

Sri Maha lakshmi deviye
(a song by Sri VijayadAsaru on Maha Lakshmi)

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Introduction to song:

shrI vijayadAsaru is one of the most highly revered and loved haridAsas in the mAdhva tradition. His contributions to religion, society and humanity are enormous and too numerous to recount. He breathed new life into the Haridasa movement through his compositions and bequeathed many famous disciples to humanity – Sri Gopala daasaru, Sri Mohana daasaru, Sri JagannAtha daasaru, Sri Venugopala daasaru, Sri Kalluru Subbannacharya (vyAsa viThThala dAsaru) are some of the more well known disciples. In terms of sheer quantum of output, he is second only to shrI purandara dAsaru. No other haridAsa has contributed as much as he has to dvaita literature. It is believed that he was an amsha (incarnation) of bhrigu muni and that he received his initiation into haridAsatva by purandara dAsaru himself (through a dream).

In this song Sri VijayadAsaru extols Maha Lakshmi and demonstrates what one needs to ask from Her.

Refrain (Pallavi):

ಶ್ರೀ ಮಹಾ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀ ದೇವಿಯೇ
ಕೊಮಲಾಂಗಿಯೇ ಸಾಮಗಾಯನ ಪ್ರಿಯಳೇ
ಹೇಮಗರ್ಭ ಕಾಮಾರಿ ಶಕ್ರ ಸುರ ಸ್ತೋಮ ವಂದಿತೆ ಸೋಮ ಸೋದರಿಯೇ || ಪ ||

shrI mahaa lakShmI dEviyE
komalAMgiyE sAMagAyana priyaLE
hEmagarbha kAmAri shakra sura stOma vaMdite sOma sOdariyE || pa ||

Difficult words:

KomalAMgiyE : One with a tender body and limbs or one whose body is made up of pure bliss and sentience;
sAMagAyana priyaLE: who likes the singing or chanting of the sAma veda; hemagarbha = Chaturmukha brahma;
kAmari = Shiva; shakra = Indra; sura stoma : collection of celestials; vaMdite = one who is worshipped; soma = Moon; sOdariyE = sister

Meaning of Pallavi:

O, Devi Mahalakshmi, you have a body made up of pure bliss and sentience and are fond of the chanting of the sAma veda (or any work that extols the Lord). You are worshipped by celestials like Brahma, Shiva, Indra and others. You are the sister of Chandra

Notes:

The ‘Shri’ used in conjunction with ‘mahalakshmi’ in the refrain is not an honorific. It is not well known that there are 2 forms of Lakshmi adorning the Lord, one on His lap and one on His chest (“hrishcha te lakshmishcha patnyau”). Acharya Madhva also mentions this in the dvAdasha stotra (“valitrayAnkitam nityamupagUdham shriyaikaya smaraNIyaamurO viShNorindirAvAsamuttamam”). It is these 2 forms of Lakshmi that daasaru is addressing in this work. Incidentally, there are 2 schools of thought about what each form is called. One school says that the one on the lap is ‘Lakshmi’ and the one on the chest is ‘Shri’, whereas the other school has it the other way around.

The 'dEvi' used in the refrain is not an honorific. In its truest sense, the word 'dEva' can be applied only to Narayana and the term 'dEvi' to Lakshmi only.

Normally, the term 'komalAmgi' means one with tender limbs. However, Lakshmi and Narayana do not have material bodies (aprAkruta); their body is made up of pure bliss and sentience. Hence physical expressions like tender, slim etc are meaningless to describe them. That is why the other meaning was chosen.

Lakshmi is the abhimAni devata (patron deity) for all Vedas, not just the Sama veda. It should be remembered that 'sama' is the name of the Lord (VishnusahasranAma). With that understanding, 'sAma gAyana' means any song or stotra that extols the Lord.

The song does not describe all celestial beings. Like most stotras it also uses the equivalent of 'brahmarudrendra' to describe senior celestials. In the 4th canto of dvAdasha stotra Acharya Madhva uses the phrases 'vibhu shambhu purandara'. It is up to us to fill in the blanks and make up the full list. When Brahma is mentioned, we need to take Vayu who is in the same kaxa or class. We need to take their wives Saraswathi and Bharathi since all celestials perform their sAdhana along with their wives. Using similar logic, kAmAri indicates Garuda, Shesha, Rudra and their wives suparNi, vAruNi and Parvathi. Along with Indra, we need to include Manmatha or kAma and their wives. Since entities in the 5th kaxa (Shiva) and the 8th kaxa (Indra) are mentioned we need to include others bracketed within this (which means the Shhanmahishis in the 6th kaxa and suparNi, vAruNi and Parvathi in the 7th kaxa). Hence 'brahmarudrendra' or 'vibhu shambhu purandara' or 'hema garbha kAmAri shakra' defines the entire top hierarchy of celestial beings.

Lakshmi is described as the sister of the Chandra or Moon since they both Lakshmi and Chandra appeared during the churning of the ocean. It should be noted that describes just one instance in history and is not a definitive statement of Her relationship with Chandra. It is interesting to note that most Indian languages use the term 'mAma' or maternal uncle to address Chandra, implying that subconsciously everybody knows that Lakshmi is the Universal Mother. Which is also why 'ma' (Lakshmi's name) indicates mother in almost all languages.

In shrIsha guNa darpana, Sri VadirAjaru addresses Lakshmi and Narayana and says "that within you two, there is nobody who is elder by birth" ("yuvayoh na vayoradhika"). This understanding is based on the fact that Lakshmi and Narayana are anAdi and ananta (without a beginning or end, i.e, they are timeless and eternal) and hence there is no question of anyone being elder by virtue of birth. It is interesting that in the same stotra Sri VadirAjaru says Lakshmi is worshipped by all male celestials starting with Brahma and all female celestials starting with Saraswathi ("brahmAdya vibhuda shreShTha, brahmnyAdaya surAngana ..").

Stanza 1:

ಸಕಲ ಶುಭಗುಣ ಭರಿತಳೆ ಏಕ ದೇವಿಯೇ ವಾಕುಲಾಲಿಸಿ ನೀ ಕೇಳೇ |
 ಲೋಕನಾಥನ ಗುಣ ಲೀಲೇ ಕೊಂಡಾಡುವಂಥ ಏಕ ಮನವ ಕೊಡು ಶುಭಶೀಲೆ ||
 ಬೇಕು ಬೇಕು ನಿನ್ನ ಪತಿಪಾಬ್ಜವ ಏಕಾಂತದಲಿ ಭಜಿಪರ (ಭಕ್ತರ) ಸಂಗವ ಕೊಡು |
 ಲೋಕದ ಜನರಿಗೆ ನಾ ಕರ ವೊಡ್ಡದಂತೆ ತಾಯೇ ಕರುಣಿಸು ರಾಕೇಂದು ವದನೆ || ೧ ||

sakala shubhaguNa bharitaLe Eka dEviyE vAkulAlisi nI kELE |
 lOkanAthana guNa lIlE koMDADuvaMtha Eka manava koDu shubhashile ||
 bEku bEku ninna patipAbjava EkAMtadali bhajipara (bhaktara) saMgava koDu |
 lOkada janarige nA kara voDDadaMte tAyE karuNisu rAkEMdu vadane || 1 ||

Difficult words:

sakala shubhaguNa bharitaLe = one full of auspicious attributes; Eka dEviyE = the Supreme goddess (or wife of the Supreme Lord); vAkulAlisi = please listen to my entreaty; nI kELE = pay heed to my words (grant my wishes); IOkanAthana guNa IIIE = the auspicious attributes and sport of the Supreme Lord; koMDADuvaMtha = that which extols; Eka manava koDu = give me a focused mind; shubhashIle = one with flawless and auspicious character; bEku bEku = we strongly desire or need; ninna patipAbjava = the Lotus feet of your husband; EkAMtadali = in solitude (or in the innermost recesses of their hearts); bhajipara (bhaktara) = those who extol or worship; saMgava koDu = grant us the company (of such noble souls); IOkada janarige = worldly people (beings in all three worlds); nA kara voDDadaMte = prevent me from extending my hands (begging); tAyE karuNisu = O Mother, please grant me this; rAkEMdu vadane = one whose face is as beautiful as the full moon;

Meaning of Stanza 1:

You are the Supreme goddess (or wife of the Supreme Lord) and full of auspicious attributes. Please listen to my entreaty and grant my wishes. Give me a focused mind with which I can extol and worship the auspicious attributes and sport of the Supreme Lord. You have a flawless and auspicious character. We strongly desire the company of noble souls who extol and worship in solitude (or in the innermost recesses of their hearts) the Lotus feet of your husband. Grant us this. Please prevent me from begging from others. You have a face as beautiful as the full moon.

Notes:

Normally, 'saka shubhaguNa bharitaLe' is usually used to describe one with a good character, having all good qualities. However, as stated earlier, Lakshmi has a body made up of pure bliss and sentience. Hence the other meaning is more appropriate in this context.

The phrase 'Eka dEviye' is very potent. It should remind us of the shruti "eko devaH sarvabhUteshhu gUDhaH sarvavyApI sarvabhUtAntarAtmA" (shvetAshvataropaniṣat). 'Eka' stands for Supreme or primordial. As stated earlier, in its truest sense, the word 'dEvi' can be used only with Lakshmi.

'IOka' also means gyAna or true knowledge. Since gyAna makes sense only with jivas (sentient beings) and since Vayu devaru is the patron deity for gyAna, the word 'IOka' is used in classical literature to indicate Vayu devaru. Hence IOkanAtha means the Lord of Vayu in its purest sense; it can also mean, the one who is acknowledged and accepted as the Lord by all gyanis. In his commentary on the gIta while explaining the verse from Gita 15th chapter Acharya Madhva defines 'loka' as all "paurusheya granthas" (authored works) and "veda" as all "apaurusheya granthas" (unauthored works). Hence IOkanAtha can also mean one who is extolled in all authored works.

One variant of this verse uses the phrase 'nOkaniyana' instead of 'IOkanAtha'. Here 'nOkaniyana' means one who is ever constants and not subject to variations in the form of increases & decreases. This is another "laxana" or unique identifier of the Lord.

Devotional literature lauds 'ekAnta bhakta's. This is based on the common sense understanding that people usually reveal their true selves when nobody is watching. In other words, one may pretend to be a great devotee in the presence of others, but displaying the same devotion and attachment to the Lord in isolation is the hallmark of a true devotee. This is the sociological interpretation of 'ekAnta bhakta'. However, there is a spiritual side to this. 'ekAnta' means the innermost recess of one's heart or mind. Worshipping the Lord here and not putting on an external display for the benefit of others is the characteristic of a true devotee.

‘eka’ is also the unique name of the Lord. ‘eka anta’ also means considering Him as the Final or ultimate entity, i.e., believing in the concept of hari sarvottamatva. Another meaning would be devotion that ends with the Lord, i.e., devotion which is completely unconditional. This describes devotees who love the Lord for what He is and not for what He can do or give. They do not desire even moksha or liberation. To them liberation is desirable only because it gives them greater access to Him and not because it brings unalloyed bliss.

‘nA kara voDDadaMte’ lends itself to many interpretations. First, there is the aspect that one should not become a burden to society and depend on the generosity of others to survive. There is an autobiographical element in this phrase because Sri Vijayadaasaru suffered a lot of humiliation due to poverty before he became a renowned gyAni. He has captured this beautifully in another song (“ninnolumeyinda nikhila janaru bandu ...”). The description of his poverty and the tribulations he suffered are very moving. The second aspect involves non material things. Just as one needs to be self sufficient in terms of material needs, one should also be self sufficient in spiritual aspects too. Take for example a rich man hoping to reach heaven because his sons are going to perform charitable acts in the first year of his death. Would it not be better for him to perform these acts himself, while he is alive and of sound health? Similarly, would it not be better for one to perform pooja to the family icons in the house instead of hiring a priest to do this? A quick way of summing up this would be, one should perform all the duties and responsibilities prescribed based on varna and Asharma dharma.

Stanza 2:

ಮಂದರಧರನ ಅರಸಿಯೇ ಇಂದಿರೆ ಎನ್ನ ಕುಂದುದೋಷಗಳ ನೀ ತರಿಯೆ |
ಅದುಳ್ಳ ಸೌಭಾಗ್ಯದಸಿಯೇ ನಿನ್ನ ಕಂದನೆಂದು ಮುಂದಕ್ಕೆ ಕರೆಯೇ ||
ಬಂದು ನಿ ಕರುಣಿಸು ವಂದಿಸುವೆನು ನಾ ಸಿಂಧು ಸುತಳೇ ನಿತ್ಯ ಸಿಂಧೂರ ಗಮನೇ |
ಸಿಂಧು ಶಯನ ಶ್ರೀ ವಿಜಯ ವಿಠಲನ ಎಂದೆಂದಿಗು ಮನದಿಂದ ಅಗಲದಂತೆ || ೨ ||

maMdaradharana arasiyE iMdire enna kuMdudOShagaLa nI tariye |
aMduLLa soubhAgyadasiriyE ninna kaMdaneMdu muMdakke kareyE ||
baMdu ni karuNisu vaMdisuvenu naa siMdhU sutaLE nitya siMdhUra gamanE |
siMdhU shayana shrI vijaya viThThalana eMdeMdigu manadiMda agaladaMte || 2
||

Difficult words:

maMdaradharana arasiyE = the Queen of the Lord who lifted the Mandhara mountain; iMdire = Deity of immense wealth and the wife of the Omnipotent Lord; enna kuMdudOShagaLa = my defects, faults and shortcomings; nI tariye = please destroy; aMduLLa soubhAgyadasiriyE = you are the repository of auspicious attributes like beauty, fortune etc; ninna kaMdaneMdu = considering me as your child; muMdakke kareyE = take me forward (help me reach higher heights in sadhane); baMdu ni karuNisu = please come and bless me; vaMdisuvenu naa = I prostrate before you; siMdhU sutaLE = daughter of the ocean; nitya = the eternal one; siMdhUra gamanE = one with the (majestic) gait of an elephant; siMdhU shayana = one who reposes in the ocean; shrI vijaya viThThalana = Lord Vijaya Vittala (the ankitha of Vijayadaasaru); eMdeMdigu = foreven; manadiMda = away from my mind; agaladaMte = separate or move away

Meaning of Stanza 2:

You are the Queen of the Lord who lifted the Mandhara mountain. You are the deity of immense wealth and the wife of the Omnipotent Lord. Please destroy my defects, faults and shortcomings. You are the repository of auspicious attributes like beauty and fortune. Consider me as your child and help me reach higher heights in sadhane. I prostrate before you to please come and bless me. You are the daughter of the ocean, eternal one. You

have the majestic gait of an elephant. Please bless me so that Lord Vijaya Vittala, who reposes in the ocean, never moves away from my mind.

Notes:

The reference to the Mandhara mountain is interesting because this is related to the churning of the ocean. This is the time Lakshmi emerged from the ocean and chose to wed Narayana.

If the entire incident involving the churning of the ocean is viewed dispassionately, one gets a good idea of who really made it possible. The celestials were unable to even lift the mountain, it was the Lord who had Garuda carry it on his back. When the churning started, the mountain started sinking, the Lord had to hold it up on His back. He also took another form and held it from the top. He then took multiple forms and churned the ocean himself. He had to take the Mohini form to ensure that only the celestials got the nectar and not the evil demons. Thus, when compared to the Lord, the celestials were all mandas (inadequate or insufficient) in terms of their capabilities. MaMdaradhara means one who supported the manda celestials and ensured that they achieved their end goal of obtaining the nectar.

The term 'arasiyE' means Queen. It can also mean one who chose ('arasu' means to choose or select). Thus Lakshmi chose 'mandhara dhara' as Her husband. This incident has been described in the Bhagavata and captured beautifully in kannada by Sri Vadirajaru (Lakshmi Shobhane).

'Indire' is derived from the verb -root 'idi - paramaishwarye'. The word 'indra' can be used in its truest and fullest sense with Lord Narayana only; when used with other celestials, we need to restrict the scope of the word.

How can Lakshmi destroy our shortcomings? She is the patron deity of the 3 gunas - sattva, rajas and tamas. Everything that happens in this universe is under the influence of these 3 gunas. Only Lakshmi and Narayana are beyond their sway. All negative aspects like sins, blemishes and shortcomings are directly attributable to 'tamas' that is controlled by the Durga form of Lakshmi. Hence, she has a direct role in destroying our shortcomings. The grace of Her 'Shri' form, which controls sattva, is needed for our spiritual upliftment. Which is why daasaru asks Her to destroy our sins and take us forward spiritually.

'andulla soubhAgyada siriye' is saying that in addition to being full of auspicious attributes Lakshmi is also the repository of perfect beauty. This follows the generic rule in celestial females that physical beauty is directly related to one's position in the hierarchy i.e., the higher up in the hierarchy a goddess is, the more beautiful is she by nature. The corresponding rule in celestial males is that bala or strength is proportional to the position in hierarchy. Incidentally, 'andulla soubhAgyada siriye' seems to be a direct translation of 'yAh nitya puShTha soundaryAdi guNairapi' (from Shrisha guNa darpaNa).

It is a common practice in devotional literature to compare the gait of the Lord (and Lakshmi) to that of an elephant (for example, 'saamaja vara gamana ..'). This is because amongst all animals only the elephant has a gait that is majestic and awe inspiring.

Final Summation:

In this song Sri VijayadAsaru has given us glimpses of his mastery over shastras and his ability to describe even complex concepts in simple words. He has shown us how to go about worshipping Lakshmi and the sort of things that one can ask Her to grant. It is interesting to see the things that he requests from her:

- a focused mind with which one can extol and worship the auspicious attributes and sport of the Supreme Lord
- the company of noble souls who worship the Lotus feet of the Lord in the innermost recesses of their hearts
- self sufficiency (not having to beg others)

- destruction of defects, faults and shortcomings.
- help in reaching higher heights in sadhane.
- constant presence of the Lord in the mind

There is nothing more left to ask! Nor is there anything worthier than this list of boons.

**bhArati raMaNa mukhya prANAntargata
shrI krishnarpanamastu**

ಶ್ರೀ ಮಹಾ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀ ದೇವಿಯೇ

ಶ್ರೀ ಮಹಾ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀ ದೇವಿಯೇ

ಕೊಮಲಾಂಗಿಯೇ ಸಾಮಗಾಯನ ಪ್ರಿಯಳೇ

ಹೇಮಗರ್ಭ ಕಾಮಾರಿ ಶಕ್ರ ಸುರ ಸ್ತೋಮ ವಂದಿತೆ ಸೋಮ ಸೋದರಿಯೇ || ಪ ||

ಸಕಲ ಶುಭಗುಣ ಭರಿತಳೆ ಏಕ ದೇವಿಯೇ ವಾಕುಲಾಲಿಸಿ ನೀ ಕೇಳೇ |

ಲೋಕನಾಥನ ಗುಣ ಲೀಲೇ ಕೊಂಡಾಡುವಂಥ ಏಕ ಮನವ ಕೊಡು ಶುಭಶೀಲೆ ||

ಬೇಕು ಬೇಕು ನಿನ್ನ ಪತಿಪಾಬ್ಜವ ಏಕಾಂತದಲಿ ಭಕ್ತರ ಸಂಗವ ಕೊಡು |

ಲೋಕದ ಜನರಿಗೆ ನಾ ಕರ ವೊಡ್ಡದಂತೆ ತಾಯೇ ಕರುಣಿಸು ರಾಕೇಂದು ವದನೆ || ೧ ||

ಶ್ರೀ ಮಹಾ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀ ದೇವಿಯೇ || ಪ ||

ಮಂದರಧರನ ಅರಸಿಯೇ ಇಂದಿರೆ ಎನ್ನ ಕುಂದುದೋಷಗಳ ನೀ ತರಿಯೆ |

ಅಂದುಳ್ಳ ಸೌಭಾಗ್ಯದಸಿರಿಯೇ ನಿನ್ನ ಕಂದನೆಂದು ಮುಂದಕ್ಕೆ ಕರೆಯೇ ||

ಬಂದು ನಿ ಕರುಣಿಸು ವಂದಿಸುವೆನು ನಾ ಸಿಂಧು ಸುತಳೇ ನಿತ್ಯ ಸಿಂಧೂರ ಗಮನೇ |

ಸಿಂಧು ಶಯನ ಶ್ರೀ ವಿಜಯ ವಿಠಲನ ಎಂದೆಂದಿಗು ಮನದಿಂದ ಅಗಲದಂತೆ || ೨ ||

ಶ್ರೀ ಮಹಾ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀ ದೇವಿಯೇ || ಪ ||

ಶ್ರೀ ಕೃಷ್ಣಾರ್ಪಣಮಸ್ತು