

karuNA kavacha - shrI gOpAladAsaru

English Translation –Shree HunsurSripad

smarisuve nA nimma charaNakamala guru vijayarAya |
sharaNajanapriya paramakaruNANidhi vijayarAya || pa ||

janmAraByavu nimmaguNakarmagaLella vijayarAya |
innu nA varNisaleShtaravanu guru vijayarAya ||1||

divijara vEShadiMdavaniyoLudusidyo vijayarAya |
divijariMdali pratidivasa biDadalidyO vijayarAya ||2||

Baagavatadharmavahisi triraavarti vijayarAya |
BAgIrathiya channaagi sEvisidyo vijayarAya ||3||

kaMchikAL~hasti shrIraMgasEtuyAtre vijayarAya |
paMchavAravu saMcharisi sEvisidayya vijayarAya || 4||

mariyaadeyillade varagiriyAtreya vijayarAya |
pariparikShEtrakke pOgi pUjisidayya vijayarAya ||5||

mahiyalli tirugi sarvakShEtradi vijayarAya |
vahisidAsatva vaiShNava siddhAMta vijayarAya ||6||

gurUpadEshakanAgi vyAsakAshiyallidyO vijayarAya |
duRyOniyalli baMda vaMsha uddharisidyO vijayarAya ||7||

svachChavAgi gaMgAtIra vAsamADi vijayarAya |
hechchAda parvaNiyoLu matsyOdaritOrde vijayarAya ||8||

tuMgAtIradi kuLitu gaMge pechchisidi vijayarAya |
aMgada musukili pAMDuraMganna kaMDyo vijayarAya ||9||

madhvamatada sAra kavanadi rachisidyo vijayarAya |
advaitasiddhAMtAbaddhavisidyo vijayarAya || 10 ||

shuddha tatvasAra suLAdi padamADi vijayarAya |
hRudyadi dhimikeMdu hariya kuNisidyo vijayarAya ||11||

sadAchArasaMpattu madhukaravRuttiyu vijayarAya |
kadanna uMDariyaru shiShyajanasaMGa vijayarAya ||12||

Baktara apamRutyubiDisi aayuvitte vijayarAya |
pratyakShyavallave manave idake sAkShi vijayarAya ||13||

nityAnna putrOtsavagaLu BRutyarige vijayarAya |
matte dharma muMji maduvegaLa mADisidyo vijayarAya || 14 ||

Baktajanarige tatva upadEshava mADi vijayarAya |
hRutkamaladi hariya tiLisi sadgatigabhaya ittyonI vijayarAya || 15 ||

ellaralli sirinallana aMshava vijayarAya |
nillisideyo ninna bageya ballavaRyAro vijayarAya || 16 ||

ballida nInoMdu rUpadi ennalli vijayarAya |
nillisiddare ella janaru OlaisOru vijayarAya ||17||

nimma puNyada shEShavinnu uMbevo nAvu vijayarAya |
namma sAmarthyavu nimmadeMdigu vijayarAya || 18 ||

enniMda AgO sAdhanavella ninnado vijayarAya |
enna poMdiharella ninna dAsaro guru vijayarAya || 19 ||

Iga I yugadi sAdhanaveMbudu kANe vijayarAya |
yOgi ninnavarige bEga odaguvudo vijayarAya ||18||

guru ninna karuNakavachatoTTa Bakutarge vijayarAya |
sirivara gOpAlaviThalarEya kaipiDivano vijayarAya ||21||

shrI gOpAladAsariMda virachitavAda
karuNA-kavacha stotra (mOdakastutiyu) saMpUrNavAyitu
shrI kRuShNArpaNamastu

Translation and notes

Overview:

In this composition, the author Sri GopAladAsaru shows his deep reverence for his beloved guru Sri VijayadAsaru. Amongst all the disciples of Sri VijayadAsaru, Sri GopAladAsaru was held up as the example of pristine devotion (“bhaktiyalli bhAganna”). In this composition he refers to several incidents that happened in Sri VijayadAsaru’s life. Knowledge of these events is essential to understanding the composition. This kavacha was composed, most probably after Sri VijaydAsaru shed his mortal coils.

Another intriguing thing to note is that the author has used 21 verses and one pallavi in the composition. The number 21 is significant since Sri GopAladAsaru is believed to be the incarnation of Vinayaka or Ganapati and the number 21 is supposed to be very dear to him. With the addition of the pallavi, the number of verses becomes 22. This number is also significant since Acharya Madhva’s commentary on the brahma-sUtra is the 22nd one!

Translation:

(Pallavi) O revered guru VijayadAsa, I remember (contemplate on) your lotus feet. You are adored by people who seek shelter in the Lord and Vayu. And such people are very dear to you. You are an ocean of compassion.

1. I am not competent or qualified to describe your qualities and your activities from birth onwards.
2. You emerged on earth in the form of a dvija (gyAni or knowledgeable person). You did not spend even one day away from dvijas. You always undertook tours (yAyAvAra) in their company. procession

Note: The word ‘dvija’ normally means anyone eligible for brahmopadesham or upanayana (brAhmin, kshatriya and Vaishya). However, in this context, it is used to denote a true gyAni rather than a person belonging to any specific caste.

3. You accepted bhAgavata dharma and served bhAgirati (Ganga) thrice i.e., you made a gangA-yAtra (trip to the river) thrice.

Note: Here trirAvarti has an additional, more significant meaning. Our shAstras insist on trikarNa shuddhi i.e., purification of kAya (body), vachah (speech) and manas (mind or thought).

4. You undertook pilgrimages to holy place like Kanchi, kALahasti, Sri Ranga kshestra (Shimsha, Srirangpatna and Sri Ranga), Rameshwara etc. You did this at least 5 times.

5. You undertook pilgrimage of Tirupati a countless number of times. You also went to other kshetras (religious centers) and worshipped the deities enshrined there.

Note: Sri GopAladAsaru puns on the word ‘mariyAde’. It also means ‘respect, formality’ etc. This is true because the relationship between the Lord and VijayadAsaru transcended normal definitions. In fact, VijayadAsaru has done some ‘ninda stutis’ of the Lord (a ninda stuti is a composition that superficially appears to be critical, but is actually based on deep devotion).

6. Accepting the holy order of haridAsatva and adhering to Vaishnavite philosophy (tattvavAda / dvaita), you traveled all over and visited holy shrines.

Notes: Combining visits to shrines with Vaishnavite philosophy is very significant. Some shrines are dedicated to Lord Vishnu and some to other deities. If the chief deity in a shrine is not Vishnu, then a true Vaishnavite has to offer prayers to the deity and his/her antaryami (which would be Lord VishNu).

7. You received guru-upadesha (instruction from a preceptor) in vyAsa kAshi. You ameliorated the condition of your ancestor who took birth in a lowly species.

Note: Even though the word used is “guru upadeshakanAgi” there is another variation which says “guru upadishTanAgi”. This variation seems more appropriate.

The first line refers to the major turning point in Sri VijayadAsaru’s life, resulting in his becoming a haridAsa. Tormented by utter and abject poverty, humiliated at every turn, he left his home and started wandering

to different place. When he reached kAshi he was at a very low point mentally, wondering what the future held for him. That night, Sri PurandaradAsaru appeared in his dream; he took VijayadAsaru to vyAsakAshi and showed Lord VedavyAsa to him. He then wrote 'omkAra' on VijayadAsaru's tongue and gave him the ankita of 'vijaya viThThala'. From then VijayadAsaru became an aparOksha gnyAni, revered and honored everywhere.

The second line refers to an incident in VijayadAsaru's life. A dog kept following dAsaru and his followers when they were travelling to Kashi. When his disciples wanted to drive the dog away, he asked them to leave it alone. Later, in Kashi, after he performed tarpaNa to his ancestors the dog disappeared. Dasaru told his disciples that the dog was his great grandfather who had to reincarnate as a dog because of past sins, and receiving tarpana from a great soul had wiped out those sins.

8. You resided on the banks of the ganga in a pure state. You made ganga visible to your disciples during a rising tide.

Note: The purity referred to in the song is 'trikarNa shuddhi' that was referred to earlier and not mere physical purity. Physical purity can be attained by actions like bathing in holy rivers. Purity in speech can be attained by actions like singing the glories of the Lord, reciting stotras etc. Mental purity can be attained by contemplating on the Lord, His attributes, His greatness, His leela (sport) and such activities.

The second line refers to another incident in VijayadAsaru's life. Once he was requested by his disciples to provide darshan of ganga. He prayed to ganga to bless his disciples. As he kept praying the waters kept rising. Finally, a heavenly damsel rose from the river and accept 'marada bAgana' from select disciples and disappeared. The waters gradually receded. Throughout the entire incident, dAsaru was in a trance. Even though the river flowed around him, none of his clothes got wet!

9. You sat on the banks of the Tunga river and made Ganga appear there. In the veil of the uttarlya (cloth used to cover upper part of the body), you showed Lord Panduranga to your disciples.

Note: This also refers to incidents in dAsaru's life. Once, after taking bath in the tunga river, his disciples had an intense desire to take bath in the ganga too! The kind hearted dAsaru fulfilled their desire by praying to

Ganga and making her appear in the tunga. For a few hours, everybody could easily see two different types of water in the tunga river!

A few weeks before a Vaikunta ekadashi day, his disciples were caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they had an intense desire to go to Pandharapur and have darshan of Lord Panduranga, but on the other they also did not want to leave the company of dAsaru! Finally, some of them went to Pandharapur but most of the others stayed back. On Vaikunta ekadashi day, Dasaru took his disciples to the local temple in Chlkalaparvi and asked them to put on a veil or musuku (covering the face with the upper garment). When they opened the veil, they were astounded to see that they were standing in the garbha-guDi (sanctum-sanctorum) of Pandharapur, with a smiling dAsaru. They had darshan of Lord Panduranga at close quarters. Later, dAsaru brought them back to chlkalaparvi in the same way. The other disciples (the ones who had gone to Pandharapur) had to spend a long and tiring day in the queue and could see the Lord for just a few seconds! Thus the Lord rewarded those who reposed their faith in dAsaru.

10. You composed songs reflecting the essence of dvaita/tattvavAda. You proved that advaita siddhAnta was invalid and flawed.

11. You captured the quit-essence of shAstras in your suLAdis. Through such divine compositions, you made the Lord dance in your heart.

Notes: A suLAdi is a mystic composition done when the haridAsa is in an intense state of devotion towards the Lord. So, in a manner of speaking, they contain the concentrated essence of all shAstras.

12. You ensured that your disciples were well taken care of – spiritually and materially. They were blessed with the wealth of good conduct and adherence to madhukara vrutti (the haridAsa tradition of going around the town singing the bhajans and collecting alms). They never had to taste inferior types of food.

13. You rescued devotees from untimely / early death and granted them additional longevity. Some of these acts have happened in front of us and some were discernible through meditation.

Note: Sri GopAladAsaru says ‘pratyaksha’ because he was personally involved in one such incident. On the orders of Sri VijayadAsaru, he

donated 40 years of his life to Sri JagannAtha dAsaru. The other famous example is that of MohanadAsaru, who VijayadAsaru rescued from Yamaloka.

14. You really took care of all the mundane cares of your disciples. You ensured that they were well fed and clothed. In addition, you took care of other responsibilities like upanayana, marriage, and other dharmic functions.

15 & 16. You did not stop with mundane activities. You took care of their spiritual needs too. You taught them the essence of shastras and set them on the path to liberation. Through your blessings and teachings, they were able to see the Lord in their hearts and thus conquer the fear of samsAra. Because of your entreaties, the Lord stayed in their hearts and continued to bless them. Who can claim that they have understood your greatness completely? Nobody!

Note: One of the greatest gifts to mankind from Sri VijayadAsaru is the enormous amount of disciples that he left behind. He did not want the haridAsa tradition to die with him. He wanted to set up worthy heirs who would continue the practice after him. To this end, he went from place to place, looking for worthy people to train and educate. At the time of his death, there were 21 aparoxa-gyAnis, underscoring the rich heritage that he has bequeathed to us.

17. If one part of you had stayed with me (after your death), everybody would have commended me.

Note: After Sri VijaydAsaru's departure, Sri GopAladAsaru was worshipping a small brindAvan containing holy mruttika from Sri VijaydAsaru's kaTTE. People used to treat this brindAvana with reverence as a living symbol of Sri VijaydAsaru.

18. We continue to feed on the benefits accruing from your puNya. All our accomplishments and capabilities are because of you and hence, they belong to you.

Notes: One variation says "nimma sAmarthya" instead of "nimma sAmarthya". In this case, the meaning would be "Your capabilities are unique to you. Nobody else can even come close".

19. All that I have accomplished in life belong to you. All the people who follow me (i.e., my disciples) are nothing but your servants.

20. In this yuga I do not see true sAdhana happening. So, out of mercy, you have to come within the grasp of your devotees soon and bless them.

Notes: Sri GopAladAsaru is basically cautioning us from arrogance and thinking “I will perform sAdhana and earn the grace of Hari, Vayu, Guru and dAsaru”. Even if true sAdhana is performed, one needs the blessings of a great guru to achieve the grace of the Lord.

21. Gopala Vittala will hold the hands of the devotees who put on this karuna kavacha (armour of mercy). In other words, the Lord will specially bless devotees who sing this karuna kavacha with devotion.

shrI bhAratI ramaNa mukhyaprANAntargata
shrI vijaya viThThAlAbhinna shrI kriShNArpaNamastu