

## Evolution of Carnatic music- a series

By Smitha K. Prasad

Dear readers, in this month's column, we will continue to look at the life of the *Bhakti* saint Kanaka Dasa and examine some of his popular compositions.

Kanaka Dasa, like Purandara Dasa, was a disciple of Guru Vyasaraaya. Having been born as part of the Kuruba community, Kanaka Dasa's compositions often spoke against the social practice of caste system, which favored Brahmins. He made extreme efforts to reform the disadvantaged communities using the medium of music. His composition "*Kula kula vendu hodedaada dhiri*" tells people not to fight amongst themselves on the basis of caste.

Kanaka Dasa worshipped the deity *Adikeshava* of the Kaginele village in Karnataka; all of his music compositions have the *ankita* (musical signature) *Kaginele Adikeshava*. Kanaka Dasa composed about 200 songs and five major literary works. Some of his compositions like *Baaro Krishnayya* and *Yadava Raaya* have been beautifully tuned and popularized by singers such as the late M.L. Vasanthakumari.

Among the interesting anecdotes attributed to Kanaka dasa is the story of the famous *Kanakana kindi* (Kanaka's window). Kanaka Dasa was a follower of *guru* Vyasaraaya and at the behest of his *guru* he went to Udipi, which is home to the *Sri Krishna mutt* (temple). Being a non-brahmin, Kanaka dasa was not allowed into the temple to have a *darshan* (glimpse) of Lord *Krishna*. Kanaka Dasa is then said to have sung his famous composition outside the temple:

"*Baagilanu Teredu Seveyanu kodu hariye*" (O Lord, open the door and accept my services)

According to popular belief, an opening appeared in the wall of the temple so that Kanaka Dasa could have a *darshan* of *Sri Krishna*. This opening came to be known as *Kanakana kindi*. To this day, the tradition of looking at Lord *Sri Krishna* through this window before entering the main shrine persists as a tribute to Kanaka Dasa.

Till we meet next time, do listen to some *devaranamas* composed by Kanaka Dasa. You can find renditions of *Yadava raya*, *Baro Krishnayya* and his other compositions by many Carnatic vocalists online.

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