The Great Sage of Our Times
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THE GREAT SAGE OF OUR TIMES

Varadapura, the ancient Vedic hermitage spot in the Western Ghats and Malnad of South India climbs down from a natural hill ridges of Sahyadri, has its own Philosophical sacred spot (atmosphere) and attracted devotees from the various parts of the Country and abroad. The enchanting place in the midst of a thick forest, a pure water like flowing Ganga of Himalayas spring with divine powers, even today thousands of devotees troubled by mental and physical health problems and evil spirits are cured of their maladies and got complete peace of mind by a dip in this sacred water. A sumptuous bath in this sacred water for about some days morning and evening with hymns and repetition of the divine name restores one’s health and has an exhilarating effect on the mind, and gives sublime satisfaction to the soul.

The whole atmosphere is full of spiritual Aura and magnetic vibrations, conducive to spiritual practice (Sadhana) penance (Tapa) and for contemplation and meditation (Yoga). The aesthetic grandeur of sunrise and sunset can be watched from this peak in ecstatic joy. The birds, the trees, the creepers, the blue water lilies - all live again in the beauty of Valmiki’s poetry. The sacred place of mountain ranges in which the hermitage is situated can bestow any blessing.

Anyone who seeks peace through meditation must visit the sacred hermitage of the great sage Shree
Shridhara Swamy. In this sacred between amidst thick forest hermitage like diamond, the great sage Shridharji undertook life long meditation in all the depth and found the hope of salvation and divine vision. Shridhar Swamiji is a household word in Malnad, Karnataka in general and Maharashtra in particular in India.

Traditional importance of Hermitage:

How well the great sage Shridharji chose this sacred place of hermitage! Almost always he is lovely spots with beautiful and metaphysical sense of natural surroundings. Traditionally there was the hermitage of Vyasa and Agasthya (Mahabharata and Ramayana fame). In the history of India there are numerous explanations about the significance of natural environments (flora and fauna) and religious centre narrated by Pietro Della Valle an Italian Traveller (1623 AD) and Peter Mundi (England Noble man on 1637 AD) who travelled this place during the 17th century in the Keladi State. There is sacred water of Agasthya, icy cave of Vyasa and ancient temple of Mahishasura Mardhini near the oldest ponds where the crystal clear blue water flows out of its tortuous mountain ranges, deep valleys, green forests and arecanut gardens into the plains below have created a lovely environmental atmosphere. A visit of this sacred places the abode of ascetics seeking supernatural faculty (Siddhi) according to Nehru’s Discovery of India gives an insight pleasure into ancient Indian Art. In the top of the hill sacred Religious
usage established by Shree Sridharaji gives the picture of significance visible the intention of the great sage for the reformation of peace and spiritual supremacy in the modern universe. This was considered to be a sacred spot with natural environmental peaceful atmosphere where celebrated (illustrious) sages were splendid. It is no wonder that such a hollowed spot was selected by Shridharji for the founding of peace, revelation and universal goal.

According to Flora and Fauna, holy shrines, their sanctity and antiquity are set against a background of enchanting natural beauty created by almighty scintillating with the change of seasons we are presented with a delightful panorama of rivers, hills and dales, backwaters, forests, groves, pleasure gardens and temple festivals like Varadapura.

Shridharajee (Shridhara Swamy)

Shridhara Swamy born in Maharashtra State. Shri Narayana Raya and Smt.Kamalabai were the fortunate parents of Shridharji. In the 1908 on the Dattatreya Jayanti celebration day a divine son was born to lord Narayana and Devi Lakshmi for the welfare of the world. The boy was christened 'Shridhar' in line with it turned out to be the most suitable name for the divine child as it became evident in his later life.

Strange no doubt were the words to pour out so poetically the pangs of the boyish heart! But such is
generally the amazing behaviours of the geniuses that have shown in human history as stated by Nehru, Chanakya, Shankaracharya, Alexander the world conqueror, Gyaneswar, Galileo, Newton, Roger Bacon, Lord Celvin, Marcony, Madhvacharya, Ramanujacharya, Raghavendraswamy (Mantralayam), Basavanna, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and even Karl Marx are some of the intellectual or phenomenon who set in motion at their very early ages, thoughts which ushered revolutions in various fields of life.

Shridharji in his younger days was very much keen to attend meditation which he liked most. Seconds and minutes are ticking off, the hour is passing away and the life is getting wasted why not utter 'RAMA'!

If any one happened to abuse God or Eternal Religion (Sanathana Dharma), or even talked against, he used to protest vehemently. Rama Nama was always on his lips (abounding recital of the name of the almighty).

Shridharji lost his father when he was three years old. He was studying at Hyderabad. His mother also left when he was twelve years of age. In Poona he lived in an orphanage. In his student life he was not only living Madhukari according to ancient religious customs, but also shared the same with some of his friends who were poor. He also helped them in all possible ways.

Shridharji was very fond of rendering service to and bestowing tender care on the diseased, disabled old aged
etc., On the way from his house to the school and also back, going to the temple and having Lords perception was his unfailing habit. Also without failing once, he used to get up very early in the morning (before sun rise) finish his bath and other chores and complete sacred duty morning and evening prayers (Sandhya Vandana), obeisance to the Sun (Suryanamaskara) and abounding recital of the name of the almighty (Akhanda Namasmara). At the time of life he came into contact with one Mr. Palanikar with whose help, guidance and inspiration, he got well versed in practice of the posture of an ascetic (Yogasanas).

The Practice of Rigid Penance:

As the days passed Shridharji started getting on one hand more and more disgusted by this mundane life and on the other more and more a keen desire for the spiritually minded life. He wanted to spend the rest of his days in achieving conscience divine power of perception with one’s own eyes (Atmasakshatkara) as early as possible instead of wasting it in learning the worldly matters. He prays: ‘‘O, lord I am extremely troubled in mind. It is difficult to pass time. O, Lord have pity on me, give me Wisdom, make my mind steady at your feet’’. In such a state of mind, after deeply pondering over this question, one fine day, he undertook the firm decision to go away to do intense penance to reach goal or destination. But at the same time the problem obtaining a suitable divine power teacher (Guru) started guideing him since he know that as the proverbial verses
तद् विघ्नार्थसा गुरुः करोदकृपा गतिचित

“Tad Vighnarthatam Sa Gurumevabhigaschet”

A seeker without a venerable religious teacher is equal to a vessel without its bottom. So thinking as to whom to approach for a religious teacher, finally he came to the decision of going to Sajjanghad, well known for its association with the great saint Shree Samartha Rama Das. He was going to be ushered and preferred a hard ascetic course of life for the realisation of the Divine, the vision of Rama.

Coming to the decision Shridharji further took the following vows before he started on his way to Sajjanghad.

1. To look upon ladies young and old, equal to his own mother and to give respect and consideration as such and to maintain his rigid abstinence (Brahmacharya) meticulously.

2. Not to touch money or other things considered as wealth or worldly treasure. If at all it comes to him of his own, to use the whole of it, only for the benefit of others and not for himself.

3. Not to assume the control of ‘Mutts’ (monasteries) in any capacity, since it invariably involves preoccupation with mundane matters and affluence.

4. Not to differentiate between people on any consideration, but to treat everyone, men or women as equal for him and to impart to them the spiritual aspects of life.
5. To the extent possible to render help to those who are in need and to soften the intensity of suffering of the people in this illusory world.

6. To life as simple a life as is consistent with the purpose of maintaining his body and soul together for the achievement of his present life mission.

To foster a flawless spiritual force and to help establish the ancient religion all over the world.

Taking the severe vows as above and pacifying some of his agitated friends Shridharji started off from Poona on in 1927 (Vijayadashami day), discarding all of his abandoning worldly possessions excepting the two books Dasabodha and Bhagavadgita, a rosary, a piece of cloth worn over the privities symbolising abstinence aspect of his mission, Shridharji had not coin with him and hardly any use of it.

Seeking divine vision (Practice and Reflection):

On the way from Poona Shridharji reached Baneswar and Sajjanghad. Having reached his destination, he immediately launched himself in the homage to the venerable teacher for his intended spiritual achievements. Here he had to face many obstacles and hardships in taking to his penance and practicing the same without hesitation and flaw. But Shridharji could overcome these problems and the testing time with his great teachers grace. With zeal and determination Shridharji meticulously stuck to
daily routine of bathing three times on the mountain sides, whatever be the climate (rains or no rains, winter or summer) then repetition of the divine name abounding recital of the name of Almighty (Akhand Naamamrana) and ceaseless service of his teacher round the clock. Pleased by his dedicated devotion and pure love Shri Samartha Ramadasa gave him perception quite frequently, and blessed. Later Shridharji got the honour of "Bhagwan" title only through the grace of his teacher saint Ramadas.

Thus it was one day, at midnight, when Shridharji was in deep meditation a great Sage Samartha appeared before him, engulfed in the seeing of something wonderful (Apurva Jyothi Darshan) and gave him full vision (perfect perception). He then commanded him to go for the sake of devotion to religion which was his chief mission to life.

After paying of obeisance to his great teacher and getting his blessings Shridharji left Sajjanghad the same instant on foot in abeyance to his teachers command.

Shrimad Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya Shridhara Swamy:

Shridharji travelled the country the way on foot only. Staying for the night at any place he found himself at that days sunset, whether it is a monastery, a welcoming house, a village choultry, a forest hut etc., and made himself comfortable. Thus he reached Gokarna, a famous religious
centre in India. From Gokarna he reached Sigehalli where famous "Shivanandaswamy" was having his monastery. The Pontiff addressed Shridharji that he discern in him a unique divine power ("Vishnu Kala") he feel that he is going to re-establish the religious way of life. He disclosed "It is dormant now and the evil forces are trying to ensure that your powers are not awakened. But in the days to come, this awakening will come about, the religion will be re-established through you only". At that time, there was a firm belief in peoples mind that Shivananda Swamy is a thrikalajnani.

Even while, he was in Sigehalli, Shridharji got acquainted with one saint Shankarananda through whose contact he got very well versed in Sanskrit, Theological part of Vedas and Yoga practice.

Reject for Pontificate:

Shivananda Swamy had a secret desire to make Shridharji as a successor of his monastery after him. Not wishing to stay at Sigehalli any longer (to maintain his vow) Shridharji got early morning before sunrise left that place. He then went to Sagar and from there round the Karnataka State, after finishing which he reached Sajjanghad.

When Shridharji had gone to Sigehalli for the second time Shivananda Swamy had attained universal soul two years before. Shridharji finished some responsible for the
betterment of the monastery and for the upliftment of the spiritual efforts (Sadhane) and brought the state of affairs highly satisfactory.

Shridharji undertook Turiyashrama on 1942 in Sigehalli, his deep austere penance on the meditation fruitful and thereafter came to be known as "Shrimad Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya Bhagwan Sadguru Shridhara Swamy".

Religious Propagation:

The great sage Shridharji travelled round all over India (Benares, Himalaya, Badarakashrama, Kanyakumari) by his exposition of source of all being with scientific spiritualistic theory and practice the awakened the peoples sense of Eternal Religion (Sanathana Dharma). At many places he established Veda and Sanskrit Institutions to learn Sanskrit and Vedas. The sages one keen desire inspiring him and his activities was to establish a Eternal Religious usage. Religious flag in the different parts of the country will be accomplished.

Scholarly Religious Works:

It is based on pure monism, the only ultimate reality in the metaphysical sense being the soul (Atman), the absolute soul. That is the subject all else is objective. "Arya Samskriti" an excellent scholarly religious work on Philosophical realities and principles composed by Shridharji reflex various aspects on their spiritual
development for religious doubt. At Varadapura the great sage encouraging devotees with spiritual bent of mind to come up with doubts and seeking religious remedy (or peace), they have on their spiritual development and used to clear them by personally talking to them or by publication as the need be like Dattastava Raja, Shridhara Sandesha etc., It was no exaggeration to mention that all men and women who were spiritually inclined meditation found in Varadapura Shridharashrama an excellent and unique religious hermitage. Shri Shankaracharya of Shringeri as well as Dwaita and Sakti Visistadwaita Philosophers (even Western Philosophers) having came to know intimately the nature of Swamijies activities and the congenial spiritual climate prevailing in the sacred hermitage and itself during their visit there thought it prudent to express their feelings on the magnificent work that was going on there which made the devotees gathered there for the occasion exhilarated and made their hair stand on their ends in ecstasy.

A Hermitage (Solitary Meditation)

Shridharji spending more and more time in a lonely solitary meditation for divine reason and meditation. He had attained a high position in the heavenly bliss (Brahmananda) cult. Amidst solitary meditation he gave his message over loud speaker from his seat during special occasions. The work of Lord Shridharji is religious enlightened state. He is working specially at the great
ideals of the new form of religion that will be founded after he leaves. He always working ceaselessly for the re-establishment of religion and for the upliftment of those who sought the mental peace and guidance through meditation and penance. His alone solitary meditation it seemed only helped his mission more vigorously.

Thus Shridharji spent about five years in real soul meditation (Samadhi) at Varadapura interspersed with occasional chart interludes to give the peace seekers and devotees his divine visible message. As this period was coming to a close, he started feeling that the main purpose of mission for which he had taken this body has been fulfilled with the establishment of Shridharashrama at Varadapura as well as all the arrangements for the upliftment of peace and religion. As it were he has now sown the seed and also seen that it sprouted well.

End of the divine soul:

Shridharji actually had started giving hints on his mind to some of his very close disciples and devotees and preparing them for the impending closure of physical relationship of the present body. Whatever might have been Shridharji’s intentions, people around him never seemed to have taken note of his subtle hints as it were. They went on merrily preparing for the ensuing Rama Navami celebrations with great zeal and joy. It was only during the Hanuma Jayanti that they started realising to their horror, that Shridharji’s health has been deteriorating
fast. So the devotees started thronging around the sacred hermitage to know about Shridharji’s health and welfare. But since Shridharji was in a lonely place nobody could see him to enquire about his state of healtced

कर्तुः म ना कर्तुः अन्यथा कर्तमः

‘Karthum Na Karthu Anyatha Kartham’

That is to say, what can we, the common folk, do to a Sarva Samartha Mahatma like Shridharji in such circumstances. Nobody had the courage to break into his seclusion to find out about his health.

On 19th April, 1973 early morning Shridharji left his mortal coil and merged into the universal soul through a title of the Supreme Being.

When this news spread to all corners people from far and near from all parts of the country thronged to pay their homage to venerable Teacher. It was really difficult to describe the grief of the people. Even the animals and plants of environmental sacred hermitage were affected by this sadness. The atmosphere was so heavy, laden with grief everywhere and on every face, forgetting their food and other requirements even the animals were shedding flowing tears and the plants took on a withered appearance. "What is in store for us in future; who will guide us in all our problems?" were the questions on everybody’s lips and mind.
The glorious Religious Sayacity established by Shridharji at Varadapura in the sacred hill peak where he attained the perfection (Poornatwa) and magnificent Samadhi and temple is still be seen. His sacred and noble mission left is the guidelines for Eternal Religion and Peace is only way for the universe for the present and posterity.

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यम्
“Janma Karma Cha Me Divyam”.

As Lord Krishna said, Shridhara Swamiji’s life has been a divine one and a divine birth came down for a divine purpose of re-establishing Eternal Religion (Sanathana Dharma) in this holy land and thereby in the whole of this troubled universe. Last but not least that it is no wonder that Shridharji has always been looked upon as an incarnation of Lord Dattatreya himself:-

ॐ तत्सत्
“Om Tat Sat”.

Spiritual life is the true genius of India. Those who make the greatest appeal to the Indian mind are not the military conquerors, not the rich merchants or the great diplomats, but the holy sages, the rsis who embody spirituality at its finest and purest. India’s pride is almost in every generation and in every part of the country, from the beginnings of her recorded history, she has produced these holy men who embody for her all that the country
holds most dear and sacred. Though they generally stay away from the main stream of life, kings and commoners pay reverent homage to them and take their advise in the problems of their personal lives as well as in public affairs. By their lives they teach us that pride and power, wealth and glory are nothing in comparison with the power of spirit. It is those who scorn their own lives that raise life above our scorn.

Shri Shridharji, the great sage of our times is one such unique sage though not the only one of its kind. He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition, which runs right through the religious history of this country from the days of the Vedic Sages.