Madhvacharya introduced the dwaitha philosophy and tried to merge the already existing two religious factions.
2. Dr. V.A. Divanaji, 1679, "Prasadayoga", Usha Sahitya Male publication, Mysore, page 14-17.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPGY**

- [1]. A.V. Navada & Gayatri Navada (Ed), Savira Kirtanegalu, Prasaranga, Kannada University, Hampi.
- [2]. Arallu mallige Prathasarati (Ed), (2010). Haridasa 4500 Hadugalu, Sri Haridasa Sanga, Bengaluru.
- [7]. H. N. Muralidhara, (2005). Tamburi Meetidava, Ankita pustaka, Bangalore.
- [4]. H. N. Muralidhara (Ed), (2010). E pariya soabagu, Prasaranga, Kannada University, Hampi.
- [3]. Kirtinatha Kurtyakoti, (1995). Kannada Sahitya sangati, Prasaranga, Kannada University, Hampi.
- [5]. Nagaratna T.N, (1986). Haridasara Bhakti Swarupa, Prasaranga, Mysore University, Mysore.
- [6]. Sa. Kru. Ramchandra Rao, (2003). Dasara Sahitya mattu samskruti, Kannada Pustaka Pradhikara, Bengaluru.
- [7]. V.A. Divanachi, (1972). Prasadayoga, Usha Sahitya Male, Mysore.