

Haridasas of Karnatak

Shri Venugopal das: Life and works

- Prof. D .V. Potdar

1. Life (1732-?):

Rukmanna was the divan of the nawab of Raichur. His second son was called Timmanna. He was brought up in a religious, traditional manner.

Once Vijaya das , the famous mystic had come to Raichur, and stayed with the divan. When the boy bowed to him, he blessed him and said “Hello Pangnama Timmanna, how are you ?” In his previous birth the boy was the famous Vaikuntha das and had put the v-shaped red caste mark on his forehead. From then on the boy turned to religion more and more and at the age of twenty three received the ankita Shree Venugopl vithal from Vijaya das, and started writing spiritual lyrics.

He succeeded his father as the divan, but was not happy with the state affairs. He wanted to retire, but his guru persuaded him to stay on. His sorrow at this period is expressed in some of his poems.

He organized a religious conference, and invited his guru to attend it. But then he fell ill, and his guru is supposed to have cured him by offering a prayer.

He was a very able administrator, and had kept away the aggressive Marathas. He was deeply pained, when his only son became a convert to Islam and married the princess. Once more he respected the word of his guru and continued in the post.

The nawab had a high regard for him, but some tale bearers created a rift between them. As a result his house was raided. It was the last straw and he decided to retire from public life. In fact he undertook a fast unto death, for forty two days, not even drinking water.

His descendants, at Advani observe his death anniversary every year.

2. Works - Selected, abridged:

1.

Should a monarch's son be a flunkey ?

Surrounded by the Ganga , why feel thirsty ?

Swimming in the ocean of milk,

why cry for butter milk ?

When the house is stacked with cloth,

why be dressed in rags ?

Why take the way to the forest,
when guides are ready to lead you to
Venu gopal vithala?

2.

You care for you devotees,
You bring them together, separate them,
You are at their command,
They are your kith and kin,
They draw you to them,
Without them you feel lonely,
I'm your humble devotee,
Keep an eye on me always.
Venu gopal vithala

3.

Wherev'r I look let me see you,
Let all my words be hymns,
my movements pilgrimages,
let the food I eat, and the clothes I wear
be your gifts,
whatever I listen to may it be your praise,
let my anger and sloth be penance,
when I lie down lazy let it be my pranama,
let all my activities be dedicated to you,
Venu gopal vithala.

4.

Lotus eyed,
Let me be your devotee for a few lives,
let me be born and reborn to serve you,
then free me from the cycle of birth and death,
and make me your door-keeper.
Venu gopal vithal.

5.

You send saints for the benefit of the world,
You engage in pastimes, work miracles,
I pray let not down your humble devotees.
Venu gopal vithal.

6.

Say,
My body and mind are yours,
my wife, wealth are yours,
all that is mine is thine,
good things that befall me
during dreams, conscious states are yours,
Venu gopal vithal will bless you, bring you joy.

7.

Things happen in this world as He wills,
but you understand it not,
devotees, preceptors inspired by Him,
narrate His wonderful deeds,
listen to them, understand, and be free.

8.

Get rid of passions,
Be content with what you get,
Know Vishnu to be the creator
of the universe,
Have faith in his devotees,
Earn his grace, and be happy,
For evils shun the man of faith.

9.

He wills the creation of the world, protects it,
and destroys it,
at the end removes the skin of his own son,
wraps it round his head,
and dances like a child.

Know, from Laxmi to all the living
and the lifeless,
He brings release.

10.

People of many nations may come together,
worship the Lord for hours,
but to no use, unless their hearts be pure,

a pilgrimage to Kashi is useless,
unless you are a devotee of the devotee.

Om Tat Sat