

The Black Capped Man With A Craze To Become A Story...

The matter as to differentiating between real facts and imagination appears to be very complicated and difficult... Some times when you narrate a story, it would appear as though you are telling a raw real facts; and sometimes when you tell the real facts, it may appear as though you are narrating a story and constructed artifices! You know, I have not seen my grand father... but if I were to write in a story that my grandfather used to take me on his lap and used to narrate stories... etcetera... and then these critics, you know, would readily declare... look here... autobiographical elements of the author are depicted here... and then they would describe this and that... and give evidences in support of that. You know our *Basu*, in order to bring *dandigi*¹ (Ω - shaped bent branch of a tree) for the palankeen of *Hanumanta devaru*², climbed the tree that was in front of the temple and started to chop the very branch that he stood...! If you tell such a real fact, that is as true as the pungency of chillies... what the critics would say...! This... and that... and all those futile things... and after all these, they would say, '...and the entire narration will grow as a metaphor... but the character, *Basu*, does not show logical development... there are gaps...' and so on... They demean our *Basu* something as a character in a drama of three *annas*³ ticket! It is logic... they say! What is this logic after all... the logic is the hen's egg offered into the *hundi*³ in the temple of Tirupati ! It wouldn't be a repast for me or you... and it can never be for the God Timmappa in the temple, we are sure! And it would not be available for the brooding as well... Let it be... I can feel it... you are perhaps intending to question me with irritation... why I have been telling all these to you... and am I tied up at the brooding some egg...? I must say 'yes' for your questions... If the egg hatches... and if ever the chick flies and pecks your head... then you must accept, and say... 'yes... it is a real fact'. And if otherwise, you can go ahead with... that the logical development of the character in this story... and this and that... all the futile things the critics employ... and keep on pecking the heads of others... telling all those futile things... You are fully free to do any such thing... And moreover, who am I to tell you to think this way or that, and to understand in a particular way...?

Let us come to the original fact now... I met this black capped *rayaru*⁴ very recently... In the bus stand of Gokavi. I was waiting for the eleven o' clock bus that would leave for our village. After waiting for hours together I looked at my watch, and it was already half past twelve...! I went to the control room to enquire, why has the scheduled bus at eleven o' clock not yet departed? A conductor sitting in the control room told – 'the eleven o' clock bus scheduled for your village is cancelled!' I came out grumbling in low tone as if to my self... 'these are unfit people... If they can't run the buses properly... they should go for herding the cattle...'. I spoke so for myself and was not expecting any response... But a response came from a person by my side... 'this is not the only thing *saheb*...!' Surprised by the unexpected response, I turned to find there, this

1.Dandigi, a bent pole to lift and carry palankeen; 2.Hanumanta Devaru, monkey god, a staunch follower of Sri Rama 3.Hundi, a treasury kept in temples in which the devotees put their offerings; 4.Rayaru, term used to address a respectable gentleman, usually a brahmine rayaru, standing smilingly and staring at me... He continued, 'Sir... You are so much irritated by a single cancellation of the bus... Tell me... how the state itself is totally administered these days...'

I have seen many such *rayaru* putting on a coat and black cap, who would be eager to engage in casual conversations and start accusing the administration, if they come across any person of thirty five to forty, wearing laundered ironed clothes... I didn't answer him and just nodded... I wanted to turn away from him, but before that, he asked, 'what time is your next bus...?'

'Our next bus...? Ham... It is... at three o' clock only... the bus leaving for Jamakhandi...', I told. That black capped man was excited, and said 'Ham... at three o' clock! Yey... still there is lot of time... Come... come... let us sit together... Come here... here... be seated'. He almost forcibly made me sit on a cement bench there. Then he sat by my side and asked, 'Your village..?' 'Kallolli...' I told. 'Ham...is it...!', he said closing his eyes and folding his hands together... He continued, '...*Hanamappa*⁵ of your village... is our *family diety*⁶. I never miss his festival held in *Kartik*⁷ month...', he said enthusiastically. I did not ask his whereabouts and other things... For that matter, he needed no such baits for his speechifying... As if he waited someone to listen, he immediately uncoiled the spring of his eloquence!

His is... some village... he said the name of a village... also told under which revenue circle it comes... I did not pay much attention when he was saying its name... may be something like

Sanagutti or some *Managutti*... 'You must have heard of our village...' he said. I never heard of such village, nor did I travel in that direction... While in primary school we used to by heart names of the taluks in Bealagavi district as... Athani... Hukkeri... Chikkodi... and so on... That was only when I heard the name of this Hukkeri! I said 'no...' to him. He emphatically said, 'That is why you don't know me... If ever you heard the name of our village, you would have known my name as well...'. It appeared something like an interesting puzzle... I tried to solve it and to find out his name from the name of his village... Umhoom... it didn't appear to be any coherent... Interest aroused in me, and I asked him, 'How is it...?' He asked 'Which one...?' 'That one... you told no... that if I heard the name of your village, I could have known your name... you told so... no...? How can it be?'

'That one...! You see, in our village – why only in our village... for that matter, in our entire surrounding... our dynasty is very famous... Therefore, if ever, our village was referred, then reference of my name... *Shamaraya* of *Kulakarni*⁸... and our family would definitely arise...'. Thus he revealed the fame of his name and family... After this discussion of his name, he immediately enquired, 'How about the availability of labourer's in your village... What is the wage system there?' Suddenly I got frightened and exclaimed loudly, 'Labourers...!' Perhaps this *rayaru* is in need of labourers. That is why he is showering his mellifluous oratory... and by that he is perhaps intending to get labourers arranged from our village for his cultivation! We

5. *Hanamappa, The monkey god*; 6. *Family God, Each family has got its own diety, situated in a temple at a particular village*; 7. *Kartik, the eighth month of Hindu calender*; 8. *Kulakarni, sir name and the vocation of village accountant*

ourselves are suffering from the lack of labourers. How could I oblige such commitment of this person, I thought. I answered him frankly 'Yeh... No labourers are available there in our side... During the crushing of sugarcane and jaggery making season, we hire labourers from other regions. You can enquire in the areas of Kurubet and Betgeri villages... They are permanent draught prone areas... every year the people of that region migrate in search of coolie'.

'Yeh...! I don't need any laborer... I have got ten families of bonded laborers... bonded families... not merely individuals... I never have that botheration. I just enquired...' he said.

I thought with surprise...if this man has to keep ten whole families as bonded laborers... how much land this old man should be holding... I asked him about that. *Rayaru* screwing his eyes

started to calculate... moving his fingers and lips and counting within his mouth... uttering names of various trees and types of soil found in different fields... he counted for some time and ultimately announced, 'Our land you see... It is two hundred fifty *koorigi*⁹...'. I was wonderstruck... 'Ababa'¹⁰...! Two hundred fifty *koorigi* means one thousand acres...! So much of land...!' I exclaimed. In response he produced a long exhale associated with a sigh, and told in a pensive mood... 'Hoom... we could retain this much...'. My interest increased and I asked 'Ham... what do you mean...?'

'It means... you see... you were accusing the government just before... isn't? It is the same design... If I must tell you the details of our dynasty... it is a long history... It is said that the founder of our family was from *Shringeri*... Vishvambhara Sharma was his name. He was acclaimed great Sanskrit scholar and great ascetic! He went from *Shringeri* to *Pampakshetra*¹¹ on the invitation from the royal family of Vijayanagara empire. The great Krishnadevaraya was ruling then...'. When *rayaru* started to narrate his history, in spite of my control, I yawned. *Rayaru* just parried it and continued... 'Ham... Vishvambhara Sharma had one son. His name was Vagbhushan Sharma... When Vagbhushan Sharma came of age, there was tumult in the palace... Cunning stratagems were schemed and ultimately *Achyutarayaru* came to the throne. He quickly took to a sensuous mode of life. But he had great faith in Hindu rituals like *yajna-yaga*¹², *pooja*¹³ and others. He established a permanent fund called *Anandanidhi*, for uninterrupted observance of all the religious activities... Our forefathers were very close to *Achyutarayaru*. Due to great fondness for our forefathers, he decided to grant an *Inam*¹⁴ of sixteen villages in this province for our dynasty...'. There I interrupted... 'You sir... why did you prefer this area of barren land...? Towards that *Shringeri and Teerthahalli*¹⁵ side, I heard, lands are very fertile and rains are also plenty... I heard that the farmers go only once to the fields to sow the seeds... There is the saying

9. *Koorigi*, measure of land, equals four acres; 10. *Ababa*, term expressing surprise; 11. *Pampakshetra*, Hampi, the location of diety, Pampa Virupaksha and also the capital of Vijayanagara Kingdom; 12. *Yajna-yaga*, fire rituals in which gods are given offerings through the medium of fire; 13. *Pooja*, worshipping deities; 14. *Inam*, special grants of land given by kings and nawabs; 15. *Shringeri and Teerthahalli*, towns in Shyadri, western ghat region receiving maximum rains; 10. *Ababa*, term expressing great surprise; 11. *Pampakshetra*, centre of diety, Pampa Virupaksha, capital of Vijayanagara empire

that the farmers throw paddy seeds in their fields and return to their home. Afterwards they again go to the fields only to harvest and bring the yield to their home! You should have requested lands in that area. Why did your forefathers select these barren lands?' *Rayaru* perhaps smelt that, some doubts crept into my mind regarding his story... He sighed that was associated with a long exhale... and contorting his face and screwing his eyes, he told as if to convince me, 'look sir... if I tell you the truth you would listen to me and you would listen even if I tell you the untruth... bare lies! But tell me... what riches am I to gain by telling you lies...? And moreover bluffing is never a zest for me... Let it be... And what you said about the barren land here are all true... In fact our forefathers were destined to get those fertile lands of *Sahyadri*¹⁶ areas only. But god disposed it...! The minister and the writer of *Kaifiyat*¹⁷ together played a mischief... That minister had a concubine. The *inam* designed for our family was diverted to that concubine's son... and these barren lands in this Hukkeri province were tied to our head. Look how the fate deceives! If the fate becomes pernicious even the pure gold in your hand would become a lump of dung... Let it be... It is now an old story only... We got what was in our fate...'

He continued, 'Even after granting of the *inam*, our forefathers remained there in *Pampakshetra* only. Later, after the death of Achyutaraya, feuds stood up in the palace, and everybody of some count, took others either as supporters or enemies. Many innocents were decapitated! Further, rumours were spread that the widow of Achyutaraya sent a secret letter to *Adilashahi*¹⁸ of Vijayapura...! Our forefathers thought it was not safe to continue to live there and they fled to this area of our *inam*. After these events, you know... Vijayanagar rule ended and Adilashahi rule started here. That also got terminated and the Maratha rule came. In between there was a brief period of Aurangazeb's rule also. There after... *Peshawes*¹⁹ and finally the *Company Sarkar*²⁰ of red faced fellows took over. All these rulers you see... have not derecognized and liquidated our *inam*...They all accepted our ownership rights of the lands. In fact *Company Sarkar* has brought *Zamindari Act*²¹ and consolidated our rights on the lands... But see... Ultimately what happened...? We got our own government... the so called the democratic government of Indian Republic...! Tell me... what did our government do...? They said the land is not yours! They brought Land reforms act... and... our own people are exploiting us... Such is the system now...' narrating so, the black capped man sent out a long exhale and heaved a deep sigh.

'You had any *inam* land in Gokavi taluk...?' I asked. *Rayaru* said, 'There were four villages... *Kolavi*, *Benchinamardi*, *Hosuru* and *Khanagaon*... The lands in three villages were lost earlier...

Forty acres of land in *Kolavi* is still in our name... But that bastard claiming himself to be tenant has applied to the *land tribunal*²²... See... what days are come now... *Ham*... We have given the land to grow a handful of grains... we told them to give us something and keep the remaining for

12. *Yajna-yaga*, fire rituals, in which offerings are made to Gods through fire; 13. *Pooja*, worship of the God; 14. *Inam*, special grant of land by emperors, kings or nawabs; 15. *Shringeri and Teerthahalli*, towns situated in Sahyadri ranges that receive maximum rains; 16. *Sahyadri*, western ghat ranges; 17. *Kaifiat*, letter licencing the grant of land; 18. *Adilashahi*, the kingdom of Adilashah, the nawab of Vijayapura;

yourself... But the bastard now says, the land itself is his...! I am not going to leave it that easily... I took two cart full of men with weapons and frightened him to the core... I also got him advised by some people who are in good relation with him... They rightly advised him... `You fool... don't invite wrath of *Rao saheb*²³... Don't think it is easy to survive against his vengeance...'. Ultimately, I gave him some money and got his signature on the bond of agreement to return our land. His name in the *khata*²⁴ is also removed and he is no more related to the land in any way... In spite of all this, that braggart has gone to the land tribunal... I have come to Gokavi on that work only... That beggar could not produce the required documents before the Tribunal... So far he got fourteen hearings postponed... I have got everybody tightened in support of me... from village accountant to *Mamaledar*²⁵... Let the bastard suffer... He is dancing to somebody's tunes... Let him dance... After getting his pocket emptied, then he will understand his stupidity...'. By then the porter in the bus stand announced loudly...

`Who are going to Jamakhandi...? Who are going to Jamakhandi...? Look... Your bus is come...'. I hurriedly got up. `We will meet some other time...' the black capped *rayaru* told and bade me good bye.

Thereafter about six months, I saw that black capped *rayaru* in Gokavi many a times... He might have come for the hearing of that Kolivi land in the tribunal... or he might have come to book a village accountant or a revenue circle inspector or even the *mamaledar* himself... Or he should have come to get somebody else to be tightened! I, frightened by the oratory of the descendent of Vagbhushan Sharma, avoided and tried not to be seen to him... But ultimately, one day I was caught. In Gokavi, I was going along *Chitra* talkies road. All of a sudden he appeared before me

and greeted... 'Good morning, sir...'. I was caught... I thought... I did not see him coming that way... otherwise I would have definitely avoided him... Now standing in front of me, he said, 'It appears that you rarely visit Gokavi... After seeing you on that day in the bus stand, I visited Gokavi for several times... Every time I hoped to find you here...'. Before I could answer him, he held my left arm and coaxingly told, 'Come... I feel I got you on the right day. Today we are getting the decree regarding that land of Kolivi... I am lucky to get you today... There should be our own people at the time of our jubilation you know...'. Telling these words, he virtually dragged and took me with him towards the tribunal court.

There he looked for his lawyer... He did not yet come... *Rayaru* told enthusiastically, 'Our lawyer is very shrewd... In the beginning only, he overawed the court by his fluent high sounding English... By his questioning, that bastard standing in the witness box, was intimidated... He

19. Peshawes, rulers of Maratha kingdom; 20. Company sarkar, the government of East India Company and British government 21. Zamindari act, a law brought by British government allotting ownership of land to certain natives; 22. Land tribunal, a magistrate court established to settle the disputes between land owners and tenants after land reforms act; 23. Rao saheb, a title awarded by British government in India; 24. Khata, account of land registered in revenue records; 25. Mamaledar, revenue authority of a taluk

became topsy-turvy by each question from our lawyer...'. Meanwhile his lawyer was slowly advancing... pacing like an elephant...! His face was decorated by *dvadasha namas*²⁶, marks of *Gopichandana*²⁷, and *angara*²⁸ and *akshanti*²⁹. He also wore a black cap... As he came nearer, *rayaru* went ahead and greeted him. Walking slowly towards the court he said, 'There will be verdict of your case in the beginning only'. We followed him into the court hall and sat there on a bench. The lawyer went ahead and sat in a chair. There on the raised platform at one end of the court hall, the chair for the magistrate stood... I started to envisage an old man with all his hair and moustaches grey sitting in that chair of the magistrate... At that moment, suddenly, everybody in the court hall stood up. I too hurriedly stood up and saw towards the magistrate seat... A young man was there! He had crop of black hair and moustaches fully shaved off! He sat and relaxed, wiping his face with a napkin... Then another young man in black coat went to him and kept a file on the table before the magistrate. This young man stealthily looking at the lawyer of *rayaru*, whispered something to the magistrate... The magistrate nodded and looked

up. The lawyer of *rayaru*, got up, looked at the magistrate and again sat down. It appeared to me that the magistrate smiled at the lawyer of *rayaru*. It might not be so...! Sometimes our eyes could deceive us and illusions may occur... The young lawyer who spoke to the magistrate told something to the clerk. The clerk stood up and told the *dafedar*³⁰ in white uniform, at the door, to announce the names... He announced loudly a few names... Then a few standing outside came in and a few sitting inside went out... Lawyer of *rayaru* and another python like lawyer rose up looked at the magistrate and then again sat down... The python like lawyer looked at *rayaru* and *rayaru* responded to him by a smile. Elbowing me and indicating that lawyer, *rayaru* whispered in my ear... 'He is the opponent lawyer... I got him also booked...!'. The magistrate coughed and got his throat cleared. The court became silent... The judge started to read... that voice of the judge uttered plaintiff and defendant... uttered evidences, *panchanama*³¹... and it elaborately quoted and quoted series of numbers and sections... As this reading out by the magistrate was going on, the black capped *rayaru* screwing his eyes... was seriously listening to all that... It was all inane unintelligible noise for me... While I was sitting indifferently, listening to the unintelligible rendering by the magistrate and blinking, all of a sudden black capped *rayaru* sprang up to his feet... and jumping he shouted 'Huryooo...!'. He further celebrated his jubilation by tossing his cap in the air and shouting the slogan 'Satyameva Jayate'³²... *Satyameva jayate*...'. The *dafedar* at the door came running towards *rayaru*... All the lawyers were compelled to control their laughter, suddenly got up, and feigning solemnity held their index finger across the lips... whispering 'shooo' 'shooo...'. I did not understand anything and in confusion I too got up and stood besides jubilant *rayaru*... *Rayaru*, who already sat down, dragged my shirt indicating me to sit down. When all these murmurings were subsided and silence prevailed in the court hall,

26. *Dvadasha namas*, twelve marks put on face, abdomen, arms and back of *gopichandana* by *madhvas*, a sect of brahmines; 27. *Gopichandana*, yellowish soil considered to be sacred; 28. *Angara*, a black vertical line at the middle of forehead drawn of coal; 29. *Akshanti*, small round mark put on the forehead of a black paste;

the magistrate with the most solemn face of his... uttered 'order... order...' and raised the hammer before him and kept it down just once touching the table. *Rayaru* was called by the clerk. He stood up and showed respect to the court by folding his hands and bowing down his head... He went to the clerk signed registers and chatted with him whispering for a while... He collected a

paper from the clerk and walked towards the door... I also went towards the door. While he was speaking to his lawyer, I found an opportunity and stealthily walked away. After pacing some distance, I virtually ran...! There was scorching sun shooting his hot rays... Under that hot bright sunlight, the huge rocks in *Maliksab hill*³³ appeared enormously magnified... I got terribly worried... if ever these rocks slid...! *Abba*³⁴...! I thought and got bewildered...

Even after I returned, that black capped *rayaru* haunted me... Oh...Very strange fellow...! He took that verdict as good as the victory in the *war of Panipat*³⁴... Jumping and shouting *huryo*... throwing the cap in the air... and shouting the slogan... *Satyameva jayate*...! All these scenes envisaged before my eyes and they made me produce peals of laughter in me! What 'satya' is here...? And which got the 'jaya', the victory...? It appeared that he must be terribly romantic fellow... In the running court, neglecting all the codes and conducts of the court... he threw up his cap in the air and jumped up! The local daily *Samadarshi* wrote about the strange happening in the court and about the judgment also... It commented... *the bourgeoisie has percolated into the judiciary also*... and this and that. Another daily, *Nirvana*, wrote under bold heading, '*An Episode of Honesty*'. This writing hailed the judgment as the most revolutionary one and held that all such cases should be settled on this line only... It criticized the injustice done by the land reforms act!

The entire writing in *Nirvana* was rendered in highly emotive language! The educated youths in our village sitting on the platform beneath neem tree in front of the *Hanumanta devaru* temple, debated that, whatever *Samdarshi* wrote was correct; others argued, no... whatever *Nirvana* wrote was very valid and judicious... After debating these subjects for weeks together, they ultimately came to me for the evaluation of their debates...! The debate in my own mind was not yet settled! How could I assess their debate? Therefore I bade them farewell telling them to settle their debates for themselves. These debates and discussions about that case of *rayaru* gradually subsided and the memory of *rayaru* in me also gradually faded and became scarce. As it was so going on... one fine morning, the black capped *rayaru* came to Kallolli itself and alighted from the bus in the bus stand! May be it was seven thirty or even earlier... I was sitting in the verandah browsing the news paper... Then all of a sudden he appeared at the door of our house. I felt thrilled... Running to the door, 'Oh... *rayaru*! Please come in... please come in', I welcomed him

30. *Dafedar, head constable*; 31. *Panchanama, first hand report recorded and attested by the officials and representatives of public*; 32. *Satyameva jayate, hail to the truth, only truth will survive*; 33. *Dafedar, head constable*; 34. *Maliksaba hill, a hillock in Gokavi, by the side of busstand*; 35. *Expression of fright*; 36. *War of Panipat, the last war between Peshawes and moghuls, at Panipat*

enthusiastically,. He came in and sat on the chair. Then referring to the day of the verdict, he said... 'You eschewed me that day! In fact that day I wanted to take you to my village...'

'That day I had some urgent work... And moreover you were busy with lawyers and the court works. Therefore I had to leave without informing you...' I answered. He told, 'Ok... Any way that day is gone. Today I have come with the sole purpose of taking you to our village'. A question passed through my mind... to what strange act of his, he wants me to be the evidence again? I laughed at his insistence and told him casually 'To your village know... I should definitely come once. I shall come later'.

'Yeh... I don't want any casual assurances like this... I have come to your place with the single purpose of taking you to our village. Do you know... I came to Gokavi last evening and stayed overnight there. From there I could come here early, and we can start earlier from here... It would be convenient for us to reach our village before noon. We must start quickly...' he said insistently. By then my daughter brought tea... I said, 'First take the tea... We will see other things later...'. The fellow took the tea cup, blew over the tea noisily, and holding the cup in his right hand, he again started insisting on my going with him... 'It is not that... I told in my house that I would certainly bring you... They will be waiting for us', he continued with his insistence. To parry his persuasion I spoke casually in lighter vein... 'Eh... what hindrance can be there...! I shall come and stay there for six months ! Let me enjoy your hospitality... I am fed up with the problems of laborers, shortage of electricity and all. It would be fine to run away from these all... ha ha ha... What do you say *rayaru*... Will you be kind enough to extend your hospitality for full six months?'

'Leave all these eschewal pranks... Get prepared to start early...' he told solemnly. Then I seriously started to enlist my problems before him... But *rayaru* did not listen at all... He made me board the bus at nine o' clock.

The bus halted at a cross, dropped us, we two, and went off. The village of *rayaru* was two and half miles away from the main road. As soon we alighted, a person came running and collected the bag in the hand of *rayaru*. There was a bullock cart yoked down near. It was fixed with arch like shelter so that the passengers would not suffer the scorching heat of the sun... *Rayaru* with a grim face asked the one that collected bag from his hand, 'Have you brought the bullock cart...?' That fellow meekly told '*Hum*³⁵ *yappa*³⁶...'. *Rayaru* walked towards the bullock cart. The meek fellow followed him from behind. Actually three servants came with the bullock cart... I also walked along. A cushion bed was spread in the cart and it was covered by a milk white bed spread. Two *lodu* were also kept there to recline... We sat in the cart... I felt it more comfortable than sitting in the bus... The bullocks were yoked and the cart started moving... Two farmers followed the cart walking behind. The cart wheels repeatedly ran for so many years along the same stripes of the road, so that the soil along was ground and dusty. These dusty stripes acted like flexible shock absorbers. Therefore the cart ran very smoothly without bounces and jerks. There was slight sideways tilt as in railway cabins and this produced a sort of cradle effect. I felt drowsy and closed my eyes for a while. Then *rayaru* asked, 'Are you sleepy...?', I suddenly opened my eyes... So far there were barren lands on the two sides of the road. But when I opened my eyes, now on both the sides of the road there were robust darkish green healthy crops of corn. I had no doubt that these lands with corn crops belonged to *rayaru*. While I was feeling so, *rayaru* himself started telling, 'These are our lands... see there... can you see... that berry tree... there... there... Yes... That one...' he showed the ending borders of the lands. Those trees were almost aligned with the zenith! I thought... we strive hard to manage the cultivation of five - six acres of land that we possess... If laborers are available for one day they abscond the next day... Obliging the seasonal agricultural commitments with such laborers would be very difficult and challenging... How could this man holding such enormous area of land manage the cultivation...? I got astonished. And besides, this man would be running to Gokavi... Belagavee... day in and day out, for court and office works. In his absence also, the crops there were so robust and healthy...! I impulsively asked him about this... Listening to me, he smiled and answered, 'What is the need of my presence to have good crop? If the indolence of somebody comes to my notice, it would mark the end of the life of that slothful harum-scarum... I would decide whether such flighty mortal should survive further or not...'. His words horrified me. I did not want to hear any more on that, and left that matter as that. But *rayaru* did not leave

it... He went on explaining, 'You see... What lord Krishna *Paramatma*³⁹ said...? He told *udyogam purusha lakshanam*⁴⁰... *Udyoga*⁴¹ gives salvation to everybody. Now tell me what sort of heretic he must be...! Firstly I would give him a warning... If he corrects himself... it is fine. Otherwise... I should communicate it to the God that, such and such mortal has transgressed your order... therefore we are sending him to you... Please, you yourself, look after him... With that prayer to the God, we would send that mortal directly to the God! That is all... What do you say... Isn't it the correct method...'. What can I say to this...!? I just kept quiet. But *rayaru* had all the enthusiasm and mood to explain. He said 'You know... What Krishna told? (when...?!)' He told, *Paropakaram idam shareeram*⁴²... How long are we going to live? We have to do service as long as we live... Death is any how pasted on our back! We have to guide and save these heretics...! Look, do not disobey God's words my children... we would advise them so. We should preach and try to guide them to go along the right path... What monk Vivekananda and others did is the same thing... you know. Of course they did it on a very large scale... They were ascetics you know ... We... we are poor worldly mundane people... and we are shackled by families... Tell me... can everybody become an ascetic...? The perpetuation of the world should also be there you see... The elders have laid the right path for us... What should we do...? We should just follow it... Thereby we can achieve this world as well as the otherworld... and more important is... we must simultaneously be achieving this goal of *paropakara*⁴³ also...'. He, the descendent of *Vagbhushana*⁴⁴ Sharma, went on building metaphysical discourse... I felt as though, somebody is forcibly holding my shoulders and drowning me into deep dark waters!

As the village approached nearer, firstly we came across the graveyard. There after we came across a pillar, that was beautifully sculptured. Curiosity arose in me. Besides, I needed to save

 37. *Hum*, expression of acceptance; 38. *Yappa, Appa*, father, respectful addressing of authorities myself from the devastating oratory of *rayaru*. Therefore I asked the man driving the cart to stop for a while... Pulling the rein and shouting 'Ho... Ho...', he stopped the bullock cart. *Rayaru* asked 'Want to relieve your bladder...?' I said 'No... I find this pillar an outlandish one... I must see it in detail...' saying so, I jumped down from the cart and went near that pillar... It was a cylindrical pillar of about one and half or two feet diameter. It was the sculpture of some highly skilled artisan. His craftsmanship was praise worthy... Starting from the ground level up to about three feet height, the artisan carved creepers, flowers and sacred lotuses. Above this stratum, for

about another three feet high, it was another stratum. In this stratum he carved a series of bison, wild boars and elephants. There was an upper stratum above this, which was as if raised and held above by, the horns of bison and tusks of boars and elephants. At the base in this upper stratum, there was a stripe in which creepers were carved. This carving of creepers served as the platform, on which the bullocks and cows were carved. In between these animals there were the carvings of ploughs... The cattle in this stratum held an upper stratum which was also about three feet tall. It was as if held above by the horns of the cattle in the lower stratum... In this upper stratum also, at the base there was a stripe of about six inches width, in which there was a carving of creepers. Above this stripe of creepers there were the carvings of human beings engaged in war... men carrying all sorts of weapons. In between these fighting warriors, there were a few human shapes that held still another upper stratum, by their raised hands. At the base of this stratum, as usual, was the stripe of carving of creepers. On this stripe of creepers there were the carvings of human beings, sitting in *padmasana*, an yogic posture! They were all as if engaged in meditation. In between these meditating human shapes intermittently, there were the carvings of Krishna playing his flute! Above this stratum there was the pinnacle, which was really a marvelous conclusion of the architecture of that pillar! This pinnacle was in the form of a human face... the magic the artisan achieved was... viewing that structure standing at any side of the pillar, you would get the same view of full vision of a human face! Enchanted by its charm I took rounds around the pillar and viewed it from all the angles... The pillar above the human face was shaped in the form of a crown over the head! There were beautiful carvings in that crown also.

If that pillar was ever established by the forefathers of this *rayaru*, then it would be beyond any doubt that his family is historically important, I thought. Might be... elders of his family only must have installed this... What would have been the occasion for its installation...? Thinking seriously, I took several rounds around the pillar and then boarded the cart... I thought that, the sight of that pillar was the most fruitful event of my visit to the village of this *rayaru*. *Rayaru* asked 'Have you seen it...?' I started enthusiastically... 'Sir... have you communicated about this pillar to the government...? It is the most valuable one... There is a government department

39. *Paramatma*, divine soul; 40. *Udyogam purusha lakshanam*, work itself is the salient feature of man; 41. *Udyoga*, work, business; 42. *Paropakaram idam shareeram*, the benevolence of others itself is the purpose of the body; 43. *Paropakara*, benevolence of others; 44. *Vagbhushana*, one for whom his speech itself is a decoration

particularly for the protection of such valuable monuments...'. *Rayaru* stared at me for a minute and then told 'You meant that we should have intimated about this pillar to the government...? If we did like that, what the government would have done?... They would have uprooted and carried it away overnight! Carrying it they would throw it at some dark dungeon like godown... among so many other useless stones already collected... Who would care their sanctity? No adorations... no festivals! Now we never miss a single *pooja*, on every *Amavasya*, the new moon day, and as well as on *Dasara*, the tenth day of navaratri festival... There will be a big festival and *pooja* on *Dasara* and thousands of devotees visit'. When *rayaru* started to explain this way, I left the present and future of the pillar and raised the past of the pillar... It was installed by some forefather in the dynasty of *rayaru*. (Now actually a doubt crept into my mind... Can it be...?). He had no information about the purpose of its installation. Whatever might be the original purpose of its installation... but the great grandfather of *rayaru* had invented a novel function for that pillar. Anybody that violated the norms prescribed by the family of *rayaru*, would be tied to this pillar and would be thrashed by a whip! That whip too became a symbol of sacredness... On every *Amavasya*, that whip would be kept beside the pillar and would be worshipped! *Rayaru* told 'There is a strong divine charm in this pillar... Because of its power only, the village would always be peaceful. It is now called as *Pillar of Justice* and has become a symbol of salvation! The people of neighboring villages and also from distant places have started visiting this pillar in great veneration and make a solemn declaration of a particular service if their desire gets fulfilled... Last year a devotee offered a golden crown that fitted the terminal crown of the pillar...! I have kept it safely in my possession.'

While *rayaru* was narrating this, a group of people came from ahead, from the village side. They were dragging an old woman... Seeing the cart of *rayaru*, the old woman burst into sobs and fell down on the ground, prostrating before the cart... A person from the group came near the cart and reported the matter to *rayaru*, 'She is *Mayagol*⁴⁵ *mudiki*⁴⁶ *yappa*... She has plucked four ears of corn...'. Now the crying woman got up and came ahead near the yoke of the cart so that she would be visible to *rayaru*, and pounding her chest and wailing she pleaded, 'Yappa... my God...

My grandson had no food for two days *Tande*⁴⁷... My entrails could not withstand *yappa*... To keep that babe alive... I plucked two ears of corn my father... I have committed a blunder... Forgive me my god...' thus revealing that old woman again prostrated before the cart begging pardon... The oxen got frightened and they took three steps back. *Rayaru* did not show any feeling or emotions on his face. He just told the cart man, 'Go ahead...!'. The man driving the cart shouted at the old woman... '*Yeh*⁴⁸ *yamma*⁴⁹... get out of the road...'. The crowd dragged her off to the side and the cart moved on... That wailing old woman tried to run after the cart. The people of *rayaru* carried her away, perhaps towards that beautiful pillar, called as pillar of justice, for her whipping! I peered at *rayaru*. He told with cold blooded conviction 'Discipline means discipline...! No compromise with it... That company sarkar, you know... should have

45. *Mayagol*, a surname; 46. *Muduki*, old woman; 47. *Tande*, father, respectful addressing; 48. *Yeh*, sound to draw attention; 49. *Yamma*, grand mother;

hanged the first ones who had broken their rules under the pretext of swarajya, satyagraha and etc. If they had hanged them, every body would have acted like a dog later. But as they acted leniently, they had to quit, handing over the state to these ignoble people... They got spoiled themselves and spoiled us as well!'

By that time the cart entered the village... It came to the front of *rayara Vade*⁵⁰, and halted. The bodybuilder driving the cart jumped from the cart and unyoked the oxen. *Rayaru* alighted and greeted me 'Welome to this cottage of ours... get down'. The *vade* of *rayaru* was something like a small fort! As we entered into the door two children, a boy and a girl came hopping shouting 'Uncle comes...' 'Uncle comes...'. *Rayaru* took a packet of *Karadantu*⁵¹ from his bag and handed it to one of them. They went dancing inside as they came earlier... I asked 'Are they your brother's children...?'

'No no... Mine only... Children of my younger wife', he said. Just as we entered through entrance door there were two platforms on either side. Then there was an open courtyard. From that courtyard we entered the *durbar* hall... All along the wall there, cushion beds were spread and kept *takke* on them to take support while reclining on one's back. To appear as the main seat, along one wall there was a single cushion spread at about the middle of the wall, and instead of a *takke*⁵², a *lodu*⁵³ was kept to recline. *Rayaru* took off his shirt and hung it to a peg fixed to the wall for the purpose. I too removed my shirt and hung to another peg.

'Come... you would wash your hands and legs...' *rayaru* said and showed the bath square there at the corner of the courtyard. A housemaid was feeding fuel to the fireplace there to warm water. She got up and took water from the vessel on the fireplace... I said to her, 'No... I don't need hot water...'. She said 'No *saheb*... it is not that hot... it is only lukewarm...'. She brought a soapbox with soap and kept on the platform there. As I washed my face hands and legs, she handed me a towel... I wiped and came back to the durbar hall and sat on the cushion and reclined a *takke*. There on the door frame of the door to go inside from durbar hall, there were four large photos fixed on to the wall. They were of Vitthala, Rukumayi and of an old man and an old woman... perhaps the mother and father of *rayaru*. To all the four walls of the hall, at moderate height, framed paintings were hung. I felt... 'it is fine... *rayaru* has a keen interest in painting'... I got up and started to observe those paintings... A painting was particularly more beautiful... a swarm of honey bees were attacking a woman. Frightened she held her hands ahead as if to beat those bees or to shield her face... The feeling of fright on her face, the richness of her bosoms... her attire of a housemaid... all these made that painting very attractive... I kept on looking intently at the painting... *Rayaru* came and stood behind me and noticed that I was fully engrossed... He asked, 'Looking at these paintings...?' Continuing my watching, I said, '*Haam rayaru*... these are really wonderful paintings... I don't know why the painter has not put his name at the corners of the paintings as it is usually done... Are these of *Raja Raviverma*⁵⁴...?' *Rayaru* laughed loudly... Ha

 50. *Vade, palatial bungalows occupied by village and town authorities*; 51. *Karadantu, a sweet made up of dry fruits and jaggery* ; 52. *Takke, large pillow kept as support to recline*; 53. *Lodu, cylindrical pillow kept as support to recline*; 54. *Raja Raviverma, a famous Indian painter*;

ha ha...! And after his laughter he said, 'If some one else asked me so... I would have said him 'yes'... But it is you, who is asking me about these... Can you imagine... that these are the paintings of our *Holyara*⁵⁵ Kencha of our village...? That bastard's hand I tell you... it was such an artist's hand you see...! If ever he drew a line... it is over... he would never change or wipe it off !' I was surprised. By then *sharabat* in big glasses came from inside... *Rayaru* handed one to me and took another for himself. He went to his prominent seat and sat there. Then he called me to come and sit nearby. But sipping the *sharabat* I continued to see the remaining paintings... *Rayaru* again came and stood by my side. ... There was a colorful building... rather a palatial building... perhaps *rayaru* was also looking at the painting... all around that building there were

dunghills! In one such dunghill a hen with the flock of its chicks was foraging, scratching the upper layer of dung hill by its paws and picking food from there... And there, over the palatial building, up above in the sky, a *brahmini kite*⁵⁶ was soaring... aiming at the chicks pawing on the dung hill... *Yeh!* If this *Holyara* Kencha continued his education he would have become very famous artist I thought sincerely... I sincerely said *rayaru*, 'This man after completing his schooling here should have continued his study... Has he done it? I hope you had supported in his studies...' *Rayaru* laughed heartily and said 'Saheb... there is no school in this village. *Ham...* Government once did that also... brought a school and planted that rootless one, here also! But nobody of the village had sent their children to the school...! Thus it got withered away...! Tell me if they sent their children to the school... what would have happened to the system here...? How could it work perpetually...?' I was dumb founded...! *Rayaru* now came very near me and as if whispering into my ears, asked, 'Saheb... I would like to know one thing... You should not misunderstand...' I was surprised and said noddingly, 'No... no... You need not worry... please ask it...', and saw his face. There I saw a fire of an intense desire in his eyes... He continued, 'I have heard... that.. that... you write stories and novels...? Is it true...?' I felt to laugh... Laughing only I said, 'What is there to misunderstand about it...? They say you know... the *man without work did something to his son*...! Like that...! Some time, sparingly I do that... The local papers like *Samadarshi* and others publish them... There is nothing special about it...'. Then *rayaru* pleadingly told 'Look... Look... Please don't say like that... It is not like that...! You are really blessed one... And I have a request to make... please write a story about our dynasty... about me... and about the well organized management in the running of our village... all about these...! You please accept my request... I beseech you... please write a story...'. When I heard *rayaru* saying so, I laughed heartily... Ha ha ha...! Laughing only I looked at *rayaru*... That desire I saw in his eyes was still brighter and it was now spread over his entire face! Then I just recalled... when those people brought that old woman dragging to him, his face was like a white washed wall, not showing the slightest of feelings or emotions... But now... his face was burning with a strange desire! The contrast struck me... Suddenly I stopped my laughing and said, '*Yeh...* what is there in it...! Leave it... Let me consider it... I would try to write it...'. He felt contented. Showing concern and affection towards me, he told, 'Come... you must be tired of the journey. Take some

55. *Holyara*, a community name.

rest. By then the lunch would be ready.'

After the lunch we sat before the plate in which betel leaves and sixteen spices to be chewed with it were kept... Then the *halaba*⁵⁶ of rayaru came and called him, '*Dhanyara*⁵⁷...'

Rayaru raised his eye brows as to indicate... what the matter was...

Halaba said '*Kamatar*⁵⁸ Channappajja has come... He is telling he should meet *dhanyaru*...'. 'What for...'

'Who knows, *Dhanyara*...? I heard he was planning to arrange the marriage of his son... May be for that sake *yappa*...'. *Rayaru* sat seriously thinking for a moment and then as if he remembered something that excited him, and told enthusiastically to *halaba* '*Ham*... tell him to come'.

An old man taking support of a staff came limping to the edge of the durbar hall. He bent down and announced 'I do prostrate before you, *yappa*...' and touched his hands to the floor. *Rayaru* enquiringly asked 'What Chanya... Are you all right...?'. Chanya shrank his body and answered hesitantly, '*Hum yappa*... Your blessings are keeping me so... See this is how I am...'. *Rayaru* told 'Be seated...' He sat there at the edge of the hall. Channappa stared at me and as he did not know me, asked *rayaru*, 'Who is this *dhanyaru*... *yappa*...? Is he your relative *yappa*...?' As if *rayaru* was waiting for this question, he enthusiastically narrated, 'He is from Gokavi province... There is a village Kallolli... he is from that village. He is a very important man... He has written very large books. Whatever he writes is published in daily papers and magazines... His name is printed in daily papers frequently...'. Channajja felt that I must be very big a person... but what *dhanyaru* said was not intelligible for him... in confusion, he could not decide how to express respects to me... Ultimately he bent his front and touched his forehead to the floor and announced 'I bow before you, *yappa*...'. In a move to prevent him doing so, stretching my hands, I said, '*Yeh*... no... no...'. *Rayaru* told me '*Yeh*... receive it... receive it. It is his duty to show respect to you...', then turning towards Chanya he told, 'Chanya... He is going to write story of our village and about our family... He has come here for that purpose...'. I was stupefied! Delighted Channya said, 'Is it so *yappa*... this has become excellent now' and looking at me he requestingly said, '*Yappa*... You should write very attractively about the dynasty of our *dhanyaru*...'. Then addressing his *dhanyaru*, said, '*Yappa*... haven't you told this *sahebaru* about the murder of that *Angadi* Kubera...? By that... as the thread binding the flowers is also received by the God with the flowers... my name would also appear in that story... Please tell it to this

sahebaru. And *yappa*... *Helavas* of Lokapura village must have already made the bravery of your dynasty as a narrative... Isn't it *yappa*...?' Rayaru turned towards me and started to narrate, 'Haam... what happened is... there in our village there was a young man running a small shop... As some money accumulated in his pocket... he started flying in the sky...! The villagers stayed patient tolerating all his arrogant flights! But later, when he started to argue and show disobedience with me also... then the villagers like Channya, who were irritated by arrogance of Kubera with me, came to me and told... '*yappa* we will remove him!' I tried to convince them

56. *Halaba*, an attendant; 57. *Dhanyara*, master; 58. *Kamatar*, surname

and told... 'whatever it may be... he is the child of this village... If you remove him it pains my entrails...' But they got their mind terribly bitter towards him, you know... and they did not agree with me... Within eight days, in the broad day light only... they dragged Kubera out of his shop and murdered him... Then from there, they straight way came to me and begged for my forgiveness... As their father, I had no other go, you see. I pardoned them'. After hearing his story, looking at Channappa, I asked, 'And... those murderers must have been sentenced to death or life imprisonment, I suppose... They must have gone to the jail'. Chanya laughed heartily and said, '*Yaa*⁵⁹... When our *dhanyaru* is here how could we be sent to the jail *sahebara*...'. Rayaru pitying my common sense told me, 'It was a social event... The entire society took it as a community welfare activity... Who would come forward to give evidence against these, in support of the case in the court? The case could not be proved in the court...'. Then Rayaru turned towards Chanya and asked, 'Hoom... let all these petty affairs be there... Leave them... Tell me... What made you come here?'

Channappa told, '*Yappa* last Saturday I demanded *koulu* from Hanamanta devaru regarding my son's marriage... You know *yappa*... he came of age... *Yappa* you know how is our *Hanamanta devaru*... as it is known to everybody... our *Hanamanta devaru* is a very very slow person...! He thinks this way and that way... considers all the pros and cons and then only he gives *koulu*⁶⁰... Last month those from Kakati village could not get *koulu* even after waiting for eight days... Under such circumstances you see *yappa*... when I asked for *koulu* last Saturday, he did not make me to wait at all...! He immediately gave me *koulu*! I came to tell it to you *yappa*... Even if I do not survive, my son and his wife would serve as bonded laborers and clear your debts...'. His throat was choked while he was telling the last sentence. After telling this, he touched his fore

head on to the floor... *Rayaru* feigned as if he was caught in thoughts... 'You have come at odd time, Channya... Now I have become empty handed...! That tribunal case and others have drained me...'. Chanya folding his hands said, 'No *yappa*... you can't deny this... We are depending on you only... Don't let us down...'. After much feigning by *rayaru* and persistent beseeching by Channya... *rayaru* came round and said 'Ok... I will see...'. Then Chanya got up and prostrated holding the feet of *rayaru*. Then, *Rayaru* in a warning tone began to enquire, 'Ham... Now, tell me Chanya... where from are you bringing the girl...? Look... I tell you in advance... You should not bring a girl from towns and cities... They think themselves as queens and behave arrogantly... They start objecting to come to *vade* to work as housemaids... You must tell the girl beforehand, that she should obey the *vade* and should perform whatever duty is assigned to her in the *vade*... Tell everything clearly... You should also tell her that, even your wife served the *vade* so...'. Channya told 'No *yappa*... I have not fixed any girl yet... Firstly I wanted clearance from *Hanamappa* and you... It is enough for me if two of you accept my request! Why to worry about girls... they are available any how....'. *Rayaru* ordered him 'Hum...'

59. *Yaa*, a sound with a tinge of ridicule; 60. *Koulu*, advice given by the god indicated by the falling of the flower from the statue. Depending upon the part from which the flower falls, the significance is deciphered and the advice of god is perceived

you go now. This saheb is perhaps tired... Let him rest atleast for an hour...'. Chanya folded his hands to both of us and went away. *Rayaru* told me to relax, and went inside...

The paintings of Holyara Kencha... the single stone pillar with many strata, each stratum filled with beautiful carvings... the murder story of Channajja... all these clustered in my mind and started to pull apart! I tried to sleep... I could only remain in the bed, rolling this way and that way... and sleep stayed away from me... The clocks never sleep and the big clock hung on the wall rang to tell that it was already five o' clock... *Rayaru* came out. Seeing me awake, he asked 'Had your sleep...?' I answered 'Hum...' and got up and sat on the cushion. 'Get freshened' he said. I went out and washed my face. By then tea was brought in large beautiful porcelain cups. After drinking tea *rayaru* said, 'Let us go out... You will see our fields and our village as well. They may be useful for your story...'. I was surprised... this man took it for granted that I would definitely write the story, I thought and smiled for myself. I told him, 'Let me consider that story later... You have brought me from distance... How can it be proper if I do not see your fields and

agriculture...?' *Rayaru* again insisted 'Yeh... the story is more important...'. In order to avoid further discussion on that count, I just said, 'Ok... let it be so' and concluded...

It was not an easy task to see the fields of *rayaru*... The area is so vast! We wandered till the sun set. 'Let the remaining ones remain...' he said, and we came back... In each field at least two bonded male labourers and four to five women were working... The women might also be bonded labourers... On hearing the voice of *rayaru*, their speeches used to dry up... They used to shudder on hearing his foot steps... If *rayaru* would call any labourer, that person would come running and stand with his body bent and shrunk! Whatever *rayaru* would utter, he would politely reply 'Hum yappa...' 'Hum yappa...', and when ordered to go, he would promptly move with drooping head. In comparison I recalled the labourers in our areas... even after taking advance money, they avoid coming for the work and talk arrogantly...! Here these labourers would accept as *prasada* of the god, whatever *rayaru* gives... They do whatever *rayaru* would tell them to do and they accept whatever punishment *rayaru* gives them...! I doubted whether these labourers, standing always in bent down posture before *rayaru*, were alive or not! I understood that the gravity of *rayaru* was very heavy... That was how he could manage such big agriculture in spite of his going day out and day in... I told 'You are lucky... Our labourers make us weep away...'. *Rayaru* said emphatically, 'They must be brought under my hand... I would strip them off, get them tied to our pillar of justice, would pour hot water over their naked bodies and would thrash them with our sacred whip!' After these words of *rayaru*, I felt like observing keenly the labourers of *rayaru*... Doubt aroused in my mind, whether these labourers have got their skin intact over their body...! Who knows...?

After the dinner in the night, again we sat over the betel leaves plate with those sixteen spices in it... We spoke this thing and that thing casually... *Rayaru* repeatedly persuaded me to write the story. His craze to become a story himself astounded me... Then, just before going to bed, he said, 'Look sir... Tomorrow I have to go to Belagavi urgently, in the early hours of the morning only. I may start at four o' clock in the morning. I shall not be there when you get up in the morning... You write the story as soon as you reach your village...', telling so he sent me into a bed room and he went to his bed room...

Now in the room, I was surprised that *rayaru* did not tell me about the plans of my journey to Kallolli. Then I assured myself that he should have made arrangements for that... He might have instructed for the bullock cart in the morning... Thus assuring I consoled myself... As my mind

got rid of this botheration, I could appreciate the grandioso of the comforts in that bed room! *Ababa*...! What type of cot it was... What type of the cushion bed it was! Just looking at them only, one would feel the comfort...! On the right side there was a life size mirror... Variety of erotic paintings were hung on all the four walls... might be of that Kencha only... When I was engrossed in such rhapsody, '*Sahebara*...', a melodious feminine voice came from behind. I turned suddenly in surprise... There stood a young shy housemaid with her cheeks blushed and head bowed down... I enquired her, 'What *avva*⁶¹...?' She was astounded and suddenly looked up... I could see her broad pond like eyes distinctly... Before I could fall in the mire of her eyes, she shrank her body and bashfully told, '*Dhanyaru* sent me to press your feet and...'. I was shocked... I saw her with eyes wide opened... I saw her *guladali*⁶² tightly fitted around her long neck... I turned my face towards the wall, and controlling my voice, I said, 'Not required... You can go...'. No movements were heard. I turned to see... and she was still standing there as if nailed to the floor! I told again 'Didn't I tell you to go back...? Go back...'. She was scared and told hesitantly... 'If I go without serving you saheb... *dhanyaru* would skin me alive...'. I assured her that I would tell her *dhanyaru* not to punish her, and on my words she hesitatingly, slowly went out of the room...

I shut the door and fastened from inside. I felt as if the paintings on the wall suddenly laughed at me mockingly... 'kisak...!' I extinguished the larger lamp and retained the small lamp. As the light dimmed the brightness of the colors on the wall also faded... I stretched myself on the bed and picked the blanket at the feet and got myself covered under it...The soft bed and furry blanket did not comfort me... I kept on rolling on the bed and I didn't know when sleep actually took hold of me! Then I got a very strange dream... Some thieves came stealthily... they carried away the cot and bed I slept... then all the paintings on the walls and those walls themselves... they lifted doors, the mud roads to the fields and finally the fields themselves...! Not only that, the whole house itself was lifted and there prevailed a big *bayalu*⁶³...! I felt the weather cold and chilly... There was no blanket on my body... I thought it perhaps slipped down... To pick it, I stretched my right leg to drag the blanket up over my body... I got pricking of prickles at the toes... With astonishment I opened my eyes and sprang up and sat... I became panicky... I was lying there lonely under the blue sky... The east was just showing the tinge of ochre... As found in the dream, there was no cot and no bed! No paintings that were hung on the walls and no walls

themselves...! The *vade* had all vanished and I was sleeping on a flat slab of boulder lying amid the ruined walls! With fright I looked around... and my dread got multiplied... I was sleeping in a

61. *Avva*, mother, a respectful addressing of woman; 62. *Guladali*, a chain of black beads worn in the neck by married women; 63. *Bayalu*, void

graveyard amid tombs... Struck by the horror I sprang up, shouting `Ayyo⁶⁴ *yavva*⁶⁵...' and started to run... I did not care the stones and spines... At that time just before dawn, when the darkness was gradually subsiding and faint light was slowly flowing in... I told myself... run... run fast, run fast... telling myself so... I ran and ran and ran...!

I came across some village... A man who was going for emptying his bowels saw me running like a calf possessed by a ghost and tried to stop me, shouting `who is it... who... stop stop...' and even coming in my way and obstructing me... he made me stop. I was so exhausted that I could not stand and I collapsed and sat there on the road itself... He made me drink some water from the vessel he was carrying. And looking at my face he asked... `Why sir...? What happened? Why are you so panicky...?' I was so much scared that I could not articulate... Holding my arm he pulled me up and took slowly to a nearby temple. I sat on the platform there... People seeing me walking slowly being escorted, came enquiring...

`Who is that one Rachappa...?'

`What happened Rachappa...'.

People crowded and they all started shooting questions at me... what... where... how... and so on and so on... What I could respond was... indicating the direction from where I came running... and with some efforts later told `There... there was a *rayaru*... yesterday he took me to his *vade*... in the night *vade* and all vanished... I found myself sleeping amid the ruins... in a grave yard...!'. Telling so much I started trembling. They whispered among themselves...`Yes... Nothing else... It is the same trick of that *rayaru*...!' An old man said `He is terribly frightened... First get him protection of *Hanamanta devaru*... bring the *parasada*⁶⁶ of *devaru* and apply it to his forehead...'. A man quickly went in the temple and brought some sacred ash and applied it to my forehead. The old man who suggested to apply *parasada* stared at my face intently and asked, `You *saheb*... do you write anything like story-geery...?'

His question suddenly brought the remembrance of the insistence of *rayaru* to write a story about himself! Trembling with cold filled throughout my body, I sat immobile looking at the old man who asked this question...

64. Ayyo, a wailing sound; 65. Yavva, mother; 66. Prasada, the ash kept in the temple which is worn on forehead. It is believed that it would protect from bad spirits.