

HISTORY, MUSIC AND EMPIRE IN VIJAYANAGARA- SOUTH INDIA: A STUDY OF THE SONGS OF PURANDARADĀSĀ (C.E 1485-1564)¹

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Abstract

The Vijayanagara Empire occupies a prominent place in the study of medieval Indian history. Historians have analyzed Vijayanagara history using various approaches. The ruins of the city of Hampi afford a wealth of data to the historians who look at Vijayanagara from an interdisciplinary perspective comprising of the multi-faceted aspects of the empire such as art, history, religion, society, economy, archaeology and anthropology in understanding the questions concerning the empire. This paper is an attempt to look at how songs of Purandaradāsā can be used as a source to reconstruct the history of Vijayanagara Empire. Purandaradāsā was a bhakti poet of the sixteenth century Vijayanagara who lived at a time when the empire was at the zenith of its political power. His songs composed in simple, colloquial idiom are popular over the vast regions stretching from the Marāthi speaking regions of the Deccan to the Lower Kāvēri in the Tamil country. The singer saints have always used the music as a vehicle and metaphor for their way of life. This paper examines the life and songs of the dāsā songster Purandaradāsā of the Vijayanagara Empire. It focuses on the origins of Bhakti poetry hand in hand with its socio-cultural contexts as a continuous poetic tradition and looks at how songs can be used as a source material to reconstruct history. It discusses the role played by Purandaradāsā in integrating the people of different cultural, historical and linguistic zones of Vijayanagara Empire through his medium of songs popularly known as Dēvaranāmās.

Key words

Vijayanagara – Purandaradāsā - Haridasa Tradition- Dēvaranāmās - Bhakti- Medieval South Indian Society - Economy

History of Vijayanagara has been a fascinating subject to the historians since 1900 when Robert Sewell published his seminal work *A Forgotten Empire: Vijayanagar*. Vijayanagara Empire is the last major indigenous political system which commanded a pan regional allegiance and historians have analyzed the history of Vijayanagara using various approaches and methods. Here is an attempt to look at the history of

¹ This paper includes excerpts from my PhD thesis titled “A study of the songs of Purandaradasa in the social, historical and religious context of Vijayanagara empire (1485 to 1564 AD) submitted to Pondicherry university in 2011.

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Vijayanagara from an interdisciplinary perspective by analyzing the songs of the 16th century composer Purandaradāsā whose life spanned two major periods of Vijayanagara history- -Saluva and Tuluva dynasties. In this study I have attempted to bring out the historical environment in which the songs of Purandaradāsā were composed and circulated. Dēvaranāmās composed by Purandaradāsā have been analyzed to explicate the cultural and intellectual horizon within which Purandaradāsā's work can be situated. Bhakti expressed in music found full expression in the melodious and mellifluous music of Purandaradāsā who invariably identified his compositions using his own name.

Purandaradāsā who lived from 1485 to 1564 A.D is one of the best known and remembered composers who left a deep impression on the hearts and minds of people of Peninsular India. Purandaradāsā was born at Purandaragād, a village near Hampi the regal capital of Vijayanagara Empire.ⁱ He travelled extensively throughout the empire singing heartfelt songs on God Vishnu, which are still remembered by all sections of the society.

Purandaradāsā was a great devotee of God Vishnu though he wrote occasional songs to Siva and the Goddess Lakshmi. His life story reveals that he was dramatically called from his worldly life to a transformative intensity of devotion to Vishnu.ⁱⁱ Vishnu is believed to be the divine maintainer of the universe, preserving it from harm. The mudra or ankitā he used in the concluding lines of his compositions indicated the form of Vishnu which inspired his devotion. He sang to Purandara Viṭhala – Vishnu standing on a brick, with hands akimbo, the form in which he is present in the famous Viṭhōbā temple at Pandhārpur in Mahārāshtra.ⁱⁱⁱ Purandaradāsā was a member of the Madhvā lineage of Vaishnava philosophy called Dvaitā or dualism. Dvaita or Dualism is one of the leading schools of Hindu philosophy propounded Madhvāchārya in the 12th century. Its cardinal precepts are the supremacy of Śrīhari and surrender to Him and service to Humanity as the sole means of Liberation. The philosophy of Madhvāchārya is pragmatic with relevance to everyday life. The basic feature of Madhvāchārya's philosophy was the equivalence between Brahman of the Vēdānta and the ēkam Sat (the one Supreme real) of the Vēdas.^{iv} Purandaradāsā has composed many songs bringing out the greatness of Madhvāchārya and his philosophy. Under the exegetical scholarship of Madhvāchārya reflected in the Gītā Bhāshyā Vishnu is extracted from a subordinate position in the Vedic pantheon and raised to the position of the true god. Sarvanāmavān mentioned in the Rig Vēdā is taken by Madhvāchārya as a synonym for Vishnu. By giving a Vēdic sanction for the supremacy of Vishnu, Madhvāchārya made possible the spread of the philosophy of *Dvaita*. It was during the Vijayanagara period that Dvaita received royal patronage with prominent Madhvā saints and *gurus* residing in the capital of Vijayanagara itself. The island in the Tungabhadra, 'Navabrindāvan' contains the sepulchers of nine prominent Madhvā saints whose life and ministry coincided with the

history of the Vijayanagara Empire. The elements of bhakti which ties the philosophical strands of Madhva beliefs with the popular manifestation of religion found in Madhva's Svētāsvatārās in which he says that bhakti is the sole means of salvation. ^v

The biography of Purandaradāsā in all its historical authenticity is not available. Based on the popular beliefs, tradition and literary accounts an attempt is made to trace out the early life of Purandaradāsā. The Kamalāpura inscription of 1526A.D lends support to the period in which Purandaradāsā lived. The inscription records a gift of land and property to his three sons.^{vi} This is the only inscription available as a piece of historic evidence to determine the period in which Purandaradāsā lived and worked. The inscription also gives the information that Purandaradāsā belonged to the Vasishta Gothra. The name Purandaradāsā is beset with the same controversy. The tradition that the poet singer and composer was born in Purandaragad near Pune has been rejected by BNK Sharma who thinks that the fort and its associated habitation came into existence only after the life and times of the dāsā saint. The claim put forth by K Krishna Rao that Purandaradāsā hailed from 'Kshēmapura' in Shimoga district of Karnataka has also been rejected by BNK Sharma on the ground that the reference to Purandaragad or Amarāvati was a literary concept than a topographical fact. Thus the various places or sites attributed as birth places of Purandaradāsā are not backed with firm historical or epigraphical material. Sharma argues that it was a basic misconception to say that the dāsā's name was derived from that of his birthplace.^{vii} The place where Purandaradāsā was born is mentioned in a song of his disciple Vijayadāsā "*Purandaragada Janisi*".^{viii} But the ambiguity remains as pointed out earlier.

Purandaradāsā was born as the only son of Varadappa Nāyak, a diamond merchant. He was named Srīnivāsa after the God of the Seven hills, God Venkatēswara of Tirupati. The Saluvās who were the rulers of the Chandragiri region in which Tirupati was situated became the rulers of Vijayanagara following the usurpation by Saluva Narasimha in A.D 1485. The popularity of Venkatēswara in the Vijayanagara region increased as a consequence of the Saluva reign. The Vijayanagara rulers by the beginning of sixteenth century had become ardent devotees of the God of Tirupati^{ix} and it was not uncommon to find individuals who were named after this deity. Srīnivāsa received good education in accordance with family traditions and acquired proficiency in Kannada, Sanskrit, sacred lore and in music. When he was sixteen years old he married Saraswati, a god fearing girl. He lost his parents at his young age and he inherited his father's business in precious stones and pawn broking. In course of a short time he expanded it and amassed immense wealth, thereby earning the appellation 'Navakōti Nārāyana'.^x

Purandaradāsā's transformation in life

Purandaradāsā was not spiritual in the first half of his life and became a great devotee in the later half. Two incidents in life were responsible for his transformation into a faithful devotee of Vishnu, one about a dēvadāsi and a bracelet and another about his wife's nose ring. Even though these stories cannot be taken into account due to the lack of authentic historical evidences, it is not altogether possible to neglect them since they are happily remembered by the villagers. The story of dēvadāsi and the bracelet goes like this: -

Once Purandaradāsā felt immense thirst when he visited the Viṭhala temple at Pandhārpur. He had to wait for a long time since he had no companions or disciples with him to get water. God came disguised as a fellow devotee and offered water to Purandaradāsā. However instead of feeling thankful, Purandaradāsā became angry because the water was not brought in time and so threw the pot at the fellow devotee who quickly disappeared. That night God assumed the form of Purandaradāsā and gave the bracelet from the Viṭhala image in the temple to a dēvadāsi. Next day the temple priest found that the bracelet was missing from the image and raised an alarm so that all villagers came to know about it. The dēvadāsi revealed that the bracelet was presented to her by Purandaradāsā. Temple officials caught hold of Purandaradāsā who was suspected of stealing the bracelet. They tied him to a pillar and interrogated him. Then the voice of God was heard saying that Purandaradāsā is innocent, and the other bracelet fell from the image as a sign. In one of his songs starting 'Muyakke muyya' Purandaradāsā narrated the whole story of dēvadāsi and the bracelet.

"Tit for tat O Lord of the Universe

Lord who help devotees in ultimate victory

I thought he is just a small boy, so I asked him to get water

But this Krishna who stole butter brought water in a golden pot

I did not know what was up

I threw things at the boy, I even beat him up

O Lord, you gave a bracelet to the Devadāsi

And made me responsible for that, you caused me to get beaten up

Now the accounts are settled"^{xi}

The other story revolves around a poor Brahmin trying to arrange the money needed for his son's *upanayana* (sacred thread ceremony). Purandaradāsā, the miserly jeweler sent him away when the Brahmin asked him for help. The Brahmin then asked Purandaradāsā's wife to help him, being compassionate and kind she gave her nose ring to the poor Brahmin. However, when the Brahmin tried to sell the nose ring to Purandaradāsā, he recognized it and expressed his displeasure to his wife so much that

she became depressed and decided to end her life. She put poison in a cup of milk and was about to drink when the nose ring miraculously fell into the cup. This incident changed the life of Purandaradāsā transforming him to become a dāsā, an inspired devotee, a singer of Lord Vishnu's praise. Purandaradāsā lived at Pandhārpur with his family for a long time. He never repented his action of giving away all his wealth to the needy and the poor. In fact, he developed a sense of gratitude towards his wife and in that situation, he sang '*Adadella Olite Ayithu*' that means: -

“Whatever has happened has happened for good and has become a fruitful means to the service of our Sridhara. I was feeling shy to bear the palanquin. May the like of this wife be thousand, she made me hold the staff of palanquin. I was feeling proud like a ruler and would not hold the beggar's basket. She made me carry the beggar's basket I was feeling shy like a king to wear the Tulsi garland on my neck. The lotus eyed Purandara Viṭhala caused me to put it on.”^{xii}

The two incidents mentioned above need not necessarily be believed as authentic biographical details. However, there is an extensive hagiographical tradition both in Christianity and Bhakti which link a sudden gush of religious illumination with an epiphany which mark two distinct phases in the saints' life. The pre conversion phase is in sharp contrast to the post conversion phase. The two incidents discussed above which are also found in the songs of Purandaradāsā are public expressions of a private moment of epiphany. These are incidents underlying transformative moments in the life of an individual. Though these incidents may find to be a construct of the oral traditions, they reflect the cultural universe of the times of Purandaradāsā. In medieval Indian texts the images are portrayed as those move their limbs, speak and also perform miracles. Images may act to settle disputes among their human devotees and in the words of Richard.H.Davis, they may engage in contests of miracles with one another to resolve their own disputes over status and authority.^{xiii} One can see that the central images are lords and owners of the temples they inhabit. As proprietors they carry out a host of administrative through functionaries who are themselves sometimes images.

Medieval Indian images are even shown as rulers of kingdoms with human ministers under their command. For medieval Indians the power and efficacy of images they created and worshipped was indeed great and even today these iconic deities retain much of their power.^{xiv} It is said that one day a call came to him in his dream that he should go to Hampi and seek spiritual guidance from Sri Vyāsarāya. Accordingly, he went to Hampi and entered the Mathā of the great Guru. Vyāsarāya was pleased by the firmness of Purandaradāsā's resolve to receive Vaishnava Dīksha and gave him spiritual

initiation. He taught him the necessary disciplines like darsanas, Vedas, Upanishads, Mīmāṃsa, Vyākaraṇa and the tenets of Dvaita Vedānta and also the importance of bhakti in the life of a Haridāsā. Vyāsarāya gave considerable impetus to the dāsakūta movement and the association of Purandaradāsā with Vyāsarāya helped the spread of the tradition in the Vijayanagara empire. BNK Sharma says “the political influence of Madhva school also rose to its highest level under Vyāsatīrtha. He enjoyed the closest affection and commanded the highest esteem of the great Emperor of South India— Krishnadēvarāya”. While the purple prose of BNK Sharma may be set aside, the fact that Vyāsarāya had a major influence on the Vijayanagara polity cannot be denied. Śrīnivāsa Nāyaka became a true Haridāsā with the *ankita*^{xv} of Purandara Viṭhala granted to him by his Guru Vyāsarāya. With a deep sense of gratitude, he describes his first meeting with Vyāsarāya in one of his songs Vyāsarāya Charana Kamala” ...

*“The sight of Vyāsarāya’s lotus feet is the result of my good deeds
of many births I have acquired the right to chant and praise the
lord of Lakshmi as the kindness of the servants of blemishless
Panduranga has been vouchsafed to me.”^{xvi}*

This song makes it clear that Purandaradāsā was admitted to the order none other than Vyāsarāya himself. Further it also elaborates that Vyāsarāya himself was a devotee of God Viṭhala and a leader of the Madhvā order. Purandaradāsā with his *ankita* (Purandara Viṭhala) began to preach the gospel of purity of devotion to Hari as the infallible road to mōksha. The Vedic hymns, the Upanishads, the Purānās and the Ithihāsās were rendered into easy colloquial Kannada language by him. They were made easily accessible to the lower strata of the society which was not acquainted with Sanskrit.

William Jackson, popularly regarded as the historian of religion has made an intensive study of the cultural and religious history of Vijayanagara in which he has brought out the essence of the teachings of the haridāsā saints like Annamācharya, Kanakadāsā, Purandaradāsā and others. He says after an analysis of some of the compositions of Purandaradāsā the core of his compositions was devotion or bhakti-the method by which he attracted the people towards God and tried to relate his songs with realities of life. In one of his songs Purandaradāsā emphasizes this depth of bhakti.

What we hope with all our heart to get at some future time

Let’s get that today!

What we want to have today let’s get it right now

What we can get right now let’s enjoy this very instant

Let’s have the loving mercy of Lord Purandara Viṭhala!^{xvii}

Jackson says “the relationship between Bhagavān and Bhakta, mutually inseparable God and Devotee is an all-consuming relationship- of love, thanks longing, care and dependence. The Lord is the listener of urgent pleas, the understanding helper, the parent, the beloved and God of existence. Vijayanagara singer-saints like other culturally creative Hindu contributors to religious life, knew that bhakti had to be simple enough to be livable, rich and varied enough to be attractive and traditional enough to be acceptable. It had to be deep enough to be inexhaustible and always challenging, substantial enough to give meaning to all experiences, powerful enough to endow kings with legitimacy and uplift the lowest villager, with heartfelt sincerity and trustworthy touchstone”.^{xviii} This kind of close association with God and devotee is found in the songs of Purandaradāsā if one goes deep into the meaning of the songs. Moreover, his songs deal with the daily incidents of life.

Purandaradāsā travelled extensively throughout the Vijayanagara Empire, met with different people and understood the realities of life. Unlike the court poets whose status and prosperity could shelter them from the grim facts of life, the wandering singers saw life’s harsh realities and their philosophy entailed addressing those realities rather than striking them.

Purandaradāsā and the Dāsā Tradition

The antiquity of Vishnu bhakti and the existence of a religious sect devoted to the worship of Nārāyana provide a strong proof for the popularity of the doctrine of Vaishnavism. The situation in Karnāṭaka was not far different. The Bhāgavaṭa Dharma had a strong base in Karnāṭaka even before the beginning of the Christian Era. The Hālmīdi inscription of 450 A.D begins with a prayer to Vishnu^{xix}. In the 4th and 5th century Vaishnavism suffered a setback when the Kādambas supported and popularised Jainism. The Chālukyas of Badāmi revived the Vishnu bhakti tradition and it became a dominant force during the 6th to 8th centuries. The Rāshtrakūṭas who succeeded Chālukyas could not resist the Pallavās of Kanchi who were staunch Saivites. Therefore, during their rule Saivism and Vaishnavism received equal patronage. Jainism was still a force and all the three faiths were together popular from 8th to 10th centuries. The Chālūkyās of Kalyāṇi who rose to power in Karnāṭaka supported Vaishnavism in the beginning of their rule. The Chālukyan Empire disintegrated towards the end of the 12th Century and the Hoysālās of Dwārasamudra came to power in its southern region and patronized Srīvaishnavism in the early part of its dynastic rule. Vaishnavism of the Dvaitā dispensation began to receive popular attention from the early quarter of the 13th century A.D which later came to be known as the dāsā tradition.

The evolution of the dāsā tradition is considered to be one of the turning points in the religious history of South India. This tradition brought in several saints who played a pivotal role in the spiritual growth as well as progress in the fields of art, culture and philosophy of South India in general and Karnataka in particular. The dāsā tradition was spread by the Haridāsās (literally ‘slaves of the Lord’).^{xx} The Haridasas were greatly influenced and inspired by the philosophy propounded by Madhvāchārya of Udupi in the 13th century which gave an organizational base to the great Vaishnava religious devotionalism in South India. The Haridāsās were saints who considered themselves as the slaves of the Supreme Lord Hari. This concept of surrender to God was in existence ever since the age of Ālvārs and Nāyanārs. Like dāsās of Karnataka there were in the 7th and 8th centuries dāsīs or dēvadāsīs (handmaidens of the Gods) who are dancing girls attached to the temples whose source of livelihood was dancing and singing in front of the temple deities. In ancient times, women were dedicated to the service of the temples, they had to be married to God and had no other duty but to dance before his shrine hence called the God’s slaves (as Haridāsās also referred to them as Slaves of Hari). In the 13th century Karnataka the dāsā tradition produced several bhaktas who sang on the glories of God Vithala, a form of Vishnu to whom they surrendered their lives. This tradition was a devotional one whose ideals and thoughts pervaded all sections of society. They found great patronage in the Vijayanagar kingdom which during its glorious reign ruled over entire South India. The rulers of Vijayanagara, encouraged religious activities which is revealed from numerous inscriptions pertaining to it. It included promotion of Vedic studies, generous patronage extended to mutts and temples, support of Brahmins and celebration of public rituals. The sectarian leaders and ascetics were provided with gifts of various kinds. For instance, Krishnadevaraya granted a number of villages to the Madhvā sage Vyāsarāya. Inscriptions record the consecration of the image of Yōga Varada Narasimha Swāmi in the courtyard of the Viṭhala temple at Hampi. Another inscription dated 1511A.D states that Vyāsatīrtha (Vyāsarāya) obtained from the king Krishnadēvarāya the lands located in the village Pūlampakkam in Padaivitta Rajyam for conducting the Āvani festival in his own name for Varadarāja of Kanchīpuram. The same inscription goes on to record the gift of a dēsavāhana of gold which was to be used in the fourth day of the festival. In yet another inscription found in the Viṭhala Swami temple at Hampi the king refers to Vyāsa as his guru.^{xxi} There is also an enigmatic reference to Vyāsa in the contemporary account of Paes who refers to a Brāhmin who was a great favourite of the king.^{xxii} An inscription of Krishnadēvarāya dated 1526A.D found at Hemmādi in South Canara district records a gift of 60 varāhās per year to Vyāsatīrtha as offering to finance the worship of Rāmachandra for the merit of the king.^{xxiii} Endowments to maṭhas encouraged religious learning and activities. The Vijayanagara rulers encouraged pilgrimages within their own empire. Since the North Indian pilgrimages became impossible for political and military reasons, pilgrimages to the sacred centers within the kingdom were encouraged.^{xxiv}

By the end of the 16th century, the religion was under a more open-minded variety encouraging rule. A European traveler named Barbosa described “the kings of Vijayanagara allowed great freedom so that every man could come and go as he wished, living according to his own beliefs without suffering any persecution and without having to be questioned as to whether he was a Christian, Jew or Moor.”^{xxv}

Though Vaishnavism became more popular in the 16th century Vijayanagara, it was not exactly a state religion. The state valued, encouraged and promoted the various sects and communities including Saiva and Jaina, Krishnadēvarāya tried to harmonize faiths, rebuilding several Siva temples including the Virūpāksha temple at Hampi giving land grants to several pilgrim places such as Tirupati, Ahōbilam, Tiruvannāmalai, and Chidambaram. According to the Indian tradition to promote many sects and world views was to promote social uplift, noble values and harmony. Thus, the Haridāsā saints also received great royal patronage from the kings of Vijayanagara. It can be said that it was through them that the Vaishnava philosophy began to spread and became more popular in the Vijayanagara kingdom.

The Haridāsās were ardent devotees of Lord Viṭhala who is considered as a form of Vishnu. The Viṭhala temple at Pandhārpur on the banks of the river Bhīma in the present-day Maharashtra, the Viṭhala Swami temple at Hampi in Karnataka and the Srīnivāsa temple on Tirumala Hills in Andhra Pradesh are considered the holiest of places in the Haridāsā context, the sacred geography of which will be discussed in the next chapter. There are a large number of inscriptions which prove the popularity of this god in various parts of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

The Haridāsās of Karnataka were preachers of devotion to God and made distinctive contribution to the religious life of the people. They conveyed great and sacred truths in Kannada in a very simple and clear style so as to be understood by the common people. The followers of Madhvāchārya preached his doctrine of a knowledgeable devotion to God, through the medium of melodious songs called dēvaranāmās. In this context Madhvāchārya's concept of devotion or Bhakti deserves special mention. Madhvā describes bhakti as a state of loving attachment born out of knowledge and regard for the object of devotion. The purpose of bhakti is to manifest the true relation of jīvā with *Brahman*. It is only the knowledge or the Jnāna of the latter which can produce the feeling of love and absolute dependence on Him. Madhvā regards Jnāna as a direct constituent of bhakti and bhakti as a combination of knowledge and love. The principle of interdependence between jnāna and bhakti and the superiority of jnāna over bhakti is established by Madhvā in very explicit terms. This can be seen in the different categories and gradations he formulates of bhakti (devotion), bhaktās (devotees), Mōksha

(salvation) and īsvara prasādā(divine blessing). According to him different souls are capable of different kinds of Bhakti. In the words of B.N.K Sharma Madhvā's peculiar doctrine of intruistic gradation of fitness among various orders of souls enables him to co-relate the different forms of devotion to different orders of selves".^{xxvi}

Madhvā mentions three stages of bhakti that which precedes *paroksha jnana* (intruistic knowledge), that which follows it, and that which comes after direct realization and wins the absolute grace of God. The final and the highest stage of bhakti is reached only when the true relationship between jīvā and Brahman is realized; the grace of God comes to the devotee after this. It is clear from this gradation that inspite of his emphasis on the principle of divine grace, Madhvā does not in any way minimize, the importance of individual effort towards correct knowledge and that bhakti for him is just not an attitude of faith and surrender. These aspects of Madhvā's bhakti existing within the frame work of his dualistic Vedanta are significant and influenced the dāsā tradition.

Though initial inspiration of the dāsās was derived from Madhvā himself who has given stirring devotional lyrics in such Sanskrit works as dvādasastōtra, it was another direct disciple of Madhvāchārya called Narahari Tīrtha, who is regarded as the founder of the dāsā tradition. Very few compositions of Narahari Tīrtha are available in Kannada. A bold attempt was made by Srī Padarāja Tīrtha, to compose songs in simple Kannada expounding the difficult and highly philosophical teachings of Madhvā in simple and clear language. Srī Padarāja's disciple, Vyāsarāya gave great impetus to the Haridāsā tradition and made it very popular by his disciples who are chief among Haridāsās- Purandaradāsā and Kanakadāsā. The centre of activity of the Haridāsās in the 15th and 16th centuries was Vijayanagara (Hampi) and nearby places. The Dāsakūta tradition inherited both the rich philosophical ideas of the dvaitā stream of religion and the literary and cultural movement that aimed to popularize dvaitā among the common people. B.N.K Sharma has rightly pointed out that:

“Those who know anything about the history of the Dāsakūta and how much Kannada literature is indebted to these poet saints of Karnātaka, will have no difficulty in realizing the importance of the service rendered by Vyāsatīrtha to the cause of “popular religion” and cultural revival; for no one can deny that Dāsakūta evoked popular enthusiasm for the philosophy of Vaishnavism in Karnātaka.^{xxvii} These ideas reached the larger public through the soulful songs of poet-singers like Purandaradāsā.

Divisions in the dāsā tradition

Two divisions in the Haridāsā sect were that of Vyāsakūta and Dāsakūta .^{xxviii} The followers of Vyāsakūta tradition were required to be learned in the Vedas, Upanishads

and other darsanās. They claimed to be strict disciples of Vēdavyāsa tradition and through slōkas and Kīrtans in Sanskrit explained to the masses the implications, and propounded the significance of this great tradition. Those who synthesized all elements of value enshrined in the Vedas and in those involved in Vyāsa tradition and taught the masses through the medium of Kannada, the language of the region was known as the followers of dāsākūta tradition. They conveyed the message of the Dvaitā philosophy and religion through the vernaculars. The poets of medieval times opted to write in regional languages which we call as vernaculars. This resulted in a cultural confrontation with the cosmopolitan order. Why the medieval poets chose the medium of vernacular is a question to be discussed. It was not because they were not capable enough to write in the languages of the cosmopolitan cultural order such as Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsa. As they moved from one genre to another they had to enter into a different mental domain of creativity and a different social perspective. Sheldon Pollock says “it was a matter of asserting one’s choice of the language of the community to which one had elected to identify”.^{xxix} One chooses to become a poet of a particular language which in turn provides him with an identity for his writings. By adopting a particular language, the vernacular poets carried along with them certain values that were not accepted by the dominant literary authority i.e. Sanskrit literary tradition which is referred as ‘high culture’ by Pollock. The choosing of vernacular by medieval poets unleashed new cultural forces like ‘folk structures’ of which the Sanskrit tradition was almost entirely devoid. There took place an exchange between the vernacular and cosmopolitan order in the medieval times of which the poets of public narratives became an important product. The idea of building a new cultural community was in operation everywhere in the medieval times and the vernacular served as a medium for this. Here Purandaradāsā, by adopting the medium of Kannada, is unleashing the cultural structure of *desi* tradition (folk tradition) as different from the *marga* (cosmopolitan). Vinay Bahl has defined *desi* as the indigenous people’s music. He traces the *Dhruvapaḍ* as an art form to the bhakti movement in Northern India associated with the worship of Krishna. In South India the *Kirtans* composed by the Haridāsā composers were the equivalent of the *Dhruvapaḍ*. In a very strict manner, the bhakti movement shaped two distinct forms of devotional music. The *Harikatha* of Mahārāshtra was another form of popular communication of the ideas of bhakti through discourses on Vishnu interspersed with song and prose commentaries.

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There was no philosophical or doctrinal difference between the two sects. Both affected *Dvaita* philosophy and religion of Madhvā. A striking difference between the two lies in the fact that Vyāsakūta was knowledge oriented whereas the Dāsakūta was devotion oriented. The followers of Vyāsakūta tried to interpret the philosophic aspects of the teachings of Madhvā in Sanskrit; the dāsakūta sang the praises of Vishnu through intelligible medium of the masses of persuading them to follow the path of bhakti.

Both the sects used the Kīrtan form for conveying the message of Dvaitā philosophy for those who had no access to the scriptures. Kīrtans are the most attractive compositions of the Haridāsās. They are also called dēvaranāmās (dēvarapadagalu in Kannada). The Kīrtan as a genre was popularized by the wandering saints belonging to the Haridāsā tradition. At one level the term describes several varieties of performances. We have, for instance *samkīrtan* which means “collective performance” and *nāmakīrtan* which represents “performing the name of god”. The kīrtan as a form of Bhakti devotional music attained its most celebrated form in the compositions of Tyāgarāja. However, Kīrtan compositions adhering to the Vārkarī tradition have survived from the times of Nāmdēv (1270-1350A.D). The Kīrtan as a narrative form presupposed the existence of an audience which could relate to the performance of music, song and theatre to the poetic composition which is partly sung and partly enacted before them.^{xxxix} Poetry both in its written and oral forms partakes of the rhythmic quality of music. Bhakti poetry and its associated music draw its intellectual practices from a set of mnemonic devices which fix the words of a song to a common repertoire of images and ideas drawn from social memory. In this aspect, the songs of Purandaradāsā essentially adhered to the grammar inherited from the folk tradition.^{xxxix}

Purandaradāsā’s medium of expression

One of the most valuable contributions of Haridāsās to Indian culture is the system of music called Karnāṭaka music. The Vijayanagara Empire stood as the patron of Vedantic and Saivite culture and music as the *sadhana* of devotion to God. Richard Eaton has framed the spread of Bhakti into Western Deccan region following the end of the Yādava dynasty of Dēvagiri and the spread of Sufī movement against the historical backdrop of military and political changes engendered by the spread of the Delhi Sultanate during the tumultuous reign of Allaudin Khilji.^{xxxix} Like Sheldon Pollock, Eaton too argues that the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra and Karnataka played a vital role in shaping the cultural tradition of the region.^{xxxix} As he says “far from integrating peoples of different cultural tradition or core areas, Bhakti movement tended to be a regional phenomenon that reinforced people’s identity with a particular region”.^{xxxv} The Vārkarī tradition was therefore ideally suited for the expression of the nascent linguistic and regional aspiration of the Western Deccan and parts of Karnataka. Richard Eaton has very rightly argued that the widespread appeal of the Viṭhala cult was due to its ability to rise beyond caste barriers. The gradual crystallization of the Deccan Sultanate led to the migration of Sufis and the growth of Khanqahs in the Deccan. Bhakti and Sufism therefore shared the same socio-political space. The fundamental cultural unity in their region was brought out through the compositions of Bhakti composers such as Purandaradāsā.

Haridāsās resorted to music as the medium of communication of the sublime thoughts of the Vedas and the Upanishads to impart instruction and to enlighten the people. Of all modes of apprehension of God, music was the most effective and powerful when employed would persuade the Transcendental God to bless with his living presence.

Purandaradāsā is said to have composed numerous kīrtans which became his medium to communicate with the laymen. Kīrtans form an important element of the Indian Classical Music. The saints, seers and composers of classical music have basically composed songs only as a means of expressing their devout feelings and also to communicate with the 'self' and 'soul'. Music when presented to God as an offering, inspires the person and the devotional excitement there in, gives rise to a torrent of tuneful outpourings. Singing in praise of God awakens the singer's consciousness of the Divine and makes him/her sensitive to the divine message. Music therefore establishes a direct contact between the divine and human spheres, between the spiritual and phenomenal realms. Music is the element of motion that brings forth the desired union. This vital element and the vocalized glorification of God in the tradition of devotional religion indicate that the Indian bhakti movement must have initiated and advanced by poet singers rather than theoreticians. Spiritualism has been the key content of Indian classical music. The beautiful interweaving of the devotional element and aesthetics has made it ethereal and eternal. In fact, it has been said that the easiest way to attain salvation is to sing the greatness of Almighty. This is highlighted in many of the songs of Purandaradāsā.

Apart from Kīrtans, Purandaradāsā's compositions are classified into Sulādīs and Ugabhōgas. **Sulādīs** in their present form were procreated and propagated by the saint composers of the Haridāsākutas of Karnataka in the 15th and 16th centuries A.D. Purandaradāsā who was the most prolific composer of Sulādīs must be regarded as the stabilizer of Sulādīs in practice. He was famous for Sulādīs which exhibit his extraordinary mastery of the technique of music. It is in fact a difficult and elaborate piece giving the most comprehensive view of all the important movement of notes.

Literally Sulādī means 'easy path' for the attainment of the eternal bliss. The subject matter of Sulādī is both devotional and mythological intended for conveying great truth to the masses. Their literary themes are purely religious and spiritual as in the keerthanas. They include biography, praise, ethics, social reformation, enunciation, interpretation of the Vedic and Upanishadic thoughts, communion with God etc. the singing of Sulādī is not much in Vogue as it involves a profound knowledge of *Tala* and *Raga*. The credit of systematizing the Sulādīs into definite and standard measures chiefly

goes to Purandaradāsā. Thus, King Tulajēndra of Tanjore cites in his Sangīta Sārāmritā that the Sulādīs of Purandaradāsā were the foundation on which various ragas were erected or improvised. In fact, the famous Sūlādi of Purandaradāsā is a lullaby to Lord Krishna “Jō Jō Srī Krishna Paramānanda”.^{xxxvi}

Ugabhōgas

Ugabhoga was the distinct creation of Purandaradāsā. It is an integrated musical piece of *raga*, *bhava*, *tala* and *samanvaya*. The subject matter of the ugabhōga is essentially spiritual and religious. In his musical compositions he has contributed not only to the world of music but also to several aspects of knowledge. His purpose was to speak about goodness, virtue and devotion to Lord. His kīrtans are noblest poetry, whose conception as a whole is magnificent and it is a mixture of *sangita* (music) and *sahitya* (literature). The great composers who came after Purandaradāsā faithfully followed his form of music and tradition. Tyāgarāja, Syāma Sāstri and Muthuswāmy Dīkshithar were deeply indebted to Purandaradāsā for the rich contribution he has made to the field of South Indian music.

The use of analogies was yet another feature of his compositions. His main purpose was to communicate the message of Dvaita Vēdānta to the common man. To make his task easy and effective, he used homely analogies. Analogies are the facts of life and the efficacy of analogy can be seen in all that he has written and preached. Stressing the importance of devotion to the One Supreme Lord, Hari, Purandaradāsā sings in a Kīrtan:

“When the Lord’s feet are available to us why should we bow down before other deities? When we possess mānikya, why we should wish for borrowed jewels?” Here Purandara has used a beautiful analogy in comparing the Lord to mānikya and other deities to borrowed jewels to communicate the important doctrine of Harisarvōthamatatva. In another Ugabhōga he expresses the same idea, “Hari charanu viralu mikka”

“When the feet of Lord are available why do you pray the sundry Gods? Being on the banks of the sacred river Jahnavi, are there people who drink well water to quench their thirst?” Purandaradāsā on another occasion compares God to a doctor. He has used beautiful analogies to show that as a doctor cures the diseases (physical), Lord Krishna cures the disease of samsāra (bhavarōga). This is expressed in the song, “Gunavayitu enna bhavarōga, Krishnanembo vaidyanu, dorakidanu”.^{xxxvii}

Social significance of Purandaradāsā's songs

Devotion to God was the keynote of Purandaradāsā's teachings and it was dominated by a mystical tendency. But through his songs, one gets the impression that Purandaradāsā was not resting peacefully in the mood of renunciation and withdrawal from the world, but was participating in the ethical and social life of his times. He believed that service to man was as important and service to God and both were interlinked in his compositions. The teachings of Purandaradāsā were intended to have its own impact on the social living of the people both directly and indirectly.

The kind of social service which a saint or mystic can do for his society is teaching, which will enable the people to see the social evils prevailing in their society and motivate them to work for their removal. In the case of a mystic, his social awareness does not arise out of mere empirical motives aiming at better social conditions or worldly life, but springs from a spiritual attitude or devotion to God. The betterment of social conditions would in this sense be intermediary and not the final goal of the mystic teaching, the final goal being the spiritual one of making all people irrespective of caste or creed- committed to the cultivation of devotion to God.

Purandaradāsā was a saint who was never tired of criticizing all evil practices of society with the view of spiritually uplifting it. He does not reject worldly life. In many of his songs he has tried to reveal his own life spent in luxury and extravaganza and has said that it was a psychological conversion that changed his entire life. He has used symbols, myths, parables, metaphors, parables etc to transmit his ethical teachings and his songs reflected the society in which he lived.

His Comments on Caste System

Purandaradāsā's songs convince that he lived in a caste ridden society in which there was discrimination on the basis of birth. He had a keen insight into the social and religious conditions of the society of his times and observed that the common people were subjected to ignorance which was exploited by the upper caste people to their own advantage. He found that it is man's selfishness which is the cause of all social evils and if selfishness can be eradicated through intense devotion and detachment, all forms of human wickedness would vanish. Purandaradāsā stood against discrimination among sects, castes or creed and respected all religions alike and had the courage to teach 'universal religion'. For this he used his songs as a medium for communicating with the people. He used the local Kannada language which could be understood by the people concerned. He protested against the caste system and ridiculed the artificiality of castes and family barriers.

Purandaradāsā openly condemned the prevalent practice of trying to evaluate a man's character by his birth in a particular caste which he mentions as '*kula*' in his kirtans. He says that *kula* or birth in a particular caste is not an obstacle in the path to attain salvation or moksha.

'Avakutavadarēnu avanādarēnu'^{xxxviii}

Whichever caste he might belong to and whosoever he be, it doesn't matter when the person has realized himself. One should not be guided by considerations of his caste. For a person who has acquired *jnana* or knowledge, caste does not matter. It is only through intense devotion to Lord Viṭhala that one can attain *mukthi*, he says.

During his days, clash between religious sects was common. He sings a noble song by bringing compromise between *Vīrasaivites* and *Vaishnavites*. "Jangamaru *navu lingangikalu*"

"We are jangamās in the world, *Linga* is our body. We are pure and meritorious. How can we be termed as people in the bondage of *samsāra*? We take bath regularly; we have the sacred marks burnt on our body. We are great devotees of Vīrabhadra. We deserve very well the grace of Purandara Viṭhala"^{xxxix}

Purandaradāsā declared that everyone irrespective of caste and creed is eligible for following bhakti mārṅa which serves as the easiest path to salvation. That was how the great devotee Kanakadāsā could live in the midst of orthodox people. There existed people who wanted to shut out this exalted devotee from the Haridāsā panth, just because he was of a lower caste. But that was strongly condemned by Guru Vyāsarāya and also Purandaradāsā. They unceasingly criticized the outward show of the people who call themselves superior in caste and made it clear that the great and virtuous have certainly been born in all castes. He proclaimed that man would become great or small not by virtue of his birth in a particular caste but by virtue of the kind of life he lives. He has expressed himself bitterly against untouchability regarding it as a curse. He distinguished between community by birth and community by quality, declaring that a man's inner being was more important than the social and religious background of his birth or status. His songs reveal that it is man's moral and spiritual efforts that make him noble, and not his occupation or birth in a particular caste.

Vijayanagara society was riven with caste divisions that occasionally erupted into open hostility. The reasons for social conflict may be seen in the intensification of the amaranayaka system during the reign of Krishnadēvarāya. The depression in the position of the peasantry may be attributed to the presence of the Vijayanagara warrior elites in the agrarian regions of the empire. Urbanization too led to the migration of artisans and

weavers to towns known as *pettai*, *puram* and *nagara*, where they established their units. The high level of taxation imposed on the artisans led to frequent eruptions of conflicts. Noboru Karashima has documented several instances of caste conflicts during the Vijayanagara period. The intensification of caste and regional identity is also reflected in the songs of Purandaradāsā, who alive to the social reality of his times vehemently opposed caste feelings of hierarchy and division. The hierarchically divided society of Vijayanagara which is shown in Purandaradāsā's frequent evocation of Bhakti as an antidote to human inequality was replicated at the lower levels of the socio political order in the form of amaranāyakās who in the words of Dominic Jenkins, "assumed the responsibility for agricultural management"^{xi} while it is not possible to draw a one to one correlation between literary and poetic imaginings with historical reality, the conclusion is inescapable that the harsh social conditions based on caste and economic inequality is found embedded in his compositions.^{xii}

Purandaradāsā ridiculed the crusty unregenerate pundits and die-hard orthodoxy of his times. In quite a number of his songs his broadsides against the overdoing of ceremonial purity and untouchability can be seen. For a person whose behavior was not marked by gentleness and god's grace, whose conduct was not blameless, there is no point putting marks of holiness on his body. Just as he condemned pedants and scholars who did not reduce to practice the great virtues they talked about; he did not even hesitate to put haridāsās under criticism. He has applied this warning to himself and has sung;

"Daubing the body with prominent caste marks
Holding a round vessel
Wearing a garment with a fine broad ornamental border
And striding majestically along the streets
Do not be deceived, O men of the world,
By all my holy pretensions"^{xlii}

Neither birth nor learning makes a man great. It is only his conduct and character that entitle him to honor. The practice of untouchability – segregating a group of people because of their birth and treating them with contempt and inhumanity was quite rampant in his days. Purandaradāsā had the courage to point out in those days that the word 'hōlēya' did not merely connote a caste, but bad conduct and character. One of his songs brings out this point.

Is the 'hōlēya' only outside the town
Is he not inside too?
Let the devotees of Hari answer if they know.^{xliii}

The Vijayanagara society was caste ridden with caste hierarchies working in full force. Every caste had a caste assembly headed by *Kattamanes* or *Gurkars*. These assemblies

were dominated by agriculturists in the village and merchants in the towns. Separate bodies of professional guilds also participated in these caste assemblies. There is reference to the term 'srēni' in one of his compositions which he might have referred to the merchant guild of his times. Important decisions in the village were taken by *ayagars*, who became an important part of the village administration of the Vijayanagara Empire. They were twelve in number and they included the village headmen, accountant (*karnam*), craftsmen like weaver, carpenter, barber, potter, and also the disposer of the dead animal (*madiga*). They lived in localities where they controlled land and those dependent on land. They also enjoyed the status of the priestly class. With the growth of numerous temples and temple property the social and economic status of the Brahmins also went up. They were the trustees of the temples and they acted as the main functionaries of the temples. They could thus impose ritual control upon other castes and classes in the society. Caste was surely one of the principles of social organization in sixteenth century South India.^{xliv} In this context mention is to be made on the two-fold divisions of Vijayanagara society- Right hand and Left-Hand castes. These are two broad coalitions of agrarian and non agrarian groups respectively, which resulted in conflicts. Burton Stein observes that in social process, the left division of castes in the Vijayanagara Empire suffered the historical disadvantage of being marginal to the dominant rural centred society in which they lived.^{xlv} The left-hand groups consisted of highly skilled artisan trading groups and regional merchant groups. This group also included the leather workers called variously as Chakkilārs and Mādigas. In Tamil country, the left division also included large cultivating groups called pallis. But most important cultivating groups- Vellālars, Vokkaligās, Reddis etc were either affiliated with the right division or were regarded with Brahmins and some transregional merchants and bankers as neutral or unaligned. Burton Stein states that the Palli affiliation to the left may be explained by their late emergence as dominant landholding cultivators and by their claim to a prior martial history and Kshatriya status. To the core of cultivators of right division were added other agrarian groups such as most herdsmen, grain traders and transporters, those providing services and goods for village people, such as potters, barbers, washermen, non-brahmin priests, and untouchable field labourers (Hōlēyas mentioned in the songs of Purandaradāsā) *Malas* and *Paraiyans* of Tamilnadu.

The peasants formed the basis of the social order on whom all other sections of the society depended. A clear idea about the lives of the poor peasants in Vijayanagara society is not available. But from the songs of Purandaradāsā, one gets ideas regarding the lives of the farmers and the agricultural activities in which they were involved. His songs mentioned the names of crops cultivated by the farmers. In one of his songs 'ūrige bandare' he describes his village as a cowherd village.

'Hey there dāsā, if you come to my village
I hope you will come to my neighborhood

And dāsā if you come to our neighbourhood
Please come to the cowherd's lane^{xlvi}

Purandaradāsā's life time spanned the heyday of the Vijayanagara empire, especially the reign of Krishnadevaraya (1509 – 1529) which witnessed a phenomenal increase in agricultural production due to the sustained investment in irrigation facilities. The picture we get from the songs of Purandaradāsā is one of agricultural prosperity. Inscriptions found in Vijayanagara record the construction of a large irrigation tank during the reign of Krishnadevaraya. The contemporary Portuguese trader, Paes, had this tank in view when he referred to the large tank which was being constructed while he was a resident at Vijayanagara. Following the example of the raya, the nayaks or military leaders too invested their social capital in irrigation works particularly tanks. The general picture of agricultural expansion found in the songs of the composer is corroborated by the references to tanks, well, channels and dams during the Vijayanagara period. As a long time, resident of Vijayanagara, Purandaradāsā would have been familiar with the tank at Kamalapuram which supplied water to the irrigated valley where crops were grown.

Pastoralists or herdsmen used to be more settled near Tungabhadra. Great care was given to the maintenance of pasture for the grazing of cattle and some tax was levied on the pasture land. Livestock like crops needed protection. Contemporary evidences testify to the fact that due attention was paid to the protection of livestock. Cattle were the main source of income. Cattle raids were common in those days and the villagers even did not hesitate to lay down their life in an attempt to rescue their cattle from the hands of robbers.^{xlvii} Such acts of heroism were indeed always appreciated and gratefully acknowledged by the people by erecting memorial stones granting lands to the bereaved families.^{xlviii} Agriculture was well cared for and its vital role in the life of the people was realized. The cultivators were called *Okkala makkalu* and were looked upon as the givers of the food to the society as a whole. Crops grown in a country determine to some extent the agricultural practice of the people. From the songs of Purandaradāsā some references to the crops cultivated by the peasants are made out, both edible and non-edible. Rice was an important cereal cultivated on a large scale where there was plenty of water supply. The chief crops cultivated are jowar, cotton and rāgi (finger millet). The peasants used the former principally for food.^{xlix}

In her study entitled *Fields of Victory – Vijayanagara and the Course of Intensification*, Kathleen Morrison has pointed out that the Vijayanagara economy was increasingly monetized resulting in two different kinds of taxations. Rice the chief crop cultivated during the period was taxed in kind, probably due to its ability to store well for a fairly long period. However, dry crops such as ragi and millets were taxed in cash.¹

Purandaradāsā's song captures the hierarchical distinction between rice and dry grains in the following lines:

“Have you brought rāgi gruel?

Bless you- May your life be gracious and not grueling

May no one treat you cruelly, bless your generous feeder of the poor

Giving up talks, except songs of God, singing bhajans daily,

Have you brought rāgi gruel? ^{li}

This song makes it clear that rāgi was the food of the poor peasants and it also shows that Purandaradāsā always took sides with the common people. Kanakadāsā, who hailed from a lower caste family of Kurubās was a contemporary of Purandaradāsā. In one of his poems *Ramadhanye Charite*, kanakadāsā expresses his deep regret over the caste distinctions of his times. He says that ragi and paddy should co-exist and one should not fight against each other by claiming superiority for itself. Here rāgi represents the commoners and paddy stands for the higher castes.^{lii}

Mystics often do not seek directly to confront and reshape society. They often function as a spiritual presence in a system and accept the current power structure as God's will. Purandaradāsā cannot be ranked as a social reformer. But his songs have some social implications which he tries to explain through a number of metaphors and similes indicating and also ridiculing the degraded social life of his times.

Vaishnava bhakti and the songs of Vaishnava saints of the Vijayanagara rulers seem to be animal friendly. There are avatars of Vishnu who take birth in animal forms; fish, tortoise and boar. Each Hindu deity has a *Vahana* or creature vehicle. Nandi- the bull is associated with Siva, the Hawk- Garuda with Vishnu; the lion with Goddess Durga. The peacock known for natural beauty is the vehicle of Murugan and its feather is a symbol of God Krishna. In Vijayanagara Empire there were a number of prominent symbolic animals. Boar was the emblem of the empire and is associated with Vishnu as Varāha. The boar during the time of Vijayanagara Empire was more a visual emblem than one sung in the songs of singer saints. It was carved in stone, embossed on coins.

By adopting Varāha as their emblem, the Vijayanagara rulers claimed that their sovereignty is directly attributed to the Western Chālūkyas who also adopted Varāha as their political emblem. Annamāchārya a Telugu poet-saint who was the contemporary of Purandaradāsā has described the greatness of man-lion (Narasimha) in his songs.

In the songs of Purandaradāsā, one can find that he has used the fresh images of birds, cow, dogs etc. at times he seems to ridicule the foolishness of social life through forceful songs about dogs. In a composition ‘donku balada nayakare’ Purandaradāsā

connects two levels- the lowly scavenger and the high-class leader of the feudal segmental state.^{liii} Nāyaka in the time of Purandaradāsā was a title of a new military class. Though they were an important class in the society their behavior to others (local peasants) did not give them a respectable position. Purandaradāsā says that their character did not bring any respect to them. This song is also an indication to the feudal set up of the Vijayanagara period. Some scholars question the usage of the term feudal and they prefer to call it as a kind of landlordism, another aspect of feudalism. Nāyaka in the above-mentioned song was a military chief of Vijayanagara period who had been given the right to collect revenue. They assessed and collected the revenue from the peasants and a part of it was given to the king. Towards the later part of the empire, the nāyakas became too strong. They appointed their own revenue officials, gave gifts to temples, repaired and built tanks, reclaimed waste land, collected dues from the temples and paid tribute to the king. They maintained their own army consisting of infantry, cavalry, elephants etc and they provided a part of their army to the king. It is assumed that the strength of the Vijayanagara Empire was maintained by these Nāyakas through military and economic contributions. In course of time the land assigned to these nāyakas became hereditary and this increased the power of the nāyakas. They declared their independence from the control of the king and this led to the disintegration of the kingdom. Their approach towards the local peasants was not appreciated and this makes Purandaradāsā use such forceful terms like ‘dog’ while mentioning those nāyakās.

Economic Conditions of Vijayanagara reflected in the songs of Purandaradāsā

The songs of Purandaradāsā are to a great extent helpful in understanding the economic conditions of the Vijayanagara empire especially under Krishnadeva Raya. It is well known from the inscriptions as well as the foreign travelers accounts like Barbosa, Nuniz, Nicolo Conti etc, that Vijayanagara had a sound economic background because of its flourishing trade and commerce within and without. These are to a certain extent reflected in the songs of Purandaradāsā. There are a number of songs sung by Purandaradāsā which highlight the materialistic background of the region in which he lived.

The agrarian economy of the Vijayanagara Empire is mentioned by Purandaradāsā by referring to the agricultural crops like ragi, jola, rice, sugar cane etc. Since Purandaradāsā travelled extensively throughout the Vijayanagara Empire, he came into close contacts with the common people their lives and activities, which he describes in his compositions.

From the songs of Purandaradāsā it is convinced that agriculture was the chief source of income for the people. The songs give an idea about the fertility, crops, cattle and

agricultural operations in various parts of the empire. Purandaradāsā traveled from Pandhārpur to the Canara Coast which was very fruitful and contained many farmsteads.^{liv} The route which he travelled from Pandhārpur to Hampi was well cultivated and very fertile provided with cows, buffaloes and sheep.^{lv} Foreign traveler Barbosa has described the cultivation of rice in the following words. “All around they sow it in valleys and flats with water for it is sown and reaped in water. they plough the land as we do it with oxen and buffaloes yoked in pairs, the ploughshare has a hallow in it where in the rice is carried when the land is flooded and as the share ploughs the rice goes on settling down under water and earth. On dry land they sow by hand. And every year this land (Canara Coast) bears two crops”.^{lvi}

Agricultural activities were facilitated by the construction of irrigation tanks by Krishnadēvarāya. He declared that “the state should create irrigation facilities by the construction of tanks and the excavation of canals; the land should be given on a favorable rate of assessment to poor ryots for cultivation which would of course bring in plenty of money to the treasury.”^{lvii} Krishnadēvarāya built a huge tank near the Southern entrance to Hospet. The tank is called Rayarakere, but it is now dry.^{lviii} Vyāsarāya who was honoured by Krishnadēvarāya by many grants of land built the Vyāsarāya Samudra on the border between the Kolar and Cudappah districts.^{lix}

Industries

From the songs of Purandaradāsā it is understood that Vijayanagara excelled in industrial production especially in the manufacturing of sugar, cotton, textiles, mining and metallurgy. Purandaradāsā himself was the son of a diamond merchant and he followed his father’s footstep in business. Much of the diamonds in Vijayanagara came from Vajrakurūr about 20 miles South West of Gooty.^{lx} The governor of Gooty was to give all diamonds which exceeded 20 mangelins in weight to the king. Garcia de Orta who came to India in 1534A.D says that there were two or three rocks in Vijayanagara which yielded many diamonds. He also located another diamond mine in the Deccan.^{lxi} Purandaradāsā in his songs glorify the beauty of the deities in the Viṭhala temple at Pandhārpur and Hampi and also lord Venkateswara of Tirupati. He describes the decoration of the deities with precious jewels, stones, gold etc. This shows that Vijayanagara had skilled workers in metallurgy.^{lxii} Diamonds, pearls and precious gems of various sorts seen in the empire and capturing imagination shine in the lyrics of Purandaradāsā. He sang the song ‘Muthu kolliro’^{lxiii} in the voice of the pearl salesman.

Pearls for sale! Come one and all, buy your pearls here!
 The best pearl of all is one called being-Awareness-Bliss!
 The divine pearl is strung on the thread of spiritual knowledge
 You can possess it by becoming wise- why even the poorest devotee can

Easily afford it once he has become enlightened
 Pearls for sale! Come one and all, buy pearls.....

In this song Purandaradāsā states that the supreme God is accessible to rich and poor people alike. He compares Lord Vishnu to the divine pearl and asks all people to buy it and make it a part of their life. The metaphor of pearl has been used in his songs which show that it was an important item among the ornaments of the people of his times. Men wore only ear rings set with fine pearls. But women wore nose rings, necklaces of gold and jewels and very fine coral beads and bracelets of gold and precious stones. Purandaradāsā also sings of receiving a diamond necklace designed around the jewel name of Lord Rama.^{lxiv} A treasury of songs using precious stones as metaphors comes down to us from Vijayanagara singers depicting beauty, value, fascination and glory. They are among the bhakti legacy's valuables as told by William Jackson.^{lxv} It also indicates the fact that Purandaradāsā had a family background of being born to a diamond merchant whose profession was inherited by the son. Besides, there were jewelers who sold ornaments of gold, precious stones and pearls. Among these were gem studded bangles, waist girdles, belts etc. there were also some shops which sold only precious and valuable gems of various sorts and weights. The diamond cutters had their own shops where they were engaged not only in cutting the diamonds into various shapes and sizes but also in polishing and fixing them.^{lxvi} There were also merchants who evaluated the purity of diamonds and precious jewellery and to negotiate transactions with the customers. The artisans known as *chinnavaradaru* extracted gold from wax balls which had absorbed it from the touchstones used by the merchants when testing the purity of the gold before setting the price of the deal.

Purandaradāsā weaves in the theme of profit from the trade in sugar in his song “Kallasakkare”, “How sweet it is”.^{lxvii} As he says :

When you take this item
 You will never suffer losses
 It is not perishable, this merchandise
 Won't go bad and smell

He goes on to state

This wonderful product
 is the best deal in town..

Don't underestimate its wonderful properties.

There is also a reference to weekly market in this song which suggests that commercial goods were transacted in markets. The time frame of Purandaradāsā

coincides with the export of sugar from the Vijayanagara to the region of Persian Gulf.^{lxviii}

Trade and Commerce

Man's love for money is also a special feature of Purandaradāsā's songs. He sings about people engaged in various business activities like trade in precious gems such as diamonds, pearls etc. It is a well-known fact that local and long-distance trade existed in an advanced level in the Vijayanagara Kingdom. Towns emerged either as religious centres or administrative centres or commercial centres and, in these towns, trade was carried on. In Purandaradāsā times, Kanchi, Tirupathi, Kalahasti, Tanjore, Tirunelveli, Penukonda etc were important towns as is evident from his songs. The greatest city of the time was Vijayanagara itself.^{lxix}

An essential feature of the economic life of Vijayanagara in the 15th-16th centuries was its flourishing trade and commerce. The metaphor of business was not always negative in the works of singer saints. The industrious spiritual activities of the Haridāsās could be troped well with the vigorous work of the busy and productive merchant class.

Peninsular India was involved in maritime trade with the Mediterranean region from the early centuries A.D. the first half of the sixteenth century saw the gradual and steady progress of European traders into India in general and Vijayanagara empire in particular. The trade with the Iberian states brought a great deal of prosperity to the empire, and a number of foreign travelers who visited Vijayanagara have eloquently testified the commercial prosperity of peninsular India. The discovery of Ming pottery in excavations at Hampi again shows the extent of trade relations. In the songs of Purandaradāsā there are hints of this larger economic and commercial world. In some of the Vijayanagara towns, there were separate markets for particular commodities. Markets for agricultural and non-agricultural goods also had existed. In a song called 'Vyāpāra namagayitu'^{lxx}, Purandaradāsā uses the metaphor of business men: -

"We have gone into business – it is a service industry
Dedicated to the lotus feet and this business keep us busy"
The mercy of Sri Hari has become the shirt I wear
The compassion of the Guru has become my turban
What do I wear beneath my feet? The worst sinner called Kali
And treading on the chests of evil souled people has become our commerce here
We have gone into business"

In this song he frequently uses the terms like business, commerce, debts, payments, deeds, documents, money bags, accounts, profit, taxes etc that are purely

related to business transactions. Certain novel business practices such as credit documents are also mentioned in this song.

The trade goods that flowed into the empire included pearls and the source was obviously Hormuz. The relationship between pearl merchants and Viṭhala is brought out in an inscription found in the Tirupati temple which records the gift of 52 rekhai pon to the deity in order to finance the Purattāsi - tirunāl.^{lxxi} During Purandaradāsā's times foreign trade in the empire was passing from the hands of Muslims to that of the Portuguese. Barbosa's accounts written between 1504 and 1515 give a description of this. "The Ormuz^{lxxii} ships come hither (Bhatkal) every year, bring horses in great numbers and many pearls, which they sell here to the kingdom of Narasynga, but now on account of our armies they take them to Goa, with many other kinds of merchandise. A few ships belonging to the moors venture to come to this spot to take in loads of spices, notwithstanding that the rules and orders of our people they are forbidden so to do"^{lxxiii}. Goa in ancient literature is known by several names like Gomanta, Govapuri, Gomantaka etc. Gomanta was a kingdom mentioned in the epic of Mahabharata. Purandaradāsā also mentions Gomanta in his song as an extension of the Kingdom of Yadavas at Dwaraka.^{lxxiv} The Portuguese occupation of Goa adversely affected the trade in the Vijayanagara Empire and placed Bijapur and Vijayanagara completely in the hands of the Portuguese for all their foreign requirements especially horses from Arabia and Persia.

Articles of export and import

The articles of export were rice, sugar, spices, salt, cloth etc. The imports into the empire were pearls, copper, elephants, horses, coral, silk and velvet. Pearls came from Ormuz. There are inscriptions mentioning pearl merchants gifting pearls to Viṭhala swamy in the Govindaraja Temple at Tirupati, where Purandaradāsā is said to have visited.^{lxxv} China supplied silk through the Portuguese and spices through the Muslims. Velvets came from Mecca.^{lxxvi} Elephants were imported from Ceylon. The Portuguese cared more for the improvement of trade than for the friendship of Vijayanagara. Even then the relations with Portuguese and Krishnadeva Raya continued to be friendly.

In one of his Ugabhogas he sings: -

I have been loading up the boat called body

With the merchandise called harinama

As I go about my business, my senses block the way

Order me to pay the toll

So, I show them the stamp of Lord Mukunda's emblem branded on me

I arrive at the presence of Lord Purandara Viṭhala

And receive the profit from this enterprise: Liberation's bliss^{lxxvii}

This song has used the metaphor of tradesmen and business which throws light on the economy of Vijayanagara.

It is well understood that Purandaradāsā lived at a time when Vijayanagara Empire started witnessing the challenges from the outsiders. The Bahmanis of Deccan entered into the political scene in the mid 14th century and the period between 1422 and 1538A.D marked the beginning of the conflict between the Bahmanis and the Vijayanagara, with the Tungabhadra doab between the rivers Tungabhadra and Krishna as the bone of contention.^{lxxviii} The Vijayanagara Bahmani conflicts in the doab resulted in the great loss of life and property to the people in that area. They used to destroy cities, crops and kill innocent civilians.

Purandaradāsā in one of his songs expresses his agony and grief over the socio-political chaos that prevailed in his days. He sings in his composition ‘Yakenani’^{lxxix}:-

“Lord why did you drag me to this kingdom?
If you can’t feed me, why did you create me?
I am a stranger here, knowing no one
And my body is weak
I have no inclination to follow any particular path
I have no other go but to feel regretful
No one wishes me well here, only Vasudeva knows my plight
None of my relations or friends is here
There is no king here who can recognize me
My mind is not very happy here- no money
Nobody to take care and help me
No one to show me compassion, my senses are all weakened
Lord Purandara Viṭhala knows this”.

The saints like Purandaradāsā encapsulate a very complex rule of ideas in which they talk about the relationship between man and society, individuals and political orders, sacrality and historical memory thus bringing out the concept of a political universe in a vague sense. All these are communicated through songs, poems and religious discourse which served as important modes of communication. Rulers used these modes of communication so that their political message could reach the wider public.

This paper has traversed a complex set of issues. While taking Purandaradasa and his life as the main theme, I attempted an examination of the larger social and economic universe in which he lived and worked. We have drawn attention to the moment of epiphany in his life which transformed him from a merchant to one who has devoted his life to Viṭhala. This feature is common in several traditions of saintliness. The intellectual context of the Haridāsā movement is analyzed by using the insight drawn from the recent

scholarship represented by William Jackson and Christian Lee Novetzke. The structure and the content of the *dēvaranāmas* were discussed. Further, I investigated the social and economic implications of the songs of Purandaradāsā with a view to deciphering the milieu in which the Bhakti form of religious feeling and expression existed. It is argued that the hierarchical nature of Vijayanagra society with both a ritual hierarchy and a politico military hierarchy made composers like Purandaradāsā use the ideology of Bhakti as a critic of existing reality. It is finally shown that the widespread exposure of peninsular India to trade was to some extent mirrored in the compositions of Purandradasa.

Notes

- ⁱ Jackson, William J (1998), *The Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints*, New Delhi: OUP, p.5
- ⁱⁱ Ibid
- ⁱⁱⁱ Deleury, G.A(1994), *The Cult of Viṭhōbā* , Poona: Deccan College, p.76
- ^{iv} B N K Sharma(2001), *History of the Dvaita School of Vedanta and its Literature*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, p.7
- ^v Ibid., p.12
- ^{vi} Epigraphia Carnatica (EC), Vol VI ,p.342
- ^{vii} B.N.K Sharma, op.cit, p.599
- ^{viii} Ibid, p.599
- ^{ix} Anila Verghese(1995), *Religious Traditions at Vijayanagra as revealed through its Monuments*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers,p.67
- ^x Krishna Rao, M.V (1966), *Purandara and the Haridasa Movement*, Dharwar, Karnataka University, P.23
- ^{xi} Purandara Sahithya Darsana (PSD), Banglore (1964), The Directorate of Kannada and Culture, Vol 1, no.53, p.169
- ^{xii} PSD, Vol I, no.11, p.89
- ^{xiii} Richard.H.Davis (1999), *Lives of Indian Images* , New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, p.9
- ^{xiv} Ibid
- ^{xv} It is the phrase or set of words used by a Haridāsā usually at the end to sign off a composition. It is basically a literary signature or mudrika or pen name that identifies the composer. Each Haridāsā had her or his own *ankita*. *Ankita* was conferred by the Guru after being duly satisfied of the merits of the student aspiring to be a member of the Haridāsā line.
- ^{xvi} Guru Pavanje Rao (1974), *Dāsara Padagalu*, Vol III, No.43, Udipi: Sri Krishna Mudranalaya, p.165
- ^{xvii} PSD, Vol IV, no.34,p.326
- ^{xviii} William Jackso (1998), p.4
- ^{xix} Gai Govind Swami Rao (1992), *Studies in Indian History, Epigraphy and Culture*, Dharwar: Srihari Prakashana, p.55
- ^{xx} Krishna Rao, M.V, Op.cit, p.54
- ^{xxi} SII, Vol IV, p.48
- ^{xxii} Robert Sewell(2005), *Forgotten Empire*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, pp.49-50
- ^{xxiii} SII, Vol XXVII, No.172, p.287
- ^{xxiv} Anila Verghese (1995) p.22
- ^{xxv} William Jackson(2005), *Vijayanagara Voices- Exploring South Indian History and Hindu literature* , New Delhi, OUP, p.14
- ^{xxvi} BNK Sharma, op.cit, p.292
- ^{xxvii} B.N.K Sharma, op.cit, p.299
- ^{xxviii} Krishna Rao, M.V, Op.cit, p.77
- ^{xxix} Sheldon Pollock(2003), p.329.
- ^{xxx} Vinay Bahl(2005), *What Went Wrong With History From Below: Reinstating Human Agency as Human Creativity*, Kolkatta:K.P Bagchi & Company, p.263.
- ^{xxxi} Christian Lee Novetzke,(2003) ‘Divining the Author- The Idea of Authorship in an Indian Religious Tradition’ in *History of Religions*, Vol.42, No.3, p.221
- ^{xxxii} Christian Lee Novetzke(2008), *History, Bhakti and Public Memory: Namdev in Religious and Secular Tradition*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Pvt Ltd, p.18.
- ^{xxxiii} Richard Eaton(1978), *Sufis of Bijapur: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, P.7
- ^{xxxiv} Ibid, p.8
- ^{xxxv} Ibid, p.10
- ^{xxxvi} Dāsara Padagalu, Vol I, No.228, p.100
- ^{xxxvii} Dasara Padagalu, vol II, No.153, p.66
- ^{xxxviii} Ibid, Vol III, No. 139, p.62

xxxix Dāsara Padagalu, Vol IV, No.139, p.68

xl Noboru Karashima, (1992) *Towards a new formation : South Indian Society under Vijayanagara*, New Delhi : Oxford University press, p.12

xli Ibid, pp.141 – 158.

xlvi Ibid, Vol I, no.65, p.88

xlvi PSD, Vol II, no.55, p.133

xlii Burton Stein (1989), Vijayanagara, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.102

xlii Ibid, p.102

xlii PSD, Vol IV, no.10, p.59

xlii Gururajachar, S (1974), *Some aspects of the Economic and Social life in Karnataka*, Mysore: Mysore University, Prasaranga,, p.41

xlii Sontheimer, G.D (2004), *Essays on Religion, Literature and Law*, New Delhi, Manohar Publications, p.123

xlii District Gazetteer of Sholapur, 1875, p.519

l Kathleen Morrison (2000), *Fields of Victory: Vijayanagara and the Course of Intensification*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, p.10.

li Ibid, Vol I, No.33, p.136

lii Dr.Suryanath.U.Kamath (2009), *Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara and his Times*, Bangalore: IBH Prakashana, p.67

lii PSD, Vol I, no.40, p.148

lii L Dames, p.184

lii S.Gururajachar, op.cit, p.46

lii Barbosa, I, p.192

lii Amuktamālyada IV, 26, Studies in the History of II dynasty of Vijayanagara, p.186

lii Robert Sewell, *Forgotten Empire*, p.364

lii Somanatha's Vyasayogi Charithra, Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society, October 1924

lii G.S Dixit (1936), *Economic Conditions in the time of Krishnadeva Raya*, Vijayanagara Sexcentenary Association Volume Ed. Karmakar, Dharwar, p.218

lii Barbosa, I, p.226

lii Metal work consisted in making jewellery, weapons of warfare and household articles. Jewellery was required by temples, court and common people. Krishnadeva Raya presented precious jewels to the temples like tirupati, Kalahasti, Ahobilam, Viṭhala Temple at Hampi etc. (Copper plate no.150 of 1924, EI, Vol XIII, p.227)

lii PSD, Vol III, no 197, p.317

lii PSD, Vol II, P.289

lii William Jackson (1998), p.26

lii C.T.M Kotraiah (2003), *King, Court and Capital: An Anthology of Kannada Literary Sources from the Vijayanagara Period*, New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, p.18

lii William Jackson, Op.cit, p.43

lii Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1988), *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500 – 1650*, Cambridge University Press, p.28.

lii Detailed description of the city is provided in the accounts of Abdur Razzak, Barbosa and Paes. The city as existed in the time of Krishnadeva Raya could be divided into three parts. Hampi, the nucleus of the city containing the Virūpaksha temple and the magnificent bazaar in its front, the citadel containing the king's palace, the administrative offices, the Hazara Rama temple and the House of victory, and Nagalapur (modern Hospet) built by Krishnadeva Raya. (Robert Sewell, *Forgotten Empire*, p.246)

lii PSD, Vol I, no.20, p.111

lii GT, 367.

lii Ormuz here means the Strait of Hormuz which is a narrow strategically important water way between the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. Vijayanagara had trade relations with these regions.

lii W.H Moreland (1920), *India at the death of Akbar: An Economic Study*, p.189

lii Gomanta was mentioned as a kingdom of ancient India (Bhāratha varsha) along with the Mandakas, the Shandas, the Vidarbhas etc. The Yadavas of Mathura, the capital of Surasena kingdom, fled from there due

to the continuous attack of Magadha king Jarasandha. They have reached as far south as Gomanta, (Mahabharatha of Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa, translated to English by Kisari Mohan Ganguli)

^{lxxv} Copper Plate no.367, Govindaraja Temple(G.T)

^{lxxvi} Robert Sewell, Forgotten Empire, p.276

^{lxxvii} Dāsara Padagalu, Vol III, no-89, p.55

^{lxxviii} Robert Sewell, Op.cit, P.89

^{lxxix} PSD, Vol 1, no.64, p.192