

Haridasas of Karnataka

## **Shri. Mohan das : life and works**

- Prof. D. V. Potdar

### **1. Life ( A.D.1730-1815 ):**

In Chippagiri (Bellary dist) there was a jeweller called Bhimappa naik. He died without making any provision for his wife. His brothers showed her the door, and the poor swoman who was pregnant, went to her mother and delivered a male child. When the mother died, the woman and the child, both orphans, moved from place to place, begging. Malnourished, both suffered from diseases, and smelt horribly.

At that time Vijaya dasa, was making preparations to observe Purandar das's aradhana at Chakrateertha. Thousands of guests were to be fed, and the woman and her child came there. Nobody would permit her to come near them. Disgusted, she was about to go away when Vijaya das saw her. He told her to come inside, and later permitted her to stay with him. He even adopted the child, and called him Mohan.

When Mohan grew up, Vijaya dasa initiated him, and gave him the ankita ( sort of nom de plume) Mohan vithal. Mohan das renounced every thing, and taking a tanpura began his tours with his wife. It is believed that in his former life he was the sage Mandavya. He had a son Venkappa, who trod his father's path when he grew up. Legend has it that his guru once saved Mohan dasa from untimely death.

Madhwa varada vithal, Viraji pranesh vithal were his disciples.

Urutune pada—Since in those days, boys and girls were married early a function was arranged to get rid of their shyness. Both husband and wife were made to announce each other's names in lines that rhymed at the end.

### **2. Works - selected and abridged:**

1.

Why this highly comic appearance  
Vedavyasa ?

Draupadi you provided with clothes galore,  
but are yourself content with a loincloth,  
a crown, studded with nine kinds of gems, you laid aside,  
and sport red matted locks,  
your heavenly abode you abandoned,  
and dwell under a badari tree !

2.

Why should you be a mendicant  
Phalaksha ?\*

You have, a millionaire friend, \*\*  
a silver palace,  
a retinue of gods,  
a serpent for an ornament,  
two mighty sons, and a wife who caters  
to all.+

I suggest, you borrow Yama's he-buffalo,  
cultivate land, reap a bumper harvest.

See your prowess,  
The divine preceptor# has but one eye,  
Mohan vithal two, but you have THREE!

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\* Sshiva, ( lit. Eye in the forehead) \*\* Laxmipati  
+ Annapurna # Shukracharya

3.

Holding a sheet of gold,  
why bother about tinsel ?  
when Ganga water is available,  
why care for water from a well ?  
repeating Garuda's name,  
why fear serpents ?  
accepting holy water, ashes from  
Shrinivarsya,  
why worry about diseases,  
worldly sorrows ?

4.

Good people listen,  
The evil that a man does  
affects the food he offers,  
beware, you eat it and stomach evil !

The assets of the righteous, stolen,  
will be millstones, not buoys.

5.

The backs of the wicked are skinned  
to cover the drums,  
the drummers play, and announce,  
“Vishnu is supreme, Madhwa is supreme”.

Among creeds, Madhwa lore,  
Among fasts the haridina,+  
Among puranas, the Bhagawata,  
And among idols, Hari’s idol stand out.

Like drinking milk in the grove of palms\*,  
is the company of black sheep,\*\*  
you are suspect !

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+eleventh day of every month ( Hindu calendar) \* where toddy is tapped  
\*\* bad people

The company of the good,  
is like a fragrant flower,  
the company of the bad,  
an onion meal burp !

Dont even stand in the shadow  
of traitors to the lord, the guru,  
parents, devotees and the master.

In our Lord’s palace, there’s no dust  
no trash,  
but sandalwood paste everywhere,  
and when it rains, it rains flowers.

Out of the five of types release,  
Sarupya, salokya, samipya, sayujya\*  
are for the common souls,  
but sarishni is for Virinchi\*\* alone.

Sister, berries stick to your body,  
Your hair is matted,  
And people laugh at you+

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\* the kinds \*\* Brahma + Subhadra to Rukmini (touch of jealousy?)

( Arjuna says)  
Laxmi’s husband is ageless, penniless,

A sage kicked him once in the chest,  
Sishupala abused him in the full court,  
Treatment which (I think) he fully deserves !

You\* are self sufficient, supreme,  
then why did you marry a bear's daughter ?  
You built a bridge, brought back your wife,  
and then sent her to the forest,  
you took a hatchet, cut off your mother's head,  
that was great!

Traitors, Narada to his mother,  
Pralhada to his father,  
And Vibhishana to his brother,  
are all your dear devotees !

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\* Vishnu (vyajastuti) (from kolata pada, a narrative poem)

6.

Raghava bring your wife,  
Carry her in your arms,  
You may be the king, we don't mind.  
(say the people).

(Laxmi stands up, says)  
Faultless Hari,  
that in the guise of a fair dame  
killed Bhasmasura,  
lift your face, I'll put a tika  
on your forehead.

Put forth your feet,  
that turned a boulder into a woman,  
I'll touch them.

( now it is the husband's turn)

Laxmi, you are always on the move,  
bring strife between relations,  
make father and son quarrel,  
and don't hesitate to hobnob with the lowborn\*.

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\* from urutune pada ( please see note above )

7.

All souls differ,  
all kinds of matter differ  
the soul and Hari differ,  
matter and Hari differ,  
the soul and matter differ,  
Know these five kinds of distinctions,  
serve Hari, earn his grace.

8.

Hari's devotees covet not other's wives,  
if they do, they wont make love,  
if they make love, there'll be nothing untoward,  
for our merciful Mohan vithal is ev'r watchful.

I tour the country,  
pretend to go on a pilgrimage,  
collect funds, and spend them on my family.

Hari, you wont accept gifts  
collected from others,  
but are pleased with a pot of water  
and a tulsi leaf offered by me,  
Kuchela offered you a fistful of pounded rice,  
And you showered wealth on him.

9.

Lord, you live in all glory,  
But see your devotee's misery,  
I come to you, not to beg a penny,  
but grant me devotion, knowledge,  
and lead me to ye,  
Mohan vithal.

Om Tat Sat