



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Dasa Sahitya: Significance, Decline, And Need For Revitalization

Author : V.Padmajha

Research Scholar

Faculty of Fine Arts

Department of Music

Annamalai University

Research Supervisor -Dr. A.Vijay Karthikeyan

Asst. Professor

Faculty of Fine Arts

Department of Music

Annamalai University

Abstract:

Dasa Sahitya, a musical tradition of Karnataka, appeared around the 13th century as an integral part of the Haridasa movement, which promoted the philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya. Prominent Haridasas as Purandar Dasa, Kanaka Dasa, and others contributed to Kannada literature and South Indian classical music. The movement reached its peak during the Vijayanagar Empire but gradually declined due to various reasons. This article examines the factors leading to the decline of Dasa Sahitya and explores the strategy for its revitalization. Understanding the role of Dasa Sahitya in preserving the cultural heritage of South Indian Music will be explored. This paper also intends to find the ideal methods of preserving this art form.

Keywords:

Dasa Sahitya, Haridasa Sahitya, Revival of Dasa Sahitya, Haridasa ,Dasa Literature.

Introduction:

Carnatic music is a classical music tradition that has its roots in South India. It is characterized by its melodic structure, rhythmic complexity, and improvisational nature. The art form has a long and rich history. Over the centuries, Carnatic music has undergone significant changes, but it has managed to retain its core essence and cultural identity. One of the essential aspects of Carnatic music is its devotional nature, where the compositions often revolve around themes of love and devotion towards deities. Dasa Sahitya is a unique form of devotional poetry in the Kannada language that has played a significant role in preserving the cultural heritage of Carnatic music.

Dasa Sahitya:

Dasa Sahitya, a form of devotional literature, was a significant aspect of the Haridasa movement or the Bakti movement. It was during this period that the saint composers of Karnataka/ Haridasas played a pivotal role in enriching Kannada Literature with their devotional hymns.

Haridasa means 'servant of Lord Sri Hari', and the Haridasa movement began in Karnataka around the 13th century and spread to other parts of India like Orissa, Maharashtra, etc.^[1]. Over the next 6 centuries, several Haridasas contributed towards music, arts, and literature, shaping the culture and philosophy among the masses by their spiritual influence.

History of Dasa Sahitya:

Haridasas were primarily the devotees of Sri Madhvacharya, philosopher, theologian, and the chief proponent of the Dvaita philosophy. They were wandering bards who educated the masses' morals, virtues, and ethical values while instigating the need for an honest and spiritual life through their songs. They brought the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas to the masses through simple compositions that appealed to the common man.

Some of the prominent Haridasas include Narahari theertha, a disciple of Sri Madhvacharya, Sripadaraja, Sri Vadhiraaja, Sri Vyasaraaja, Sri Purandaradasa, Sri Kanakadasa, Sri Jaganathadasa, Vijayadasa, Sri Gopaladasa etc. Their contribution to music were in the form of Devarnamas - Keethanas, Ugabogas, Suladhi, Padas, Mundige, Slokas, Vachana, Gadhya, Yalapada, etc.

One of the major services of the Haridasas to society is the preaching of the doctrines of equality among the people. They preached that neither sex, social status, caste or creed played any role in realizing the Supreme Bliss ^[2].

The Dasa Sahitya [Literature of the Dasas] gained popularity as the compositions were in simple colloquial language so that it was easy to understand by the common man, and the messages that they held appealed to young and old alike. They used similes and metaphors in their compositions, and they were set to various ragas. They covered various topics with varying levels of complexity. The songs were interesting and had a unique way of narration. This aroused a fervor among the masses.

All these created a sort of cultural revolution and brought music nearer to the people. This musical form had a unique set of literature that contributed to the education, culture, and upliftment of society. Thus the Haridasas, though led the life of recluse, were no less than reformers ^[3].

The Haridasa Movement flourished in the Vijayanagara Empire. It attained its peak glory during the period of the ruler Krishnadeva Raya of the Vijayanagara Empire. He made Sri Vyasaraaya, an exponent of Madhva philosophy and a scholar, his Raja Guru [official Guru of the King]. Sri Vyasaraaya was the Guru of the two most important saint composers – Sri Purandaradasa and Sri Kankadasa who have contributed immensely to the Dasa Sahitya.

Apart from Haridasas Krishnadeva Raya also patronized several Telugu and Tamil scholars, Dancers, Dance teachers, sculptors, and other fine arts artists and theatre. Thus the age of Krishnadeva Raya witnessed glorious cultural activities in terms of music, dance, painting, sculpture, etc which lent brilliance and color to his political achievements.

After his demise, his brother King Achuthadeva Raya ascended the throne and he was an able administrator and a patron of art too. He ascertained that his country was peaceful and prosperous along with a sense of cultural supremacy.

Significance of Dasa Sahitya:

1. Dasa Sahitya holds a prominent position in Kannada literature.
2. These compositions uphold the cultural values and traditions through simple messages.
3. The values put forth are relevant even today.
4. The reformist nature of several compositions has made it even more appealing.
5. Dasa Sahitya has influenced several poets like Da.Ra.Benre.

After the Golden era of Haridasas, there was a steady decline in the Dasa Sahitya. Some of the **reasons** include:

1. Lack of patronage - After Achuthadeva Raya, there was a decline in the patronage of Haridasas.
2. Decline of the Bakti/ Haridasa movement after the demise of Achuthadeva Raya
3. Emergence and interest in other art forms.
4. Changing cultural preferences.
5. Erosion of traditional values and modernization.
6. Lack of effort to preserve and promote this art form.
7. Other music forms took over that appealed to the masses.
8. Language barrier.

With a treasure of literature, it is only fair that the Dasa sahiyas be preserved and passed on to the coming generations.

There are some projects that are going on in this respect, one of them being -The Dasa Sahitya Project by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam which aims to acquaint people with the life and works of Haridasas and bring back the devotion, righteousness, and morality as prescribed in them. They have released a number of CDs, and other publications. They also conduct seminars, workshops, summer camps and Aradhanas.

Another noteworthy contribution is by the Guru Sarvabhouma Dasa Sahitya Project which was initiated by Sri Sri Subudhendra Theertharu, the pontiff of Jagadguru Sriman Madhwacharya Moola Mahasamsthana Sri Raghavendra Swamy Matha. They have been organizing Dasara Aaradhanas, summer camps, discourses, quizzes, and Exhibitions about the Dasas in various cities, towns, and villages. Pada-yatra between major pilgrim centers is also to be organized.

Along with these projects here are some of the **revitalization methods** that can be used for its revival:

- Creating awareness about the genre and outreach programs
- Using digital platforms to reach a wider audience
- Collaboration between contemporary artists and Dasa Sahitya artists
- Creating institutes for research and development of this genre
- Funding/ scholarship/ Fellowships for artists
- Introduction of Dasa Sahitya in Educational institutions
- Music festivals and workshops on Dasa Sahitya
- Integrating Dasa Sahitya to Dance.
- Collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including the government, organizations, artists, and the public, to revive and sustain the art form of Dasa Sahitya.
- Maintaining a library accessible to all with materials related to Dasa Sahitya and Haridasas.
- Renovating the Dasa Stalas[places]
- Tours to Haridasa Kshetras
- Digitalizing the Dasa Sahitya works, making it more accessible to the public
- Translating and transcribing the works of Haridasas.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Dasa Sahitya has played a significant role in preserving the cultural heritage of Carnatic music. The compositions have helped to popularize the art form among a wide range of audiences and have provided a platform for the expression of devotional sentiments along with spreading social values in simple language. Through collective effort, Dasa Sahitya can be brought back to its former glory.

References:

1. Giridhar Boray, The Great Vaishnava Seers and Composers: Revolutionary Composers of the Supreme Devotional Music, 2022, Pg 4.
2. Kuppuswamy G, Indian Music: A Perspective, 1980, Pg 33.
3. Bengeri H.G, The Main Outlines of the History of Sri Hari Dasa-Kuta, 1931, Pg 3.

