

**SRI SHIVA CHIDAMBARA
CHARITHRE**

-Saligrama Subbaramaiah

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(A Translation of Kannada Original)

Prof. Saligrama Subbaramaiah



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By:

Prof. SALIGRAMA SUBBARAMAIAH

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Foreword


An ardent believer feels greatly secured in the hands of unseen divine Protector who is sometimes seen in human form of flesh and blood. The story of Sri Shiva Chidambara Dikshitaru is one such God's play in this mundane world. Sri Shiva Chidambara (18th Century) belonged to Murugodu of Karnataka state and became very popular by his devotion and miracles.

The life-history of Guru Sri Shiva Chidambara Dikshitaru is beautifully narrated in such a captivating way that readers' attention is enthralled while going through the traditional sacraments extold all along in this text.

Putting his heart and soul in a prayerful mood Prof. Saligrama Subbaramaiah has transcribed this work resembling an ancient (*Puranic*) scripture.

I trust that devotees interested in spiritual *sadhana* will be definitely benefitted in going through this book of enormous value.

Tirupati
06 -12-2012

In the Service of the Lord

L.V. Subrahmanyam I.A.S.
Executive Officer
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

Chapter I
Marthandadikshitharu-
Tapodhana

Unlike stories that go back in time, this one is well documented. Some three hundred years ago there lived a brahmin of the name of Thryambaka Bhatt in a village called Gote in the present District of Bijapur, Karnataka State. His wife was Krishnabai. He was a learned Brahmin and knew the Vedas and Vedantha, besides being very proficient in *Jyothishya*, the science of Astrology. He had four children and all of them had learnt from their father *Jyothishya*, calculation of the movements of planets and stars and how they affected the day to day lives of ordinary men and women. Marthanda Bhatt, the first of the four, was however a different person. He didn't like his family profession of astrological calculations to determine and guide the affairs of men although he was as proficient as any in this trade. He was a *Shivabhaktha* a devotee of Shiva and was disinterested in the affairs of the world as *Viraktha*. He had succeeded in holding his body and mind under his control and never wavered from the path of service to parents. A worthy son is not a free person in his own family. He had no desire for money or its accumulation into wealth and property. *Jyothishya* was no long time profession for such a one. To eat and dine at others expense was a sin, he strongly held. But he had to face such situations almost every day. He felt his earning was tainted and his food was unwholesome. He feared that he was filling his basket of sin everyday.

One day he left his home for Kashi, the holy place of river Ganga and Vishwnatha. It was also a well known centre of Vedic learning following the hollowed tradition of the Guruparmapara. True learning is that which is learnt under the tutelage of a *Guru*. He needed sanction and approval of the gods for his adventure. Bhatt went first to Devarahipparigi to worship his family deity, Marthandabhairava and

then to Pandhrapura where he offered his prayers. Now the road to Kashi was clear to him, a pure soul whose *anthahkaranas*, inner instruments, the different layers of his mind from the gross to the fine, were clean and spotless.

Bathing in the river Ganga and worshipping Vishweshwara every day, Bhatt prayed for a Guru. As in answer to his prayers or because of the merits of his previous lives, or both, he soon came into contact with a brilliant person, and erudite scholar in many *shastras*, called Swamyamprakasha. He was a *yathi*, an ascetic, a renouncer, and of many such attributes. He accepted Bhatt as his disciple and became his *Guru*. He taught his disciples, the *Samhitha*, *Mimamsa*, *Nyaya*, *Vedantha* and *Jyothishya*, besides other disciplines. There were many under his tutelage besides Bhatt. There were three others whom Bhatt had met on his way to Kashi.

The *Yathi* after a long period of training and service thought of testing his disciples and the depth of their devotion. He invited on himself by the power of his penance, the horrible disease of leprosy. The ailment took a foot hold on his body with each passing day. He became a nest of worm-ridden wounds and boils giving out puts, blood and offensive and intolerable smell. The Guru called in his disciples and said: "This is a horrible disease. It has come because of my unsettled dues of my karma of previous birth I must suffer and endure it and I will. You may go out and save yourselves." The disciples slowly walked out one after another with the passage of time. Only four, Bhatt and his three friends were left. Undaunted, without giving into disgust and impatience, Bhatt and his friends, rendered matchless service and nursing. Pleased with their resilience, The Guru once again invited on himself, the agents of recovery and good health, and became a normal person glowing with health and fitness. He called the four into his privacy and said: "I enacted this to test you; I am happy with your firm devotion and faith and I admire you." He transferred to them the power of all his learning and wholeheartedly blessed them and permitted them to go home.

The grateful disciples requested their Guru to tell them how they should redeem themselves of the debt of gratitude they owe to their *Guru* and what kind of *Gurudakshina*, is expected of them. The Guru is said to have observed: "Meritorious of my disciples, it is my good fortune to have disciples like you. I expect from you a recompense called *Sadachara*. I want you to give it to me. I want you to promise that your life manifests *sadachara*. The four, happily promised that they wouldn't aspire for the other woman or covet others wealth and that they wouldn't indulge in slur or abuse and would desist from unnecessary or fruitless wrangling.

Swayamprakasha Yathi, permitted AnanthaShastry, Siddheshwar Mahararj and Govindabhatt, the three fellow disciples of Bhatt, to renounce the worldly life and accept the life of renunciation. Marthandabhatt too wanted to be a *sanyasi*. Despite his desire, Bhatt was not permitted to renounce worldly life. He was specifically asked to become a *grishastha*, a married man and live his life for the good of the world and mankind.

The Guru asked Marthandabhatt to do an *Agnishtoma* a yajna, sacrificial fire. The pundits of Kashi were immensely pleased with the fervor and devotion of Bhatt in the doing of the yagna. In recognition of Bhatt's scholarship, steadfast adherence to the path of Vedic life, *sadachara* and brilliance, he was honoured and conferred the title of *Dikshitha*. Bhatt had become a *Dikshitha*.

Chapter II

Arduous Penance

Marthanda Dikshitharu, the renowned scholar of Kashi returned to his native village Gote unannounced as he had left it some twenty years ago. The family was happy to receive him and the honour he had brought to them.

Dikshitharu wanted to share all his knowledge and learning and his way of life with his fellow men. Giving away the ancestral land and property to his youngest brother he planned to open a school for Vedic learning. He opened one on the beautiful banks of the river Malapahari, near Munivalli. He did a *Somayagna*, in which his expertise was acknowledged. He received an invitation to start a similar institution and establish a tradition of learning and research in Murugodu. Unable to deny the invitation, he moved to Murugodu, leaving the school at Munivalli to his brother. In the meantime, we hear, that he lost two wives one after another, leading to a marriage with Lakshminatha, in his 37th year.

It is not surprising if Dikshitharu's perception of life had changed. Probably he saw more clearly the outer world, as it really was, than before. He must have come to realize that all external learning is illusory if it isn't grafted within. Dikshitharu's austerities were provoked by an inner longing for a son, a progeny. The desire for son was a legitimate wish of a married man. It was approved by tradition as it was a sacred duty. *Dikshitharu* wanted to get a son through penance and austere life.

His first choice was *Sogala* Village the home of his ancestral deity Sri Somanatheshwara. Here he commenced the *Gayathrimanthra japa*. Fortified with what he derived at *sogala* he moved to *Subrahmanyakshetra* for an extended stay. Here he spent a year in renovation and restoration of the temple surroundings. He planted several trees like the banyan and the *Amla* (gooseberry plant) and sunk a well

too. He installed the idol, Swaprakasheshwara Linga, following the Shastric injunction. He then moved to Hipparigi, the holy place of Lord Marthanda Bhairava. Here he returned to doing *Gayathrimanthra japa* ceaselessly in repeated cycles. How long he stayed here we do not know. But one day Lord Marthanda Bhairava, came in his dream and said:

“Devotee supreme, I am pleased with your devotion and the austere life you have led. I know what desire has led you to this act. Do not worry about your progeny. Down south from here, is a well known place called Chidambara Kshethra. With its Panchasabhas, and *Akashalinga*, the holy place is renowned as *Gaythri grama*. Many seers and sages like Upamanyu, and Kanva, have attained their desired boons, successfully completing their penance. In this very place Brahma and Vishnu got blessed. Lord Chidambara the devotees darling, resides here always fulfilling the devotees wishes. Who can adequately describe the glory of this place? It is the seat of Mahasiddhas, those that have gained and accomplished their purposes and goals. This is devotees wish fulfilling spot, the holy ground for penance *tapobhoomi*, and a place where the divine light drives away the darkness of sin. Sage Vyasa, the primordial Guru, has elaborately sketched the glory of this place in his *Skandapurana*. Go to that holy place and Lord Chidambara, will be pleased with you and he will make his descent as your son.”

Dikshitharu, the veritable fund of penance, *thapodhana*, woke up to recall and review his dream and its meaning. The pious couple finishing the morning bath and prayers, securing the permission of Lord Marthanda Bhairava, left for the holy Chidambara town.

The holy ground of Chidambara was replete with many types of plants and tree. Here and there holy springs delighted the eyes. Several species of birds were flying across the open skies with their chirping and twitter. The trees were so big and dense that they didn't let the rays

of sun touch the earth. All around the holy place there were several flower gardens. The temple was looking grand with its golden domes and towers. Dikshitharu and his wife worshipped and propitiated the ground as a preliminary to commencing their penance.

Dikshitharu woke up before the *Brahmi* hour, around four in the morning and took his bath before sunrise to commence his *Sandhyavandana* and other daily prayers. He was now ready for the worship of Shiva as prescribed by ancient practice. The worship, an extended, was carried on without haste or rush. Sitting on a soft grass mat, *Dikshitharu*, went into the *Gayathrimanthra*, till noon. Bathing once again to refresh himself enjoying himself with a mind clean and clear as crystal, he worshipped Shiva, as a preamble to entering into a mood of long japa, deep into the caves of silence. With the onset of *pradoshakala*, the early part of the night or the last leg of the evening, he bathed in a pond nearby Shivateertha, to begin another round of worship of Shiva and japa that culminated in an indescribable state of *dhyana*, for as long a time as time didn't click, stretching itself into night.

We do not know what time of the night it was when Dikshitharu extracted a juice of tender grass. He offered as naivedya half a measure of this juice to Uma's consort. Uma's consort, Lord Shiva he then collected, the offered juice as prasada. It was his food and tonic. Resting a while on the deer skin *krishnajina*, Dikshitharu fixed his mind on Shiva. He had merged in Shiva as did a blend of milk and water.

One day while Dikshitharu was thus joyfully meditating on Shiva, the darkness of night approached. For Dikshitharu the Mahathma who was on a steadfast and austere penance, the auspicious time dawned. Chidambara appeared before him as soon as the cycle of manthra repetition was completed. Difficult it is to estimate the effect of his meritorious penance. Chidambara standing before him in his full glory, said aloud: "Dikshithendra, Supreme among the Dikshithas, wake up, get up, your penance has fructified. It has achieved its purpose. I feel

happily disposed towards you. I am pleased with your devotion and ardour. Tell me, what desire has prompted you into his formidable penance? I will fulfill it."

Dikshitharu engrossed in his Shiva meditation, sat unmoved not knowing that Shiva had descended before him. Sadashiva, the ocean of grace, placed his blessed hands on the head of Dikshitharu and gently tapped his shoulder to wake him up. The Lord, literally shouted, "Wake up, wake up". When the awakened Dikshitharu slowly opened his eyes a pleasant light had spread everywhere. Surprised at what he saw, he closed his eyes again and sat still. While a few moments passed thus, Dikshitharu, opened his eyes, awakening himself. He saw before him standing, the consort of Aparna, the Puranapurusha, the Supreme Being the puranas extol. His twisted and locked hair was bright, clean and pure. The three eyed He was wrapped in five robes and his physical frame was smeared with sacred ash, He appeared magnificent, bedecked with a chain of crystal clear white beads. The sight drowned Dikshitharu in the ocean of joy. Parvathi's Lord, darling of the devotees, had his wife Uma, on his left lap. He wore a chain of skulls and was decorated with a serpent around his neck. He was beaming with a pleasant smile on his face, with elephant hide thrown across his shoulders. On seeing Shiva with these ornaments and decorations, Dikshitharu mad with joy fell at the feet of the Lord, Shankara, who has compressed his compassion and kindness into a solid block, *dayaghana*, on seeing Dikshitharu, the devotee supreme lifted him up affectionately to embrace him. He said in a voice, a mix of command and entreaty, "Ask. What boons do you want? I will grant them however difficult they may appear. I am pleased and satisfied with your penance." Dikshitharu, with folded hands submitted: "Oh, Chandramouli, one, with the crescent moon as his crown, what boons do I seek? If you want to give, grant me Lord, Prabho unflinching and unshakable faith at thy feet."

Sadashiva *kripanidhi*, one who is wealthy with grace, addressing Dikshitharu, said "Brahmin superior, how can you forget your desire

for a son? Wasn't that desire that led you to this most difficult penance?" Dikshitharu had woken up and come back to the world around. He remembered his desire for a son. Looking up at Maheshwara he appealed, "Oh, treasure house of kindness, Ambikadhava, if it is so, then grant me a son, the one like you." Shankara's reply came forth with. He said: "Foremost among the Dikshitha's it is incumbent on me now, to take birth in the world for establishing dharma, uplifting the poor and humble and you desire for a son. I will myself take birth as your son. Conclude your austerities appropriately." The Lord had blessed.

Dikshitharu, appealed and asked. "If you are going to take a human form, give me a sign to identify you." Chidambareshwara said "I will give you the sign of my descent. Listen. As you see me born, you will find tender *bilva* (Bengal quince, *Aegle mesmelos*) leaves and *Akshathe* (reddened or yellow coloured rice grains) in my right ear".

The next moment the Lord disappeared. Awesome it was. Dikshitharu bowed down to the holy spot where the Lord had stood before.

Dikshitharu related the story of grace to his wife. The devoted Lakshmimatha, for that was her name, her husband's shadow, his mirror word and thought, stood wonder struck as Dikshitharu did. Dikshitharu and Lakshmimatha returned to Murugodu.

Notes:

The Chidambara temple is a very large one covering an area of 40 acres. The Panchamahabhas refer to five court halls. They are called the Chitsabha, Kanakasabha, Nruthysabha, Devasabha and Rajasabha. The Chithsabha is the hall of consciousness, Chith, if the names are indicative of their purpose and utility. Rituals and worship of the deities take place in the Kanakasabha. The Nruthysabha contains the icon of Nataraja, the dancing Shiva. Devasabha is the place where processions

are taken out. The vast Rajasabha contains a thousand pillars of large size. The Chithsabha may be the hall of Consciousness.

Akashalinga is meant to invoke the idea of Shiva, co terminus with the infinite dimension of the skies. He is to be seen in one's own inner eye, perception and not out there, because the outer world is too small to contain him. The Sanctum sanctorum is free from idols and icons.

* * * * *

Tapas is the primordial fervor, the original fire, the supreme concentration, the ultimate energy, the creative force that imitates the whole of cosmic movement.

The three major concepts of Indian wisdom and Man's awareness are tapas, rta and satya, ardour, order and truth. Owing to rta, this world is not a chaos but a cosmos, not an anarchic mass but an ordered and harmonious whole. Owing to satya the world is not a haphazard place, and irresponsible game, and inconsistent and purely fluid appearance. Satya is not primarily an apistemic truth but an ontic truthfulness, an ontological fullness with content weight and reality namely being. (cf. Raimundo Panikkar, the Vedic Experience, Manthramanjari, An anthology of the Vedas for the modern man and contemporary celebration. P.59.

Chapter III

The Descent of Chidambara

While Dikshitharu, bestowed with Shiva's grace, is joyful and happy in his daily worship of Shiva, time was ripe for grace to manifest and descend. Lakshminatha the great lady devoted to her husband Lakshminatha is pregnant since Shiva as promised has entered her bosom. Dikshitharu feels happy and fortunate. He thinks he can look forward to play and frolic with Chidambara whose company is difficult to secure even through the arduous paths of japa, yagna, and dana. He feels fulfilled, satisfied, in having done that, which he wanted to do. Lakshminatha's pregnancy, like the waxing moon in the bright half, (called shukla paksha) is growing. The signs of advancing pregnancy have added charm and luster to her beauty. She appears robust and vibrant, her face aglow with a shine similar to that of a flame that radiates from Brahman. The joy of onlookers is like the pleasantness of the moon light. She experiences several signs of ecstasy, devotion closes her eyes focusing effortlessly on the light that is glowing within. Since the entry of Chidambara into her inner realm, her perception of the outer world, consisting of moving and unmoving objects, is erased and lost, as also its dual and differentiating characteristic. She sees and feels the world as one single manifestation of Chidambara. She cannot and does not, see anything other than Chidambara; hear any sound other than that of Chidambara. That great lady, having harmoniously merged in Chidambara in all her three states of being: waking, dreaming and of deep sleep, is resting in happiness true and real.

Dikshitharu is wonder struck to witness his devoted wife, lost always in a state of joyful dhyana, meditation. One day witnessing his wife magestically resting in Brahmananda, the joy of contemplating on the Brahman, Dikshitharu asked "what makes you sit this way for long hours, in dhyana? What desire have you in your mind? If you speak out and let me know, I will fulfill it." She, in her state of harmony, had blended herself with Chidambara, in form and shape, as one

undifferentiated being, spoke nothing in reply. Quietness was she. Disturbed or embarrassed or both, at her restful poise thinking aside what might have happened to her, he asked again in a voice, that was really loud "Tell me, what desire troubles you"? Opening her eyes and directing her sight at her husband, the devoted wife said:

"How come, you ask me, of my desire when I discover myself free from all desires"? I have spread myself in fullness all over and everywhere. Immersed completely in the joy of joyousness, I am myself the prime cause, for all (that happens). To the devotees, it is I, who confers on them, their real state (of being). I will establish Dharma and tie up Kali, hand and foot. I will instruct and teach Brahmakarmas, actions and deeds that are in conformity with Brahma. I will put an end to practices that have sprouted out of Kali, the contemporary time."

Dikshitharu was most happy to hear her words issuing out of jnana and dharma. Desirous of listening to more such words emanating from dharma, Dikshitharu shot more questions at her. To all such interrogations she answered but once." I harbour no other desire. I desire the establishment of dharma and its practice and I desire protection of devotees (devotion) and uplift the world and its transactions." At one another time she said "I only think of one thing. When does Shankara, the Lord of Kailasa, grant me darshana as a beautiful boy"?

The devoted wife of Dikshitharu gave pleasure to her husband by her words of Advaita, non dual perception of life disclosing and heralding the prospective Lordship of the embryonic Chidambara. Really lost in such joyous events, Dikshitharu did the several rites of passage including Seemantha, a rite performed during the first pregnancy.

Lakshminatha's pregnancy completed nine months and entered the tenth. It was the dawn of the first day in the week, Monday November 20th of 1758 A.D. (Shaka 1680, Pramathinama Samvathsara, Karthika Krishna Shasti) The devotee's darling descended. At the descent of Jagannatha, the wind of pleasant touch blew, the ten Directions and the

waters and the consciousness of Sadhus and Saints had become pure and pristine. The heavenly drums roared and fragrant flowers showered from the skies. That divine moment the blessed couple saw before them standing, a captivating presence of an eight year old boy.

The labour room was lit up with the brightness radiating from the pleasing form of the eight year old. As signaled before, there were the fresh tender bilva leaves and the Akshathe in his right ear. It was bedecked with ornaments. The bewitching smile of the eight year old, with the chain of rudraksha beads around his neck was captivating. Dikshitharu was in supreme joy and contentment. Those thaporusis, huge mounds of austere penance, placed their heads on the feet of that eight year old boy. Not satisfied, they prostrated before the boy. They stood up and with folded hands and invoked:

“Hey Sathyakeerthi, renowned for truth, Umamadhava, you have kept the word you gave. I have identified your form and I know for certain that it is you, the Lord of Kailasa. Hey Girijaramana, Samba, Mruthyunjaya, you have descended in human form to keep your promise though you are ‘birthless’, (outside the cycle of birth and death). You are an icon of jnana, that which transcends illusion. You transcend the six modes of being. Your descent is to protect the devotees, I am aware. I bow to you, the one whose fear drives divine beings like Brahma and other celestial beings, to do their assigned duties. Deva, I do namaskar. The one, chanting and remembering whose name, burns into ashes the heaps of sins of infinite births, is you, who is now born as my son. How can I then describe in full, the good fortune that is bestowed on me? I am overwhelmed. The whole of my lineage is uplifted. Oh, Ambikadhava, ocean of mercy you are and do not present to the world, this form of yours, that is illusion transcendent. Kindly withdraw this vision, regress yourself into an infant form and gratify and delight the joy of my inner being. This invocation I renew without a break.”

Dikshitharu fell again at the feet of the boy and placed his head on it. Husband and wife stood up again, looking intently at the boy form

that stood before them, as though they were taking its imprint on their hearts.

Lakshmimatha not satisfied perhaps, fell at the boy's feet once again; her joy swelled and her hairs stood on end. She was ecstatic. Her throat choked, copious tears ran down her cheeks. With folded hands she spoke again:

“Shankara, kindness incarnate, my desire you have fulfilled. Becoming a son to me, you have liberated forty two branches of my lineages. I know who you are. The Yogis try hard to get a glimpse of the unworldly charm of your taintless form, a cure for all worldly ills. May my heart retain that form forever. I am now aware you can incarnate yourself into any form you care for the benefit of your devotees, though birthless and formless you are. As vouchsafed, you have taken birth as my son, though you are a treasure mound of Jnana. Now grant us the pleasure of witnessing your babe hood and childhood play, as any mother desires. Nursing you and playing with you is a joy one is unlikely to get without the merits of a crore of births. And that joy has come to be mine. Take from me, I beg of you, as much service, as you wish and I am ready to render. Grant this prayer in full. I don't think much of deliverance or *Moksha* when I have seen you in person, direct face to face. Oh, Lord Supreme, grant me devotion steadfast and unflinching. This is all I pray.”

Picking up his mother who had fallen at his feet, Chidambara said:

“Ava, Mother, all your desires will surely be fulfilled. Give up doubts that your mind is a host to. Pleased with the austere penance you did, I have chosen to descend as your son. I am Jagadeesha the Supreme Lord of the Universe and Sarvakarana, the prime cause of all things. To prove to you that I have descended, to confirm my descent, I have taken this boy form. Whoever reads with fervor, the invocation you have made to me, their desires will be met. Their sons and daughters and their children will be blessed. They become prosperous and

wealthy.” The next moment the Lord had disappeared. A new born babe was crying at the place where Chidambara stood.

Looking at the beautiful and immaculate babe crying helplessly, Lakshmimatha lost no time and took the babe into her lap. She was a witness to a painless delivery. The devoted wives of the neighbourhood coming to know that Dikshitharu is blessed with a baby boy, gathered around Lakshmimatha and blessed the new born. Dikshitharu invited the Brahmins to do the rites of birth, Jathakarma, and presented them with cows and gold and land. Expert astrologers came to determine the time of birth, the planetary conjunctions associated with that time. Horoscope of the new born babe was cast and looking at Dikshitharu they said: “Respected Dikshithare, listen to our reading of the chart drawn on the basis of the time of birth. One, born at this hour is a being who has come to lift, elevate and deliver mankind. He is possessed of powers to grace and bless as he can curse and destroy. A look at the planetary chart reveals that the Lord of the Universe has descended. His name and fame lasts as long as Sun and Moon do. The sign of his limbs and bodily parts indicate, that he would be World Teacher and even the Gods volunteer to serve him.”

Marthandadikshitharu, did the Namakarana rite, and named the new born as Chi Dam Ba Ra, a name of four phonetic letters.

Chidambara began growing like the waxing moon giving immense joy to his parents through his frolics and play.

Notes: Rudraksha: Binomial name is *Elacocarpus ganitrus*.

Chapter IV

The Great Play of Childhood

As Chidambara was growing, his childhood frolics delighted his parents who were joyous witness. He dares to catch the flame of fire in his palm and jump into the glowing fire. If he is stopped in one he turns to another. He makes a shamble of deities kept in order in the puja room. Next he regales himself by the sound of pots and pans. Tumbling down Lakshmimatha has too much on her hands to prevent her son mixing one grain with another. Mixing the grains with the flour he hurls vessels and plates all around. Giving up her daily chores if Lakshmimatha chooses to gaze and keep a watch on him, he renews his play with redoubled spirit.

Chidambara who is an entity total and perfect in himself suckles his mother and drinks milk only to conform to worldly norms and expectations. If she goes out on some work he follows her crying and weeping. If she is engrossed in some activity the one who is all capable and yields himself to bhakthi, rolls around shouting and crying aloud only to present some supernatural vision. When the mother catching him in his act hands him over to his father, Chidambara regales his father with his baby talk. He signals that he is hungry by squeezing his father’s breast to suckle it and diverts attention by his baby talk. When the mother takes him to the kitchen ready with several dainty dishes and feeds him one morsel after another the tiny food balls easy to devour, he runs away after one or two morsels are fed. When she forcibly catches him and resumes her feeding, Chidambara tries to wriggle out once again thus leading to a great play of hide and seek. With great love and affection Lakshmimatha pleads:” Appa, dear one, Chidambara, you shouldn’t go like that isn’t our Chidambara a good boy? Would he do that? No, eat this little morsel and we will call it a finish. I have no time left to sit with you and play.” Lakshmimatha endearingly cajoles. Chidambara with willing affection opens his mouth and that fortunate mother sees a wonderful panorama of the world

projected from the face of her son. She sees her motherland, Bharatha. Inside it is her own town and home where she is feeding her darling son. Beholding all that is presented from her son's face, she closes her eyes in reverential devotion and goes to narrate in detail all the wondrous things that her eyes were a witness to. In a state of joy supreme, Marthanda Dikshitharu replies "No mortal human, is your son. Did you forget that the Lord Parameshwara himself has descended" thus sounding a warning as well as an awakening. Looking at his son in utter devotion, and with his hands folded, he pleads "Jagannatha, disclose not thyself, at this stage of your and our lives. Please remain hidden away from the world with his hands folded, he pleads, "Jagannatha, disclose not thyself, at this stage of your and our lives. Please remain hidden away from the world."

Chidambara smiling away the incident in simple disregard insists on being fed without delay so that he may return to his play. Divine sports difficult to comprehend even for Brahma and other god heads, Chidambara was presenting to his parents every day. He would run away and come back jumping, dancing and singing. Thus the childhood sport of Parameshwara was on display in the back and front yards of Dikshitharu's house open for the towns men to come and witness, a sight that the celestial beings didn't get.

One day Lakshminatha was giving an oil bath holding firmly to him who was no other than Bhagavan himself. It was he who drove and activated Indra and other Gods and it was he from whose toe Bhagirathi sprouted. It is he on whose ground support the Mount Meru stands aloft. It is he who enslaves himself to his devotees so that he can serve them, holds on to the wall as a support to walk. It is he who is the very source from which all living beings derive their food. It is he who craves for food and milk to fulfill various desires of his devotees. Such a one was Chidambara who gave delight to his father and mother through his childhood games and plays.

"Who, what shall be the object of our worship? To whom shall we direct it"? There is a God but he is unknown to us.

"The divine is an integral part indeed the kernel of human life. God and gods are living realities."

The vedic text doesn't say that the name of God is unknown...

It says only that it is neither a proper name, nor a substantive, nor a substance,

"nor a "thing" but simply the interrogative pronoun itself. Never has a pronoun been more properly used...."

To whom is not simply a theoretical question. It is the object of our adoration, the term of our worship, the aim of our sacrifice...

God cannot be known if by knowledge we understand a mere mental consciousness; he can be reached only by sacrifice by holy action...

The living God... Is not a concept, not a defined and graspable reality but rather the term of the actual sacrifice..... finds in the dynamic" to whom" its justification and reward.

Sacrifice is not a manipulation of the divine but the existential leap by which Man plunges as it were into the not-yet-existent with the confidence that the very plunge effects the emergence of that reality: into which he plunges.

Notes: (cf: Raimundo Panikkar. PP 59-61)



Chapter V

Brahmacharya, A Life of Discipline

As Chidambara continued to regale his parents with his play and frolics the Sun took the northern way, *Uttarayana*. Dikshitharu ceremonially initiated his son into *Akshara* the word imperishable; its soul was *Om*, the primordial syllable of great mystical meaning after adoring Ganapathi and Saraswathi. Chidambara learnt in a single day all the moolaksharas, the primary and basic letters and asked his father: “What next”? Bewildered at his son’s capacity to grasp and absorb, he initiated him into *Shiksha* and the five other wings of the Veda. Within a month the young one had mastered the *Vedangas* (the six wings of the *Veda*). Drivining his son’s power and ability to grasp, retain and cumulate and recall at will, Dikshitharu performed the Upanayana ceremony for his son Chidambara.

Beautiful Chidambara glowed with a world transcending brilliance on being initiated into the life of Brahmacharya. He wore a sacred thread across his shoulder as its mark. When gold gets the dazzle of a diamond what is there to ask? It was like the very sun coming down to earth as a youngster. He shone like a *Vedapurusha*, Veda manifested into a primordial Man. Chidambara was bedecked with a *danda*, *kamandala*, *mekhala* and *kaupina*. He held a holy staff and an open mouthed wooden vessel in his hand. He wore a lion cloth around the waist besides the sacred thread across his neck.

Beginning with a morning bath the external purification as a preamble to securing the purification of the inner organs, he did Sandhyavandana before worshipping the Fire God Agni. He rendered loving and unwearied service to his Guru which provided the preliminary groundwork for embarking on the study of the Vedas.

Marthandadikshitharu, likewise performed the upanayana of his second son Prabhakara, to provide as though a companion for Vedic

studies. The day obviously began with *snana* and *sandhyavandana*, the passport for daily schooling and studies. After propitiating the sound Om, he did shanthipatha followed by the practice of Vedamanthra recitation under the tutelage of their father. The young one’s accent was faultless, every word and sound uttered rhythmically as prescribed at the very first rendering. Dikshitharu taught his children the four Vedas, and all the sastras connected with them by custom and convention. These two were not ordinary students, needless to say. Witnessing their attitudes, their skills, and their presence of mind under all circumstances, the scholarly pundits were awe-struck, to use a much familiar expression. They were witness to a world transcending wonder.

Since the whole gamut of learning was done in a span of a year their teachers were compelled to reminisce and say: “Oh, no, these are not ordinary men: they must be Nara and Narayana” alluding to the celebrated companionship of Arjuna and Lord Krishna. The two are compared to the renowned Krishna and Balarama of our heritage and their schooling in the Sandipani Ashrama. These two not only learn and master their learning; they make their companions learned by their association. They also transmitted their learning to their friends and fellowmen. Above all they were Brahmanishthas volunteering to a life dedicated to the dictation of the Brahman. Dikshitharu lit the fire of Agni to commence the sacrificial worship, Chidambara became an Adhvaryu; he became an officiating priest in charge of the ritual. He recited the Yajur manthras and offered the oblations.

The pundits who had come to teach Chidambara and Prabhakara were shy of opening their mouth in the presence of these two. They sat spell bound witnessing their intonation, the style of utterance, the movements of hands, fingers and palm. The sickly, the unwell, the diseased, who so ever they may be got cured and felt relieved of their pain or problem when they sought Chidambara’s help. When Chidambara’s words were diamond anointed, for they cut the most difficult of worldly ties. Chidambara’s words were deeds indeed. They

fructified at their utterance. One who earned Chidambara's grace equaled the divine Indra and even the gods were helpless before Chidambara's wrath.

Many wise men and scholars observed on witnessing the sport of Chidambara thus: "This Mahathma, how many more would he unleash when grown up if he presents so many miracles and supernatural deeds at this young age? We feel tongue tied and speechless. Oh God! grant us a long life so that we may feel fulfilled witnessing those wondrous deeds. We would like to serve this Mahathma and feel fulfilled and finally attain Kailasa the state of living in the domain of Shiva, Kailasa."

It was in this way they invoked and adored Chidambara. Who is indeed competent in this world to describe fully the sport of Chidambara? Even if one listens to an abridged version he will be redeemed from the strangulating ties of the world. He who listens to the mysterious story of Chidambara in deep devotion and unhurried patience will be rid of all sins and be blessed with a long life in the world.

Chapter VI

Prana Prathisthapana

(Infusion of Life)

Marthandappa of Hosur celebrated the Gajagowri festival every year. It is primarily a ladies festival. It is the women who worship ceremoniously goddess Gowri astride an elephant as the name itself suggests. This year too Marthanda went to invite his Guru Marthandappa Dikshitharu to be the priest and guide the ladies in their worship. Dikshitharu suggested that the young Chidambara would substitute for him, as he was busy otherwise. Marthandappa faithfully nodded his head in acceptance without asking a question. Young Chidambara was escorted to his residence at Hosur after taking the permission of his Guru.

Chidambara though far too young to be a priest in the eyes of the world was received with appropriate honour and respect due to his status. Moreover he was his guru's nominee. Marthandappa called his wife and said: "Get ready with the materials for worship. Because of your good fortune, Guru's son has come to conduct and direct the proceeding's." The lady of the house and other women came and sat on the wooden planks ready to commence the worship. Chidambara kindness incarnate playing the role of a priest also came and took the seat meant for him. Looking at the attractive figure of the six year old resembling Shyamasundara, Lord Krishna is described that way, the blue hued, all the ladies were struck with wonder. Perceiving the beautiful face of the Guru's son, his vivacity and lucid pronunciation and clear accent, the worshippers were awestruck. Out of their natural frivolity, they tried to make fun of the youngster. Laughing and talking among themselves they said light-heartedly "Look at that Vamanamurthy, the little master, how sweet he looks!" They enjoyed drawing him into some conversation or other.

Watching the women's indulgence in frivolous ridicule, Chidambara the killer of pride smilingly asked the women: "Oh! What are you asking?"

I haven't learnt anything. Since I am sent by my father, I have come to have a nice and dainty meal after finishing somehow the priestly job assigned to me." Listening to his funny declaration Marthandappa's wife went to her husband and said: "This one is still a young one; what kind of a direction can he give? How can he conclude the worship and story narration at the end"? Marthandappa displeased with his wife's attitude said: "Dear one, He is Guru's offspring. Do worship as directed with a restful mind. Improper it is to be lacking in faith. The lady regained her composure and got ready for the worship.

Chidambara commenced the worship procedure with the initial rite of Sankalpa, and Ganapathi worship. The worshipper has to resolve into himself his willingness to do the worship. Then the young Chidambara installed the deity of Gajagowri with his own hands. Gowri is another name of Parvathi, Shiva's consort. The worshipper or the priest does the pranaprathistapana uttering the sacred syllables called beeja mantra with appropriate signs, beejanyasa. The deity is invoked by the worshipper himself before he begins his worship. This is a normal ritual done mechanically. But not so was Chidambar's act. The clay elephant on which Gowri was seated was filled with life and became alive; all its limbs and parts becoming activated. When the life filled and activated the elephant began to move of its own volition. Chidambara signalled it to remain arrested and concluded the worship as laid down by custom. At the end, Chidambara read the story of Gajagowri, its meaning, purpose and utility. This is a post worship requirement.

Chidambara's rendering was so pleasing, clear and touching that the mirth-making ladies listened with rapt attention. The (young) Mahathma received thamboola and dakshina the prescribed objects given by the worshipper to the priest and returned home on a horse. He bowed down to his father and reported that he had completed satisfactorily the job assigned to him.

In Marthandappa's house the elephant with Gowri atop slowly descended from its holy niche and began to move all over the house. It

was not at all a heartening sight to Marthandappa's wife who was called by the onlookers to see what is happening. What she saw was to put it mildly devastating. The little elephant, the clay toy had become real with life, prana in it. It moved wherever it liked lifting up and down its proboscis careless to its consequences. The festive household was in shambles with materials thrown about all over the house. A living elephant though toy like in size, created a confusion that was beyond their understanding and imagination. They did not know whether to be amused or to be feared and rescued, when a baby elephant went wherever there were people to dance with it. Marthandappa, who was also a witness thought aside: "This feat must be an unintended demonstration of the power of Chidambara; the stupid ladies indulging in ridicule cannot understand otherwise. The clay elephant is life filled energized and activated because of the intrinsic power of the Mahathma."

Marthandappa came to Murugodu and submitted to his Guru and appealed: "What then is the way out? Until the elephant is regressed to its former state, we cannot have peace" he begged.

Dikshitharu listened to what his devotee reported. He called Chidambara and asked: "Appa, Chidambara, what have you done in Marthandappa's house? How did that clay elephant get life infused into it? Tell me the truth." The branchmachari appearing to be a little flustered said to his father: "(All knowing) Father, I haven't done anything that is forbidden! As directed, it is true I went there and guided Gowri worship. I have done pranaprathistapana only as instructed by you. If the clay elephant has come alive because of that I do not know."

Marthandappa discerningly smiled and said: "yes, I know what you mean; go back now and do the uttarapuja the post worship rites". Accordingly Chidambara went to Marthandappa's house and directed uttarapuja and offered the akshathas sacred grains of rice.

The moving elephant returned to its lifeless material state as an idol. Witnessing, this astonishing act and incomprehensible event, the assembled people shouted in joy and fell at the feet of Chidambara.

Many said: “Chidambara, you are paramathma indeed who has come to us as a boy. You entice us with your presence. Your acts depict that you can create, destroy, and preserve and regulate the lives of all living beings. Oh! Wondrous boy, may thou be victorious. We always remember you as kindness manifested. Ignorant ones we are, we beseech you to protect us always. In this fashion several prayers were offered. After dining, Chidambara along with the host Marthandappa came home and bowed down to his father. His silence conveyed what words couldn't.

“Despite my subtle pleas and sometimes open instructions, you are letting your superhuman powers out under the guise of a boyish prank. I know you are none other than the consort of Girija, Shiva. Your fame will spread far and wide in the three worlds soon. Yet I beseech you, do as I say, my son exalted. If you reveal yourself and your deeds, pilgrims flock around you denying any access to you as our own son. Since you have descended to revive dharma and hold it fast as a protective shield against hostile forces, service to parents is also a part of your prescribed conduct. Confine yourself to this guideline as long as we live and then enlarge, release yourself into the games and sports you have come to present to the world”.

Chidambara bowed down to his father signaling that his heart acknowledged and valued those words.

Notes:

Worship of gods is a daily ritual in Indian homes even today. Many may have given up and some may do in their own way. It is a ritual that exists in its neglect or on observance.

The gods we worship are our own creations as we recite the pranaprathisthapanam mantra. It may be a mantra which heroically invites the gods to come down and give the benefit of their worship to

the worshipper. Probably the gods too must be eagerly looking forward every morning for such a call as friends and kin look forward to each morning. Somewhere the fire got extinguished and died down. The Manthra became mechanical lacking in scruples. Five or six year old Chidambara did what worship really meant.

Chapter VII

Recovery of lost treasure

In this story we go from Hosur to Hallihal another village sanctified by the visit and stay of Chidamabara. Regardless of their geographical location, they are neighbourhoods because of their common heritage.

Ramachandrappa and his wife lived in the village Hallihal. Both husband and wife were devoted to Marthandadikshitharu and held him as their master and mentor. Ramachandrappa had nourished a long time wish to invite his beloved guru and his young son Chidambara, home one day and offer them something as a token of self-satisfaction and fulfillment. He was aware of the joy of giving and all that it brings forth.

Marthandadikshitharu too was ready for the event, so it seemed. When Ramachandrappa humbly begged his guru to visit his house and spend some time with them, he readily accepted. Dikshitharu and the young Chidambara were accorded a simple but sincere reception of love and affection shorn of any public display. He offered them some object as a gift filled with his own soul and its deep yearnings of thanks and gratitude. He also begged them to rest for the night and grace him with their divine company. The father and son, accepted with joy whatever Ramachandrappa and his wife gave them.

Chidambara was massaging his father's feet and legs before going to bed. As he was thus engaged, he couldn't help overhearing the conversation between the host and his wife. The wife was telling her husband Marthandappa in a hushed voice:

“Shouldn't we inform about yesterday's theft in our house and how our hard earned savings, all of it is lost, without a pie left behind? How do we make our living here after? If he is kind to us he may lift us out of this difficulty”.

The husband said: ‘I don't think so; it isn't proper. It would be like asking for a pittance sitting under the Kamadhenu, the wish fulfilling

tree. Satpurushas, holy persons, can make anything happen. Beg them for such paltry things? It isn't done. Addressing a prayer for worldly pleasure and happiness isn't right for us. Behold and wake up and get in touch with the Atman and peace. Good and bad, gains and losses occur as a consequence of divine design. There is no escape, from the consequence of divine design. There is no escape, from the consequences of karma; it must be savoured. Incorrect and unjust it is to be elated with happiness and be dejected with sorrow. Think you are blessed for certain; for ‘He plunders before he bestows’. Therefore, think not of what has happened; rest in satisfaction”

Young Chidambara's inner being was touched. To say so is wrong. He was one integrated being undivided as inner and outer. Finding an excuse to call Ramachandrappa out, he called him and said: “I want to answer the call of nature; take a lamp; let us go.” Ramachandrappa brought a lamp and showed some spot in the open quite close to his residence.

“Men of knowledge don't use the village limits (for such acts); they go beyond (the village precincts)”, Chidambara said.

Ramachanarappa took the young boy outside the village limits. Young Chidambara wanted to go farther. “No, not so close a place to the village as this one; it gets polluted and unclean,” Chidambara said with disapproval.

Taking the boy a little farther, Ramachandrappa said: “Now, you may use this place. Dense forest lies beyond and there is a threat of wild animals.” Chidambara smiled and said:” “When I am here, (Time the Great)”.

The two walked another mile or two and Chidambara stopped near a huge tree trunk and called Ramachandrappa who was virtually sleep walking perhaps following the young boy. He was feeling confused with the young boy's mysterious midnight walk into darkness. He said, unable to overcome his impatience and consequent anger deviating from

his normal obedience, “Why did you bring me this far in the mid night? I feel terribly sleepy; what is in your mind, tell me”?

“Come, dig around a little here; you will be happy” Chidambara ordered, disregarding his host’s overt annoyance.

Ramachandrappa scratched the earth around the root with his bare hands and at a palm’s depth, a box was found which was in fact his own. He sat perplexed for quite some time. Collecting himself into a mood of satisfied restfulness and peace, he caught hold of young Chidmbara’s feet and uttered loud prayers that the woods echoed in participatory joy. Lifting him up Chidambara said:

“Take this home fast but don’t tell my father”.

Chidambara went to sleep but not his host. He shared with his wife the midnight windfall, a recovery of a lost treasure by Chidambara’s grace; the darkness of night didn’t subdue the joy they felt.

Next morning, when Dikshitharu announced his departure he was persuaded to extend his stay and leave after the noon meal. A lunch party had been arranged in honour of the guests and to all the brahmins. Looking at the joyous aura around his disciple, Dikshitharu sought an explanation.

A grateful Ramachandrappa looked at the young master who gave his consent to disclose the previous night’s happenings. Then everyone said in utmost faith and devotion ‘Jai Chidambara’.

Chapter VIII Dead Ox Revived

Marthandadikshitharu had his devotees and disciples all around his place. He was respected for what he said and did. There was no cleavage between the two. Everyone knew how difficult it was to gain such a control over one’s tongue or mind.

Mallappa a resident of Bettasur was an ardent devotee and follower of Dikshitharu. He wanted to build a Shiva temple in his village. Chaithra Shuddha panchami had been fixed as the auspicious time, Muhurtha for installing and consecrating the idol by his Guru Marthandadikshitharu. It corresponded to sometime in March-April of 1768 according to some estimate. Naturally a large number of people from villages nearby had come to witness the ceremony.

But one well known in those parts as an astrologer asked Mallappa to advance the ceremony to a later date; he thought that the time fixed was inauspicious, affected as it was, by ‘Mruthyu Yoga’ forces inviting death. He also suggested a different and more auspicious time for the purpose.

Mallappa was too faithful a devotee to be swayed by others. He stuck to the muhurtha already fixed and started the celebration. He offered the preliminary worship and prayers of purification accompanied by women carrying auspicious materials for worship as the brahmins chanted appropriate Vedic mantras.

As soon as Mallappa crossed the threshold of his residence, a messenger brought a bad news. His prized ox castrated bull had collapsed and dead after some struggle. Mallappa didn’t know what to do. The spurned astrologer who was there at that time felt that not only was his reading testified but was also convinced that the present Muhurtha fixed by Dikshitharu was inauspicious.

“At least now give up your obstinacy; day after tomorrow there is an auspicious moment. Advance the proceedings to that date.” The astrologer reiterated.

Right at that moment so to say, appeared the young Chidambara. He shone with Brahmathejas, radiance of the Brahman. He wore a sack cloth and a grass belt around his waist and his hand held a 'Kalasha' a water pot. The astrologer addressing Chidambara said:

"Rejecting my forewarned objections to the present Muhurtha, Mallappa reposed faith in your father's advice."

He didn't say events have proved him right and Chidambara's father wrong.

Chidambara ignoring the astrologer's interruptions asked Mallappa:

"Why? What has caused the sudden lull in activities? Why do you look pale and disturbed, why? Little time left for the auspicious minute; you can't be indolent and let it go; cheer up and let us go to the temple."

Mallappa distraught and agonized said: "Son, Let us install the idol at some other time; the present is inauspicious as it is shadowed by 'Mruthyu Yoga' the deadly conjunction. Fearing something dreadful, I have stopped the proceedings."

"You must be deluded; otherwise you wouldn't disregard and violate the Guru's injunction", Chidambara asserted and said: "When my father has fixed the auspicious time how can there be 'Mruthyu Yoga'? Don't get skeptical listening to the ignoramus wicked. Hasten to the Shiva Temple. Let us install the Shiva idol".

"Respected son of my Guru, like the fly in the very first morsel, I stopped because of the impediment at the very beginning", Mallappa confessed. A smiling Chidambara enquired "What (kind of an) obstruction was it? Isn't there any countervailing remedy? Why go on thinking about it?"

Mallappa was ready with a reply. He said: "God's dispensation brooks no countervailing action. An ox of mine, fastened firmly to the peg fell down dead a few minutes ago."

Chidambara with a smile on his face said:

"Mallappa, you are not right in your inference. What great hurdle is it for you to worry about? Give up your ignorance. When the crown of Guru's grace is on your head, what does this obstruction do to you? Walk fast to Shiva Temple. The time fixed for the Shiva idol installation is auspicious because it is the Guru's word and you, the head of all these activities, are a Gurubhakta. How can, then, any impediment, arise? Set aside the doubts in your mind. My father has given you the most auspicious time and how can that be vitiated by 'Mruthyuyoga'? I will show the power of that Muhurtha to you now. When the auspicious karma is going on how can Yama, the Lord of Death, take away the life of the ox? Let us see his power and strength."

With those words Chidambara walked with Mallappa to the place where the ox had fallen dead. The castrated bull merged in the five elements, was lying inarticulate. Chidambara, with his nectarine sight, glanced at it and asked: "Is this the obstruction causing ox?"

Without waiting for a reply he sprinkled the kalasha water all over the ox, from the horn to its tail and addressed the supposedly dead ox: "Son get up soon. A great ceremony is held up because of you. Oh king of oxen, wake up into life"

Chidambara's words were as nectarine as his caressing touch was rejuvenating. The ox stood up kicking its legs.

Mallappa fell at the feet of Chidambara washing them with his tears of joy and gratitude. He was ecstatic and broke into poetic prayer. Young Chidambara lifted him up and said: "You are a great devotee and who can forestall your obedient services to the Lord and mankind? Proceed with the installation ceremony."

Mallappa, observing the due rites, installed the Shiva idol to the joy and happiness of everyone present here. The accurate astrologer realized how dumb and stupid he could be in the face of divine presence. He fell at the feet of Chidambara seeking forgiveness.

“Why prostrate to me? What do I have in me to deserve it? The ox was revived because of the auspiciousness of the muhurtha fixed by my father. I am a young brahmchari a celibate in word and deed whereas you are a well versed scholar. Please place your hands of assurance on my head and bless me. ‘Chidambara’s humility was unpretentious, divine.

Those who read or listen to the infinite plays of Chidambara’s Brahmacharya, and to the devotees' promise and herald, will be rid of their various sins.

Chapter IX

Marriage

Chidambara past seventeen had served a full tenure of brahmacharya, a celibate life of discipline, obedience and service. The display of his supernatural powers despite his father’s entreaties, was perhaps also a part of a game plan beyond human explanation and understanding. Marthandadikshitharu instructed his son that it was time to break his vow of celibacy and get married and enter the grihasthashrama.

One Lingappa also known as Madalli of a nearby village came forward with a proposal of offering his daughter Saraswathi matha in marriage to Chidambara. Dikshitharu found the proposal acceptable. Offering one’s daughter in marriage to an eligible bachelor, is a ceremony as well as a celebration of giving. It is a father’s responsibility as well as a duty of great significance and fulfillment. It is this offering that is rejoiced. The ability to offer isn’t given to all.

Lingappa offered his daughter with love and devotion to Chidambara. Lord Parameshwara with his consort Parvathi is said to have witnessed the proceedings as a mark of approval and sanction. Lingappa’s joy and satisfaction was full. He offered his all to the newly wedded couple.

Marthandadikshitharu was a happy man and he desired nothing more. He also got his second son Prabhakara married. Chidambara’s service to his father continued undiminished in any form because of his new status. On the other hand he had increased responsibilities.

Since Ishwara himself had descended, his parivara, entourage, had also taken birth in different forms and places. Some had taken birth as his devotees and they were functioning as his servants. Some, born as children were very close and intimate with him. Some as students were learning under his tutelage. Goddesses, parvathi and Bhagirathi,

incarnating themselves as Savithri and Sarswathi were looking forward to the company of Chidambara. He had already married Savithri.

Not long after, one day Chidambara went to his father and said: “Father, I have something strange to tell you. An astrologer came to me and read my palm. He said that I am destined to have two wives. I am unable to grasp its implications.”

Dikshitharu smiled at his son and said: “Son, I know who you are; let your wishes be fulfilled.”

A few days later a brahmin approached and prostrated before Chidambara in implicit devotion.

Chidambara asked: “Sir, from where are you and where are you going? What makes you come to me”?

The brahmin replied: “Sir, being omniscient, you feign no knowledge? Knowing what is happening within me, you want to hear it aloud from my own mouth. I will do so. Please listen”, he said and began to relate a long lineage: To the east, from here, is a place called Shellikeri. There lived a pious brahmin called Manigiri. He had a devoted wife by name Krishnamatha. They had a son who was known for his adoration of Shiva; and his wife Gangamatha, was also a devoted wife. Just as the moon rises from the sea so did a son named Bhishta issued out from their union. You might have heard of his famous deeds and actions. His supernatural deeds and actions only you can divine; not for me to expatiate. Sakharamatha was Bhishta’s wife and she gave birth to a daughter of extraordinary beauty and charm. Even the gods and divine beings are after her. “When they were thinking about a suitable groom for this heavenly beauty, a brahmin came and mentioned about you and all that needs to be known. The couple felt overjoyed to hear his words. The damsel has emaciated herself in the thought, whether or not Sarveshwara, the Lord of everything, would accede to their proposal and accept her. “I am sent by Bhishta who is unable to contain the heavenly prospect before him. Please inform us about your decision.

Chidambara reported this conversation to his father who accorded permission without any delay. Chidambara was also thinking on similar lines. He said to himself: “Now that I have married Saraswathimatha, who is no other than Goddess Parvathi, Lord Shiva’s consort, when does Savithri who again is none other than Bhagirathi, Shiva’s another consort come to me as my second wife”? Chidambara held the hand of Saraswathimatha (a manifestation of Bhagirathi) and the wedding was celebrated with joyous devotion and thankfulness.

Chidambara continued his service to his parents unhampered by the knowledge of his divine descent. Marthandadikshitharu was not only his father but also his Guru.

Chidambara enslaved himself to his father and Guru for true service. True service acknowledges no predetermined limits to its operation. He gave no opportunity to his father, mentor, to feel dissatisfied with the services received. Chidambara woke up before his father did and went to bed only after his father did. Service was self-giving and the joy it gave, the senses didn’t know how to reckon.

Chapter X

Nirvana of Parents

Marthandadikshitharu's advanced age, his extended family with grandchildren, his widespread fame and a large circle of devotees did not affect in the least, his personal life. He was a god's devotee humble and unpretentious, although he knew more than anyone else, who Chidambara was. That he was his son did not overshadow the truth: 'Chidambara is Lord Shiva' and he was but a member of the divine troupe, descended as an enabling accompaniment.

Marthandadikshitharu, that day, was engaged in a special worship requiring butter as an ingredient. He wanted Chidambara to fetch it, even if it meant the latter going to another place. Chidambara's reply was unexpected and surprising. He said: "I don't feel like going out to day, come what may. I don't know why? However, obeying your order, I will go despite my unwillingness". Chidambara said while prostrating to his father.

Before going to the other village to fetch butter he bowed down to his mother and said fervently: "Mother, do not, under any circumstance, accept anything from others if they try to give you; do not touch it."

As Chidambara left, came a fated lady from the neighbourhood. She persuasively presented a snake gourd describing it as a fresh one excellent in taste and quality. Lakshminatha accepted it without a thought. As soon as she touched the vegetable, she fell down unconscious and died.

Chidambara came back as rapidly as he had left, unwillingly, but his mother had already died. He ran to his father to inform about the death of his mother and volunteered to revive her if the father approved.

Marthandadikshitharu said: "Son, I know your powers of creation and regeneration. But take heed. If you revive her, tomorrow you will be asked to revive every dead man or woman! Not that you cannot or

powerless to do so. There are many reasons for you to consider why you should not do. Among others, it is of utmost importance that you shouldn't disclose your true identity now. The other reason is that death is time-determined and hence you are not to interfere; further the death of your mother before me is appropriate, (wife dying before her husband is preferred as it saves her from widowhood and its consequent problems). Instead of trying to revive her, attend to her obsequies as a filial duty."

Chidambara performed the obsequies to the physical body according to the shastras and gave away gifts with open hands and fed the brahmins for fourteen days. One day Marthandadikshitharu was a witness to a wave of thought in his mind. "Incredible happiness has come my way, since my birth. I have the joy of seeing my grand children play. Even Shankara is listening to me without disclosing himself and his miracles. I am ninety now, my vision is poor and blurred as I feel deafened. From today may Chidambara disclose, 'His Glorious self'. With a smile on his face, Dikshitharu summoned Chidambara aside and said: "Appa, Chidambara from now on present yourself to the world and let your glory radiate; now joyously I enter into your feet".

Taking the appropriate posture of Vajrasana, 'Diamond-Seat' directing his breath flow into its skyward path piercing through the Brahmarandhra, the Brahma valve, the venerable old soul merged itself with Brahma on (Shanka 1700 Jyeshtha Shuddha Navami).

Chidambara did the funeral rites according to the shastras. Three 'Audumbara saplings' had sprouted at the place of cremation. The heavenly monument was made a place of worship and a priest was appointed to be at service. Even today the huge trees that sprouted to mark the event are visible.

On the fourteenth day a public feast was arranged according to tradition. A disciple of Dikshitharu by name Kashiraja sought Chidambara's permission to commence serving the food. Chidambara said: "Do not be in a hurry; wait until I give you go ahead".

Each time Kashiraja sought permission to serve food he was asked to wait for some more time. When permission was finally accorded it was well past noon. The leaves were spread, food was served and brahmins were about to begin eating, then a group of three hundred strangers from the north arrived. Chidambara asked them to join but Kashiraja hesitated fearing a shortage. He submitted: “Swamy, withhold permission to commence eating; we may run into disrepute”. Chidambara smiled at him and said: Don’t bother about short supply of food. You will know later. Don’t entertain doubts”. Kashiraja wasn’t convinced. He demurred and said: “Twice the number expected are at the dining hall, I am afraid whether they would all be fully fed.” Chidambara replied: “My father, a generous soul, has left behind Annapurna the Goddess of food, under my control. You may see her. ‘Kashiraja was taken to the kitchen where he saw the revered looking Annapurneswari sitting. As soon as Chidambara entered, the venerable lady stood up in respect. Kashiraja was satisfied and pleased. About eight hundred people were fed but the supply of food remained undiminished.

The glory of Chidambara Dikshitharu had thus begun.

Chapter XI

Previous Life Recalled

Chidambara Dikshitharu led a life of grihastha, a married man which entailed several duties and responsibilities particularly to the community and society where he lived with his family, relatives, those that come on invitation and others who sought food and shelter. He adored shrouthagni, the Fire god, according to the injunctions of the Vedas. More specifically he followed the Kanvashaka tradition of ritual and prayers, (practices as laid down by the followers of Kanva Rishi). These practices though not stringent and exacting as those of the Karma proponents were however governed by the rules of shruthis. He had come to uplift and elevate the man of the world not from an exclusive distance but by living in it along with them.

On waking up at the Brahmi hour, he went into contemplation and meditation on the Brahman Brahmachinthana followed by prathahsmarana, remembering him and contemplating on him in a reverential mood. Then finishing the morning ablution, he dresses himself up in a two piece of clothing dhotis after the morning bath. He would then apply on all parts of the body the sacred ash besides drawing three lines of vibhuthi on his forehead. It is time for him now to rekindle the fire and revive it for the day to enable the Homa, sacrificial worship, after the daily sandhyavandana and other rituals. Worshipping the brahmins, the cows and the gods he proceeds straight to the school where a large number of students are waiting for his visit. His nectarine sight fills the students' hearts with medharasa, a memory tonic that flows in its fullness, ever alert and ready for recall. From the school, he goes to the assembly filled with people waiting and longing for his darshan. When the Guru arrives walking slowly through the assembly, they fall at his feet with joyous happiness. The joy giver, anandadayaka, would lift them up and cut asunder their binding ties. People’s deep desires and wishes were fulfilled by his very sight. Chidambaradikshitharu, personification of kindness invited them to a daily instruction. It was:

“Speak that which is auspicious, Mangala
Utter Shivanama the name of Shiva.
Repose faith in the Vedamarga, the path of Veda.
Follow and practice ‘Sadhdharma’, the true righteousness
Do not get involved in the ‘world and its affairs’, and
avow yourselves to “Truth Speaking”.

Chidambaradikshitharu had six sons, four from his first wife Saraswatimatha; they were Divakara, Shankara, Mruthyunjaya and Bapu and a daughter of the name Champa.

And from his second wife Savithrimatha, he had Kashinatha and Bhaskara.

The six sons shared the multidimensional qualities of their father. As ideal sons they made their father proud for they lacked nothing. Well read and educated they excelled in their paternal devotion. Following the rule-as is the seed so is its sprout, the great qualities of Dikshitharu were found reflected and shared among the six sons. Each one was outstanding and prominent in one or other quality or direction.

Chidambara’s administrative efficiency, executive expertise and fearlessness found their new proponent in Divakaradikshitha.

His expertise in all branches of knowledge, including the Vedas and shastras, his capacity to win people’s hearts into total submission were found reflected in Shankara dikshita.

His mastery over arduous penance, his proximity to the heart and soul of the mantras his skill in worldly affairs and his beejaksharajana, the capacity for deciphering the sacred syllables and his unbroken daily service to Lord Agni were found in equal measure in Mruthyunjayadikshita.

Chidambara’s grace-bestowing power, his deep devotion to gods and brahmins and his capacity for enduring penance were reflected in Bapudikshita. He also matched his father who had the power of uttering the word that fulfilled itself in fruitful action.

Kashinatha Dikshita had inherited from his father his omniscience, pleasant and endearing speech, capacity to forestall the wicked and his extraordinary time sense and avowed performance of good deeds.

Bhaskara Dikshita similarly had secured from his father devoted service to the ealders, steadfast adherence to the conduct of daily rituals and a fineness of temperament that was timely.

Chidambara’s family of two wives and six sons and their wives and children made no exceptional or compromising demand on his being a poor brahmin living for the good of the world.

Thus Chidambaradikshitharu was living with his large family observing the tenets of grihsthashrama dharma. His glory had spread far and wide and everyday a large number of people came to see and have darshan of Dikshitharu. Among one such was Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna was a resident of Vijayapura. He lived a life of sadachara. Though well to do, he wasn’t happy because he had no children. They felt deprived and dreaded life. One night a brahmin appeared in the dream of both the husband and wife and said:

“Men seek fruits for their meritorious deeds but are reluctant to do those that confer merit. No one desires consequences of sinful acts but few desist from them. How strange! Getting a son or daughter is the result of meritorious actions. It seems the evil deeds of your previous lives have stood as obstructions. You may get in touch with Chidambara if you are desirous of an issue.”

They were surprised at their dream which however was singular in its content and timing. Both husband and wife dreaming the same sight same night was no common happening. Divining its meaning, they felt very happy. Next morning they got up early in the morning reciting prayers of ‘mind and heart purification’, they left for Chidambara darshana after finishing the mid-day meal. Reaching the Guru’s town and his residence, they fell at the feet of Dikshitharu. They made their supplication thus:

“Kindhearted Master, we have come seeking your grace so that we may have an issue. We surrender to you. Save us and fulfill our desires.”

Chidambara’s reply was heartwarming for the eager couple. He said: “Mother, the deeds of your previous lives are blocking the issue of your progeny. Fruits of karma are to be eaten. If you are willing to undo your karma, I suggest the following. “There is a village called Sathigeri some distance away from here where there is a Maruthi Temple. Opposite to it is an oilman’s house. A rich oilman resided in that house earlier. He gave his earnings to his wife to whom he was passionately attached. She in turn deposited all that she received in a narrow mouthed vessel and put her nose ring too on it and closed the vessel firmly with a lid. The vessel was buried underneath the grinding mortar near the hearth. She became old with the passage of time and merged herself with the elements without giving any to her children. Her five sons dug up the entire household in vain. Disappointed the children began cursing and abusing their mother for her deceit. Stuck in dire need and poverty they continue to curse their mother.”

“In your previous life, you were their mother and now you are born a brahmin. You are denied of your issue now accursed by your children of your previous life.”

“If you want an issue go to Sattigere and worship Maruthi before you enter the house of your previous life. Get the grinding stone removed by your 'previous life-children' and get hold of the hidden treasure. Open the lid of the unearthed vessel and keep for yourself the nose stud that is at the top. Distribute equally among the five, all that was treasured and regained. Your children in their happiness bless you and clear the block. With that you get an issue and you will be happy and joyful. This is the story of your previous life”.

The lady bowed down to Chidambara after listening to her story of the previous times and went to Sattigere. Curious folks followed her

to see how things unravel. She, following the instructions of Chidambara, worshipped Maruthi with devotion and gave a festive meal to brahmins. She then entered the house of her previous life. After giving the children of her previous life a feast-like meal. She had refreshed herself with an oil bath, a bath following the oil massage of the body and the hair and dressed herself in a gold embroidered silk saree with a chain of rubies around her neck. Her moon like face of spotless charm with a bold spot of kumkum and vermilion in the middle of her forehead was symbolic of auspicious things to happen.

Entering the house, she asked the children to dig up the grinding stone. Everyone was happy to find the eagerly expected vessel with its contents. When the lid was opened there was the dazzling nose stud atop. She took it and fixed it on her nose. She poured down on the floor the contents of the vessel and distributed them equally among her former five children. They were immensely pleased with what they got. They shed tears of joy on hearing their former mother’s story. They fell at her feet driven by the pull of maternal ties.

The brahmin lady addressing her children said: “Appa, folks, Chidambara tells me that I have deceived you as a mother in withholding your rightful share of wealth and has thus driven you all into poverty. Your distressed and sorrowful curses have blocked my getting an issue in this life. All that Dikshitharu disclosed have come true and real. Since the previous wrong is undone, I ask you to absolve me of my misdeeds and withdraw your curses of dissatisfaction and rid me of that guilt and bless me to have a son.”

As she said these words, her eyes were filled with tears. The five prostrated to the lady who was once their mother and said these heartfelt expressions: “Since we are rid of our destitution we are satisfied. Beget a son soon and may your fame and glory last as long as the Sun and Moon shine.” She lifted them up in affection and blessed them in turn. The lady returned to Chidambara and narrated the course of events. Dikshitharu blessed her to have a son giving her two coconuts. The

brahmin lady caught in the wave of bhakthi adored Chidambara in this manner.

“O Vibhu, Lord, spread across the world, who is there in this world who can match you? You are omniscient and a storehouse of kindness. Chidambara to you my namaskaras. The one indweller in all beings, Sarvantharyami, I bow to you with a feeling of oneness. Vignanaswaroopa the one self-manifesting as scientific knowledge, I bow to you again and again. Grace personified, who is there, the one who can give away and who knows so well, the lives of the past? Becoming a father to the humble orphaned, your words are always sweet and pleasant. Because of your deluding Maya, the conjunction of events, we saddle ourselves in vain getting caught in the cycle of birth and death.”

“In the inner layers of my mind I perceived 'my mind-my foe' is hankering in futility for a son. I realized how many children I must have delivered in my many past lives! Even then my desire for a son did not get appeased and satisfied. Oh, Narahari, godman, please save me from my sensuous cravings and relieve me from the pangs of worldly life”.

She again fell at the feet of Dikshitharu, concluding the above prayer. Chidambara in reply said to the lady: “Mother, let me know straight and clear what desire you have? Regardless of its nature I will plead with Ishwara for its gratification.”

“Lord of the Universe, if you wish to grant me a blessing, grant me faith in the service of thy feet and save me from the distressing weight of feeling barren. Distraught am I wandering in the affairs of the world. Lift me up and release me from its shackles” The devoted lady pleaded.

Chidambara pleased with her attitude promised: “You will be my great devotees and will enjoy all the worldly pleasures you care for and live forever in that domain called the hereafter.”

The blessed couple receiving the prasada from Chidambara returned home with joy. With the grace of Chidambara they got two good looking children. What is impossible if there is Chidambara's grace? They went to live in Kailasa after enjoying their time span here on earth.

Chapter XII

Communion with Narayanayathi

Chidambara was in Murugodu. The Desai of Murugodu a chieftain of sorts wanted to kill his own executive Lingopanth who was a staunch devotee of Chidambara. Lingopanth was going often to the young guru to render whatever service he could. He didn't have any inkling of Desai's vicious plan.

One day Desai sent summons to Lingopanth asking him to present himself before him. Chidambara persuaded the guileless subordinate to disregard the summons. Panth asked, "how can I disobey my superior?"

Chidambara unequivocally advised that he shouldn't go to meet Desai that regardless of any consideration of duty and service. Lingopanth in his innocence prayed: "My Lord, permit me to go as I am called by my master". Firm and decisive, Chidambara implored: "Don't go I am giving this warning in your own interest. And I repeat it thrice"

Owing to 'kala karma samyoga' the conjunction of kala (Time) and karma (deeds pre-determined in this context) disregarding the guru's words, Lingopanth went to Desai and respectfully bowed down. He was immediately beheaded by a sign of Desai.

On hearing this Chidambara said: "Shiva, Shiva," and walked out of Murugodu forthwith along with his attendants. For twelve long years he ostracized himself from visiting that place 'disgraced by brahmin murder' he sought refuge in the nearby Devalapura.

II

Narayana yathi a great thapasvi one who has spent long years in penance came to Devalapura for Chidambara darshana.

Narayana yathi before attaining this status was a poor man. Dejected with life (understanding that life of the world gives only dejection

not satisfaction) he entered into arduous penance ignoring time. Pleased with his ardour Lord Dathathreya blessed him with siddhi. The power to achieve the goal conceived. He used this power for public good without compromise. He was thus respected by people.

One day Chidambara presented himself before him and granted darshan in a place called Amarakshetra. Narayana yathi surrendered himself to Chidambara in acknowledgment of an inner direction. Chidambara gave him Brahmopadesha instruction to him on Brahman.

Narayanamuni, another way of address, referring to his cultivation of silence cooked a meal on the fire of his yoga and served it to Chidambara as token of devotion.

He also declared himself as a disciple of Chidambara uttering whose name purifies the voice and confers self-fulfillment. Among the six well known disciples of Chidambara Narayana Yati is said to be the foremost.

Later the yathi offering all his learning to the sacrificial fire', (vidwath sanyasa), took residence in narasimhakshetra living in 'Nirvikalpasamadhi'.

Many crossed the ocean of life and attained mukthi through instruction received from Narayana yathi. Along with his disciple referred to as Kashikar, he went round the country on pilgrimage rescuing many from their ailments and diseases on the way. This man settled in Yoga is said to have invited a diseased tiger to his side and cured its ailment. A brahmin boy was brought back to life by this great one by administering the sacred ash into his mouth uttering the name of Chidambara. In Rajapura as in the holy town of Jagannath he divined water where there was none. He arrived in Devalapura in the back drop of these events.

Chidambara announced to his disciples and followers: "A great man settled in Brahman and jnana is coming to visit us. Let us go and receive him." When he was half way through, the two met and embraced

each other as a token of their oneness and unity. Chidambara holding the hand of the visitor brought him to his place and adored him with devotion. A feast was offered to brahmins to mark the meeting.

Narayanayathi stayed with Chidambara for three months engaged in a continuous dialogue on vedantha each one nodding his head in appreciation of the other's perception and expression. What is there to report when god himself chooses to explain the nature of things? None whatever his deficiency can remain uninfluenced or transformed.

Once Chidambara wanted to have a river bath in accordance with a particular custom. Narayana yathi suggestively observed. "Your feet are the abode of all water sources. Where then is the need for you to go to a river in this chilly season and make your followers toil?"

Chidambar replied in the same note and tone. "I got your suggestion; in the Kaliyuga isn't it described to remain hidden? If you so desire turn your wish into a deed and I will take bath with that water".

Narayana yathi went to a waterless well. As soon as he stepped in, Chidambara began to pray to Ganga a synonym for plentiful water. Water came gushing from below and Narayana yathi took bath and came out. With Chidambara getting in, the well overflowed with water.

Narayana yathi sought permission to take leave and go to Dathakshetra a place considered holy for the devotees of Dathathreya. Chidambara said: "Pass through the town of Sangli on the way. My devotee Thryambaka panth, is a jail resident. Talk to him and proceed." Chidambara bowed down to yathi before taking leave.

Narayana yathi went to jail declining a royal invitation. Talking to Panth in the jail he said "Panth, caught you are in Chidambara's net; give up your worries. Sixteenth day from today you will be released. Go to Chidambara and get his darshana and blessings following your release. Engage yourself in publishing the life history of Chidambara".

Narayana yathi went to Narasimhakshetra meditating on the name of Chidambara. On the fifteenth day Chidambara visited the king of Sangli Chinthamani in his dream and ordered: "Release into freedom my devotee Thryambaka by tomorrow or invite on yourself your own down fall". Unshackled the prisoners were given a royal feast and many presents and gifts and the king said: "Go forth into freedom and to the service of guru". Thryambaka pleaded for four more days of stay in the prison which was granted without a thought. He went to the prison and copied down the Chidambara Charithra he had inscribed on the prison walls with cow dung. Panth then went to Chidambara and wrote on Chidambara his own experiences and the glory of his master in prose, poetry and lyrics after getting blessed.

Chapter XIII

Dead Girl Comes Alive

Chidambaradikshitharu had come from the holy place known as Gavala to Kundagola a small town in the present District of Dharwad. The Desai of Bhandiwada a chieftain came to Dikshitharu and prayed: "Swamy, I am bound by your word, I promise. Bless me with a progeny so that the family line may continue". Before saying anything, Chidambara observed "If you do as I say you will be blessed. Tell me will you"?

"Omniscient Lord, 'This is my promise; your word is a command'" replied desire-ridden Desai.

"You will get a daughter first. If that girl is given in marriage to the one I suggest you will get a son", Dikshitharu held out a qualified promise.

The Desai happy with the outcome of the meeting went home rejoicing. He was blessed with a daughter a year later.

Many years later a young man a poor brahmin named Rama came to meet Dikshitharu. "Have you come here with a wish to get married?" Dikshitharu volunteered even before he could say anything.

The poor man replied: "Swamy, I have no relatives or friends to support me; how can I think of a marriage? You are supreme and powerful to protect the poor and the humble."

Chidambara ordered: "Go to Desai of Bhandiwada. Tell him that you are my man and ask for his daughter's hand. Hurry, waste no time".

Rama fell at the feet of Dikshitharu and left. Desai was furious displeased with Rama's impetuosity. He asked himself: "How can a worthless fellow ask for my daughter's hand"? Rama was hurt and pained at what had happened. He conveyed the unfortunate event as he felt to Dikshitharu. The latter asked him to stay put at that place. He

was also assured of his marriage with the same girl. Begging for his food Rama lived in the same place where Desai reigned.

Desai was unhappy with Dikshitharu. He felt insulted, his status and position ignored with deliberation. He wanted to and did cut off his links with one unequal to him like Dikshitharu, a poor brahmin, he began to search for a suitable alliance for his daughter befitting his position and rank. He found one and elaborate arrangements were made for the wedding.

Marriage celebrations began. The longer the duration of celebration the greater is one's importance and prestige in society. The next day the bride fell down unconscious unable to withstand high fever that had affected her. Desai mobilized all his resources to rescue his daughter; they didn't work. He prayed to the gods and avowed a good many things. Nothing happened. He sought the opinion of astrologers. "Looking at the constellation of force, we find no hostile star or planet causing ill health or obstruction. A great man's wrath and displeasure may be the cause for her present situation," the astrologer observed.

Desai knew who that great man was as he also knew the cause of the present condition. He did not have the courage to face his own real self or the great man. The astrologer's verdict was simple and clear. "You don't have a tomorrow if you stick to your present untenable position. Sun's brightness may be dimmed and fire pacified but the guru's word cannot be falsified. Make bold and follow guru's instructions without allowing doubts and suspicions to override you".

He made unto himself a promise before the astrologer that he would abide by the guru's word. As soon as he invoked the earlier word of promise his daughter stood up. Desai wanted to get his daughter stood up. Desai wanted to get his daughter married to Rama but his wife intervened and said: "Our daughter is drained and exhausted with fever and she needs time to recover. Let us celebrate the wedding next year". Several months passed. Desai's wife spoke in privacy to her husband her mind and its clever arguments. "Look this daughter of

ours is our only possession and an unusual one too. I find greater happiness in drowning her in a well than getting her married to a pauper. For some godly reason she got fever and your astrologer predicted according to his preconceptions. He is under the influence of Dikshitharu and you stood ready to approve it. And we are not Dikshitharu's yeomen. What does he do? We must find a wealthy groom for our daughter and celebrate the marriage".

Desai tried to speak the path of truth and wisdom. But his wife disapproved and rejected any alliance with Rama and Desai had to yield to his wife's counsel. A wealthy boy was found and the marriage preparations began in style. No single detail was missed in the celebration and everything went around and the marriage was about to be sealed. Rama who was witnessing the proceedings from a distance cried aside in desolation, "Alas! Chidamabara, your omnipotence is cracked".

Dikshitharu's miracle was unleashed. The bride shivered in panic fell down and became unconscious. She was burning with fever. Her parents tried to revive her spirits but she did not respond. Desai invited the astrologer once again. The astrologer had no word of consolation to give. On the other hand, he observed: "You have cut your own nose with your faithless conduct and through your acts you have sent a wrong signal to the world. Auspiciousness embalms him who reposes faith in the 'Gurusword'. What can be done to the faithless? What do you think of Chidambara vani, the voice of Chidambara? The east-rising sun may rise in the west but the guru's word can't be falsified".

Desai said once again: "I give word and promise. If my daughter wakes up I will give her in marriage to Rama here in this very place where all arrangements are made".

And Desai went meditating on the feet of Chidambara for a second. Time rolled on and the bride did not wake up. Her upward breath was fast and rapid. Desai begged Rama to accept his daughter as his wife. Rama seeing the deteriorating condition of the bride began to think about the pros and cons of his response. Chidambara presented himself

before Rama in the meantime and said: "Young man, accept the bride and take her as your wife; take her to your place. My words yield nectarine fruits". Rama was awe struck at the sight of his guru there, as also his disappearance the next moment. Accepting the bride as his wife he took her to the Maruthi temple and placed her on the floor and began meditating on Chidambara. Around midnight, the bride attained union with the five elements. Rama was shaken and frightened; his hand and feet became cold. He began crying aloud 'Chidambara and Chidambara', outpouring the longings of his heart and the doubts of his mind.

Dikshitharu appeared in the temple from nowhere sprinkling on her face the sacred ash and the holy water from his kamandala. The bride woke up. Rama seeing Dikshitharu standing in the temple washed the guru's feet with his tears and placed his head on the feet. Chidambara said: "Get the bride to my place early in the morning. I will get both of you married at the auspicious time".

Dikshitharu informed Rama that marriage would take place the next day and invited Desai for the celebration. Dikshitharu appeared for the groom's side. The marriage was celebrated without a hitch. Looking at Desai, Dikshitharu asked: "Chieftain, are you disconsolate because the groom is poor and not of your status?"

Shame-struck Desai fell at the feet of Chidambara and did not dare to ask forgiveness.

Dikshitharu gave two coconuts as a token of his blessings and grace.

Desai was blessed with a son.

Chapter XIV
The Wicked Conquered; The Honest
And Upright Protected

It was said that a conclave of the heads of three Mutts, Sringeri, Koodli and Kolhapura was taking place at Hubballi. They were returning from their visit to various places meeting their disciples and devotees. Mutts are religious institutions and they are also believed to be repositories of wealth and riches. Rathnakar the chief of the Royal forces of Kolhapura attacked the conclave with a view to plundering them.

The heads prayed fervently to Dikshitharu known to everyone as Shiva incarnate. Their prayers were heard and Chidambara presented himself before them. Surprised the heads accorded a reception of sincere thanks and gratefulness. Chidambara assured them and said: "Shankara is all powerful to thwart the intentions of this bandit; why think about it"?

The followers of Ratnakara tried to enter the premises but made a hasty retreat on seeing Chidambara standing ready to meet them single handed. The followers later confessed: "We retreated, fear struck on seeing Chidambara".

Ratnakara understood what they were saying. He was not unaware of Chidambara. Wily Ratnakara went to meet Dikshitharu with fruits and flowers in his hand. Chidambara directed Ratnakara to go to the heads first and beg for their excuse and pardon after escorting them respectfully back to their palces.

Rathnakara did as directed and came back to Chidambara seeking forgiveness for his misadventure. Securing his pardon and permission he took leave and cleverly resumed his activities outside the forbidden sites and limits.

Chidambara's efforts to reform Ratnakara continued. He sent messages whenever possible to this effect: "I continue to guide you into

the right path; do not be deaf, pay heed to my words. Violence, cruelty and such other acts bring forth their own fruits of bitterness. Give up your recalcitrant tendencies. Your downfall is certain if my words are spurned".

Ratnakara had grown too big to pause and listen to these words. He thought of Chidambara as a poor brahmin unqualified to speak of life's policies.

In the meantime one Gokale Dhondopanth came to Dikshitharu for darshana. On seeing him Dikshitharu said: "Come big man, come in. You are the one to fix Rathnakara and do away with him. Go now straight to Bajirao of Pune; (you) have my permission and endorsement to meet him".

There persisted an endless feud between the Maharaja of Kolhapur and the Chieftains of Pune. Ratnakara owed allegiance to the Kolhapur Kings and was intruding into the territories aligned with the Bajirao group. Dhondopanth had now become the second in command in Bajirao's forces. He led his men against the Kolhapur tribe. A battle ensued between Rathnakara and Dhondopanth with heavy casualties on both sides. The two fought like warriors for a long time and Rathnakara died at the hands of Dhondopanth. Ransacking and confiscating all the wealth of the vanquished, Dhondopanth began to perceive of himself in a new light. He was no longer what he was before!

With this frame of mind he went to Dikshitharu for darshana. Dikshitharu was happy to hear that the source of one evil is destroyed. He blessed the victorious Dhondopanth and instructed: "Get back to your station and secure the good of 'the cows and brahmins' (symbols of piety and kindness living for the good of the world). Take these fruits as my benediction and live in peace and joy".

Panth was in no mood to listen to these homilies. He stated: "Swamy, I will accept your blessings only if it ensures wherever I act. This is my vow. Otherwise I will not".

Dikshitharu not amused with Panth's recalcitrance said: "Son, do not be obstinate. Accept first the blessings given; If enemies attack you on their own success will be yours in repulsing and beating them. This is as certain as truth". "That isn't what I care. Success must follow me where I go. I ask for no other, second option. For such lasting success, you must grace". Dhondopanth satisfied with himself, asserted. "At least take blessings conferred." Dikshitharu now tried to persuade panth's brother into listening. "How do I receive when a senior is present?" questioned the latter's brother, declining the blessings offered. Next in line was panth's son. Dikshitharu undeterred said: "Bapu, son, I am giving this to you in love; take it and enjoy". The arrogant brothers walked away bowing down to Dikshitharu as a formal act. They noticed the young boy receive that they had refused.

Dhondopanth blinded by his own bellicosity, threw discrimination to the winds causing hardship to people. His tyranny was insufferable. The forlorn and the abused complained to Chidambara and sought his refuge. "The Lord is competent to deal with your problems. Don't worry and go back to your places" Dikshitharu assured them.

In the mean time, Dundia, shudra from the south of India had come to Chidambara seeking his help and direction. Uttering incessantly the holy word Chidambara he stood one legged at the door step. His determination and faith was incredible. He stood thus for three long days disregarding rain or shine without sipping a drop of water.

"Swamy a man engaged in a terrible penance like Hiranyakashipu is standing at he door step since the last three days" the attendants reported to Chidambara. (Hiranyakashipu was a demon king, father of Bhakthaprahlada). The Guru said aloud in response: "His fiery devotion is compelling no matter what it unfolds. Nonetheless, (we should be aware) the snake ejects poison even if it is milk fed and the neem plant yields only bitterness even if nourished with Panchamritha-milk, honey, sugar, ghee and curd. Similarly if this man is graced, he becomes a tyrant causing distress to the public.

Dikshitharu came out with a smile on his face to meet the self willed shudra, one born in the last of the four classes.

"Dhundappa I know you and all that is going on inside you. Get ready to receive the blessings of a durable and lasting nature. Follow the right dharma and protect the interests of 'cows and brahmins' Your end begins the day you dishonor the brahmin. Don't forget this word" cautioned Dikshitharu.

Dhundappa went away receiving guru's blessings. He got a suitable position in Tippu Sultan's army where he fought as a valiant warrior against the British forces. But Dhondopanth Gokhale, fighting on behalf of the British forces vanquished Dhundappa in a battle. Seeking revenge against Gokhale who was fighting for alien interests, Dhundappa regrouped his forces and waged a battle. A fierce and bloody fighting ensued. The cry and moaning of the disabled soldiers rent the sky. Gokhale enraged on seeing the ravage and the mutilated bodies, penetrated into the centre of the hostile camp and killed Dhundappa's horse, in an encounter. The valiant and powerful Dhundappa jumped down to earth and pulled down the mounted Gokhale a brahmin to a ground battle and killed him.

Everyone in the world seeks happiness but when it comes to treading the right path they do not care. They disregard the advice of the guru and of the wise men. They forget that they can reap only what they have sown. The same fate overtook Dhundappa too. Drunk with the power he forgot the guru's instructions and invited his own downfall.

Dhondopanth's wife coming to know the way how her husband died bound her son with a vow that the funeral rites should be withheld until Dhundappa is defeated and beheaded.

Bapu her son, taking the help of British forces, invited Dhundappa for an engagement. On seeing Bapu's combined forces, Dhundappa ran away from the battle; his forces demoralized went into disarray running helter-skelter. Dhundappa the deserter was caught within the

full flowing river Krishna and the sky-ward-looking mountain peaks all around. The enemy forces chased him down wherever he went or tried to hide. Remembering his guru Chidambara, with no other option open, he jumped into the river Krishna and reached the other bank chanting the “guru’s name” for sometime.

Bapu’s forces coming to know that their foe is hiding on the opposite bank rushed to catch. Bapu fought single handed with Dudappa and his followers killed his father’s foe. Dhundappa died with Chidambara on his lips.

Bapu fulfilling his mother’s vow regained his territory following the rules of the dharma and earning love and gratitude of his people.

Chapter XV

Some Events

Around 1803 A.D. Chidambara’s fame had spread all over India and Rajarama with his troupe had crisscrossed the nook and corner of this vast continent heralding the descent of Lord Shiva in human form as Chidambaradikshitharu in Karnataka. Dikshitharu was in Kundagola at that time.

A gentleman named Bava lived somewhere not very far away from Kundagola. He had a strange dream. Lakshmipathi Lord Venkateshwara of the Tirumala Tirupathi Hill, ordered Bava in his dream as follows:

“I am to pay an interest of rupees one lakh and quarter towards the debt I owe to Kubera the Lord of Wealth. Take my Utsavamurthy in the palanquin procession, along with the usual paraphernalia to Kundagola and deliver this latter to a resident Chidambaradikshitha and deposit in my vault whatever money he gives. (Besides the idol in the sanctum sanctorum there will be another idol meant for taking out in a procession. That idol is called the Utsavamurthy. The procession is usually preceded by the pipers and the drummers, musicians and singers and dancers to herald as it were the arrival of the Lord.)

Bava was surprised by the dream command. He related this dream to his wife and decided to carry out the dream order. Taking the ‘dream letter’ he left for Kundagola scrupulously following the instruction in letter and spirit. It was a long march passing through and stopping at many villages and towns to enable devotees to offer their worship to the Lord in the Palanquin.

Here at Kundagola, Dikshitharu was getting ready to receive the Lord of the Seven Hills. He said to his attendants and devotees:

“Lakshmipathi is visiting us today; get ready my friends; let us go and receive him”. Dikshitharu, accompanied by his devotees, carried

with him, fruits and flowers, incense sticks, and other articles of worship and adoration. He wanted to accord a welcome suitable to the name and fame of Lakshmi pathi. When they reached the outer limits of the town, they saw the procession of Lakshmi pathi coming towards them.

Sri guru Dikshitharu offered five fruits to the Lord and prostrated full length before him. Later he worshipped the Lord according to the prescribed rites and customs. Following this the Lord was taken to the residence of Dikshitharu and the entire town of Kundagola stood as one man and offered their prayers and respects to the visiting Lord. The people of Kundagola declared that the happiness they felt was one similar to the one Pandavas enjoyed when Lord Krishna came to Indraprastha.

After every one had offered his worship and namaskar to the lord, Bava stood up and gave the dream letter to Dikshitharu who looked at the letter and smiled unto himself. He asked one of the devotees to read out the letter in public. The devotee who opened the letter said: “This is a blank sheet; nothing is written. I cannot decipher its meaning. Only a man like Chidambaradikshitharu can unravel the message and glory of Lakshmi pathy”. Saying this he returned the letter to Dikshitharu who took it into his hands. On opening it a curious revelation occurred; he saw in letters of gold a message. Its purport was:

“Madhavesha (another address of Lord Narayana) bows down in reverence to Lakshmi pathi who runs this universe. Lakshmi pathi is caught in a financial crisis. He has to pay rupees one lakh and quarter as interest remittance. Chidambara a manifestation of Satchidandanda is to offer this sum and bail of out the Lord”.

Addressing the large gathering of Sri Venkateshwara devotees Dikshitharu said: “Do you get what is written? Lakshmi pathi is asking for financial help; but how am I capable or competent to rescue Narayana? Good deeds alone are my treasured wealth? You decide what I can give to this divine appellant? Who can blow pleasant air to

the Moon if he feels sultry and warm? If the Sun sits in darkness, who can give him light? If Yagneshwara the Fire Lord feels chill and shakes, who can wrap him with warmth”? Who can respond to those words? Silence held them stunned Lakshmi pathi visiting one’s residence is a matter of grace and deserves joyous celebration. Dikshitharu thought like this and gave a grand feast to brahmins marking the adoration of the distant Lord atop the Hill visiting him. Sensing the air of contentment and satisfaction on everyone’s face Dikshitharu called Bava to his side and said:

“You must remain satisfied with what is offered and count it only after you reach the Hills the resort of the Lord.” Dikshitharu placed five coins at the feet of the Lord and gave a cordial farewell to the Lord and his followers after suitably rewarding and offering gifts to the visitors. Bava took the long march to the Tirumala Tirupathi Hills and took stock of the things to be offered to the Lord. He saw a few varahaas gold coins and began counting them to make sure. As the last coin was counted they were replaced by a few more. As Bava was collecting the coins so were they appearing until the total amount exceeded a quarter and one lakh gold varahaas. The entire amount was put into the Lord’s coffers. (Rupee is symbolic of a coin for our understanding)

II

A trader of British origin located in Bombay had sailed out in pursuit of his business. While returning his ship ran into foul weather of gale and winds. The ship lost its moorings and was swept away in unknown directions. The British trader called his brahmin assistant and said: “You Hindus call for help several gods of yours in times of difficulty and dire need. If there is one who can save me now from this catastrophe, let me know. I will offer a quarter of the profit likely to arise from this transaction”.

The greatly pleased assistant said with humble love and faith: “The glory of Chidambara is unsurpassed; at this moment it is he who can

keep us afloat. He rescues those who cry for help”. The trader deep in his heart prayed for Chidambara’s help and very soon the ship met with a sandy shore. The trader stayed there for some days and returned home as a satisfied person.

He sent a lakh and quarter Rupees a fourth part of his five lakh profit to Chidambara in fulfillment of his word.

Chidambara in turn passed it on to Sri Venkateshwara on the Hills, saying that the money belonged to him.

III

Chidambaradikshitharu went to Chibbi, a hot and dry place of acute water shortage. He made water spring in that arid land and returned to a place called Parshvawadi.

One day while Dikshitharu was offering fruits and food as naivedya to the Lord a woman of evil intent came and begged: “Swamy please accept this ghee and bless me”. She insisted on its acceptance. Dikshitharu called one of his disciples and said: “See, whether this ghee is fit for offering to the Lord”. The disciple went out and came back saying it was fit. Dikshitharu asked, “Do not be in a hurry, check it once again carefully”. The disciple lost his cool and said “Do you think I am blind? Why ridicule me thus? If you don’t trust me try it yourself”?

“If it is so it is all right with me too” Dikshitharu said in acceptance of his word and offered it to the lord as naivedya.

The daughter in law of the lady who had offered ghee to Dikshitharu came running. She said to Dikshitharu who was about to take his first morsel of food which included ghee. She dissuaded him from using the ghee as it was poisoned. Dikshitharu’s reply was one of

helplessness. He said: “Mother, the ghee is already offered to the Lord and the Fire God. When he has taken what about us ordinary mortals”? Dikshitharu took his meal along with the ghee offered to the Lord but suspected to have been poisoned. The evil that men do is harvested soon after.

The son of the woman of evil intent who had given ghee to Dikshitharu reaped the fruits of his mother’s action; afflicted with a poisonous disease; he was on his death bed. His wife (daughter in law who had warned Dikshitharu) came to Dikshitharu and begged “Swamy protect and ensure my status of a 'Muthaide', and excuse us for our evil deed”. (wifehood with the living husband)

Kindness incarnate Dikshitharu excused them and cured the man of his fatal illness. He was given a pinch of sacred ash.

IV

A gang of robbers accosted Dikshitharu once. But the latter outwitted them with his incredible understanding of human nature. He recognized by telling them whose sons and grandsons they were. By showing them that he was the one who knew all about them, he brought them back to Sanmarga, the right path.

Some of them, however, tried to attack him. Chidambara stood before them like a He - man and invited them for a combat if they dared.

The robbers were arrested by their own immobility. They could not move their limbs. They were held fixed to the ground where they stood. Struck with fear and apprehension they sought clemency. Restoring to them their mobility he set them on the right path and conduct.

While Chidambara was at Kasugallu a nearby place he released eight 'Brahmarakshasas from their ignominious existence instructing them in a variety of ways. (As the name itself suggests they are of demonic characters though possessed of great learning. They work for their own destruction overcome with conceit and disregard of the interests of others).

The Desai of Yadagir a prominent public servant of that place came to Dikshitharu seeking two favours. One he wanted a son and two a water spring in his well.

The guru Dikshitharu replied "If you want a son, give up your affairs with 'the other woman', for water in your well, offer a meal to twenty thousand brahmins".

On both counts the Desai was rewarded.

After some time his faith and devotion waned. He failed to grasp and imbibe the 'spirit of feeding the brahmins'. He reverted to his old habits. The water in the well dried up and he was afflicted with wounds all over the body. Unable to withstand pain the same old person Desai met Dikshitharu. Again Desai was made to renew his promise already made. Both the problems were solved forthwith.

"If feeding brahmins becomes soulless and a mechanical act of throwing food at people, the cumulative merits of thousand lives evaporate into thin air. The path way to hell is paved when one indulges in other women, believe me". Dikshitharu warned.

Gurupura The Mentor Town

Mahaswamy accompanied by brahmins and the local chieftains and their armies went once to the well known mount of Yellammanagudda to offer worship to mark the occasion. On his return journey to Murugodu he worshipped Maruthi whose temple is located on the bank of the river Malapahari. The Swamy was impressed by the surrounding landscape and felt that it was a suitable location for forming a township.

Divakara Mahaswamy's brother and the Royal followers inspired by the nectarine word of the guru designed and built a new township. They went to their guru to give the glad tidings and seek further instructions. Expressing his satisfaction over the building of the township the Mahaswamy said, "it is your right; not ours." Whatever name you approve that one will be its name", the followers replied. Dikshitharu pleased with the reply suggested: "The place deserves the beautiful name Gurunavapura and it is made for auspicious and good deeds and actions".

The Leeladhari he was, (the one who bore in himself the world as sport) determining the auspicious moment entered the town and felt happy about its design and plan. In the centre of the town is a beautiful temple. The market place is to its east and brahmin households are to the south and west. In the north are the big bungalows of the kings and Royal households. In the north east is the open community of all groups.

Mahaswamy took residence in that town and his fame and name spread far and wide while he was here. We try to review his great deeds sequentially.

Dikshitharu, that is Chidambara, followed Shrouthaniyama and instructed his students and devotees in Sadachar. He had in his own hearth Shrouthagni as laid down in the Shruthi. He taught what he himself practiced. He himself taught the Vedic texts that is the Vedamanthras. There were seven hundred who were proficient in Vedas,

Rg and Yajur. There were fifty eight Samapatis, fellow scholars. There were three hundred enrolled in different branches of learning. Some were learning the Yagna procedures and some were interested in and dedicated to the learning of Nyaya and Vyakarna. Some were experts in Karmakanda and some were deeply immersed in what is known as jnanakanda. Some on the other hand were engaged in unraveling the jyothishya and some were specializing in samhitha. The sonorous recitation of the Shuklayajurveda in proper accent and pitch spread all around the ten directions of the compass. Indra and other gods were listening to the recitation with single minded concentration. Even the gods stood arrested and wonder struck looking at the way the Vedic school functioned.

On a fateful morning Shankara Bharathi Swamy of Sringeri (Sri Satchidanda Bharati Swamy: (1770-1814) A.D) came to see Chidambaradikshitharu. It was early morning. The seer of Sringeri was clad in ochre robes and held the sacred staff and wooden urn in his hands. Looking effulgent like a nascent sun he arrived at the assembly hall of Chidambara. The awe-struck student looking at the brilliant icon fell before him all their eight limbs touching the ground. The yathi of Sringeri asked the students “Where is your guru”? The students replied that their guru was in the homa hall the place where fire is worshipped and went to fetch him. Coming to know that the Jagadguru has arrived Dikshitharu made haste to the assembly hall with the materials for worship and greeted the Jagadguru. Offering and elevated seat of honour to the visitor Dikshitharu washed his feet with water sprinkling the same water on his head as a token of grace received. Dikshitharu addressing the yathi submitted:

“Swamy, though bound by family ties I feel sanctified by the sight of your feet. Deena, seeker as I am, your darshana is like the wish-fulfilling tree, Kalpavriksha appearing before a poor man. Today I feel satisfied with myself for doing what needs to be done. The merits of previous lives have fructified. For your orders, the slave awaits.”

Listening to the words of Chidambara the Jagadguru smiled and replied:

“The noblest among the Dikshitas, I came here to see the Vedapatashala, the school. I am pleased beyond measure. The sound of Shukla yajussu piercing the open skies has reverberated through the expanse of the Brahman. The supernatural deeds you perform hereafter will be many and numerous. For the good of the world, I have come to remind you of the duties you are born to carry out. In the past I rejected the different perceptions and viewpoints and established the non-dual truth. Through the ravages of time it is getting worn out. Revive it and spread it. Revive the Vedic paths of Karma, Upasana (adoration and devotion) and jnana. I have come to remind you”.

Chidambara falling at the feet of the seer said:

“Jagadguru, please permit me to say a few words. In the earlier times the rishis like Yagnavalkya and others established the Vajasaneya branch that got corrupted through time. The wicked ones slandered the propounded new look at the Vedas. (Therefore) my first task is to revive the indisputable Shukla Yajurveda and then I will certainly do what thou hast ordained”.

Those who listened to this conversation felt that Chidambara was no other than Shankara of Sringeri and felt greatly blessed for what they had witnessed and heard. It was their greatest day they felt. The truth and identity of Shankara and Chidambara being one and the same took root in their hearts. While people were rejoicing thus, the seer was offered ‘Bhiksha’, devotion filled alms and brahmins were given a great feast in celebration of this occasion.

* * *

A brahmin overcome by his evil mind felt disconcerted with the outflow of miracles emanating from Chidambara’s deeds and wanted to profit by it. He wanted to rob the kalasha the pot-like vessel that Dikshitharu carried with him thinking that it was the source of all wealth.

He wanted to get rid of his poverty through the kalasha. With this design in mind, he took discipleship with Dikshitharu and fatefully he was given free access to the objects in and around Dikshitharu's household.

One day Dikshitharu went to the river for a bath keeping the kalasha in the temple. Seizing the opportunity the brahmin shut the temple door and emptied the contents of the kalasha on to his spread out dhoti. Instead of gold and silver pouring out, an army of scorpions crawled out of the kalasha. They spread round the temple and began climbing on the brahmin. He did not have space left to place his leg. Frightened by the invading army of scorpions, the brahmin cried out for help. He began shouting: "Come and rescue me". Dikshitharu hearing the call returned from the river to find the temple doors shut from within. "Who is in? What has happened?" Dikshitharu inquired. "Swamy, it is me the culprit. Open the door forthwith. I am disabled". The brahmin cried from within. Dikshitharu forced open the temple doors. The temple was scorpion infested "Shiva Shiva" said Chidambara immobilizing the scorpions and scooping them handful, into the vessel. He then asked the brahmin "What did you intend? What do you want?"

The brahmin replied "Mahaswamy, I have committed a great sin and offence. You are Hari as well as Hara the protector as well as the destroyer. Please excuse my misdeed and uplift me. Mistaking a live coal for a ruby I have paid dearly and in repentance, I beg your forgiveness. You have banished my foul tendencies. I tried to obliterate myself harbouring evil thoughts sitting under the shade of a wish fulfilling tree. Sarveshwara, I embarked on this wretched act to get rid of my poverty".

Chidambara's kindness transformed into grace, warned: "If you don't give up such evil deeds, destroyed you will be."

Dikshitharu then gave a handful of gold and money twice taking them out from the kalasha.

Chapter XVII The Coming of Lord Venkatesha

"Give this to Divakara's wife. She desires to beget a son; her wish will be fulfilled" (Divakara is Dikshitharu's brother) a smiling Dikshitharu said in a pleasant voice while giving a piece of date fruit left over in his vessel.

The disciple succumbed to a wave of temptation, a compelling disposition to transgress. "Why not I take this myself? It is so difficult to get his uchhista", the disciple thought and ate it too.

Later Dikshitharu inquired whether he did what he was asked to do. The disciple stood in silence with his head bent and eyes down cast. He was reprimanded openly before a large number of devotees and others who had assembled there.

"Stupid fellow, why did you eat the uchhista; your act is indiscreet; it is sinful. It is forbidden as it is inauspicious".

Many in the gathering minced no words in adjudging his conduct. The brahmin felt ashamed at his weakness and decided to inflict on himself an equal punishment. He cut off his tongue with a sharp blade, deciding all by himself, that his tongue was the culprit and offered the severed part of his tongue at the feet of the guru "What did you do; why did you take recourse to such a heinous act?" Dikshitharu questioned and sprinkled vibhuthi, the sacred ash, on his face and placed his blessed hands on the brahmin's head. His tongue was restored to its normal state. He was blessed with nirmala jnana, clear and unsullied knowledge devoid of any ground for misconceptions. The brahmin extolled Dikshitharu in many ways and secured ineffable pleasantness of being.

II

An erudite pundit of the name Srinivasacharya came along with his followers to Dikshitharu's daily-assembly of devotees and disciples

coming from various parts of India. He had come to test the godly nature of Dikshitharu. Does not Chidambara know what is in everyone's mind? For quite some time Dikshitharu engaged the scholar in talking about the affairs of the world as one deeply immersed in it. The scholar's preconceptions got affirmed by this meeting. He had no idea about Chidmbara's designs! Returning home the scholar and his followers had enough material to engage themselves in derogatory and slanderous talk about Chidambaradikshitharu. The scholar did not care to introspect how sinful slander was and how much more so it would be if a man like Dikshitharu is disrespected and abused. He had to face the consequences of his actions mental as well as physical.

He lost his voice. Every one very soon recognized that the disability was a direct consequence of his attitude and conduct towards Dikshitharu. He was brought before the latter for his clemency and blessing. The disciples of the pundit appealed:

“Respected Dikshitharu, our guru has lost his tongue and his present mute state is due to our slanderous and derogatory remarks on you. Our conduct is reprehensible but we seek your excuse and beg you to restore his speech and health.”

Dikshitharu smiled and said: “The Lord has said that indulgence in praise or slander for personal profit is forbidden. Since the Lord resides in all beings those that indulge in praise or slander must take its consequence. The saintly dictum goes that we should not ridicule or mock at others' words or actions. The same secret is passed on to Arjuna in the Geetha. Since the slanderer licks others' lapses with his tongue, those that seek 'the good and the benevolent' must not evaluate or deride others' acts. Talking ill of others amounts to talking ill of Narayana as He resides in every bosom. He who knows this truth will not talk ill of others for its violation would lead to self destruction. The principle underlying all the organs or instruments of the body right upto the discriminating intellect is its physical material; their operator, driver

is Sri Hari. This is the proper attitude for one who wants to cross the ocean of life”.

Listening to this exposition repentant Srinivasacharya fell at the feet of Dikshitharu; his voice was trembling and tears were flowing from his eyes and he burst into loud crying. Kindness personified Dikshitharu glanced gracefully at Srinivasacharya. Satisfied with that look bestowed on him the pundit said: “Sir, not knowing the extent and power of your glory I abused you; kindly ignore it. Indulging in such derisive talk every day I have lost my sense. How can I then qualify for a knowledge founded on discriminating ability? Since you with your all round competence have instructed me into it I will give up the habit of talking ill of others. I assure you I have given up the habit of slander from this moment”.

Dikshitharu blessed and graced Srinivasacharya.

III

One day, Dikshitharu came to the assembly followed by a retinue of kings, scholars and devotees. He was dressed in fresh and bright robes with marks of sacred ash on his forehead and a rudrakshi chain adorning his neck. His benign presence, smiling face and endearing speech enchanted everyone who set his eyes on him. Dikshitharu, sitting on the mat meant for him addressed the devotees: “Meritorious fortunate ones, there is no greater merit than observing faithfully and sincerely the code of conduct into which one is introduced in his family or society. You may experience it now. Lakshmi pathi, the Lord, will present Himself before you wherever you are”.

Those assembled were surprised to hear this statement of promise. Naturally they began asking: “In what form?”

“Since the Lord can take infinite forms, it isn’t possible to predict the form he prefers. But remember, fifteen days from now he would present himself here for all of you to see”.

The assembly as one man began counting days expecting the Lord to appear before them. Friends and relatives from distant were invited to join them. On the fifteenth day morning the expectant crowd was ready well before time. Chidambara Dikshitharu was entertaining them with his refreshing talks. In the meantime a good looking Pathan with a beautiful turban on his head and decked with a variety of gold ornaments arrived on the scene. He was mounted on his horse and a sword in its sheath was hung to his belt. He asked the attendants of Dikshitharu to get him an appointment to see their master. The attendant came to the assembly and said to Chidambara: “Swamy, an alien Pathan is waiting for your darshan at the entrance”. The pundits in the assembly began wondering how Chidambara would receive an alien! Chidambara asked his assistant "how many have come one or two"? And the assistant replied "one". Chidambara sent back the assistant to find out for certain whether there are two or only one. The assistant came back and reported that there are two and not one. Chidambaradikshitharu asked again: "Your reports do not tally. You first said one and now you say two. Go back and report to me how many?"

Now the assistant said there was only one.

Laughing at his report Chidambara himself went out to check. A whole retinue followed the guru. The Pathan on seeing Chidambaradikshitharu, dismounted from his horse and embraced the latter. The sight offered a myriad of observations. The conversation between the two the Pathan and Dikshitharu in the parsi tongue was Greek and Latin to all others. Chidambara took the Pathan into the temple and held conversation for quite some time and only one came out and that was Chidambaradikshitharu.

The bemused assembly asked: “Where is Pathan”?

Chidambaradikshitharu replied that he was no Pathan but Lakshmipathi who had come in that form. “Otherwise how could we embrace each other? I had briefed you before lest you may get confused” Chidambara observed.

Not only the Pathan his horse too was not there to be seen.

Chapter XVIII
Shiva Shastry and Bhakthi
Explained

Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu's fame and glory had spread far and wide by 1800 A.D. People from all parts of India were converging on his residence in Navagurupura the newly laid out township of Karnataka. They had come to see with their naked eyes Lord Shiva, Parameshwara, or a god of their adoration, living here as a human being. Among them were many who wanted his blessings to solve their personal and many other problems. Some wanted to know the truth of Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu being a descent of Shiva.

Shri Shivashastry was one such investigator.

He had come from Machilipatnam now a part of Andhrapradesh. He was a great devotee of Shiva, whom he worshipped all the three times a day. Shastry gentle and cultured was a poet too. He wanted to see in person Dikshitharu who was acclaimed as a very incarnation, an Avathar of Shiva, in the present kali age. He had ofcourse read in the Gita, that god would take his descent whenever he felt the need for revival of dharma and defeat the forces antithetical to them. Shastry's skepticism did not give him rest until he decided one way or the other through personal experience. He therefore went with his followers and friends to visit the Avathar.

That very night the all-knowing and omnipresent Chidambar clad in fresh and bright robes with marks of sacred ash on his forehead and rudrakshi beads around his neck appeared in Shastry's dream and asked him where he was going. Shastry replied that he was going to Gurunavapura the place of Chidambaradikshitharu. The latter with his half smile said: "How can Shiva, the consort of Girija, descend at a time when the evil infested kali is so vibrant, domineering and widespread? How can the skeptic seek peace of mind"?

"It is not possible for someone to divine my mind unless he is gifted and godly. Chidambara must be Shiva's descent" Shastry surmised in his dream and fell flat at the feet of the guru and extolled his glory. He washed the guru's feet with his copious tears. Dikshitharu of immeasurable kindness spoke lovingly to Shastry and said: "Since, people tend to be sinful I have come to re-establish dharma in their hearts". The dream ended.

Shastry was no longer the same confident investigator he thought he was. Meditating on the form seen in the dream, Shastry left for Gurunavapura. He saw before him personified the very form he had seen in the dream. With folded hands Shastry went near the effulgent and glowing Avathara. Girija the consort of Shiva was standing to the left of the Avathara. Shiva with his five faces was all aglow. The serpent decorated his neck. He wore a rudrakshi chain. On the top of his head was Ganga. The auspicious Shiva mounted on nandi the bullock stood before Shastry.

Seeing the Lord thus Shastry in a state of adoration prayed: "Hey, Ambika's Lord, merit of my countless lives has come home to profit to day. Thou inaccessible even to the Yogis hast come to me. I bow to thee with all my eight limbs. Ocean of kindness, destroyer of sins, extinguisher of the molten heat of the World, you enable devotees to cross the worldly ocean. You, a lifelong friend of the poor and the humble descent to this world to elevate and uplift it. You shield and protect those from sorrow who submit themselves in faith and devotion. Kindhearted Lord, rid me of my worries".

"Mahathma, protector of the sagacious, wish fulfilling tree of true devotees, provider of safe harbour to those who utter thy sacred name, Chidambara, world leader, grant me thy presence. Lord of everything, having come in my dream why do you delay the same now? Granting what I sought fulfill my desire. A sinner conceited and snobbish, I am; but take me as a devotee with kindness my Lord and look at me with

thy profound grace. Like the clouds for one burning with heat, like a raft to one drowning in the sea, like a path found to one lost in the woods you are found to me on the pretext of my orphaned status. Oh Lord, world elevator and uplifter, please glance at me, with thy lotus eyes and promise me fearlessness on the basis of our close contract in my dream. Oh Lord, why this indifference in my dream: 'I am He, Samba who fulfills your desires, dispels your suspicions. Whatever you wish I grant them you said'. Oh guru of the universe, act and demonstrate that you do as promised. Save me from my illusion; I have sought your feet".

Listening to these hymn-like words of profound affection the satisfied Chidambaradikshitharu talking like an ordinary human being asked: "Shastrigale (honourific plural of Shastry), which is your place? Where are you going? Because of my merits you have given me the pleasure of seeing you".

Shastry replied: "Why mislead me by such inquiries, Oh Omniscient Lord? Conforming to worldly customs and manners, I respond since you have asked; please listen: "I am from an eastern land and I have come to do service at thy feet. Like delicious food to the famished, like liberation to the one in bondage I have got you and where do I go from here? No-where do I go from thy lotus feet hereafter. I will be here like a honey bee. "Protector thou art Truth and Guru, rescue me; sinner I am and mother thou art to those in need and want". Listening to the poetic hymn of Shastry, Dikshitharu said in a mellowed voice in the open assembly: "Shastrigale invoke Eshwara the way you have praised me instead of praising an ignoramus like me. He will surely fulfill your desires. What can I give you"? He further said (aside) "I am Shankara, eulogize and sing and offer hymns and prayers in many a fashion; you are my devotee dear and loving". Shivashastry began composing in Samskrita a symphony of prayers and hymns of profound value and meaning and got ready to sing them in the open assembly next day. The effulgent Dikshitharu surrounded by a galaxy of scholars and eminent

men presided over the assembly. Bowing to the lotus feet of Dikshitharu meditating on the sacred name with his hands folded Shivashastry began reciting his compositions. The gathering listened to it in joyous silence. Chidambara interrupting the song said:

"Shastrigale what did you do? You are eulogizing a human being instead of invoking the divine? Stop your verbiage". Shastry undaunted submitted. "Sadguru, this is no laboured praise of a mortal; this is indeed divine rhapsody and I have not indulged in human admiration. Well informed fellow men, I will present you with the experience that this is divine prayer. Before all of you I take a vow and it is this:

"Singing these compositions I will offer arathi with burning camphor on my plam. If the compositions are divine invocations I should remain unharmed. May my vow be fulfilled".

Shastry held in devotional trance, did the arathi in the avowed manner. He was singing the joy filled lyric and tear drops flowed from his eyes as he fed the flame with one piece of camphor after another in an endless sequence. Agni the fire god, had forgotten his nature. The muted assembly witnessed and felt something that it had never seen or known before making ecstasy a common experience. Realising that Chidambaradikshitharu was god they offered prayers in many ways. Some fell at his feet and some danced in joy. Who can describe that scene? Dikshitharu stood up from his seat and embraced and fondled Shastry in love and grace and said:

"Son, stop it I am indeed the Lord Mahesha you adore. You have extolled only Shiva". He then pacified the flame and uttered: "Dear devotee, I am very pleased. Ask what you want and however difficult it may be I will plead with the Lord and secure it to you. My word is truth" With folded hands Shastry submitted: "Chidambara, worldly ocean navigator I do not go anywhere near the wind of worldly happiness. But because of an unknown disharmony within, I forget you for a second.

If you want to give anything at all grant me bhakthi at your feet and instruct me into its path”.

Chidambara replied: “May that be so. For your sake I describe the path of bhakthi. Those who listen to this sinner even if he is, will get deliverance from samsaara the shackle of worldly ties.

First he must do and adhere to actions prescribed in the Vedas submitting all his doings at my feet doing ‘Namasankirthana’ repetitive utterance of my name. He must worship me with adoration and listen to my life story every day. He must meditate on me. Knowing that god resides in everyone, he must merge with him. To augment this bhakthi, he must follow these twenty four guidelines and for you foremost among my devotees, I am enumerating them. Listen with your ears open.

- We should not expect or desire respect or honour from others.
- However we must honour others suitably depending on the circumstances.
- One should not work with prestige and fame in mind
- A god’s devotee should not recount before others work, deeds done, for public or general good.
- Anger is useless at any time.
- We should be humble in our conduct with everyone.
- We must seek perfection in the work we do.
- We must watch our mind and hold it remain, purified and poised
- We must look at animals with divine temperament and love them.
- We must be unsullied and pure within and without.
- Adherence to truth is a great vow.
- We must employ the discriminating intellect, buddhi, in regulating and controlling our limbs and organs.

- Cruelty to animals is a cruel act.
- Misdeeds of others deserve our excuse
- We must think good of those who slander.
- Peace within is not to be squandered.
- We must abjure the company of ‘the other woman’.
- We must cultivate the company of wiseman and saints with love and affection.
- It is wise and desirable to lead a solitary life.
- You must always direct your attention on ‘My Form’.
- You must let your body serve me with the attitude of a slave.
- Never give up gurubhakthi.

You should look at your limbs and organs and ask: how can they be of service to the divine? Deport lethargy complacency and sloth.

“He who practices these twenty four guidelines with sustained interest I make his heart my dwelling place. Even though the yogis strive for long periods I (Lord) am not visible to their sight. For your sake I will let you know how I can be attained. He who is desirous of having me, must have five qualities. “The first requirement is: he must be free from all desires. Such a devotee, bhaktha, should discard and reject all other things as vomit. Only he will know my real form”. The second: cogitate and meditate on me. Forsaking all restlessness he must intensely and deeply think of me. Only such one is eligible and capable of gaining me”.

“The third is the symbol of peace. By peace is meant satisfaction and contentment. Come what may, the physical and bodily pain or sorrow is not given to the mind to make grist of it”.

“The fourth: absence of hostility or opposition. Others and their virtues and defects are not discussed or reckoned”.

“The fifth one is: equanimity, samadarshana – disregarding the differentiation witnessed in beings of the world and firmly holding to the view that everything is Brahman”.

“Appa, Shastry, impossible it is to get a person endowed or possessed of these fivefold qualities (Appa, an address of familiarity indicating a close kinship.). I want to embrace him; I am searching for him. Although everything is available getting a person of these fivefold endowments even to me, is next to impossible. I take birth for the sake of devotees, bhakthas”.

“When dharma deteriorates, (is) degraded and derided, discarding the division between the high and the low, I descend to the world to reestablish dharma.”

“My form is that of joyous self, swanananda, and I am content with it. I am joy manifested”.

“I am brilliance embodied”.

“I am indivisible and I am related to no other”.

“In order to enjoy the happiness of having a form and experience it too in person, I became two, one as Eshwara and another bhaktha his devotee”.

“Therefore, the devotee who does nishkamakarma, works without expectation, without desire, is dear to me more than Brahma and the other pantheon of gods”.

“Dear devotee, you remain a witness to what I say.

“He who has possessed me, I will free him from all catastrophes; I am at his back as his sentinel and all his burdens I shoulder. I will run indeed rush to him the moment I hear his voice of distress. The moment

I hear the voice of my bhaktha invoking kindness, I lose my own awareness. Poet Emeritus, listen to my secret, I disclose it to you.”

“I become he and shield him day and night who thinks of me at all times giving up all other concerns, coming to know that the human form is not one, to be got for nothing. This I say, three times not once or two. This is truth indeed. I do not have my meal without looking into the welfare of my bhaktha. No point in talking too much. Time hangs heavily on me if I have no bhaktha. Without him this universe becomes empty and hollow. I am bhaktha’s subaltern. For bhaktha’s sake I incarnate myself. To fulfill the desires of bhaktha’s I become their errand boy provoked by bhakthi I washed Arjuna’s steed. I held in my hands Draupadi’s shoes. I put my hand to the grinding stone clasping with that of Janabai. I partook of the leftover of Namadeva. As a servant I toiled in Ekanatha’s house. I have rendered service in the house of my devotees in many ways”.

“Therefore Shivapanditha, trust me and believe my words and take them to heart. Teach it and spread it having lived it. Since you are my top ranking bhaktha responding to your entreaties I will free my single minded bhaktha from all his difficulties. This word of mine is truth, truth indeed. The one who recites daily the stothras you have composed, his desires I will fulfill however difficult they may be. Real joy I grant to him who recites everyday your composition ‘Bhakthananda Lahari’ (The joy waves of Bhakthi.)”

“I have taken descent only because of the erosion of the path of bhakthi”.

Chapter XIX

The Story of Rajarama (1768 -1843)

This is a brief version of a long tale of Rajarama an illustrious and unique disciple of Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu. His countless Abhangas constitute the main source material for his guru's biography in Marathi and Kannada. (Abhanga is a form of Marathi verse widely in use). He was thus his master's chronicler and one who proclaimed and heralded the descent of Parameshwara in human form as Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu in Karnataka. He was his master's viceroy, delegate, representative, a surrogate and a messiah to the devotees spread across the length and breadth of this ancient land.

Rajarama went to the door step of the humble and poor devotees who felt isolated and excommunicated by their families and by the society. He met them in person and affirmed and vindicated their faith and devotion to an unseen god. The forlorn devotees saw in Rajarama and his itinerant followers a faith confirmed and fulfilled.

We recount here the story of this disciple.

Rajarama belongs to a Rajaput family that had come and settled down in Babulgauam long, long ago. As village heads they were wealthy and prosperous. They were god-fearing people and their family diety was Kashi Vishwanatha. Rajarama was born into this god-loving family. Around his sixth year or so he heard the story of Dhruva from a Haridasa who had come to the village as a wandering person. These itinerant holy men and sadhus spread the essence of Vedas as contained in the stories of Ramayana, Bharatha and Bhagavatha. Rajarama is said to have asked himself the question: "If a six year old can win Narayana by a six months penance what am I doing here?" He is reported to have changed his daily schedule accordingly. He would get up early in the morning and refresh himself with a river bath and proceed straight to the temple to offer worship and pray in his own fashion for as long a time as possible. While he was in this state of untutored self culture his

attention is held by another half-naked ash-smearred person who communicated through signs. What transpired between the wordless holyman and much too young boy Rajarama remains a mystery. As the story goes the highly impressed reverent Rajarama feels like inviting him home but pauses and waits to take prior sanction and permission from his mother. But the naked man will not be there when Rajarama goes to invite him. How Rajarama a six or eight year old boy reacted to the events that would probably have gone unnoticed by any other is reflected in the following Abhanga:

"Brother, don't mind. Kashi Vishweshwara, the god you adore, is already incarnated and to mark his presence he is playing his games of 'miracles'. He, still a boy, remains hidden; not yet heralded. To full stature grown, he displays wondrous deeds. His glows will fill the universe like that of a morning sun. He liberates many."

Rajarama in this state of gnawing unrest meets Baleshwar Maharaj, a man of Self-knowledge, 'Athmajnani'. "Though young, your thirst is exemplary. Your longing for god as manifested will be fulfilled. God assuming a human form will come to you, talk to you and fulfill you with his grace and blessings. It isn't time yet. You have got to wait for it; don't get agitated. The seed of bhakthi is sown in you. Doesn't it take time to grow big and give fruits"? These unsought reflections and observations of the Maharaja not only satisfy the young man but tend to affirm his faith in himself.

Rajaram now a young man of twenty is tall, well-built and handsome. The Maharaja of Nagpur a scion of the Bhonsle clan spots the young man somewhere and invites him to join his army with promises of promotion. Royal invitations do not brook rejection. Though disinclined, Rajarama enters the choice-less Royal Service. From one position to another higher he moves up noticed and appreciated by the higher officers. The death of his father reopens the possibility of his return to his ancestral village but compulsions of Royal Service shut the door against it. Rajarama's mother now widowed fears her son's volition

towards an inward life of renunciation and devotion to god. She gets her son married and dictates him to abide by her word: “Do what you like I don’t mind or care. But as long as I live, I want you to lead a life of a married man primarily responsible for his family”.

Rajarama a loving and dutiful son promises to do as she wills. Fifteen years of service in Royal Armed Services of the Ruler of Nagapur do not subvert or affect the core of Rajarama’s being. His yearning to see god remains undiminished. His reliance on prayers, adoration and contact with monks and wise men of knowledge continues without a break. His inner life rested in silence and dignity is neither encroached upon nor disturbed by outward affairs or events.

Rajarama is now transferred to Hoshangabad as the head of a cavalry unit in appreciation of his sincere and faithful service. Except for his mother’s death, his cup of happiness is filled to the full.

He meets Krishnabhata, a Vedic scholar of Telugu origin while in search for a suitable person of competence to perform the last rites for his mother. Bhatta guides and monitors the obsequies proceedings to the satisfaction of Rajarama in all respects. The two had met earlier and had discovered common traits of abiding nature. When Krishnabhata informs that he is on his way to Kashi Rajarama is at once reminded of his own wish for a similar pilgrimage. But Krishnabhata’s advise surprises the dutiful son. He says:

“What madness is this? When God taking a human form has descended in our midst, what fun do you find in seeking darshan of a physical, material object? If you trust my words, listen to me: Go straight from here to Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu. All your wishes will be fulfilled. If you go elsewhere not an iota of satisfaction do you get? My duty I have done in saying what I should. Now do as you think fit”.

Krishnabhata leaves for Kashi and Rajarama is again caught in the eternal wrangles of his mind. He wants a power higher than his mind and intelligence to intervene and guide. That night he has a dream.

“A disciple of Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu has come somewhere to a nearby place. A long carpet like object is spread on raised platform. The disciple is sitting there in perceptible self-composure. Clad is sitting there in perceptible self-composure. Clad in a loin cloth, wearing an elegant cap on his head, his body is ash-smearred. Everyone is going to him for darshan and someone is making an announcement. “Shivachidambara has come; you may have his darshana. “Rajarama too joins the crowd; the disciple calls Rajarama aside and speaks with loving affection and orders him to go and have ShivaChidambara’s darshana. Rajarama bows down and returns after obtaining permission”.

The dream was decisive. It decided the direction of Rajarama’s thinking as well as his travel. It also had the power to recognize the disutility and ignore the countless details that restless mind spins out at all times. ShivaChidambara was his goal and direction.

Rajarama and his wife are both disabled in a sense; if Rajarama’s sight is poor his wife is lame, unable to walk they take an assistant called Nimbaji trusted fellow-devotee and a pony for his wife to ride. The trio one of whom is a pony rider leaves in search of Chidambara. From Hoshangabad across the river Narmada the pilgrims go to Nagpur the Royal Capital to secure permission from his authorities. And from Nagapur they walk in the direction of Pandhrapur around 1805 A.D.

It was a simple adventure of a devotee, whose goal, so to say, draws as it were steadily, irresistibly, the striving seeker; the unmapped terrain, a haven for robbers and brigands holds no threat for them. Rajarama had enough cash on himself but none chose to attack or rob although such encounters were not uncommon those days.

After eight or nine days of travel the three enter a dense forest with no visible way out of it. They stay put where they are waiting unmindful of time, for their good fortune to appear in one form or another and direct them out of it. They feel despondent but not disheartened.

A boy of eight or ten appears before them. Rajarama asks the destiny sent youngster: "Boy, can you show us the way out of this wood? Do you care to"? The boy replies pleasantly: "Yes, Sure, I will". They fall in love with the boy; he is charming and bright; his voice rings a familiar tone, endearing and fascinating. The boy in deference to their curious inquiries, says: "Sir, I am an outcaste a poor one". He is dressed in pants of sorts; a rug thrown carelessly across his shoulders he is holding a stick. His leather foot wear appears new. His walk is brisk, his movements quick and fast goading the strangers to walk fast and keep pace with him. He is always inaudibly ahead of them discouraging any conversation.

The leader boy on approaching a water source asks his followers whom he has virtually rescued from wilderness to take food near a pond that is close by. Rajarama invites the saviour boy to share food with them but he politely declines. The boy apprehending further pressure from the strangers walks away saying: "Eat in peace and comfort. Once you are through with eating we will resume." When Rajarama, his wife, and Nimbaji are ready to go, the boy appears to scout them again from a distance far a head of them. The more interest Rajarama shows in getting close to the boy, the farther away he seems to go not showing any inclination for any conversation or friendship. Expect for a cryptic 'yes', they get no closer to this boy of destiny. As they approach at last a human habitation the pilgrim group is happy and expectantly joyful.

Rajarama as a token of his gratitude to this boy of destiny tries to offer a few coins which he can easily spare. As they go closer to the village the unknown boy disappears in a way very similar to that of his appearance. Rajarama has at last reached the holy town of Pandhrapur after a month long walk. The search for the boy who led them during the most trying circumstances is of no avail.

Rajarama going to Panduranga Temple bares his heart to the Lord and says: "Paramathma, arrange for me Shivachidambara darshan as fast as you can. Though inert in form you stand out here prominently.

You don't talk to anyone. But I learn that you are now reborn as the son of a brahmin. Therefore, Lord of my adoration, come to me in the form of Chidambara of my conception".

Even after six days of stay in the holy Pandhrapur, the trio are unable to plan and proceed further. They are unable to get a trusted escort familiar with Kannada the language of Chidambara's land.

A priest coming to know of their predicament wants to help them. He says: "I have an assistant who can speak both Kannada and Marathi. Moreover, I have to send some money to my friend who has gone for Shivachidambara darshana; I was planning to send a 'Hundi' an indigenous demand draft for his use. My assistant will be yours for this journey".

Enabled thus Rajarama and his wife and Nimbaji leave Pandhrapur to Kundagol where Sri Shivachidambara is residing at present as a poor brahmin. The pilgrims at long last reach their place of destiny on Friday in the month Shravana Chathurdashee (1805 A.D.). Finding some lodge for stay the group hastens to Sri Shivachidambara Darshana.

On seeing the large congregation of waiting devotees seeking darshana, they stand arrested at the main entrance. Rajarama says unto himself: "Has it been of no avail oh Lord, walking this distance this long? If wait I must, I will; be it so Shivachidambara. Until you grant me direct audience, water and food, I don't touch. Do what you like".

The three return to their lodge. Rajaram's wife and Nimbaji coming to know of Rajarama's resolve, follow him in word and spirit. Each passing day is spent in anticipation and renewed resolution and repeated avowals. Rajarama spends long hours calling Chidambara unable to withstand divine indifference.

Rajarama witnesses a strange sight and describes it as follows: "Sri Shivachidambara comes near me and sits down. He picks me up as one does his dear child and resting on his lap caresses me fondly and

gently moving his hand gently all over my face. Then shifting me into a sitting posture, Chidambara feeds me with sugar mixed dried up coconut sweet meals. Slowly and clearly uttering in whisper “The Chidambara mantra’ into my ears, he initiated me into the manthra expatiating on its power.”

Sri Shivachidambara Mahaswamy asserts: ‘no impediment or obstacle can lift its head before this manthra’. Saraswathimatha wife of Sri Shiva chidamabara engaged perhaps in cooking comes out and says: ‘Affectionate one, you have had the darshan of both your father and mother. No need to worry; be happy’. ‘She is washing her dough stained hand with water. Rajarama continues to be sitting on Sri Shivachidambara’s lap. The Swamy says many pleasant and sweet words to Rajarama as a father does to his son in affection. By his side are two little girls decked in beautiful ornaments. Many such things happened...”

Rajarama is awakened and feels well fed despite a three day fasting. Copra shavings stuck in his dentures dispel disbelief and doubts about the happening. He is extremely happy and sleeps ruminating over the events.

Another one follows: “Rajarama is sitting in some place is covered with leaf-filled neem and mango branches as awnings. Clad in a lion cloth, ash-smearred, Chidambara all the while looking at Rajarama is talking gracefully to a fine- complexioned beautiful boy of five years. He is saying: “Tell me all, all that you want to. I am ready to part with all that you seek. Why take recourse to an intermediary when you can talk to me straight? To you my darshana is given at all times. Does it satisfy you?”

But Rajarama feels all these sights and visions, however real and genuine, are no substitute to a direct personal contact. He finds no reason to break his fast; he extends his fast until he is granted direct audience. Thursday afternoon nearly a week after the avowed resolution, Sri Shivachidambara’s grace flows and Dikshitharu walks towards

Rajarama. There was none with him at that time. Immense was Rajarama’s happiness. He had brought with him from Pandhrapur, ‘bukka’ ‘evil-sight dispelling powder’. He applies it lavishly to Sri Shivachidambara disregarding the latter’s mild protestation. Rajarama sees his God and fills him eye full. God stood still for some time. Rajarama falls down, rolls on his feet. There was no limit to his joy. God immediately returned to his residence.

Rajarama broke his fast. Rajarama took his wife and Nimbaji for Sri Shivachidambara’s darshana that very evening. The crowd was so large and dense they fear further delay of three or four days for them to get darshana. A direct meeting was yet to take place.

One day the Maharaja came straight to where Rajarama and his wife were, stood before them and said in gentle affection: “Appa, you seem to have come from a long distance. From where are you? Are your horses and cattle safe? How is your Royal Service”?

Rajarama seems to have given suitable and appropriate replies. Coming to know that they have come from distant Nagapur the Maharaja was concerned. “You must have faced and survived plenty of difficulties and problems. What made you embark on this enterprise? I will fulfill them the moment you let me know your driving desire. No matter how difficult it may be let me know what your desire is ; I will plead with the Lord and see it is fulfilled.”

Talking in this manner a persistent Sri Shivachidambara asked Rajarama: “What do you desire”? Seeing Sri Shivachidambara at such close proximity and listening to his sweet voice Rajarama was shaken and humbled. With folded hands he said: “Lord, thou art a witness to all our instruments (bodily organs and their functions) within. What transpires in the domain of our heart is already known to you. Where then is the need for me to make a special petition of my wishes? Since I am asked by you, perforce I have to reply. It is my submission that I seek an audience with you in person all alone. I feel fulfilled if my wish

is granted.” “Yes. It is done” said a smiling Mahaswamy. Eight days passed.

Mahaswamy is sitting all alone in some solitary place. Rajarama goes there as called. Mahaswamy is standing presenting his uplifted right palm opened indicating the ‘No Fear’ sign of ‘Abhayahastha’. Rajarama falls at the feet of Mahaswamy in reverent submission with his hands folded. A smiling Mahaswamy says: “Son, you wanted to meet me alone. Is that wish fulfilled now? We are the only two here. You may now ask all the boons you desire without any hesitation”. Rajarama full with humility submits: “My Lord, It isn’t my power to stand before you and speak. In deference to your command I ask this: “let my mind forever be in meditation of the ‘Satchidandaswaroopa’ (meditating on one’s own form: Sat Chit and Ananda). This is the first of my boons.

Mahaswamy: “Be that so. Ask another”.

Rajarama: ‘God having set my eyes on thy feet, let not my mind be distracted and wander and think of anything else at any time. This is my second one”.

Mahaswamy: “Yes. It will be so. Ask the third one. It is my wish to grant you one more”.

Rajarama: “Because of my misfortune my eyes have lost their power of vision; may akshara be visible to my eyes. This is the third boon I seek”

Amused at the kind of boon sought the Mahaswamy observes: “What a fool are you! When your mind devoid of volatility is pointedly focussed in contemplation of its own Satchidananda form why think of eye sight and vision? How can such a residue of desire remain clinging”?

Rajarama: “Mahaswamy the question you raise is legitimate. When the body consciousness is absent and gone, when mind waves are focussed forever on its own Satchidananda form, there is no place for

anything else. But as long as we are stuck inseparably joined with this body, its consciousness intrusion of such body consciousness is likely off and on. Don’t we experience such intrusions off and on? At such moments of intrusion don’t we feel the necessity of the eye and other organs”?

Mahaswamy: “Look here you are to act according to my dictates. If you fail to do so that very instant your and my relationship is cut. You will enjoy enormous happiness as long as you carry out my orders in word, deed and spirit. If you act in consonance with my dictates, I too will enjoy it. It is true I am a poor brahmin. But all that I say is truth. I will let you know the auspicious time when you should leave this place. Be here till then”.

Looking at Nimbaji the Mahaswamy asked: “What do you want”?

Nimbaji replied: “May my life remain attuned in devotion to thy Holy Feet. This is my submission and beyond it nothing else I have to ask”.

Needless to say what Mahaswamy said or did. A literal down pour of experiences, instructions, institutions, suggestions and signs fill Rajarama’s life from then on. ‘Many a time’, says Rajarama, he didn’t understand what was happening; he had to wait for later events or some other occasion to suggest or spell out its meaning? Each experience was an addition to the sum of his understanding and knowledge spiritual or temporal. Once Rajarama was sitting on a raised platform and Sri Shivachidambara came. He looked radiant with vibhuti marks on his forehead. Rajarama fell at the feet of his master pleasantly shaken by his arrival. He was ordered by the guru to utter three times:

“My true form is Satchidananda”.

Rajarama uttered three times as directed. In a variety of ways its meaning was brought home to him; doubts were cleared and Rajarama was gifted with satisfaction complete.

Rajarama is a witness in another illustration to a congregation of gods and divine beings with their heads bent in submission to Sri Shivachidambara who is at the centre. Rajarama is called and fondly embraced by the Mahaswamy. As though he is addressing the gods he declares: “This is my boy and you are not to comment or say anything about him. I cannot tolerate if any one indulges in such acts”.

The text concludes as follows: “God showered uncommon grace on Rajarama who as a recipient enjoyed it to the full. I don’t have words for its description. No, it isn’t possible. “The Mahaswamy instructed me in a variety of ways and methods. He dissolved the spirit of my being into his own. ‘Those’ I felt in his presence I can’t translate into words. He committed me into a path of bhajan, a compound of bhakthi and jnana. He made me get the idols of his two wives and his own as also that of Maruthi sculptured. From a variety of angles he enabled me get spiritual experience. I began worshipping with basil leaves his leather foot wear and for this purpose he presented a set of new footwear every year. I was led to make promises and forced to vouchsafe for it. Affirmative signs and illustration I used to get for all deeds done in accord with his wishes; he did miracles so that people would know and learn. But how many should people witness to learn? I used to take in procession, wherever I went a portrait of the god Sri Shivachidambara aloft a beautifully decked horse; a regal umbrella held over it. Large fans were waved on either side of the portrait. Someone held an unsheathed sword followed by others playing their musical instruments. This procession was a part of my pilgrimage. The leather footwear of the Mahaswamy tied to my breast adorned my heart. The bhajan group, the flag bearers, the dancing folk singing Abhangas formed a part of the procession. I was ordered to travel in this fashion and sent to far off places. I covered Prayaga, Kashi, Gaya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Delhi and Kurukshetra”.

“With all this, the delusion of many didn’t vanish. Even when God spoke from his mouth and did miracles from his hands, people remained

immersed in their delusion. Illusion, (that co exists with God) is hard to crack. Unless Ishwara, God wills it is not possible for men to decipher the play of illusion. All the scripted Abhangas have come from the mouth of God”.

Rajarama passed away in 1843. Vithobai carried on the glorious work of Rajarama before she took her watery grave in the Arabian sea. (Jalasadhi)

Chapter XX

Vishnuroopa Darshana

Chidambaradikshitharu had become a household name in what we now identify as the Northern Karnataka region and the borders of Marathi areas. Four vaishnavas wanted to see him in person and satisfy themselves. He was referred to as an Avathara of Shiva and his durbar attracted people from the four directions. The four visitors called themselves vaishnavas because of their rigid adherence to the view that Narayana, also called Vishnu alone is supreme among the gods and all others are secondary. Dikshitharu was also known as a kind tolerant host who never failed to appreciate the good and outstanding qualities of others.

“Sir, tomorrow is a holy day a Haridina. Would you care to join us and others for your meal or like to have an exclusive arrangement made for you”? Dikshitharu asked the Vaishnava guests for clarification.

The visitors replied: “We are vaishnavas and joining others isn’t done”. They were therefore supplied with the required provisions and other facilities for cooking their meal. They woke up the next morning and began their cooking near their mobile Devataarchana (puja) chest which they carry as a part and parcel of their life. (A box containing the icons of deities the devotee worships every-day without fail). They opened their box to offer the food cooked to Saligrama the symbol of Vishnu. In each one of the four boxes the Saligrama was found missing. The four visitors met Chidambara in the Kitchen prostrated to him and with folded hands pleaded: “Chidambara, we are famished but we are facing a big problem. Please solve our problem and enable us to have our meal”.

Chidambara a little astonished asked: “Sir, you are Vishnu bhaktas and how can problems trouble you? Don’t worry; they will be solved”. The four lamented and said again: “When Lord Vishnu has left us where

then, is our meal? When the Lord whom we worshipped daily before our meal has left us how can we touch food”?

Chidambara observed: “What are you saying? Isn’t it most surprising? Is it possible for the Lord to forsake his bhaktas and go away? Be certain. He never does so. Lakshmi pathi savior of devotees is right here. But tell me why and how he is missing from all the four boxes at once”?

The visitors meekly replied: “That is something beyond us. Omniscient you are and you know it. Please resolve our problem first”.

Chidambara offering a way out said: “Don’t be afraid; please wait. I will replace with the new and more beautiful Saligramas. Worship him and have your meal”.

The visitor’s response was quick, decisive and clear. “We have been worshipping the missed Saligramas since our upanayana and we haven’t taken a morsel without offering it to him first. We would give up of our lives rather than survive without him”.

Witnessing their intense devotion Chidambara’s heart throbbed with kindness. He called the main cook and said: “See whether the Saligramas are lying in the sambar vessel”. The cook stirred several times with his ladle the boiling sambar vessel kept on the oven and began scooping one after poured all of them before Chidambara. “If your Saligramas are here please pick them up, worship and have food and give us happiness” said, Chidambara.

On witnessing the great miracle, the visitors were surprised and shaken, bowed down, prostrated and said: “Damn our superior status Chidambara, caught in our own delusion we shut our eyes to your greatness. Held by our petty logic we remained disinclined to appreciate your glory and rejected the great food you offered; we erred in insulting you the omniscient. When Lord Vishnu himself has tasted the delicious ‘sambar’ what about us? No blemish is attached if one eats with others. (we understand it now) Our superiority has led to making the priest

greater than god. Pride-filled minds of ours were deluded. We have identified your form. Our mind is at rest fixed on thy feet. Kindness manifest, lift us up, elevate us. You are Narayana dressed in human form. Please permit us to partake of your food here along with others. Oh, Lord, shower thy grace on us”.

Chidambara seeing their intense Bhakthi lifted them up and pacified them and revealed to them his ‘four shouldered Vishnu Form’. Having seen the sinless form, a sight visible only to Yogis in the deep intensity of their meditation the visitors invoked and prayed to him in a variety of ways.

II

Those who came to see Dikshitharu were always assured of their food prasada the god-graced food. It was a sort of broken jowar soup. Narayanabhatta, a Telugu brahmin wanted his accustomed ‘anna’, cooked rice. Needless to observe, no one appreciated the brahmins demand for a dish of his own liking. Moreover to ask from him who would readily relinquish his own seat for the food of one’s own choice, was infantile, thought everyone. The brahmin’s choice appeared inappropriate because it was like preferring intoxicating drinks to ambrosia. The mirror can reflect only the facial contours of the beholder; similarly god gives what is desired by the human mind. Dikshitharu said to the brahmin: “Preferential treatment in serving food at a public place is sinful to the server as well as the eater. Therefore cook your own meal and be happy; the rice you want will be given”. He was given a handful of rice.

When Narayanabhatta put that hand full of rice into a vessel it multiplied itself into an inexhaustible measure. It was, so to say, a self-replenishing gift. He felt extremely happy and satisfied and embarked on offering food to people just as Chidambara did. There was however one major

difference. While Dikshitharu offered broken jowar, Narayanabhatta gave rice.

Because of this self-imposed responsibility his work load increased several fold. He became irritable, intolerant, restless and abusive. He found fault with every one and began to look down on others. He spoke ill of brahmins at each step. His slanderous outbursts didn’t exclude Chidambara too. He didn’t hesitate to say to the diners who were in fact devotees,: “You eat stomach full and leave the cleansing to me. Who is there for my help and assistance? You get rice here where as Dikshitharu serves only broken jowar and I have with me the vessel inexhaustible; has he any such? After all what is so great about Chidambara”?

Narayanabhatta gave free vent to his enormous pride, arrogance and conceit. The brahmins complained to Dikshitharu about Bhatt’s conduct. The latter pacified them asking them to eat what he serves and not fall a prey to the superior grain of rice. He said further: “Come and eat here; satisfaction derived from eating is the same, whether food is ordinary or tasty. Shame and dishonour follow those who yield to the cravings of the tongue. That which is served with love and affection when needed becomes nectar; even nectar ceases to give satisfaction if it is given without care or warmth”.

Sometime later Dikshitharu took a vow of alms seeking and went begging to Bhatta who was immensely pleased to find himself as Chidambara’s choice and gave a handful of rice to the latter as sought. As the guru returned with that handful rice, Bhatt’s vessel became empty. He was stunned and stupefied to realize that the game was over. He fell at the feet of Chidambara and confessed in remorse: “Maha Swamy I accept my guilt and wrong-doing. I have insulted brahmins in my arrogance. Thoughtless I have slandered you in many ways and words. I am despicable lowly being. Please excuse my deeds and utterances; I beg your forgiveness”.

The guru with his usual smile said: “Well, there is little that I can do. You will get what you have earned through karma. Keep that in mind. He who is conscious of his own good will thank the brahmin even if the brahmin misbehaves by his word or action. Our wealth, opulence and our Jnana, learning, will perish if the brahmin is insulted. Therefore in your own self-interest surrender yourself to them and seek their clemency. Through the blessed offerings given by the brahmins, prasada, flows happiness of power and strength”.

Narayana in obedience to the instructions received fell at the feet of brahmins. Blessed by brahmins he became purified and later he got Chidambara’s blessings as well.

We bow to Chidambara in concluding this note. His grace dispels our fear of birth and death.

Chapter XXI

Stone Turns Gold and Poverty Eradicated

In the princely state of Agadi there lived a court priest called Ramashastry. He had come with his family to see Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu. After the formal pleasantries, Dikshitharu asked: “Shastry, I have a desire to listen to your rendering of the puranas; may I ask for its fulfillment”?

Shastry in obedience to the wish of the Mahaswamy got himself ready for the rendering. The listeners had already assembled. Dikshitharu sent his assistant Govinda to personally invite Thryambakashastry a well known scholar to listen to the Puranas.

Displeased with the messengers poor grammar and rustic usage the scholar Shastry said: “You say you are a Chidambara’s disciple but speak like an unsophisticated novice. What a Chidambara and what a disciple? Alas! What poor diction and usage”!? The invitee chose to decline the invitation. Govinda embarrassed and ashamed returned to his guru and reported verbatim the reception he received.

Sri Shivachidambara sprinkled some sacred ash on the face of the stupid Govinda making him into an all knowing scholar well versed in all branches of knowledge. Govinda then went back to Shastry and renewed his invitation in a scholarly language of variety, style, grace, taste, prasa, rhyme, slesha, and Yamaka (a type of word play with sounds).

Shastry was stunned and stupefied on hearing the stupid messenger addressing him with authority like a scholar. Divining the infinite ways in which the guru’s grace can radiate, Shastry attended the assembly accepting the invitation.

Ramashastry seeing ‘the scholarly tiger’ Thryambakashastry in the audience felt self-conscious, diffident and distraught. Watching

Ramasasty's discomfiture, Chidambara put some sacred ash into the former's mouth and sprinkled some more on his face. When Ramashastry started his prefatory reading after the invocation, the scholar Shastry didn't forget to warn and caution the pauranika (the purana reader) to be careful and watchful in his presence.

Ramasasty the pouranika drawing inspiration looking at the face of the Mahaswamy interpreted the word Chidambara in sixteen different forms and meanings supported by the rules of grammar and usage.

Thryambakasastry stood up at the end of the rendering and embraced the pauranik in profound appreciation and warmth. Overcoming his conceit he confessed: "The glory of Chidambara is inexhaustible and wordless". Throwing aside his self importance and scholarly distance he became a devotee of Chidambara.

Ramasasty sought Chidambara's permission to leave after spending a couple days in the holy company of the Mahaswamy. But his mind was seized by the Mahaswamy. But his mind was seized by the thought of his poverty and the absence of any indication of its eradication. But Dikshitaru could easily discern a streak of dissatisfaction on the face of his beloved puranic. He was besieged by his mind which reminded him of his uneradicated poverty even under the benevolent company and fellowship of Chidambara.

While sending off Ramashastry Chidambara accompanied the visitor some distance. At some point the Mahaswamy took away Ramashastry to a secluded place leaving all others behind. Chidambara placed a big stone in the shawl of Ramashastry and secured it with a knot. He further directed not to unite the knot before he reaches his village. He also pronounced: "With this your poverty is eradicated".

Shastry's wife was a self willed hasty and imprudent woman. Her eagerness to know what transpired between her husband and the Mahaswamy appeared irresistible. She insisted on Shastry to disclose to her the contents of their private meeting. Shastry's suggestion to wait

till the village is reached didn't appease her thirst for knowing. She wanted it to be known here and now. Quarreling thus they walked up to a place called Doddavada where Shastry went for a bath keeping aside his shawl. Shastry's wife untied the knot for inspection and got disappointed on seeing a big stone and threw it away.

"Wicked woman what did you do"? Shastry remonstrated. Recovering the broken piece of the thrown out stone he hit his forehead in anguish and distress. The stone shone in brilliance and half of it had turned into gold. Showing it to his wife he said in sadness that the whole stone would have turned into gold. If only she had cared to wait and see. He thanked Chidambara for giving at least a half instead of nothing.

He returned to Agadi and lived his time in the company of Chidambara's name and memory.

II

Narayanabhata a shivabhaktha dedicated to the Vedic knowledge and learning was living on the banks of the River Thungabhadra. He was poor and his family was large. It was a daily struggle to make his both ends meet. Shelter less and thrown out from the house in which he was living he had to beg for a living. He migrated to Pandharapura Vittala's holy place as a destitute thinking of suicide if Vittala didn't care to help. A year passed by. One night Vittala came in his dream and said:

"Brahmin, listen to me. Don't worry your penury has come to an end. Parameshwara of oceanic kindness is living in Murugodu with the name of Chidambaradikshithru. Go to him without a trace of hesitation and free yourself from destitution." Awakened, the brahmin reviewed his dream and questioned the basis of its message and appealed to Vittala: "Aren't you capable of helping me? How can a man do what is

impossible for Lakshmipathi ? (Lakshmi goddess of wealth and Narayana her Lord) Don't dispatch me to a human being. I want Thou to grace me". Resolute in his stand he again prayed to Vittala forsaking food. After three days Vittala came again in his dream and admonished: "Brahmin, don't be impudent and spurn the divine. Give up your delusion and proceed to Chidambaradikshitharu". Vittala also made sure to visit the priests in their dream that night and warned: "Don't let the brahmin inside the temple; drive him out".

When the brahmin went the next day to the temple early in the morning the priest had this message to deliver: "You are ordered to go to Murugodu. If you don't I have Vittala's instruction to send you out of temple". Terminating his fast and vow by feeding the brahmins Narayanabhatta went at last to Murugodu.

Seeing Chidambaradikshitharu from a distance Bhatta ran to him and fell at the feet of Vittala's nominee. Lifting Bhatta up in love Dikshitharu said:

"Brahmin superior, you had gone to the divine, hadn't you? Why then did you come to a mortal? What is that a man can do which the gods don't?" Dikshitharu asked.

The brahmin embarrassed again held the feet of Dikshitharu. Tears trickled down profusely from his eyes and his throat got choked. The brahmin, addressing Dikshitharu, said: "Oh! Chidambara, in my delusion I couldn't comprehend your glory even when Vittala himself directed me to you. If you don't rescue and uphold a stupid one like me how can your glory spread? I have come to you in total surrender, please lift me up".

Guardian and protector of the lowly and the humble, Chidambara enquired in sweet affection about his family and how they were doing. Listening to Narayanabhatta's description of his poor circumstance, Chidambara observed: "In this world there is no fire second to poverty. But what can I do? I am myself a poor fellow. The poor man's desires

die as they are born. How can your poverty be eradicated by my actions? I have however designed a plan for you. Stay here for a day or two and proceed straight to Srirangapattana where an extraordinary charitable person by name Purnaiah lives. (Dewan Purnaiah is a name to reckon with in the history of Mysore). You get five thousand coins from him which in turn extinguish your poverty. Don't entertain disbelief, trust me".

Guru's permission secured, Narayanabhatta left for Srirangapattana the holy place of Sri Ranganatha. Good signs and omens greeted him on the way. He met a stranger who became close very soon. The stranger confessed: "I have in fact come in search of you. Let us get back to our place. The five thousand coins you sent me were timely. The debt is cleared and my daughter's wedding is fixed". Narayanabhatta said to himself in disbelief: "When did I remit five thousand coins to a stranger who I am meeting for the first time now? This is Mahaswamy's leela the divine sport-an outflow of his hidden grace. His deeds are awesome. He spoke like a common man and sent me out saying "I am myself a poor man and I can't give you anything". "Greater than the greatest Thou art. I called you by names and teased Vittala too. Forgive all my misdeeds." He prayed. Turning to his stranger friend on the way Bhatta said: "You get going. I am going on Swamy's command".

Chidambara now appeared in Purnaiah's dream and said: "Listen, I speak this in your interest. You are likely to face a problem very soon which isn't insoluble! There is a solution and it is this. Tomorrow a stranger from the bank of river Thunga claiming to be sent by Chidambara appears at your eastern door step. Receive him and extend a cordial reception and give him rupees five thousand and a festive meal. Your problems hinted earlier will be solved with this act. You will be in trouble if my words are ignored".

The next day was marked by events as foreseen in the dream. Wonderstruck Purnaiah paid rupees five thousand to Narayanabhatta

besides scrupulously following the word and spirit of the dream instructions. Providing an escort Purnaiah gave a cordial farewell to the poor brahmin.

Narayanabhatta returned to Murugodu to relate his incredible experience. In gratitude and thankfulness he bowed to Chidambara and said: “Thou art the Lord of the universe who gives double of what is asked” “You are enriched by your forces unseen called good fortune; what have I got to do with that”?

Chapter XXII Water Spring at Thadasanooru and Thimmappa Gosai

Thadasanooru is too small a place to find a place in our school maps. But no place or person is unimportant for Sri Shiva Chidambara Dikshitharu. One hot afternoon he went with his band of followers to this arid waterless tract. Everyone in the group felt thirsty their throats dry and choking. To fetch a pot of water the residents had to trek long distances.

Walking to the North Eastern boundary of the village Dikshitharu selected a point on a plateau-like land to dig a well. A shudra familiar with the nature of the tract watched Dikshitharu’s activity. He could not restrain himself. He said: “Brahmin the great, what are you doing here”?

Chidambara replied: “I am getting a well dug here; I am feeling very thirsty”. “Are you mad or what? You expect a water spring here? Why labour in haste? Expect water in this barren stretch! Isn’t it like milking the ox, instructing the stupid, enriching the luckless, purifying the butcher’s mind? I tell you, it is useless. Should not discretion inform work? Should not you examine the earth and sub soil before embarking on sinking a well? You will find happiness in all things you do if it is supported by experience”.

Chidambara replied in simple faith: “Appa, I am very thirsty. If Shiva is great and all knowing he will let a water fountain spring here”. As these words were being uttered a fountain of water gushed itself from the earth. Seeing the water fountain the shudra confessed: “You are no common brahmin. You are Shiva indeed. Do not mind my words uttered in haste. If you grace anything is possible”.

He fell at the feet of Shiva Chidambara.

A pleasant commotion disturbed the pilgrims who wanted to watch the water fountain and the upsurge of water from that barren bosom.

Caught in the cause and effect nexus of things and events they asked Dikshitharu for an explanation and his reply was true to his being. He observed:

“Since Shankara is favourably disposed towards you, he has sent his Bhagirathi, the river goddess. She has herself come to save you and quench your thirst. If you bathe once in this Ganga the river that knows no pollution’, the ever pure and clean river, your sins are burnt and your mind gets purified and the merit of bathing in the holy Prayaga accrues”.

II

A Haridasa came to the durbar of Shri Shiva Chidambara Diskshitharu. Haridasa is a slave of Hari Sri Vishnu; slavery is a simple life of innocence to be attained not a living condition that is deplored; they narrate through a blend of simple music, lofty prose and dance that is vibrant and natural the life and glory of Hari to touch the heart of the common man. His proficiency was well known and his fame as a performer had spread far and wide. Many devotees of the Dikshitharu too were attracted by his outward performance and perceived skills of narration. They wanted him to perform in Chidambara durbar. The Haridasa’s conditions were clear and not negotiable. He demanded one hundred rupees for his performance and his tone was imperious. He said “No money, no performance is my rule”. Go and ask if your Dikshtharu is willing to abide by this condition”.

The devotees pooled their own meager resources and arranged for the programme of course with the consent and approval of the Maharaja as some referred to the Dikshitharu. The durbar was full and the audience was eager with expectation. The Harikatha rendering was all set to begin. The Chidambara Maha Swamy presiding over the durbar called for Thimma his assistant in a loud voice. The assistant stood before the Mahaswamy shaken by the call in that durbar. The guru Maharaja said: “I am desirous of listening to your kirthana, (rendering of a musical narrative). Go ahead and start”. Bowing down in reverence

to the Maharaja and touching his sacred feet he submitted: “Maha Swamy, you know as everyone does here that I am the dullest and most stupid of your devotees. I cannot talk much about it. Deformed and ugly looking as I am what performance can I present? You must be playing with me a poor being and that indeed is no small a grace. Let not your word go unheeded. I am an illiterate unfamiliar with the written word. What kirthana can I present before you, Swamy”?

Dikshitharu was moved by Thimma’s sincere and honest expressions of innocence. He asked Thimma to come close to him. When he did Dikshitharu, sprinkled sacred ash on his face. Thimma at once discovered in himself a competence and scholarship and learning that sprang out from within. He began composing in prose and verse the knowledge enshrined in the books of the world of learning. He began singing melodiously a variety of tunes set to a range of beats and notes touching the heart of every one present there. His first item was a eulogy on the guru. Those who wanted to leave early changed their mind caught by the voice of Thimma. The Haridasa had before him a yardstick to compare his own skills and proficiency in this art; he stood awe struck beaten in every direction. He fell at the feet of Chidambara seeking clemency.

Thimma was turned into Thimmappa Gosai a saintly being.

Chapter XXIII Mallappa The Munificent

In the year 'Kshaya' of the Hindu calendar there was an outbreak of famine in the regions now known as North Kannada. Since rains had failed there was no work for farmers. Many walked to the place of Dikshitharu leaving their hearth and homes in search of food and livelihood. Moved by the sight of hapless people, he arranged for gruel centers providing broken jowar soup and butter milk for the needy; but conditions grew worse with each passing day.

Dikshitharu was however conscious of the significance of kala, time. All things happen in time and its dictates are not to be transgressed. Let time run its course was what wise men said. "We must carefully deal with the event by providing food and rescuing people from the jaws of death", Dikshitharu thought and posted his son Divakara to Gurlahosur the newly built town entrusting him with the task of providing food to the famine stricken immigrants.

Dikshitharu marched to Betasuru followed by a large group of volunteers and devotees. The townsmen received Swamy with sincere devotion and loving respect. The Swamy made kind inquiries about everyone no matter who they were brahmin or shudra. Going close to one Mallappa, Swamy said: "Do you remember me the one who lives under your munificence? Like the Chataka bird that remembers the moon, so do I live in your remembrance. Today, I have come for your Darshan".

Mallappa, a little startled recited this invocation in reply: "Lord of the universe, Jagannatha, prime mover, why do you enthrall me with thy words? I have come in submission to thy feet. Your servant I am and so I remain. This house is not mine; it is yours. (When) You go to your house, where is the need for someone to accord a reception"? Pleased with what Mallappa said, the Swamy with his entourage entered the house of Mallappa, who lost no time in offering to his guru

and his followers a great and satisfying meal. Mallappa joined the Swamy after his meal.

In the meantime, two brahmins seeing the Swamy from a distance joyously approached him and made a humble submission of their destitute condition. "Chidambara, protector of the three worlds, blessed are we to see you. We are brahmins; we are struck with hopelessness and want. We remain exhausted in caring for a family with no resources. We never had a good and satisfying meal in recent days. Now things have gone worse and who can give whom when everyone is in dire need"? Dikshitharu was moved and said: "Give up your desperation; your problems have met their end. Stop worrying hereafter. Go and have your meal with a rested mind. Umaphy Lord of Uma will save you from your problems".

Dikshitharu called Mallappa to his side and said: "The one who gives food during famine, money during normal times and words of assurance to the fear stricken is dear to Shiva. Therefore give pleasure to Shankara (Shiva) by giving away jowar to these two brahmins a quantity that meets their annual requirement. In times of general destitution, Uma Ramana Lord of Uma will be pleased even if a small offering is made to fellow beings. This is true and certain. Don't entertain doubts".

Mallappa bowing down reverentially submitted: "Swamy, the times are hard and difficult with no alms giver left. My own family is large enough to reckon. Everyday a large number of visitors step into my threshold. Those who come to beg are migrants and often demand with vehemene. Everyday my foremost thought is about how I can sail through these difficult times? (Given these conditions) how do I carry out your wish"?

Chidambara observed: "Let me first know how much jowar you have. Then I will tell you what you should do in your best interest". Mallappa replied: "Sadgurunatha, I have with me nine underground cellars-cum-warehouses and similarly big and large is my family".

Mahaswamy pleased with Mallappa's transparent disclosure of stocks as they truly were, smiled in satisfaction and continued: "Mallappa, how can you be so tight-fisted possessing such huge stocks? How can you expect fulfillment in life by such acts? Consider the real and the unreal and be discriminating. Futile it is to get into passionate attachment. If you think your assets, land and buildings and your relationships, wife and children and other resources like grains and cash are permanent and last forever, then be parsimonious. If not your ceaseless toil may go in vain".

"In this illusory world samsara the conjunction of happy circumstances is like a lightning that vanishes as it flashes. The life-span of beings is like a drop of water on molten steel. Like a frog trying to swallow a fly caught in the jaws of a serpent, fools except happiness in this samsara the world. Consider carefully. Only sorrow befalls a man, the more he strives for happiness. Happiness is like a dream an appearance. Our song of life 'companionship of wife and children', is like the birds that fly away in the morning after night's rest on the tree. Wealth is a volatile phenomenon. Youth dies down like waves of the sea. (The human) body is a nest of diseases. If this is so, how can happiness happen in the world? Learned fools toil and devise clever plans for bodily pleasures. The Atman is separate and different from the body which is but a compound of five elements. Thinking that securing for one's living and food for belly ensures happiness, stupid is he, who fills his granaries nine. He must know it is like dressing the donkey with the most expensive embroidered silk to protect his self against cold and wetness. The fools unaware of the Atman that is different from the body get into many difficulties driven as they are by manifold desires and conceptions. Unaware of the secret of joy and happiness, action bound man goes on working and toiling. He himself thus becomes responsible for the repetitive cycle of his own birth and death. Do what you will the desired fruits do not come by. Caught in the delusion (that the body is he and its happiness is lasting and real), he becomes a subject of repeated births and deaths. He doesn't notice

that the instruments of happiness remain even if the body withers away inconceivably. 'The God in the belly' (The God within) who protects you naturally, does he forsake you now? Why wear the cloak of 'self importance'? If God forsakes who can save? If man thinks that he can protect his self why does death then visit him without ever being invited"?

"Therefore Mallappa, give up your body consciousness and invite and accept the attitude of dharma. You will then get happiness pure and simple. It is dharma alone that protects us finally. All that is visible to the eye mirage like, will vanish truly and really. In the final analysis, only Atman is permanent and lasting. He to whom you attach yourself as your own poses difficulties and in the end becomes your foe. Your own men and people each bound to one's own karma incapable of pursuing their own interest, can they serve and protect your interests? Consider with care. 'The one who can protect one's own self is one's Self only' is a vedic pronouncement. Repose faith in the Vedic dictum and redeem yourself from worldly worries. Happiness and sorrow and gains and losses are not under your thumb. Do not add one coin to another in greed and lust. Do not squander money thoughtlessly in evil ways being a prey to passion. Sensing the wholesome spirit of dharma and equipoise, apply yourself to work with single mindedness. Since Atman permeates in all things moveable and immovable do work for his pleasure. The Atman is in fullness in all beings including the four-faced Brahma; to secure the grace of Atman you must offer your life in sacrifice".

"Therefore thinking that Paramathama is residing in these two brahmins give them grains that would last for an year". Mallappa's mind always oriented towards dharma took hold of him with the instructions received. He called in the brahmins and asked them to collect as much grain as they thought would last for a year. The brahmins lost no time in collecting their requirement of grain and bowed down to Dikshitharu in wordless gratitude and satisfaction. The incredible act of Mallappa

spread like wild fire in those bad times. A multitude of people were ready with their petitions before Dikshitharu who directed them all to Mallappa saying: "This Mallappa is a munificent person; go and ask him; he will provide you with grains".

Dikshitharu's nectarine instructions on the one hand and the sight of famished faces on the other had prepared Mallappa for the act. Placing a couple of basil leaves on the mountainous heap of grains collected from all the granaries he offered it to Dikshitharu saying: "Sri Chidambara with his manifold forms and shapes has come to me seeking alms. I place this heap at his feet."

The granary was literally looted for three long days by the poor and the famished. When everything was over Dikshitharu questioned Mallappa: "Taking in earnest what I said as a matter of course you have given away your grains. What do you do for your own people"? Mallappa replied: "Swamy! why should I bother when the protector and saviour of all, Jagannatha, is there? Burden of fending for the family is on his shoulders. Samardha (One who is capable of doing anything) Lord, listening to your nectarine words had rid me of all worries and I am filled with satisfaction. Your presence I see wherever I look".

Pleased with his response, Dikshitharu said: "Disciple most dear, keep in mind what you have said right now and hold on to peace. Worldly business needs to be transacted. Achievement or no know for certain that the business transacted is unreal and preserve and safe guard the poise within. Every day take bath as required and perform the daily adorations. Listen to the Vedas with love and worship Shiva as resources permit. To your forefathers and other divinitied offer food and oblations and then partake of your daily meal with the family after extending hospitality to the uninvited guest. Let time be invested in recalling and remembering Shiva's name. The karmic dues and affiliations get settled through this style of living. Actions done in response to the flow of unknown forces do not fetter."

Instructing Mallappa in the manner described before, Dikshitharu collecting jowar in his upper garment came walking to the granaries that were now empty. Moved by what he saw he threw a handful of grain into each underground storage bowl. Turning towards Mallappa he said: Munificent one, open these bowls after three days.

Having given this parting message Dikshitharu left for Kusugallu a nearby place. Mallappa opened the sealed warehouses after the stipulated time of three days. Dumbstruck was he to find them full. Because of the Yoga of that sadbhaktha devotee true and sincere, people of that region survived the effects of famine with the least sweat or strain. (The word Yoga is also used to indicate destiny).

Mallappa earned fame as munificent because of the grace of the sadguru.

Chapter XXIV Shirahatti and Around

Chidambara Dikshitharu came to the nearby Kusugallu on one hot afternoon from Betasur another draught affected village where everything was hot and scalding. Farmers had no work to do; village residents had no food or water. Many left their home and hearth in search of food, water and employment. Water had to be brought from long distances to quench their thirst. Dikshitharu had come with nearly four hundred followers. The village had no resource of any kind to receive them and Dikshtharu knew it.

Dikshitharu, therefore, asked for a bamboo tray full of sugar and four pots of water from the local residents who fetched it from an incredible distance.

He took on himself the task of distribution of sugar and water so that no one would miss his share. He began giving tray full of sugar to his followers estimated at four hundred. Sugar supply replenished itself on the tray as soon as it was emptied. Everyone had his share which was no less than that of the other.

With four pots of water received from the villagers he did the same. Each follower was given as much water as he needed to quench his thirst besides filling it up in their pots and vessels which they carried with them. He augmented the supply of sugar and water by four hundred times if that was the number of his followers. Satisfied with sugar and water received they went to the shade of a tree nearby and rested.

Further Dikshitharu asked for eight measures of jowar to be brought perhaps from some villager who could afford. Nearly the half of jowar received, was milled into flour and the other half was converted into granules; mixing the two jowar flour and granules together a broth was cooked and distributed. Again each one was served as much as he liked thus opening a virtual canteen for the famine struck villagers

and immigrants. The make do canteen, was kept always open as long as the drought conditions lasted. Those that preferred to cook for themselves were given grains from Dikshirharu's inexhaustible stock of eight measures.

The effect of draught was far more severe in Shirahatti. He saw the fire of anger and disappointment aflame in the unsmiling face of men and women.

On a morning of the Kartheekamasa of the Hindu calendar corresponding to the month of November Dikshitharu climbed up to the roof top and bowed down in prayerful reverence to the Lord governing the four directions on the compass.

Clouds gathered and a heavy down pour of rain lashed right through the day and night. When people prayed for rain to stop Dikshitharu, again intervened on behalf of the village folks; went up to the roof top and communicated with the forces of nature designated as four directions. He asked the farmers to sow the seeds and harvest the crop when ready. Thus draught was swept away from the whole region around Shirahatti. A large mass of people followed Dikshitharu where ever he went.

One day he went to a farm land where farmers were at work on their fields. Proceeding to a particular stretch of land he instructed the farmer through Shiva Shastry his renowned disciple to follow the Maha Swamy. Walking around the farm land he stood at a place and asked the farmer to dig the earth at the indicated spot. The farmer dug as directed and unearthed the hidden treasure.

A brahmin of the name of Annambhatta a normal and decent person left his home unannounced following a quarrel with his wife. He came to Dikshitharu and stayed with him.

His wife coming to know of her husband's whereabouts came to Dikshitharu, prostrated to him, and presented her son before her husband and bowed down to him.

Annambhatta infuriated with his wife's moves, picked up a stone to hurl at his wife. The latter fell at the feet of Swamy and sought his refuge. Dikshitharu said: Brahmin, What are you doing? The wise ones shouldn't enter into matrimony; having entered it, hell, you cannot escape through divorce. There are well established norms to seek divorce; listen to me with patience.

"If there is no issue even after a decade of wedlock divorce is permissible." "A wife is to be divorced forthwith if she hates her husband or obstructs dharmic activities, or kills her off springs;" there is no time duration.

"In the absence of any of these faults no wife who is keeping the home and hearth is to be forsaken or treated indifferently. He who disregards these norms gets no happiness whatever. The wedlock must be preserved by some means otherwise the decree of the Lord of death Yama is inescapable. This is founded on the Dharma Shastra the eternal rule. In the codes and texts of Manu and Yagnavalkya the same is enunciated. Do not separate yourself from your dharma pathni wife by eternal sanction. Go and live happily with your devoted wife".

Annambhatta infuriated at the advice given went away and lodged himself with some unknown person. With grace-filled look at the disappointed wife Dikshitharu said: "Mother, do not give up courage; devoted as you are your husband will join you on his own". Her trust in Dikshitharu gave her the strength to live in peace with herself.

Annambhatta a man of narrow and limited perception did not like Dikshitharu supporting and espousing his wife's cause or his wife taking refuge under the latter. He slandered Dikshitharu and questioned his impartial status. The other devotees and followers did not approve Bhatta's conduct or words. They feared its consequences and they were soon to follow. A boil erupted on the Bhatta's thigh and its burning

and shooting pain made him come down on his knees. Unable to withstand pain the intolerant brahmin knew within that it was the fruit of his own actions and conduct which he now regretted. He feared death and ran to Chidambara for mercy and cried aloud seeking clemency. Dikshitharu with a smile on his face asked: Appa, why do you come here? Go somewhere and be happy. I am a women's advocate and do not have your discriminating perception. Why come to me? Go where you like". Holding replied: "Swamy, I am a pronounced sinner and my wrong deeds are too many. I did not know or care to know the extent of your glory. I am suffering this pain for I repudiated you. Thou, embodiment of kindness, free me from this suffering. In a second you can burn asunder this earth if your anger is provoked. If you grace a straw a mount it becomes. Save me from this pain, Oh sadguru; otherwise I will not survive. Oh, guru the great, crippled I cannot get up or sit down. I will not hereafter disregard your word and I promise to go by it. I swear I do not lie".

Mahaswamy asked: "Annambhatta, do you really care to listen to my world!? Then go and accept your wife if there is a grain of truth in what you swear".

Bhatta: "Kindness incarnate I do and accept my wife but first relieve me of this pain and free me from this cancerous eruption".

Guru: "Why clamour and scream about your boil? Show me how and where it is"? Annambhatta pulling off his robe showed his thigh to discover for himself that there was no trace of a boil what so ever on his skin. Awe struck Bhatta exclaimed: "Omnipotent, thy powers are exalted and incredible. Please do not mind my misconducts." galore of

Guru: "Take your wife and be happy; think not of what has passed".

Bhatta: "Sadguru, in surrender I have sought your refuge thinking that the world is listless but you ask me to rejoin it! Isn't it unfortunate that you being a Gnani the knower are asking me to go back to the world? I don't see any other reason".

Chidambara Dikshitharu replied: "I am surprised at your words. Do you know what they convey? It is like a thirsty man stretching his hands to ice cubes in preference to rain water. Though the world samsara is truly listless, for the one dabbling in it samsara doesn't affect. It is not proper to believe that vairagya detachment connotes the discarding of samsara. It is because of our body consciousness alone that we passionately fall in love with our wives and children". It is moha passion that indicates hatred, happiness and sorrow in our mind. The body for whose happiness you strive all through your life is that which turns into dust. As long as there is body-consciousness in you, how can you remain detached asanga? Kama and krodha (passion and anger) are the root cause of samsara. These two culprits destroy the great penance of maha yogis at once".

"Therefore only those that are not subject to kama and krodha are qualified and eligible for moksha deliverance. Doing penance in the deep forests will be fruitless and futile if you are afflicted with kama and krodha".

"Moksha is more easily secured by being a grihastha a householder pursuing happiness following swadharma the dharma of one's own background and tradition rather than doing penance in the forests".

"The grihastha is better equipped to conquer the foe of sensuousness than anyone else. Like a king gaining success stationed in his fortress, man can gain moksha being a householder".

"When (your) sovereignty over mind is established, what does it matter if you are at home or in the forests if you are a grihastha or a sanaysi, a householder or a recluse? Nothing is achieved by one who has no control over his mind. Therefore living with your wife and family hold yourself in a state free from all attachments nissanga".

Annambhatta joined his wife and family after bowing down with reverence to his guru.

Shirahatti had become a place of pan Indian conclave of Chidambara devotees. From various parts of India people had come to see and meet in person Lord Shiva living as a poor brahmin. It was a huge gathering far beyond the resources of that township. In this vast congregation were two persons from the village Anaji of Chithradurga District of former State of Mysore a Virupaksha Jois and his friend Krishnappa. Jois had come to seek a personal benefit as a last resort. He wanted a son to his son so that the family line may continue unbroken. He had heard of Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu and his divine descent. The two friends tried everyday to meet Dikshitharu only to return disappointed. After six days of disappointment they thought of returning home reconciled to their fate. They planned to circumambulate the holy town where Chidambaradikshitharu was in residence the next morning as a mark of their sincere devotion and a willing acceptance of their fate.

But they were not to leave. Jois was called by Chidambara the next day but someone else of the same name presented himself into the guru's precincts.

Chidambaradikshitharu knew whom he wanted to meet. Virupaksha Jois from the Durga region sporting a green shawl as his headdress was called specifically, the following day. And Virupaksha Jois at last was in the immediate presence of the Lord.

Chidambara Dikshitharu innocently asked: "Mr. Jois, is your mind still a captive of anger against us?" Jois did not know what to say; silence held him.

"Do you circumambulate the town and leave?" Dikshitharu asked without expecting a reply. The two were asked to extend their stay by another week and meet Dikshitharu again.

At the second meeting a week later Dikshitharu gave a coconut to Jois and said: "This is for ourselves". Jois received what was given. He was too close to unravel or analyse its import. Dikshitharu continued:

"Your son gets a daughter; give her Chidambara's name. Chidambara will be reborn as a full blown descent in the family to which she is married". Giving four more date fruits Dikshitharu continued: "This is for your son. He will get a son. Give a feast to all when your desire is fulfilled". Krishnappa was also blessed and he got a son later. As Chidambara Dikshitharu foresaw Sri shankara Linga Bhagawan Saraswathi Paramahamsa was born as Chidambaramma's grandson. And Krishnappa's grandson became a saint called Brahmananda.

Chapter XXV Ghantarava Shastry

There was a proud and haughty pundit who did not know how to live in harmony with his scholarship. He challenged, derided and slandered other scholars inviting them to a contest believing that he would emerge supreme vanquishing others into submission. He rode in his palanquin accompanied by fanfare and umbrella bearers. He had a bell tied to his wrist heralding his coming and his presence. The bell was his brand to use a modern expression. From the vanquished he demanded and got a parchment of Victory Certificate.

The pundit was on his way to Shirahatti; his target was Sri Shiva Chidambara Dikshitharu whose name and fame he had heard. He wanted to defeat the latter and the very thought made him joyous.

Chidambara's durbar that day was full and overflowing; there were scholars, singers, dancers and men of varied talents and accomplishments. He was surrounded by Vedic scholars and princes and nobles and chieftains dressed in varied armours and colours. A large section of disciples and devotees were sitting on their knees awaiting his close presence sweet speech and pleasant and silent smile. The silver scepter holders were proclaiming the fame of the poor brahmin. The princely retinue and guards were in attendance. And to this assembly bell sound Shastry walked in to regret. He couldn't retrace his steps. He thought: "Why did I step into this durbar? why is it that I feel an upsurge of stress tension and fear? The lustre of this assembly seems to delude me. How do I design my victory plans here"?

Unsteady and perspiring Shastry split within and made bold to walk forward. He saw people falling at the feet of Chidambara dressed in bright clothes with ash marks on his forehead. The scholars were listening to the finer and subtle intricacies of shastras and their explanation and meaning. As soon as he went close to Chidambara the latter

stood up in respect and bowed down his head and offered him a high chair and made pleasant inquiries: "From which place are you? What has brought here? Where are you bound to? A bell is tied to your wrist; what does that mean"?

Shastry replied: "I am a scholar from the East. Bagging victories I have come to you. The bell tied to my wrist is my title. My name is Ghantarava (bell sound). I am well-versed in four sastras. I have deciphered the meaning of Vedas. I am an expert wrangler. I have met people and seen places. No one stood up to my wrangling. I have taken 'Victory Certificate' from every one. Having heard about your fame I have come here. Argue you must or handover Victory Certificate".

Chidambara laughed and said: "Argue with you? No sir I have no capacity or ability or qualification. You are sir, a great pundit. Those that possess scholarship should also earn 'blessings of brahmins'; and not the taint of disrespecting or dishonouring the brahmin. A Jnani is he who is equal-minded. Therefore dear pundit, forsake from this moment the desire for battle, for words and arguments; rest, in mental poise. Why hanker for title? Throw it away. I am saying what is good for you. If your mind doesn't receive my words or if you are bent on wrangling look, here are seated reputed scholars. They will lighten your pride within a moment".

Laughing, Shastry replied: "Even before listening to my unheard of debating skills you are taking in the light of your own egoism. Who has the expertise or merit to sit opposite me and argue? The four faced Brahma may get exhausted in wrangling with me. Therefore why do you field in vain these scholars before me to argue? Why don't they secure and preserve their reputation in silence? It isn't proper to detail a flock of sheep for an elephant-fight? If you have a little respect for yourself come, debate with me and accept my challenge. I will lighten

your conceit. If you have no taste for debate or argumenatation whatsoever then hand me in your Victory Certificate."

Chidambara Dikshitharu heard what the Ghantarava Sastry said with pride of erudition.

He called a five year old mute boy standing close to him and put some Vibhuti on his face and into his mouth. He became a Jnani an all knowing being that very instant. Securing the Guru's permission the Jnani turned mute boy announced his readiness for debate exchange and argument with this opening remarks: "pundit respected, state fearlessly your proposition and present your premises". When Ghantarava Shastry began presenting his basic premises his heart throbbed with anxiety and mind went blank. Profuse flow of sweat ran down. No Shastric proposition came to his mind. Struck with intense fear he sat mute. Recovering after sometime he apologised for his misadventure. Seeing Shastry's pride eroded Chidambara touched him with his blessed hands all over. Shastry's scholarship and erudition returned to him and he became a Jnani as before. Shastry addressing the assembly said: "Distinguished members my mind reflected on the company of the virtuous the expression that in a satsangha all sins will be burnt. "You have yourself seen how arrogant and hot headed I was. With the very sight of a satpurusha (He man of Truth) it was exorcised. My birth is fulfilled. The feet of sadguru I have seen". He composed many hymns on the guru and his glory reflecting his learning and scholarship. Divesting him of his title he was accorded a seat in the company of scholars. Ghantarava Shastry stayed with the guru and became renowned for his 'extempore repartee' on forty subjects at a time.

Chidambara then went to Mulugunda continuing his draught-mitigating deeds. He ensured provision of food and thus fortified them

against its fear. But something special happened here. There was in that place a young prostitute of extraordinary beauty and charm. Leprosy struck her and spread all over her body probably because of previous karma. She was thus depressed and despondent. She had heard of Chidambara and his infinite power and love of fellowmen. She thought in her mind: "From now on Chidambara, I surrender this physical body of mine to thy feet. Come what may, freedom from this nasty ailment or the very life breath; in Chidambara I live. Chidambara the Omniscient is aware of my state of being". Resolved thus cleansing herself with a bath she came to the door step of Chidambara and prostrated thrice and circumambulated his residence three times and again prostrated three times. Standing there (in prayer) for three hours she returned home. She continued this regimen for three days in succession.

Chidambara's heart was touched. When it was around three in the noon, Chidambara came out of his residence. Seeing the sadguru at the main entrance she ran to him and fell at his feet. When others preferred to distance themselves from her Chidambara called her. People nearby got the signal. The young woman came near the door. The Guru with his smile said to her: "The sins of earlier births are insurmountable. That is why this reprehensible ailment. Since you have come seeking its cure listen to me. If you roll upon 'food-plate leaves' thrown out after meals for three days you will be rid of leprosy; your body acquires a golden sheen".

A heap of such leaves was there outside the village. Reposing faith in the 'Guru Word' she rolled on the heap. The colour of her skin changed to the better after the first day and at the end of the third day her skin got a golden sheen.

She presented a three hour dance performance to Chidambara in the durbar as a token of her gratitude and devotion. She then respectfully submitted joining her two hands together "You are no ordinary man; you are Parvathi's Lord Parameshwara indeed. With your grace filled glance you cured me and rid me of my several births ailment.

Ignoring the company of erudite Vedic brahmins you came out to uplift me. You burnt with your graceful sight the ailment that didn't yield to Dana, Homa, Japa and Thapa (offerings, sacrifice, repetitiv utterance of the holy name and penance respectively). A grace treasure kripandhi like you, wouldn't find if I search in all the three worlds. Vow bound I promise before all of you here; listen, I in my word deed and mind surrender my all to him" (in a choked voice). Tears of joy flowed down on her cheeks. Unable to contain her joy she again began singing and dancing and pleased Chidambara. Satisfied with the lady's offering and conduct Chidambara said "Conclude your recital. I am very pleased, ask what you want". The devotee replied: "Oh Jagannatha, Lord Protector of the universe, (see to it) My bhakthi in you should be steadfast and unwavering and your Maya (delusory pastime!) shouldn't touch me. Grant me this much. Not less than that."

The Mahaswamy observed: "Since your disease is cured by the leftover food of brahmins you are required to adore them. I will also be pleased and happy with the adoration of brahmins". True to 'Guru Word' she renounced her all like the celebrated Pingale* of yore.

Note: A prostitute who was awake in vain throughtout the night waiting for her paramour. She realized within herself that desire is sorrow and real joy lies in relinquishing desire. Meditating on this awareness she attained The Atman. (Cf. Mahabharatha, Shanthiparva)

Chapter XXVI

An Introduction to Yajna

Chidambara's peregrination around the drought affected towns and villages was mainly to fortify the will of the humble and the destitute against the dread of drought by a variety of measures of supernatural dimension; they were miracles both in occurrence and impact. An assurance of such sincerity and daring was perhaps necessary for the drought victims to lift themselves up from their boot straps and take to living in a refreshed perception and possibility. They found in Chidambara a fellow human being who could exorcise their ingrained doubts of helplessness and detestation. Their grateful eyes and graceful postures of submission were expressions of an innocent soul. Darshana to them was a manifestation of a truth and Chidambara didn't disappoint the true aspirant and the real seeker. He went to their hearths and homes confirming the truth of a fore knowledge that resided in them defying external communication or expression.

The people of Navalgunda received Chidambara with joy and celebration who in turn gave what they desired in their hearts. With some he talked and made enquiries and to others he gave his smile and poised dignity and to one a touch that was benevolent and satisfying. He opened a free canteen Annasathra, providing food to all those who came for it and appointed one of his own assistants to supervise it. Chidambara was accompanied by his wife Saraswathi Matha and disciples and devotees. Here too he commenced the feeding of brahmins after the Agni hothra fire worship. He also initiated a large number of children into schooling and learning.

He initiated his son Kashinatha and hundred others into the rite of upanayana and adored the brahmins for four days. The brahmins felt fully satisfied with the gifts received in kind and cash besides the festive meal that went with it. In the meantime a friend of the Peshwa Rulers

Gokhale Vishwambara Panth came and surrendered all his wealth and resources to the feet of Chidambara and chose to remain as his disciple receiving Maha Swamy's attention as well as affection.

He asked one day "Mahaswamy, the whole country is afflicted with famine and consequent destitution. Your descent under these circumstances is timely and in a variety of ways you are sheltering them from its heartless effects. Sadguru Maharaja I have a humble petition to make. Do something to eradicate the visit of these bad times off and on and ensure lasting happiness and security to people. Please let us know the technique; have mercy on us"

Chidambara replied "Appa dear one, Vishwambhara, drought is the root cause and therefore we have to devise methods for regular, timely and adequate rains. Rains drive out famines and rains are a product of Punya (meritorious thoughts and deeds). Since people of the world are inclined towards sin drought and attendant consequences rule the world. In the Geetha Lord Krishna has elucidated to Arjuna the origin of rains. I reiterate it for you now."

From anna are derived pranas, (Anna connotes anything that goes into the human system). Anna is therefore a function of rain.

Yajna is necessary for it causes rain. Yagna is fulfilled and completed with meritorious deeds. If you want people to be happy and satisfied scout for a good brahmin and get the Yagna done by him. The inference is: when it rains famines are swept away bringing happiness to people". There was silence.

Vishwambhara broke the silence and asked "Swamy is there a brahmin superior to you on the face of this earth? please answer me"

Mahaswamy was quick to reply. He said "Let it be clear; I have nothing to do with the conduct of the Yajna, do you understand? Its processes and regulations are hard to comply. Therefore search for the right brahmins and conduct the Somayaga. Rains follow".

The conversation was happily interrupted by the arrival of Divakara Dikshitharu. Doing an eight fold namaskara to the feet of the Mahaswamy he stood before him with folded hands. "Appa Divakara, is every one fine in Gurlahosur? What thought and deed have brought you here"? Mahaswamy inquired.

"By your grace everything is in its place. While I was happily engaged in my work I was listening to the rendering of the epic Bharatha by a visiting brahmin. He was discoursing on the conduct of Rajasuya yaga. I will recall the very rendering before you as I understood. I quote him 'the Rajasuya yagna as conducted by Dharmaraya has no precedent in the past and none can replicate it in future'. I have come with a longing that you can simulate the Rajasuya. I have disclosed the contents of my heart. If the Mahswamy wills he can fulfill our desire".

The Mahaswamy laughed aloud and observed "Your boyishness has led you to conceive of this impossible and difficult venture. In this age of kali we cannot think of doing by mere human effort a yagna comparable to the one done in Dwapara yuga with the help of Lord Krishna". Divakara Dikshitharu was ready with a counter argument: "If you (accept to) be the Yajna Dikshita I will see through the Rajasuyayagna even in the times of kali".

Chidambara was emphatic when he said "Brother, what foolish prattle are you talking? Can any human being do the way what the gods have done"? Divakara Dikshitharu was unyielding. "If (we) get assistance from a human being like you we can achieve much more than what gods have done. I know for certain of what mettle you are made and what kind of man you are. Why be passionate and talk in vain. Avow yourself for a yagna and that is all is needed".

Chidambara disregarding Divakara's insistence stood his ground and said "Say what you will. Don't, in this kaliyuga, press for your demand for a yagna. If I preside over it who will be there to assist you in that stupendous work? How can big works go if large scale assis-

tance isn't ensured and forthcoming? Work taken up without adequate thought doesn't get completed".

Divakar was decisive when he said "No problem. You must avow yourself for this yagna; the gods are in readiness to serve your ends".

Chidambaradikshitaru didn't concede. He asked once again plaintively "Divakara, consider once again your stand. Take a long term view and tell me".

"I have already considered (all possibilities). Please permit me to mobilise resources for the yagna".

Chidambara resolved to do the Yagna. Vishwambhara was happy.

Chapter XXVII

Preamble to Yajna

Our actions are uplifted and elevated when others approve and endorse them. But when one like the omnipotent Mahaswamy approves the project conceived by Divakara-Vishwambhara team, how can there be a deficiency of spirit and enthusiasm? Invitations inscribed by the very hand of Mahaswamy were sent through personal emissaries of Kings and Royal families, brahmins and dikshitas and rithvija (participants in the Yagna) and devotees and spectators.

Chidambaradikshitharu was happy to hear the way the process was initiated. He said: "Dear one, listen to me. There lies a vast mango grove in a place called Gonnagere on the bank of the River Malapahari. It can hold countless people besides being naturally endowed with unlimited water supply and the consequent arrangements for drainage and disposal. Such a place is singular and hard to find. The ground is made for the yagna rites and if you approve we may proceed right now with Agni, to that place. Time now is auspicious".

Cheered by Dikshitharu's readiness Divakara said: "Swamy, the transport is ready if you wish we may start now". Invoking and propitiating Agni as prescribed Dikshitharu started accompanied by his wife. The rest followed the Mahaswamy. Some on their carts, some on their horses and some carrying their belonging on their heads stepped forward. A whole population was on the move, merry, joyous, vigorous, committed and devoted; proclaiming the name of Chidambara as loudly as their throats permitted amid pleasant and harmless conversation. Mother earth felt happy at the touch of their soles. Leading such a magnificent procession, Mahaswamy reached Gonnagere where an attractive canopy and awning had been erected on the bank of the river Malapahari to receive the visitors.

The Mahaswamy was lodged in a place close by.

The invitees seeing Mahaswamy's inscription on their invitations were delighted and got ready to leave for Gonnagere with their belongings and accompaniments human as well as material. There were armed personnel like the Mandaliks and the Pattavardhans regional and divisional heads, traders and financiers of repute. Shastrys and pundits, Vedapatis and Ghanapatis, Shrouthis and Jyothishis had come. Kings with their four fold armies after a long march had arrived and had encamped. Stepping down from their official transport vehicles, bereft of their regal insignias Princes and Lords walked to the Mahaswamy's place of residence to announce their arrival and volunteer their services and resources as an offering to the Lord Almighty and profit by their participation in some insignificant measure. They prostrated to the Mahaswamy. They offered tokens of vast resources they had brought to deliver.

Mahaswamy offering them suitable seats conversed with them in sweet proximity. He said: "All of you have come here for my sake; you have responded to this poor man's invitation a hall mark of your high status. Believing that I am your protector of dharma you have come of your own accord. The work contemplated is yours indeed. It must go on in its fullness completeness and totality. I am a Dikshita an avowed president for name's sake. Carrying out the work is on your shoulders".

Responding to the endearing words of reception the Kings said in one voice: "Swamy, you are the director of this universe. Why do you mislead us by your kind words? We are in reality your footmen. If you tell us what is to be done we will strive to the best of our abilities to fulfill. Your enormous spirit and potential will itself do what needs to be done. where are we before such power"?

In the meantime there arrived clusters of brahmins from all the four directions. Those from the Dravida region were marked by the vibhuthi marks on their forehead, rudrakshi beads around their necks and a cap as a head dress. With their deer skin and a water pot, they

appeared like the Vedapurushas. Men of Vedic conception. In that assembly some were experts in Nyaya and Vyakarana and some were well versed in Mimamsa and some were proficient in the four Vedas and some learned in Shathapathabrahmana sections. When this conclave of brahmins opened their eyes and saw the Mahaswamy they were blessed with the presence of Shyamasundaramurthy Lord Krishna. Before that sight they fell prostrate at once and prayed and invoked him with the melody of Vedic sounds. The manifestation of Eshwara Sri Chidambara, dressed in fresh and bright robes with Vibhuthi on the forehead and rudrakshi around the neck stood up in appreciation of their conduct and bowed down to the college of brahmins and made polite inquiries with words of pleasant sweetness and requested them to be seated. Later they were provided with suitable lodgings as directed by the Mahaswamy.

The kings had erected several clusters of living apartments called Mantapas. At the centre was Mahaswamy's living quarters large and commodious a cone shaped Mahamantapa.

In the East on the bank of the river there was the Vaidika Mantapa hall of recitation of Vedic manthras and beside it was the pakashala the kitchen. In the South were the cantonment and the engineering sections. The Royal wing was in the west and the cottages for brahmins were located in the North. In the meantime Divakaradikshitaru came and prostrated before Chidambara and suitably requested him to visit and oversee the resources mobilized for the purpose. The Mahaswamy agreed and went round the store yard accompanied by Vishwambhara and Divakara. Vishwambhara gave a succinct account of the inventory of all items in units of five bags beginning with five bags full of turmeric and kumkum.

Satisfied perhaps with what he glanced Mahaswamy said: "Vishwambhara,(there is) no need to go through exhaustively the stores mobilised by Divakara. All is well and full and there is no need to be concerned". Vishwambhara's request was meaningful and perceptive.

He said: "Even then Mahaswamy, please cast a glance on each one of the articles stored here; (if you do so) they become inexhaustible".

The Mahaswamy did as requested. He glanced at every article. The Mahaswamy majestically followed Vishwambhara. He then showed mountains stocks of rice and pulses. By their side were all kinds of flours no less small in measure to other victuals. Thousands of ghee cauldrons were shown next. Five thousand bags of sugar was next. The heap of jaggery looked a mountain. He saw eighteen other articles including salt. Smiling gracefully Mahaswamy observed: "Plentiful are the stores. No need to think of them".

Divakara intervened to ask: "But we are not certain about who should be in charge of the accounts relating to the yagna; that is to be decided". The guru said: "Book keeping is the work of the wealthy. It does not befit the Vaidikas. Do not go after (tracing) incomes or expenses". Then Mahaswamy went to perform sandhyavandana on the river bank but not before the arrival of Shyamabhata. Greeting most respectfully the visiting Shyamabhata he embraced him affectionately and each one touched the feet of the other experiencing the various signs of ecstasy. Tears trickled down from their eyes.

Addressing Chidambara Dikshitharu Shyamabhata asked: "I have a question to ask: You were tempted by the Soma drink, the drink that gives immortality; who then will be the god left to receive the havis the offerings of the yagna"? Dikshitharu smiled and said: "I did not have the least interest in the conduct of this yagna. All this is (the result of) Divakara's compulsion. I did not have the heart to overrule his wish". Shyamabhata observed: "Be that as it may. Mahaswamy has inaugurated a very exalted yagna. I am pleased to hear about it. The yagna has attracted worldwide attention and fame. I have come only to see it"!

Talking to each other in such pleasant fashion the two reached the site of the yagna mantapa the ground of the holy hearth. The shroutha brahmins too arrived at that time. Dikshitharu in this distinguished company went about to see the arrangements. The conical yagna mantapa

already referred to was built on the architectural rules and precepts of the shastras. It was decorated in multiple ways to suit contemporary fashions and tastes, decked up in gorgeous material. Sugar cane sticks and banana plants had been fastened and erected. Flags and pennants and mango leaves were hoisted and tied around to give a festive look. Several pictures had been pasted or hung. On the ground were drawn several sketches and graphs of ancient geometric patterns and structures called rangavalli. Chidambaradikshitharu was very happy with what he had seen.

A yavana an alien entered the mantapa abruptly unannounced. Divakara Dikshitharu was furious at the trespasser and went to hit at him but the gurumaharaj came forward and whisked away the alien and showed him round the mantapa from where he vanished unto open space.

The onlookers observed in wonder: "Who is this alien? And (how) can the Mahaswamy take him round!? And how did he disappear into nothing in the very yagna ground"?

Dikshitharu observed in solemn dignity: "The visitor was none other that yagneshwara. He was no alien. He (went and) hid himself in his place".

Chapter XXVIII

Yagnamahothsava

Dear reader, you are requested to read this descriptive account of the yagna celebration with close attention and feel fulfilled.

Sri Chidambara Dikshitharu started the yagna on a Monday. It was the year called Prabhava the first in the Shalivahana sixty year cycle. It was the month called chaithra the first month of the year. It was the first day of the month prathipada or padya as we call here, the first year of a sixty year cycle, the first month of that year, the first and bright fortnight of that month, the first day of the week somavara monday. It was Chaithra shudha prathipada of prabhava samvathsara Shalivahanashaka 1729 corresponding approximately to the March-April months of 1807 A.D.

Getting up in the brahmimuhoortha around 4-5 in the early morning, finishing his daily duties first he arrived at the congregation of seer-like brahmins who had imbibed the Vedic learning and jnana followed by his elegantly attired twin wives Savithri and Lakshminatha.

The great Dikshitharu sought the permission of the invitee spectators and all others to avow himself for the yagna after he had bowed down in reverence to his family deity Sri Marthanda Bhairava and the congregation of brahmins.

The "Somayaga Vow" was thus taken.

The cleansing ceremony preceded by Vigneshwara worship was performed followed by that of ancestor's worship. Chidambara dikshitharu appealed to the assembled brahmins: "Brahmins superior, please listen to my request; sixteen rithvijas, (those who offer the various articles to the Agni in tune with the appropriate manthra) are wanted. I will instruct them suitably if the brahmin volunteers come to me".

As soon as the announcement was heard all the brahmins rushed towards Chidambara in one go, creating as it were a virtual stampede

and a momentary disorder. Dikshitharu forced to renew his appeal said: "Sir, favour me with your listening; why this unnecessary commotion? Please sit down and be at rest. Though a poor brahmin I am you have come graciously on my invitation. I know all of you are well versed in the shroutha text. If all of you come forward at once when I need only sixteen how does it help? I assure you I will receive and treat every one of you as I do the selected sixteen. According to my mite I will honour every one of you with an equal mind. Please forsake mutual dissent and permit us to go ahead with the conduct of the yagna". Mahaswamy's words restored order infusing a sense of amity and fellowship among the contending brahmins. Sixteen of them went up to the guru's place. The guru then, washed the feet of each one of them and offered perfumes and flowers besides gifting and decorating them with shawls, silken garments and chains and necklaces of gold and silver.

This was followed by "Honey Worship".

Chidambaradikshitharu walked towards the yagnamantapa to inaugurate the proceedings. I describe the magnificent picture of Dikshitharu so that it may remain indelible in our meditative consciousness. Dikshitharu having had his morning bath, was dressed in robes clean and bright; the vibhuthi marks all over his body were visible prominently as the rudrakshi beads around his neck appeared befitting. His hands held the 'Amrithpoorna Kalasha' a narrow necked round vessel filled with nectarine water. His two wives Savithri and Saraswathimatha suitably and divinely attired followed him step by step unhurried and majestically like Parvathi and Bhagirathi entwined Parameshwara. Dikshitharu presented a picture of immeasurable brilliance enrapturing them to a mood of devotion, his children five in all stepped behind keeping pace with their divine parents. The rithvijas carrying materials for the yagna in their arms took position behind the children. Scholars and pundits with their vibhuthi marks and rudrakshi beads conversing in samskritha were following next in the order. A great expanse of a robe canopy like was fixed above as laid down in the yagna manuals.

Kings and members of the Royal clan dressed in various colours appearing like dikpalakas (Lords of Directions) followed the pundits adorning and brightening the procession. The surrounding armed guards were to be seen everywhere. The heralds and proclaimers were announcing the fame of the Swamy in their sonorous voices. The melody and its reverberations of musical instruments like Thurya and Patahadi the great sounds of the Veena and the Mrudanga filled the ten directions. The vipra the learned brahmins were reciting the Vedas.

The Vast congregation of devotees clapping their hands in ecstatic joy was chanting Lord's name. The security personnel were making way for the procession regulating and controlling the crowd lost in the music and dance presented by the dancing girls.

The gurunatha who is also Shyama Sundara and Kamalaksha (blue coloured beauty, lotus like eyes refer to Lord Sri Krishna), walking slowly glanced at every one assembled and gave time for everyone to see him and fill him in their eyes.

A women whose husbands are alive are only eligible to wear auspicious decorations like kumkum, bangles. Such women are called muthaidus. The muthaidus are carrying water filled pots on their head followed by women who looked like divine damsels led Mahaswamy. He was more magnanimous than the wish fulfilling tree, kalpavriksha in meeting devotees' desires. He was the pearl of a Dikshitha. If one remembers this pearl of a Dikshitha and stores his name in one's heart center the Chitta consciousness, peace-filled he becomes. Looking at the Mahaswamy's celebrated procession to the yagnamantapa, the devotees' eyes brimmed with satisfaction.

On arriving at the threshold of the yagnamantapa, the Mahaswamy took into his hands the two aranis after cleansing his own feet. He entered the Mantapa rubbing the two aranis one against the other listening to the Vedamanthraghosha (sonorous chanting of the Veda manthras). With the spark of fire issuing out of the rubbing of aranis,

Dikshitharu established fire in the five centres as a disciple establishes his own knowledge in the fire bowl of his heart after deeply cogitating on the guru's words and instruction.

The adhvyakarma started according to kathyanasuthra. (These are ritualistic actions done to the accompaniment of the recitation of appropriate yajus formulae by one of the four main officiating priests in the sacrifice).

All the ritvijas, the officiating priests together, did the first day's dikshaniyati karmas and bowed down to Mahaswamy's feet. The four main priests (Maharitvija) of the sacrifice are Brahman, Hotri, Udgata and Adhvaryu.

The guru who had avowed the Krishnajina deeksha sat in the Mantapa as 'sacrifice incarnate'.

He ordered Divakara to arrange for 'Brahmin adoration' as the afternoon approached. Brahmins enwrapped in purity came and sat in the mango grove. All the four sections (of Veda) began reciting the Vedamanthras. Many did the Shathapathapanchaka; some were rendering the melodious Samagana.

Divakara Dikshitharu arrived and ordered that food may be served.

Each one was in charge of serving one dish. Bapugokhale was in charge of serving cooked rice, anna, as is popularly called. Parashurama Panthpattavardhan of Jamkhandi was entrusted with the delicacies, (bhakshya). Havanur Desai was serving ghee. Ashta pradhans of Chathrapathi were entrusted with Ambodi and other Apooa (food articles made from flour) while Narendra Deshapande was responsible for Kosambari and other vegetables and curries.

Food brought in cart loads was served row wise by a host of volunteers. Some were loading the food carts chanting loudly the gurunama and others were serving drawing from food carts. Some were drawing food carts along the rows of brahmins. The huge task was

done without a fault or a hitch and in meticulous detail, order and speed because the gods in human form were at work as volunteers.

After serving ghee Shankara Dikshitharu sprinkled some water on all food as a purifier; and a spoonful on all food vessels as a token of offering all the food to the Lord with an undivided unitarian thought (Ekobhava). Also everyone was given ouposhana a spoonful of water as 'Permission accorded' to begin eating.

Instrumental music was in attendance during dining. Since the sadguru had graced the food vessels the stock of food remained undiminished regardless of the withdrawal. The more one ate, the more he was served. Thamboola chewing pan and dakshina money were offered after food.

In the first batch 52,200 persons were served excluding the royalty the servers and the armed forces consisted of two lakh personnel.

The Mahaswamy with his wives Lakshmi and Saraswathi took cow's milk and sat in the yagna mantapa.

The collegian of scholars came to Mahaswamy to seek and understand the intricacies of interpretation and satisfactory derivation of meaning.

After satisfying every one Mahaswamy went to sleep on the Krishnajina deer skin as it was four past midnight.

In this way the first day proceedings were concluded.

Second Day

On the second day of the yagna the avowed guru was sitting in the Swasthikasana the body posture considered appropriate for the occasion. The rithvijas bowed down to the Mahaswamy reverentially seeking permission for commencement of the second day proceedings.

The Mahaswamy then got up and adored yagneshwara Lord of yagna agni before he took his presidential seat. Satisfaction and thank-

fulness issued out as joy on his face. The priests commenced various rites like somakriya and began the pravargya dharma.

When the two accredited priests fed the fire the ajapaya the rising flames of the Yagna was awesome. The spectators saw and felt a sign of divine approval in those ascending flames relating themselves with the thoughts that led to the first act of yagna. The priests then savoured the proceeds of the yagna the yagnabhaga.

It was noon time. The brahmins assembled for their noon meal at the mango grove. Shankara Dikshitharu treated them to a great and delicious meal and Divakara Dikshitharu offered them a variety of fruits in accordance with Chidambara's wish.

About 60,270 brahmins were fed that day; the others were as big in size as they were the previous day. Having taken the 'prasad', the royal group met the guru who in turn spoke to them about the wondrous path of Jnana the Jnanamarga.

While the guru was thus discoursing the news came of a brahmin feared drowned in the Malapahari river. The Sri guru lifted both his hands up and sat still his eyes closed for some time; water began flowing from his robes as the listeners witnessed the event in unspoken surprise.

Nearly at the same time when the sri guru lifted both his hands up someone literally rescued a drowning brahmin in the Malapahari river. He was seen sitting on a rock head after being rescued. The fortunate brahmin looked around for his saviour. There was none not even the rock head as he walked ashore chanting the name of Chidambara his saviour for sure.

The guru continued his discourse after changing his robes. In the meantime a large group arrived with the rescued brahmin to register their gratitude and bow down to Chidambara and herald his infinite mind-boggling powers.

Thus everyday faith in the guru spread wider and wider to confuse those 'blinded by worldliness'

There was something more.

Divakara Dikshitharu had come to share his concern; inventories estimated to last for the whole duration of the yagna had dwindled and touched a floor level. He submitted: "Oh! kindness personified, three fourths of the provisions stored are used up; only a quarter is left. What about tomorrow? The congregation and the visitors are increasing every hour and withdrawals are too fast to be regulated. I am feeling helpless and shaken. Do something and rescue us".

"Brother, didn't I tell you at the very beginning not to venture into this yagna business? You invited this needless distress. Don't attempt the brave. Why, book-keeping for brahmins living the "Vedas"? That (book-keeping) is for the wealthy. Our wealth, dhana, is "Satisfied poise", "samaadhaana". We need to preserve and protect it at all costs. (When it is so) why indulge in the annoying book-keeping. When our protector, 'The world sustainer' Vishwambhara is awake day and night (for this purpose) (why get upset)? To help and sustain acts and deeds of auspiciousness and benevolence Shambhu (Eshwara) is alive and awake in the hearts of his devotees. Don't tremble in fear; continue the work on hand unafraid". Chidambara assured.

The latter left the place with renewed enthusiasm and vigour. The stock yard was redeemed of the watchful eye of the accountant and the storekeeper. It turned into an open mall for anyone to pick up anything on liked or desired. The freshened up rithvijas performing the act of Sampravargya, bowed down to the guru and went to the malapahari river for doing sandhyavandana after obtaining guru's permission. Chidambara Dikshitharu rested after taking some milk. The puraniks were reading the puranas; musicians were singing as the highly proficient veena players were playing on their instruments and the brahmins were reciting the Vedas all serving to please the guru in their own fashion. The guru lost in his 'true bliss' enjoyed his rest.

Third Day

The third day was marked by a reiteration and repetition of the previous acts and deeds. The brahmins were rendering the Vedas without a fault. In the afternoon a ghastly accident held up the midday meal. A cook slipped into the burning cauldron-like vessel where pumpkin was being cooked. The servers extricated him from the viscid heap of cooked pumpkin. His body too had been literally cooked and burnt like the vegetable into which he had slipped.

The servers ran to the Mahaswamy and begged: "Swamy, the brahmin meal schedule is affected; a cook inadvertently slipped into mountainous heap of the viscid vegetable. Though pulled out he looks deathly. What next? Oh! Jnanarashi, knowledge immeasurable! How do we proceed with the programme of brahmin- adoration"?

Chidambaradikshitharu with a smile pacified them and said: "Speak the auspicious; utter not the unpleasant. Those who desire the auspicious and benevolent must give expression to the pleasant word. Let the inauspicious expression be stuck at the gullet".

Walking slowly among the devotees who stood up to greet him he went into the kitchen and directed his glance at the helpless brahmin and sprinkled nectarine water from his water pot and finely applied honey on his burnt body. Shifting him on to a broad banana leaf Swamy declared: "Fear not, the worst is over. Eat now with a rested mind; today is 'yours by choice' and therefore ask what you want and eat as you like".

He thus satisfied the brahmins by bringing into being out of his own will all that was in short supply or was unavailable because of seasonal conditions.

Mahaswamy the Somayaji went along the row of dining brahmins pleasantly persuading and coaxing them to ask without hesitation for their desired dishes and serving them accordingly in plenty. Who can describe the flavour and sweetness of those dishes of Guruprasada?

That day about 80,000 brahmins were fed in the first batch besides those that were a part of the personnel in charge of yagna celebrations.

The rithvijas after their meal met the Swamy in the yagamantapa and asked: "Mahaswamy how disquieting (it is for us to reckon) that a cook should suffer unbearable pain when you are in command? You revived a dead girl and conferred sowbhagya, to a widow by restoring to her husband and brought back a lost boy. But why allow the cook to suffer? How unfortunate"?

Chidambara answered them: "Brahmins exalted, listen to his antecedent tale carefully. He had prayed once: "Mahaswamy I will serve you till this body lasts; this body must fall at your feet in the end and I must go to Kailasa. Please grant this wish of mine". His mortal frame should have fallen to day. I didn't want an inauspicious event to take place during this auspicious celebration. I therefore have secured a ten day extension of his life by pleading with the Lord Karpuradhavala Lord Shiva. On the morning of the eleventh day from now he will cast off his body and ascend to Kailasa and that is certain". Mind my words of forecast. His body knows no suffering whatsoever. He is lost in the joy of Shivanamasmarana, remembering the name of Shiva".

While the brahmins left for sandhyavandana Swamy took some cow's milk and rested after his mind-cleansing words of instruction.

Fourth Day

On the morning of the fourth day the rithvijas came to Swamy to seek permission for the commencement of the fourth day proceedings. But Savithrimatha's menses (considered unclean for holy acts) raised questions regarding Chidambara dikshitharu's participation. The pundits consulting the shastra texts observed: "No objection to continue proceedings since the senior wife is present". Mahaswamy however said: "The brahmins will be fed for four days more why not? Let us do the agnishtomi on the fifth day"!

Brahmins were fed with love and respect. In the four days an aggregate of the three lakhs and sixty thousand brahmins were fed. On the Ashtami (eighth day of the fortnight between full moon and new moon) the rithvijas came to the yagnamantapa and bowed down first to Sri gurucharana, guru's feet, to inform him about the successful completion of the sites. This was followed by a feasty meal to the brahmins.

A strange thing came to notice. The man in charge of the inventories came to Mahaswamy and pleaded: "We found ghee stock exhausted when half the gathering is served. Interruption caused to a brahmin meal is a grave lapse and I take the blame. Save this orphan".

Mahaswamy remained unperturbed and Said: "Don't bother. Get ghee a plenty from the river malapahari and finish the job". As the malapahari water was filled in pots chanting the name of Chidambara they became aromatic ghee pots and it was served to the rest of the rows without any delay. The ghee served that day was a delight to everyone and many asked for several helpings. Divakara Dikshitharu himself was serving ghee. Every one complained of overeating and many felt they were rid of their ailments. An estimated 94,800 were fed that day.

Fifth Day

On the Fifth Day the brahmins woke up in the middle of the night to get ready for a long haul. The sthuthyakarma was initiated and prathasthavan began at the yagnamatapa as the skies reverberated with a low tuned melody.

The heavenly beings surged and rushed forth to stretch their hand fo a fill of somajuice. Extraordinary and incomparable devotees like Rajrama and others have testified as eye witnesses to the phenomena mentioned earlier. The rithvijas raised their voices in the enthusiasm of their anticipation of getting their share of left over Somajuice; they felt satisfied with drinks served and received. Held captive by the pleasant

music of samagana they forgot their meal assignments. Gods pleased with the soma drink sat chatting merrily with the brahmin scholars.

The expert rithvijas started the second episode of the afternoon somayaga and brought it to a conclusion. Then the dakshinahoma was completed. Sri guru then arrived at the mantapa to honour the rithvijas. He first washed their feet with water and sprinkled that washed water on his head. He adored them with several robes and ornaments. He gave to rithvijas a hundred well-decorated cows along with cash as dakshina. Then he rewarded the Chamasadhvaropa rithvijas, shastrys, pundits and brahmins crowded in the mantapa to their satisfaction. Giving away liberal dakshina to any hand stretched forward he rid them of their poverty. The wants of others were fulfilled by the large hearted giving of the Sri Guru. When Chidambaradikshitharu began giving, the known and unknown wishes of all except 'kali' were fulfilled.

The rithvijas completed the residual formalities of the yagna. He then ordered Divakaradikshitharu: "It is already late. Arrange for the brahmin meal". 96,000 men and women were fed that day. With the departure of the invited guests the Somayaga was concluded.

Chapter XXIX

The Terminal Ritual

The terminal ritual, as the inaugural one, is an event of celebration.

The Mahaswamy with his wives and rithvijas and brahmins went to Malpahari river for the celebrated bath. The Kings with their armed retinue followed them as body guards. The four armed escort consisting of the elephants, horses, chariots and the footmen marched behind. The countless flags adorned the skies. The heralds astride the elephants were announcing the name and fame of the Swamy. The 'Gold Cane' contingent was making way for the Swamy surrounded by a battery of kings to step forward in an unhurried pace. The five children led by Divakara Dikshitharu followed. The devotees were chanting aloud Chidambara's name and the brahmins were chanting the Vedas in unison to the joy of listeners. The four corners were filled with the sound of musical instruments, thurya, mridanga, dundhubhi, thala and Veena. The harmony of music and dance of the professional dancing girls captivated the onlookers. The sound of Devadundhubhi the celestial drum played up above in the skies surrounded everyone. The heavenly gods rained flowers on the Mahaswamy and the procession. The elephant wielding the iron chain in its proboscis prevented the onrush of people watching the spectacle.

Divakara Dikshitharu holding the white umbrella over the head of Chidambaradikshitharu kept pace with the honoured guru. Many holding a fan in their hand were sending waves of their affection and devotion to the Mahaswamy. With ecstatic joy the procession reached the bank of the malapahari river.

Dikshitharu accompanied by his two wives got into the river and thus fulfilled the requirement of Varuneshti. The Malapahari river in joyous participation in the celebrations varied its depths depending on the particular needs of the bather. Everyone was below the water in complete sync with the Mahaswamy when he dipped his head into the water.

Completing thus, the Avabrutha fulfilling the vow taken, the Mahaswamy was sitting in the yagamantapa. Divakara Dikshitharu arrived with a request seeking permission for the kings and wealthy noblemen and others to offer gifts to the Swamy on this occasion.

The Swamy observed: "Brother, gifts received are difficult to swallow. I do not accept gifts. Do not press or compel".

Divakara Dikshitharu responded: "When a great yagna as postulated by the vedas is started is it not incumbent on you to receive at least a 'Chandramana' a symbolic camphor which leaves no trace behind when burnt? If Chandramasi is an impervious injunction then I allot three hours for that event provided the poor and the humble get precedence. I do not accept offers later beyond the time limit" insisted Chidambaradikshitharu.

Kings and wealthy people who came forward with their gifts and grants disregarding the instruction were politely sent back to the end of the line. Chidambara specifically announced: "Let the poor come first; others later". The brahmins were called first by Divakara Dikshitharu. The mantapa was filled with countless brahmins of one or two rupee offerings. When at last the kings came to make their offerings the Swamy firmly declined and said: "Time is up; no more".

When the disappointed Kings felt excluded from an opportunity of a life time the Mahaswamy consoled them with the familiar but unheeded truth and said: "Do not get restless. Your kingdom is indeed always mine".

Dikshitharu doing the residuary acts for the completion of the yagna and offered all the fruits of action, karmaphala, to Eshwara and arranged for a brahmin feast to mark its conclusion.

Nearly 90,000 brahmins were fed that day and for the entire duration the number was eight lakhs thirty one thousand and five hundred. The total for the armed forces was 20,00,000 and others were 1,16,000.

Chidambaradikshitharu was however not satisfied with the extent of people served with food. The quantity fell short of the Jyothishtoma norm. He expressed his dissatisfaction and said Divakara, despite his dissuasion had persisted and started the yagnakarma. The Mahaswamy addressing all the participants and supporters said with an affectionate and endearing smile: "You have all laboured for me because of the yagna. Impossible to do even for Kings and Emperors, I a poor brahmin, could do because of your help. The work was concluded without a hitch or obstacle".

The kings replied: "Supreme God, why speak deceptive words pleasant to hear? You are Parvathipathi Parvathi's Lord come directly to us. You have descended in human form. Within the short span of a batting of eye lid you bring into life millions of beings, sustain them, and destroy. When you have started the yagna how can shortage arise, lapses occur? What help can human agencies provide to one an Eshwara manifestation? For reasons wholly selfish we would like to say a few words; if permitted we submit, the kings requested. "Go ahead and say what you want", Mahaswamy agreed.

Chapter XXX

Easy Way to the Other Shore

The Royal princes came as a group and met Mahaswamy a living example of right living and pleasant speech. They asked: "Swamy, you have concluded a sacrifice that is difficult even for the Royal Kings. How did you arrange for it? How can people without a similar ability undertake such a sacrifice? Have they no other choice except to depend on and wait for the like of you? What returns are expected from it? How many kinds of sacrifices are there and which are those that are simple and easy? Please enlighten us on all these".

Chidambara said in reply: "Honourable Kings, your questions are relevant and appropriate as they widen our awareness of the world. I am pleased to explain the meaning of sacrifice so that it may help people develop the right attitude for its appreciation. The yagna, sacrifice, which I concluded just now is suited to those who affirm their faith and believe in karma. The Vedas say that 'Jyothishtoma', a type of 'sacrificial ritual' secures heaven and all it denotes".

"But listen to the 'Easy to do Yagna', I outline. It will clarify all your doubts. The mindless stupid clinging to the 'Path of works', karma, hold on to the view that those who seek heaven should do yagna. Doing yagna is open to all and all are welcome to do it. All the four castes are qualified to do whether he is a Jnani or a believer in Karma. Whoever does should do it in a spirit and attitude of nishkama, 'desire-relinquished state' of no longing for rewards consequent on action".

"He who is handcuffed to the desires of the world cannot overcome the desire for money and wealth. From this desire for worldly resources arises 'adharma' counter dharma. 'Adharmi' one who indulges in adharma cannot escape from the cycle of births and deaths. Therefore, Vedamatha Vedas our mother indeed taught us into yagna to deliver us from our desire for worldly things. From yagna arises inexhaustible happiness and heavenly life said Vedamatha Veda our mother".

"Fired by a desire for another heavenly world of happiness, the believers in karma expend themselves towards doing a yagna. Their inner instruments their mind in short, anthahkarnas, get purified by the merit derived from doing a yagna. It erodes desire for resources. When desire is thus destroyed with careful and watchful subtlety, the yagna-doer gets released from the clutches, dispositions and inclinations inherited from previous births and begins invoking Ishwara". The path of deliverance is then opened effortlessly. The Vedas contain elaborate description of yagnakarma, yagna for chittashuddi by which we mean keeping one's conscience clean and pure. Since no one takes to action without the promising pull of benefits and fruits, Vedas assign great many fruits to yagna. You need to walk the path of karma to enter the gates of deliverance. If one looks at the innate form of yagna all are free to do it".

"Now listen to my exposition of the meaning of the term yagna. The shruthi states 'Yagnovai Vishnuhu'. The (all) pervasive Chidathma (atman as chith and chith as atman) is designated by the symbol Vishnu (as distinguished from a specific and individualized divine personality). Therefore yagna that is the format upheld for adoration of Jagadeeshwara Lord of the universe is foremost among all types of such adoration. From such a yagna arises indestructible heavenly joy. It is truth and truth it is, I repeat purposefully. Mukthi, deliverance, is realised naturally if Eshwara is worshipped without desire. All karmas, (actions) it must be understood, are fruitless and in vain if they are done, without devotion to god. All karmas done with devotion to god are yagna. That indeed is the sign of yagna".

"There are two sides, perceptions of yagna: Karma yagna and jnana yagna".

"If Eshwara is worshipped with a burning intensity thapas following the life style into which one is born the outgoing mind will be cleaned distilled and purified. This purification is the signal for Karma Yoga. Accordingly morning bath, Vedic prayer, daily oblations, gifting food

anna, wiht bhakthi and going on a pilgrimage and such other karmas actions denote karma yagna. This is what the Rishis of the smrithi say. These karmas free and open to the poor as well as the well-to-do can be done by any one and bring big returns with small efforts".

"Now listen attentively to the way of jnana yagna. It has three arms called kayika, vachika and manasika, (Physical bodily, oral and mental thought vibrations,) respectively. Giving up body consciousness that is thinking and firmly settled in the belief that "I am not my body" is kayika yagna. He who is free of body consciousness is a jeevan muktha. He is regarded as one who has attained deliverance alive or redeemed alive. But it is not easy to overcome body-consciousness. It is not easy to think, feel and act always that I am not the body. Therefore one has to submit wholeheartedly to the guru in a spirit of surrender a state of willing enslavement to the guru. A sadguru is to be reckoned as he who has Brahmanubhava, experienced the Brahman has himself, imbibed the shastras in word and spirit and who through many a fine and subtle methods drives doubts away and effortlessly establishes the shishya the disciple into a state of redemption. Day in and day out the body must wear out in the service of the sadgurunaatha, sadguru the saviour. One should not be passionately attached to the pleasant and unpleasant consequences issuing out of service rendered to the guru. We must understand that this other dependent body, paradheena, { subject to others and not your own dictates } jumps and dances as Sarveshwara wills. Love of one's self as a physical body is to be forsaken understanding that the body is not one's own and it is not related to one's self. The most important one in this world is Parameshwara; nature appearing as the world is the second. When this is so, from where has come the third one the intervening robber the sense of 'I and myself'. One must ponder deeply. Like this and through various devices such as giving up one's passionate attachment to the body constitutes kayika yagna. Through this Eshwara residing in one's self will manifest before us. The jeevan muktha state the state of those who have realized lib-

eration is thus attained with ease. Heavenly happiness inexhaustible is its sign".

"Exalted rulers, listen to me as I now explain vachika yagnas. Adoration of the Lord through speech is vachika yagna. Recitation of Vedic texts, singing hymns on Eshwara and manthrajapa repetitive utterance of the sacred word is to be a daily discipline. Always one must be uttering the name of the Lord. We must speak and write words and expressions thinking that Girijaramana, (Girija's consort Lord Shiva) manifesting as sound and its vibrations has pervaded all sounds and utterances. The speaker must give up his pride of being the speaker in the understanding that the one who speaks is Shivakantha, Shiva's light and that there is nothing of his own in his speech. Since Shankara lives equally in all living beings our speech must be pleasant to all. He who thinks of seeking Eshwara's blessing must speak those words that give happiness by merely listening to them. The guru forsaking his own importance of 'Guruhood' must instruct his disciples on true learning and knowledge. The disciple holding that guru's instruction is equal in importance as Vedic learning must grasp his teachings".

"I now point out to that which is opposed and inimical to vacyagna the word uttered as an act of Yagna. Speaking ill of others and speaking mainly with a view to please others and tale-bearing are not conducive to right conduct. Harsh words and expressions, slander and calumny are forbidden. He alone is considered in this world as an Abhigna 'The Knower' who practices unblemished Vacyagna of the kind mentioned. Parvathipathi Lord Shiva confers on him ahethuka bhakthi causeless and hence consequence-free bhakthi and delivers him from worldly tangles. Understand this as Truth".

While the Kings and Nobleman felt enlightened with what they heard Chidambara continued and said: "I will now explain manasika Yagna which confers timeless contentment and satisfaction. As the mind wakes up so does samsara the world of our transactions and dies down

as the mind dissolves. The Vedas lay down that one who is 'mind-free' attains a state of Brahman as a direct and personal experience, 'Brahmasakshatkara'. A being through his attachment to mind suffers multifarious sorrows. Moksha is attained as the mind is dissolved. Body is a concept (function) of the mind. The being in his delusion believes that the body itself is he. And because of this he passes through many sorrows like birth and death. 'She is my life, these are my children, this is my land and property, this is my treasured deposit, my friends and relatives are these'- such ideas are only the constructions of the mind. Since the feeling that they are ours is rooted in all these objects and products of mental construction, the being suffers a whole gamut of sorrows. Understanding, therefore, that the mind the cause of all sorrows is the enemy and if it is destroyed carefully, watchfully, then unfettered freedom from bondage will be attained. This is the sign for this manoyagna".

"I now tell you the method of dissolving the mind. Take a vow of vairagya dispassion and kindle and fan the fire of jnana in the hearth of your heart. Erect therein a perpendicular pillar of dhyana. Now fasten with a multi strand rope of vichara intellectual inquiry the mind cow and sanitize process it with the mahavakyas and take it to the ignorance-free, cattle shed called nirajana and with the weapon forged out of nirmamathva (the detached attitude of looking and living in the world that "it is not I and not mine") mercilessly slaughter it being a witness unto it and cremate it in the fire of jnana".

"If you do so, Nagabhooshana the serpent adorned Lord Shiva, will be pleased and grant inexhaustible happiness. Yagnas delineated by me so far needs to be practiced subject to one's circumstances and one who practices will be conferred with endless happiness".

PS. The last paragraph may call for some explanatory analysis. Let us go about this way:

How to dissolve the mind? The process suggested is as follows:

First, take a vow of vairagya by which we mean dispassion, indifference, renunciation, a requirement of the spiritual path.

Next kindle and fan the fire of jnana, in the hearth of your heart. You must always be fanning the fire so that it never dies or loses its heat.

Erect in the hearth of your heart perpendicular pillar of dhyana. Your dhayana is both a pillar and a perpendicular upward-looking and straight.

Now catch hold the cow of your mind and bind it with the many strands of vichara intellectual enquiry.

And sanitize, process it with the Maha Vakyas. Everything is Brahman and so you are also That. When you realize the truth of this statement you tell yourself, Yes: I am Brahman.

Then forge a sharp weapon out of the attitude of nirmamathva. We have a congenital predisposition to look at the world from the point of view of how it affects me. We see the world through this 'I and mine' glasses and interpret it accordingly. We are enslaved to it and we need to emancipate ourselves from it. We need to cultivate this attitude of nirmamathva as to make it a part of our being. Through this sharp weapon we need to slaughter the mind which has already been bound by the strands of intellectual inquiry about our purpose of coming to this world, living and death. While slaughtering we have no second thoughts. We are determined and we are clear about what we are doing and so we remain a witness to our act of slaughtering and consigning the slaughtered ones to the fire. If we do so Lord Shiva who has adorned himself with a serpent around his neck will be happy.

Chapter XXXI

Navalagunda

It was time thought Chidambaradikshitharu to give a formal send off to the Royal visitors who had so enthusiastically participated and helped in making the yagna fulfill the intended purpose. The Kings and the Nobles on the other hand wanted to provide a Royal escort to the guru on his return journey to Navalagunda. Before leaving Swamy called his son Divakara and said: "The time is auspicious for us to leave tomorrow. Let serving food to brahmins continue as long as the provisions last". Divakara replied in submission: "Swamy, without you how can food be offered to brahmins"? Smiling Dikshitharu, proceeded to the store room and observed: "Divakara, provisions stored here last for five days; feed the brahmins that long". "Swamy, I did not see or participate in the yagna that concluded now. I had no idea of the stocks. Since there are enough provisions, I seek your permission to do another yagna". Divakara pleaded. Dikshitharu smiled in reply.

Divakara did a five day soma yagna with the assistance of qualified brahmins. During that period 2,98,000 brahmins were fed. Dikshitharu satisfied with the successful termination of the yagna was ready to leave for Navalagunda. In the meantime the manager of the nearby mango grove complained: "The brahmins have plundered my grove; they have eaten away my annual yield; how do I survive this loss"?

Unruffled Dikshitharu replied: "Do not commit the sin of brahmin abuse without basis. First go and see your garden". The manager was surprised to see each plant and branch loaded with fruits. He felt ashamed and sought Mahaswamy's clemency. Dikshitharu returned to his place in a brahmin driven chariot after blessing the people of Gonnagere. He was accompanied by his two wives and the two arunis. The Kings with their royal guards and troopers followed the Mahaswamy.

The people of Navalagunda accorded royal welcome to Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu and his followers. He went round the gathering and personally inquired their welfare and arranged a feast for all brahmins. He rested for a while after taking his meal following the feast. The next day he gave phalamanthrakshatha benedictory offerings to the visiting Kings and Nobles and accorded them permission to leave.

Peshwa Bajiraya II came to pay his respects to Swamy with his army of troops and ministers. They were received and fed as befitting to a royal guest. Bajiraya awe struck felt that he was unequal to Swamy's incredible resources or hospitality. His ministers however did not approve or endorse Bajirao's perception or appreciation of Swamy. The ministers argued that there was no supernatural power behind Swamy. It was the result of support extended by other kings and rulers, their advance planning, efficient supervision and overall management. They further argued that they would accept Dikshitharu's greatness if similar arrangements are made for the next day also.

Bajirao, true to the dictates of the times listened to his minister's critical explanation. He thought of testing the Swamy's powers seen as well as unseen. Such are the fruits of evil company as ambrosia loses its potency when mixed with poison so do the good, in the company of evil. When Dikshitharu sent for Bajirao to bless him with phalamanthrakshatha, the latter pleaded: "Swamy, grace me with permission to savour what you offer to me for one more day. Permit me to receive your blessings later".

With a smile on his face Dikshitharu replied: "Oh Royal King, listen to me. I am your protective shield of dharma. Do not try to test truth or its efficacy. With the help of noble men around here I have fulfilled myself in giving a reception suitable to your position and status. Do not put it to further test".

Bajirao stuck to his wish even after listening to Mahaswamy's words of displeasure. Dikshitharu suggested: 'If you are so interested; come alone; you are welcome'. "Come as I have with my retinue, how

can I alone accept your hospitality? Is it impossible to host the army and my followers? You may grace me after the meal" said Bajirao who appeared unmoved. Chidambara settled the argument when he declared: "No other way if you are intent on testing my truth. All powerful jagadisha is there to protect. Be satisfied with only the feast. You may with your army included take what we offer".

Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu went into the store; there were provisions sufficient for about 125 people. "We have enough to spare", Dikshitharu observed. Within three hours festive food was ready. The reception was many times more excellent and delicious than that of the previous day. There was not an iota of defect to point out. An unrepentant Bajirao ashamed of himself came to Swamy. "Royal King, (man's) Intellect functions as time determines. None can prevent what is destined to happen. Listen to me carefully. Accept this what I offer now. In you resides the food (welfare and prosperity) of many. Therefore do not exceed my sanction. This prasada what I give you in my grace do not pass it on to the other. Keep it with you until you reach your place", Swamy ordered while offering the blessed phalamanthrakshatha.

Bajirao gave away phalamanthrakshatha he had received to his servant right before and in the very presence of the Swamy. With tears in his eyes Swamy bemoaned: "How generous are you, Sir! you handed over all of yours to your servant. Is there a remedy to this? Who can stop the divine dispensation"? Mahaswamy turned to others gathered there and said: "The non-brahmin time has come".

Chapter XXXII

Concise but no less

There was a king on the banks of the river (Saptha) Godavari and his name was Chaturbhuj. He lived a life of Sadachara, a discipline that forbade slander and evil talk about others, desire for the other woman and other's wealth and indulgence in fruitless disputation. On two occasions he had survived external attacks through the grace of Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu. Now he was on his way to Mahaswamy after crowning his son as the King. He had avowed to fast until he met the latter who deeply loved his warrior disciple.

The retired king on fast dream that he ate a meal that was sufficient to keep him as energetic as ever. He met the Swamy in Gurlahosur and chose to remain with the Mahaswamy as a personal volunteer ordering his forces that had accompanied him to return. His dedication was incredible.

Once he brought up from the river Narmada eleven bana lingas diving deep into its depths on the instruction of Dikshitharu his guru. When the King gave the lingas to Dikshitharu the latter declined to accept them. The poor king cast them away into the river malapahari before he himself seeking a watery grave in the depths of the river.

The Mahaswamy pulled him out and said: "I want the eleven banalingas but not your life prana".

Avowing himself again to a food-less life till the task is accomplished he set out to river Narmada to fetch the ordered object. On the way he fell down exhausted and fatigued. Once again he was served in his dream what he did not touch while awake. Energized thus he dived into the river, scooped the banalingas and presented them to his master and felt satisfied and fulfilled. Resting in yoga in the caves and mountain spaces he attained jnana becoming a leading light to many.

II

A yathi seeker of mastery over self had come to Gurlahosur instead of going to Rameshwara to complete his pilgrimage to Kashi. (A pilgrimage to Kashi the holy place on the bank of the river Ganga, is completed only when one visits Rameshwaram too) He had dreamt that Lord Rameshwara was now in the human form as Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu. The yathi with his pot of Ganga water met the Swamy and said: "You are Rameshwara come alive. I want to fulfill myself by doing abhisheka (give a holy bath) to you with the holy Ganga water".

Dikshitharu's reply was well known. He said: "I have two wives and six issues. How can I be (the Lord) Rameshwara you think I am? I cannot accept your abhisheka". While the yathi insisted on doing what he had resolved Dikshitharu persisted in denying him permission. This went on for some time. Very soon Dikshitharu got a sound of Yathi's devotion and its intensity; he made an offer. He said: "Exalted yathi, get ready to do the proposed abhisheka. I submit myself to it on the condition that you do it with your eyes shut till the end".

Chidambaradikshitharu sat in a large brass plate ready for the abhisheka. As soon as the avowed yathi began reciting the Rudramantra eleven times, the earth below caved into a river bed for Ganga to flow. The yathi with his eyes shut joyously performed Abhisheka accompanied by eleven rounds of rudramantra recitation. As soon as each round of manthra and abhisheka was over, the yathi felt the touch of linga. When the yathi opened his eyes after the completion of the avowed rounds a linga had materialised close to him. (Lord) Rameshwara said to the yathi: "Since you have opened your eyes the abhisheka is completed".

Lord Rameshwara presented himself before the yathi as Chidambaradikshitharu. The yathi became ecstatic on seeing

Chidambara and broke himself into singing several hymns and prayers. Pleased with the prayers Chidambara instructed the Yathi into 'Brahmopadesha' knowledge of the Brahman. The yathi attained mukthi alive.

III

While Chidambara was in Gurlahosur a person of the name Ramamuni came to have the former's darshan and took lodge in Annambhatta's residence. But the visitor never went to see Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu much to the surprise and dismay of every one who indeed knew how deep and intense were the visitor's devotion.

Ramamuni's desire for darshan and instruction was fulfilled without ever going to the Mahaswamy.

He became a Rama yogi and wandered freely instructing those that came to him with an open mind and heart. Many sought his light and direction.

IV

Mahaswamy went to Gavalakshetra a sacred place to take a holy dip in the river Krishna. A large congregation of pilgrims assembled for the same purpose was taking the darshan of Swamy in an endless line. Swamy blessed a lady: "May you have eight issues and live happily in your husband's company".

But she was widow as they came to know later. People were dismayed about this blessing. Husband's company for a widow was as inconceivable as Mahaswamy's blessings becoming untrue. The lady bowed down a second time to seek a further confirmation perhaps. Dikshitharu's blessings remained unrevised even after skeptics sought further clarification. Dikshitharu observed: "It is the divine word that I have mouthed; it can't go untrue".

The next day Swamy called the widow to identify a person who had come from Kashi to see the Swamy. He had come with a pot full of

Ganga water. The blessed lady so to say looked at the person from head to toe and identified him as her husband who was missing. The man from Kashi with Ganga water too identified her as his wife. Selecting an auspicious time Mahaswamy celebrated their wedding anew. The lady lived happily with her family adoring Chidambara in her heart.

V

From a place called Gavala Mahaswamy, accompanied by a huge following left for Hipparagi where he wanted to have darshan of his family deity Marthandabhairava and do a mahabhisheka to the lord as a part of his adoration. Pouring water from the palm of one's hand to flow slowly, gently letting on the deity to the chanting of manthra is a mode of worship known as abhisheka.

One afternoon while Swamy was immersed in worshipping the family deity the meal time for the brahmins passed. Divakara Swamy's son wanted food to be served and he was ready. Swamy however withheld permission to the annoyance of his son.

Divakara disregarding Swamy's intention went ahead asking brahmins to squat for the meal. Food plate leaves were also put before them and various items of food were also served one following the other. However permission to begin eating had not been accorded. No one touches food until the sanction is given by serving ouposhana.

At that moment a hurricane-like wind blew across raising a dust storm. In the consequent disorder a poor brahmin died hit by a stone slab that fell from above. His forlorn wife began weeping beating her chest. Sri shiva chidambaradikshitharu coming to know of the event prayed: 'Shiva, Shiva, Shiva'.

Shutting his ears with his palm he went near the spot of the accident uttering: 'Shubham bruyath', let the auspicious be invoked.

The dead person bundled and covered in a cloth was taken to a secluded room. The separated limbs were joined uttering the mruthunjaya

manthra the 'death conquering prayer' and he was infused with prana the life breath by Chidambaradikshitharu.

Dear readers, who can complete and conclude the infinite tales of the Mahaswamy and his leelas? I am compelled to leave out many captivating and instructive episodes to make the book handy and concise. I seek from you the very reflections of Sri Shiva Chdambara Dikshitharu forgiveness for my disabilities and unsound sense of economy.

Chapter XXXIII

Lingavathara

Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu was fifty six. He thought: "Deeds and actions to be done through this descent are concluded; its purpose is fulfilled and it is time to return to its hidden source".

Elsewhere not far away from Murugodu Yamadharma the Lord of Death had already taken his position as a recluse in a cave waiting for Dikshitharu. If anyone asked why and for whom he is waiting he would reply cryptically: "The All knowing Chidambara would himself come and grant darshana".

One day Dikshitharu called his close devotees and spoke at length in private as though he was discoursing on the life to be led in future:

"My exalted devotees, listen to me with attention. The times to come are hard and difficult. You need to observe and follow dharma with a great deal of courage, effort and perserverance; do not give up your prescribed daily prayers and remain complacent. Give according to your mite. Receive not that which is tainted either food or resources. Even if poverty visits do not give up courage. To put it in a nut shell very soon it will be the time of disrespect for the brahmin. Then one must seek happiness in doing and acting right. According to the law of gods descent, Eshwara will be reborn after a lapse of time to uphold and strengthen dharma. Till then hold fast and safeguard truth spending time in Shivadhyana".

Rajarama and other true devotees saddened by the nature of the times to come appealed: "Mahaswamy, why do you entertain this forlorn feeling? We believe you are capable of doing, undoing, and forestalling anything. Why desire to terminate this descent? The time spent so far at your feet seems to have passed off like a second. While sitting or at rest, eating or talking or thinking or in a public assembly, you never left us out but now. Why do you think of going away from us? If

you are bent on going take us too along with you. A second without you live we cannot".

With tear stricken eyes, their sight fixed on the guru, every one fell at his feet begging for a change of mind. Sri Shiva Chidambara dikshitharu's heart was touched by the outflow of their sincere devotion. He was quick to comfort and console them with his sweet and tender advice. He said: 'Men of benign intellect, never have I left you behind and gone in the past; I will not do so in future too. This is truth. I had come out into the open so far to uphold and establish Dharma; hereafter I remain hidden taking care of and protecting my devotees. Do not have any misgivings. Deeds of descent are done and concluded. But for the devotees their work remains".

The devotees dissatisfied and unconvinced, asked: "Oh Lord, without you how can we live in the present time of Kali bedeviled by darkness"? Devotees exalted, do not lose heart; the secret of my being I will let you know, listen. Leaving behind my devotees, I am not the one to run away at any time. My favoured spots are Kengeri and Gurlahosur. Know for certain they have become holy places. Kengeri is Kashi in fact. Residing there at all times I will fulfill the desires of my devotees. Uphold Chidambara tradition and extend augment the realm of bhakthi. My six children who know my mind will help and assist you".

"I reside in him who carries forward my way of life. Do not get worried. The gods are expecting me and Brahma's emissary is waiting for me residing in Siddha cave. Therefore give me a warm send off. I depart to please the gods".

"Right here on earth casting aside the worldly form (physical body) I continue to live unseen. I reside in the hearts of those who are calm and unruffled in temperament and obey the dictates of the Vedas. I reside inside those who sing my songs and hymns and listen to my stories with rapt attention. I live in those who do not indulge in slander and do not feel divided between Hari and Hara and those that are

equal in spirit and mind. I live in my fullness in those who think not of the other woman and the wealth of others and those whose poise is neither temporary nor whimsical and who would not cause or inflict the slightest pain to animals even in their dreams. Truly do I live in those who speak the truth and those who do not steal the brahmin's food. I live in those who put faith in Rajarama's abhangas and those that recite the samskritha and prakritha hymns composed by Shivashastry. I live in those who go ecstatic while singing my bhajans. Great among bhaktas, to you I say in one word, the heart of my devotees is my residence" Chidambara assured.

To convince and prove as it were that Kengeri is Kashi indeed, he made the sacred Ganga flow from the oudhumbara tree for a week. Further the of food, pinda, offered to the ancestors was seen floating in the well that was down below. The devotees felt satisfied with the assurances given and all they had witnessed.

The Sri guru, Sri Shiva Chidambaradikshitharu finished the morning prayers of the day and worship of agni. He then went to the platform on the central assembly and taking the lotus posture padmasana said: 'Aham Brahmasmi', I am indeed the very Brahman and got merged in Chidananda the bliss of consciousness. The day was Margashirsha Krishna Chathurthi. The devotees witness to this event sat silently mourning over the inevitable.

In the meantime Divakaradikshita, the eldest son of Dikshitharu the person responsible for carrying out his father's instructions into corresponding actions and deeds arrived. His vociferous and irressible dissatisfaction was visible as well as audible. He protested and struck work saying that he would not conduct the last rites of his father. He turned violent raised his hand against even Shivashastry and asserted that his father cannot go to Kailasa all alone leaving behind him.

Shivashastry unafraid of Divakara's threats appealed to his Master Sri Chidambara with folded hands: "Mahaswamy, this is Dakshinayana the sun is on his southern path. The doors of heaven are

it is said, narrow during this time. You are Shiva come to earth to uplift it. Why seek the infamy of exiting now? It is not right and set it right"

As soon as the disciple uttered the words mentioned above, Chidambara woke up from his eternal silence. He said 'Shiva Shiva' and resumed his daily routine saying: "Young man, it is sundown time the brahmins are famished; Have you not started cooking? What...?"

Divakara delighted and surprised ran and held his father's feet and said: "How can I keep track of things when you had planned your unannounced exit"?

Chidambara replied instantly: "What do you say? Is your intellect deranged? Leave my devotees (behind) and depart? No, impossible. Even if a deluge sweeps across I remain in Kengeri and that is for sure". Consoling his son and other devotees Chidambaradikshitharu arranged for food for brahmins and fed them. After four such days of return to normalcy he called his son Divakara to his side and said: "You know the accident of the previous days was a divine dispensation. I have prayed and appealed to our family deity Marthandabhairava and Panduranga for terminating successfully the previous accident. I do not want others to offer thanks on my behalf; I want you to go".

Divakara endowed with the grace of sun and his brilliance though in part (Suryamsha) could not escape the net cast by the pleasant and sweet voice of Mahaswamy. Divakara went to Hipparagi and then proceeded to Pandharapura.

According to the Saka calendar it was Yuva Samvathsara (Year) Pushya Masa (Month) Shudha Chathurthi (Day). Chidambara Dikshitaru rose in the brahmi hour finished all his daily oblations and offered worship and adored the cows and the brahmins. He then adored the sun god, enkindled the panchagnis, the five fire gods, gifted away decorated cows and bowed down to all the brahmins and sat on the grass mat spread on the platform.

He then called his wives and children, devotees and disciples, near and dear and pilgrims and addressed them: "To day, ask whatever boons you care to I have discharged all dues I had to clear during this descent; they are cleared, done and completed. I will be here alone (around you) to uplift my devotees. Therefore be happy".

He was thus fulfilling the desires of 'seekers' the want-ridden devotees.

In the meantime Prabhakaradikshita, brother of Chidambara/Divakara came and pleaded: "Oh Lord, how can you push us into the sea of kali and go away? Take me with you". Mahaswamy responded consolingly: "Brother, fear not. Take courage. Let Galava the holy place be your place of residence; your fame spreads across the world. Live with my devotees and spread our way of life in the world and then come and join me".

In the meantime, Brahma and other gods and divinities came as brahmins to have 'darshan'; they bowed down with reverence and sang hymns in his praise. The guru with vibhuthi marks all over his body was sitting in the center of the glowing five faced fire. His clothes were bright and neat. An enchanting half smile lit his face; his half shut eyes were inviting and arresting; the bunch of basil leaves adorned his ears. The Sri Guru bore in his heart the Panchayathana idols (Five god conclave Adithya, Ambika, Vishnu, Gananatha and Maheshwara), brightened the 'House of Homa', the yagnashala making the devotees feel fulfilled by his very sight. The visiting pilgrims and the rest were focusing their sight on the guru while Brahma and other gods were singing hymns.

The Mahaswamy gave the panchayathana idols to his son Shankara and the other tear struck children implored: "Mahaswamy, leaving us behind you seem bent on going. How do we live without you in this frightful and dreadful world"? Take courage and do not fear. Listen to my deal. I will take care of the interests of those who discover the

secrets hidden in right actions as demonstrated by my life and living. This word of mine is a truth indisputable and settled" Mahaswamy said.

The guru then called his two wives and took back the lustre they reflected so far by placing his hand on their head. He then fulfilled the desires of all and invoked agni and its eternal glow. Chidambaradikshitharu sat in padmasana on the grass mat as prescribed and directed the sight of his half shut eyes onto his nose tip. His two hands were near the heart as befits the jnanamudra, the jnana posture. Through Kumbaka his breath held arrested, he sat motionless for a stipulated time span muhurtha and then gave vent to the sound "Brahmasmi, Brhman I am", and attained the joy, true and real curtailing the respiratory cycle.

While the guru was thus manifesting into a flow of light, men and women were crowded into silence as birds do at the time of sunset. The grief ridden were comforted by Chidambara presenting himself alive and pacifying them the returning to his invisibility. Everyone was thus satisfied and comforted. Some were reciting the Vedas; some were singing bhajans and some prose verses and some were dancing in their ecstasy. Lighting the ahithagni Shankaradikshita commenced the last rites as directed by the Vedic scholars.

The Mahaswamy was placed in the chariot (cartage) and it was drawn slowly by a band of pure and upright brahmins. The bhajan group singing in the forefront was accompanied by the sound of cymbals and drums and pipes and stringed instruments. The Upanished reciting brahmin team was ahead of the singing group. Some were offering date fruits and rice flakes and some sandalwood flakes and perfumes of various scents. The chariot moved in the northerly direction and reached the oudhumbara tree at Kengeri. The entire village had assembled to pay their last respects to the Mahaswamy.

Desai of Rudrapur was on his way coming to know of Mahaswamy's eternal departure. Chidambaradikshitharu met him on the way. Desai was wonder struck to see the Mahaswamy alive and

standing before him and asked: "Mahaswamy, where are you going alone. We are on the way to Rameshwara and my assistants are close behind" Mahaswamy replied and disappeared.

Desai's mind was clarifying to itself, the sequence of events. 'How awesome'? I am proceeding to the Dikshitharu on hearing about his death and he has himself come before me to grant darshana and disappear! What do I make of this? How come I am granted darshan while I hear the bhajan group singing? That is how he related his experience to other devotees when he saw them witnessing the last rites.

The same afternoon Mahaswamy gave darshana to his son Divakara on the banks of the river Chandrabhaga in Pandharapur and went along with him to the temple of Panduranga. After Panduranga darshana he looked at Divakara and said: "Stretch your hand and take this phalamanthrakshatha. When Divakara stretched his towel to receive the graced articles, Mahaswamy had gone invisible. Divakaradikshitharu felt that Vittala (instead) gave the graced articles and placed a lace of basil beads around his neck. Divakaradikshitharu surmising that his father must have exited from his body made a quick return to Murugodu after reviewing the sound and scent of his experiences. Mahaswamy had given darshana that day to all his real and true bhakthas in a similar way.

Kashinathadikshitharu and others had marked out a ground for 'Chidamabara space' to the south of Ramachandra temple and north of the Oudhumbara tree. And it was here that the mortal remains were cremated with the sacred fire known as shrouthagni. Taking a post cremation bath avabhruthsana, all of them arrived at the Chidambara space. The Oudhumbara tree remained green and fresh unaffected by the crematory fire. It stood and looked fresh and green as it would during and after rain. In the bright light of that fire the brahmins had their meal. One of them a brahmin did not partake of the food thinking that the crematory fire was impure and contaminated. He felt a bout of

stomach ache thereafter but he was rid of it when he ate the prasad, the blessed and graced food.

Divakaradikshitharu walked for three days and reached Murugodu. He ranted and turned violent unable to withstand his grief and disappointment. Mahaswamy pacified and comforted Divakara with his darshana and sweet advice. He said: "Divakara, be poised and listen and mark my words. I say that which is auspicious to you. I have gone away only in a worldly sense. Here I live in the privacy of the timeless. For the time being I manifest myself in the holy place of Subrahmanya as a linga the physical symbol at the root of the oudhumbara tree. I have gone to the darshan of the guru supreme Swayamprakasheshwara, Eshwara, the Self Luminous and Effulgent".

"Kengeri is my home where I reside; trust me. Go to the holy Subbapura and install the linga at the specified place. I will as before fulfill the wishes of my devotees. My words are truth and truth indeed. Believe me".

Listening to the guru's words of assurance, Divakaradikshitharu pierced through the web of delusion and adored the brahmins with renewed faith and poised in peace within. The brahmins were very happy with the variety of food served and multifarious gifts received. In the Chidambara space a commodious and large temple was built. At the holy place of Subbapura a linga was found at the root of the oudhumbara tree and the same Linga was brought to the newly built temple where it was consecrated according to the prescribed rules. The Lord of Kailasa manifesting as linga is fulfilling the wishes of devotees spreading auspicious influence and granting darshana to true and real devotees.

Shubham-Mangalam.