

Haridasas of Karnatka

Shri. Kakhandiki Krishna das : Life and works

- Prof. D.V. Potdar

a) Life (1673-1729 A.D.) :

Kakhandiki Krishna das was the younger son of Mahipati das. Almost all his works are available, but not the details of his life. Unlike his brother he took up the spiritual path. He had seven sons. He passed away on the twelfth day of Magha, in the bright of the month. His vrindavana is near his father's in Kakandiki.

An ardent follower of dualism, a majority of his poems are hymns to different gods and goddesses according the hierarchy. In the very first poem he describes the fitness of the Kannada language to describe the deeds of the lord and philosophical subtleties. He had a good knowledge of veershaivism, theory and practice. Like other haridasas he believes the guru is the inevitable bridge between the individual soul and the Supreme Being. He humbly considers himself a dog guarding the gate of his guru. His social concerns are seen in the poems where he advises people to be in good company, and to be always aware of their birth as human beings, and not to be lost in the worldly jungle. Knowledge alone will not lead to salvation, but self realization, with the help of the guru.

b) Works - selected, abridged:

1.

Sanskrit* or Prakrit*, don't bother,
listen to the story of our Father,

Look not down upon vernacular,
Kannada expresses thoughts, crystal clear,

Whatever the colour of the cow,
drink the milk, so sweet, wow !

Scriptures holy we regard
where words ooze the glory of the lord.

* classical and corrupt languages (India)

2.

See the trick of Maya,

“Gods feed through Agni”, say the learned,
but people warm themselves, and spit on fire !

3.

How lucky the mother,
cradling the lord in her lap,
while Brahma and others,
just to touch His feet stop !

4.

The cowgirls ran to gopi, and said,
“Come out gopi, see the three-eyed
monk, walking on the road.
The children have run away frightened,
have hid themselves, bring Krishna
to meet the monk.”

Gopi did so,
Krishna smiled, greeted the monk.
He in turn bowed to the lord,
departed, pleased,
while others watched,
wide-eyed !

5.

Don't worry mother,*
the lord'll sure come back.

Offended by the lotuses,
does the bee fly away,
the nectar un drunk ?

Will not the parrot return to the ripe mango,
from which he has flown away ?

I wonder,
how long the lord'll keep away,

from your sweet lips and warm embrace!

* Goddessa Laxmi

6.

See the lord play chess!

The earth is the board,
bodies the squares,
deluded souls the kings,
the will--gathering the fruits of good or
bad deeds-- the minister,
the two winds* elephants,
me and mine+ camels,
intelligence horses,
and the ten organs# the infantry.

Time passes, the pieces keep moving,
and at last victory or defeat depend
upon our acts.

* prana, apana + ahambhava # five motor
and five sense organs

7

Born on the earth, you just acted like
a human, Gopal Krishna.

You gathered used dinner plates
at a sacrifice,
and while princes watched,
you bathed a horse, drove a chariot.
And when a thorn stuck in the foot
of a cowgirl, carrying a water pot,
you removed it with your teeth !

You didn't mind being called a beau, a thief,
but hobnobbed with the cowboys, and ate from their
lunch bags.
And you also showered your
grace to Guru mahi pati

8

Devotion is the key to the lord's grace,

He didn't mind, the hunter's profession*,
or Vidura's clan,
Dhruva's age or Kubji's figure,
the simplicity of the king of elephants,
Sudhama's poverty, the efforts of Ugrasena,
or the gratitude of Draupadi,
was ready to be even a charioteer,
all for the devotees.

* reference to Valmiki

9.

Why are you fuming* Parvati ?

Your lord keeps the Ganges on his head,
to cool his burning throat,
the crest jewel of the serpent **,
is his ornament, but for you a mirror,
he brooks not separation,
offers you half his body,
see his goodness, now smile !

* angry ** round his neck

10.

Why this tiff* with your queen,
Ranga ?

Your man-lion form
made even Brahma tremble,
but then bold Laxmi came, sat in your lap,
and you smiled !

With a necklace of red seeds around your neck,
you lived with cowherds, ate with them,
but then she a princess, put a garland round
your neck, and wed you !

So don't find fault with her,
set aside this anger, go to her,

now.

* quarrel

11.

Earning His grace is easy,
like collecting water from a pond, throwing it back.

Repeating His name costs nothing,
so don't be a fool,
just coming up like a tree, growing ,
and falling down someday.

12.

You sleep on the water Ranga, why ?

Is't because you gifted the earth to the
Brahmins ?
or are you disturbed by the constant calls
of devotees and gods, which you cant attend ?
or may be it is just to cool your body after you
swallowed fire !*

* for protecting cowherds

13.

Crime and punishment, all right,

But why bring a tiger to kill a rat,
and an elephant to kill a rabbit ?
why cut a fruit with a saw,
and break a mirror with a pickaxe ?

Why a ship to cross a stream,
and a shower to douse a spark ?
why a bodkin to remove a thorn,
and a rope to tie flowers ?

I'm an ignoramus,
forgive my sins,
take me under your wings,
Guru mahipati suta.

14.

A prince marries a maid,
she becomes a princess,
a river joins the Ganges,
and becomes the divine river,
receiving your grace Tande Mahipati,
I'm no longer just a man but your devotee.

15.

Earn the guru's grace,
from worries be free,

Stand in the sunlight,
fear no darkness,
stand in the shadow,
feel no heat.

For sweat and moonlight,
snow and fire, toil and wish-yielding beads,*
good and evil do not hold hands,

Like fire in camphor,
salt in sea water,
fragrance in the breeze,
my guru resides in my heart.

*chintamani

16.

I stand at the guru's gate, a dog,
growl, grr, grr,
g(u) r(u), g(u)r (u) !

17.

The yogi sees Him every where,
and is happy alway,
like the fish swimming in water,
like the stag roaming in the forest,
or like the bird flying in the sky.

He is a demon indeed,
who forgets his creator, protector,
and sows his wild oats.

18.

The minds of fools it's difficult to change,
the wise tried, but threw up their hands.

Oceans you can sweeten with a pot of milk,
provoke a lion, fight with him,
face charging elephants,
cut diamonds with petals,
even move round Meru* faster than the sun !

Want examples, see Duryodhana, see Ravana,
So black cant turn white,
declares Gurumahipati suta

* a mountain

19.

The washer man beats our dirty clothes
with his hands, cleans them,
but the guru just talks, cleanses our minds,
with his tongue !

The porter carries loads for a price,
but the guru carries our bundle of sins,
leads us to happiness.

20.

You cant cook without fire, see without light,
grow crops without rain, offer food
without sprinkling ghee,*
sail without the boatman, and cant see the Lord,
without good company.

* naivedya

21.

To the god-conscious,
luck or fate,
are like pups to the elephant rider.*
The devotee sings His praise,
guffaws, like the drunkard !

* he neednt mind them

22.

”Pride comes before fall”.

Durvasa* met Indra in all his pomp and glory,
presented him with a garland **,
but he let it fall at the feet of Airavata,
and with it fell Indra’s fortunes.

Nahusha performed sacrifices,
sat on Indra’s throne,
but trying to command the sages,
was cursed, fell to the earth a serpent !

Pride destroys penance, knowledge,
keep away from it, says Guru mahipati.

* a sage ** used for Shiva’s worship

23.

Just, reading religious texts,
listening to sermons,
wont lead us to Him,
but the company of the learned.

So why climb to the top of the tree,
when fruits hang at the bottom ?

24.

Pray to the lord with all your heart,
otherwise he accepts it not.

For it* will be like,
the parrot’s talk,
the fish’s bath, the stork’s contemplation,
the silence of the cuckoo,
the stay, of the monkey in the forest
and of the rat in the cave,
the serpent’s fast,
the tree’s nakedness,

and the croaking of the frog.

* prayer (note-- snana, japa, mouna, upavasa
are supposed to lead us to god.)

25.

Forget not, the guru isn't just human,
but the divine in human form.

Seekers of knowledge profit from lectures,
not dullards,
trees welcome a breeze from Malayaja,
not a clump of bamboos,
successors profit from hidden treasure,
not the guarding serpent, declares Mahipati.

(a miscellany)

26.

In the Kali age,
Five year old girls will have lovers,
seven year olds will bear children,
brothers will marry sisters,
dropouts will be employed,
graduates will be searching for jobs
and the river Ganges will go dry !

27.

The god of love eats, dresses,
never tires, but stretches his hand for more.

The greedy one never enjoys himself,
nor allows others,
but like the bee collects, stores,
and like the silly serpent,
guards the treasure underground .

See the proud one,
he never bows to devotees,
but frowns, turns his head away,
he is sure to fall in the pit sometime,
like the blind elephant wandering

The youngest, the jealous one,
has honey on his tongue, scissors under his shirt,
is unhappy at the happiness of others,
carries tales, while he gains nothing.

Their sister ignorance,
nev'r repeats the lord's name,
is deaf to what others say, passes her days in folly,
fully veiled, sightless, she makes others blind.

Here we come to offer presents,
To the god of love a coronet engraved 'Renounce',
and to the greedy one, a necklace
with 'Be generous' stamped on the locket.

Fine notes pour from Vani's lute,
all credit to her skill, and not to the lute

You declare "I'm Brahman",
to whom ?

(From philosophical musings)

Om Tat Sat
