

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Kanaka Dasa**  
**- poems -**

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# Kanaka Dasa(1509 – 1609)

Kanaka Dasa (Kannada: ಕೆ.ಕೆ.ಕೆ) was a great poet, philosopher, musician and composer from Karnataka. He is known for his Kirtanes and Ugabhoga compositions in the Kannada language for Carnatic music. Like some other dasas, he often used colloquial language for his compositions. He was a disciple of Vyasathirtha and a follower of Dwaita philosophy propounded by Madhvacharya.

## <b>Life</b>

Thimmappa Nayaka was his original name and he belonged to chieftain (Kuruba Gowda) / (Dhangar) family of Kaginele in Haveri district. He was born to the Kuruba Gowda couple Biregowda and Bachchamma at Bada village. Kanaka Nayaka being of the warrior community (Kuruba Gowda) his defeat in the field of battle, directed him to the path of devotion. He came to be called Kanaka Nayaka as he found a treasure-trove of gold (kanaka means gold in Kannada).

Kanaka Dasa was well educated and capable of analyzing the society microscopically. Based on one of his compositions it is interpreted that after he severely got injured in a war and was miraculously saved, he gave up his profession as a warrior and devoted his life to composing music and literature with philosophy explained in common man's language. It appears that he started traveling to places a lot to gain more knowledge. However he had maintained a balanced view about all faiths[citation needed]. At a young age he authored poetries Narasimha stotra, Ramadhyana Mantra, and Mohanatarangini. (See Ref 2)

# Nee Mayayolago

Are you a creature of illusion? or illusion your creation?  
Are you a part of the body? Or is the body a part of you?

Is space within the house? Or the house within space?  
Or are both space and the house within the seeing eye?  
Is the eye within the mind? Or the mind within the eye?  
Or are both the eye and the mind within you?

Does sweetness lie in sugar, or sugar in sweetness?  
Or do both sweetness and sugar lie in the tongue?

Is the tongue within the mind? Or the mind within the tongue?  
Or are both the tongue and the mind within you?

Does fragrance lie in the flower? Or the flower in fragrance?  
Or do both the flower and fragrance lie in the nostrils?  
I cannot say, O Lord Adikeshava of Kaginele,  
O! peerless one, are all things within you alone?

[Translated by K. Narasimha Murthy]

Kanaka Dasa

# O Lord, Are You In The Maya

O Lord, are you in the maya,  
Or, the maya is in you.?  
Are you in the body,  
Or is the body in you?

Is the view in space,  
Or the space is in the seen?  
Or do both be in the eye?  
Is the eye in buddhi,  
Or the buddhi in the eye?  
O! Hari! Do both exist in thee?

Is the sweetness in sugar,  
Or sugar in sweetness?  
Or are they together in the tongue?  
Is the tongue in buddhi,  
Or the buddhi in the tongue?  
O Hari! Do both exist in thee?

Is the flower in fragrance,  
Or the fragrance in the flower?  
Together are they in the smell?  
O Aadikeshava of Kaginele  
Of incomparable prowess!  
These are beyond my grasp!  
Isn't all in thee?

Kanaka Dasa