

One Soligi¹ Of Wheat...

He woke up...

Came out and got relieved of his bladder on the nearby *dunghill*² and stood at the entrance of the home... watching people carrying water from the nearby well... His mouth was still filled with saliva... did not yet spit... Women were carrying water pots keeping them at their waists... men were carrying two pots on their shoulders held together by a loop of iron chain or rope of fibres... and young women were waiting for their turn of the pulley to draw water from the well... While he was engrossed in watching this scenario... a female voice called him from behind... 'Kallanna...'. He turned and... pooh...! This Balavva was standing there. 'What Balavva...' he flippantly parried. 'Kallanna... what is the medicine for my son Husanappa's illness...?' Pooh...! This only thing was not conferred on him so far... This *Goudar*³ Kallanna – having failed his BA exam... decided to get relieved of that botheration and came back to his village Betageri. And here as a mark of having learnt the alphabet... helped the people to write and read their letters for them. For this he was acclaimed as *sarvajna*⁴... the omniscient of the village! And now this Balavva was trying to make him a *Dhanvantari*⁵! Kallanna felt a gush of laughter and he hurriedly bent to his left and spat the saliva stock in his mouth before it could spill over his shirt... He then reluctantly asked her, 'What...? What medicine...?'

'*Ham yappa*⁶... it is for my son Husanappa... yesterday I took him to the doctor in Kulgod village... He said... that the chest of our Husanappa is eaten by worms! He said that they had made holes in his chest...!'. Balavva said this in her utter despair and looked at Kallanna for his advice. Kallanna did not tell anything... Balavva herself continued 'Kallanna... *yappa*... how could these worms enter into anybody's chest...? Let them be burnt alive...! My boy has become sapless... And where from this merciless cough rushes and attacks him I don't know *yappa*... In the early morning hours, he coughs and coughs... whooping and wheezing continuously without breath... and Kallanna... see (showing her cupped palm)... this much... do you see... *ham*... this much of blood flows with his phlegm... Coughing only he goes for his work in Sivappanna's *kirani shop*⁷...'. Having told her distress, Balavva wiped her tears. In her speech the, 'chest of Husanappa is gazed by worms...' aroused a terrible laughter in Kallanna... He got a scene stood up in his mind... there this Husanya's chest is like a lush green grassland... attracted to this juicy grass... swarms of grasshoppers are attacking... and see... this dried dessicated Husanya is brandishing the stick in his hand and shouting *Ei.. Ei..* you... out out! Overwhelmed by this

1.Soligi, is a measure of grains equivalent to eight seru; each seru is roughly 1.072 kgs;
2.Dunghill, the place where cattle dung and other domestic, agricultural wastes are dumped to decompose; 3.Goudara, sur name; 4.Sarvajna,omniscient;5.Dhanvantari, Hindu god of medicines; 6.Yappa, used for respectful addressing, also means father; 7.Kirani shop, shop dealing with groceries.

whimsical scene... Kallanna burst into a loud laughter...

Balavva was dumbfounded... Might be... she thought... even in the heart breaking miseries there might be seeds for laughter and fun!... She was astounded and stood still like a pillar. Kallanna felt that the botheration of Balavva was over, and he again turned his attention to the scenes there around the nearby well... Alas...! It appears the loop of rope fastened to the neck of the water pot to draw water from the well got loosened or got cut... *Simpigyar*⁷ Sugunabai and another woman drawing the water filled pot from the well fell back... Sugunabai quickly got up and was peeping into the well to locate her copper pot... His attention was again broken... Balavva in her sunken voice called, '*Tamma*⁸...' and asked, '...what should I do *yappa*...?' 'Why should you ask this to me...' Kallanna wanted to retort... But he playfully said affecting a serious tone... 'For the sickness of your son Husanya no...? Do one thing... take him to *Vadyara*⁹ Siddayya. He is very expert in giving medicines...'. In telling this much Kallanna got overwhelmed and he rushed into the house with a burst of loud laughter...

Balavva was shocked by the advice of Kallanna... This *Vadyar* Siddayya is the village quack giving herbal medicines to the cattle and sheep! She stood still for a while staring the gait of Kallanna walking into his house... and then turned to move. Meanwhile *talavara*¹⁰ Yamanavva arrived there to sweep the street. She enquired, 'What Balavvakka... came so early in the morning hours...?' Balavva with a prolonged sigh said 'Yamanavva... I do not know why... our Husanappa is unwell... I am distressed Yamanavva'. Yamanavva exclaimed expressing her concern '*Ayya yavva*...!' and then she enquired 'but *yakka*¹¹... Husanappa is regularly attending the work in Shivappa's kirani shop?' To this Balavva sent out another sigh and sat down there near Yamanavva. Yamanavva also sat and she dropped this matter of Huseni's sickness and picked the interesting matter of Rajama, Huseni's wife. Rajama went to her parents house on some pretext with her only son and there after she did not return. All the people used to talk that Rajama ran away taking away her child, leaving behind this Huseni here. '*Yakka*... Husanappa's son might have grown up now... And *yakka*... why did Rajama go away? Did she quarrel with you or Husanappa?' What should Balavva tell for this! She exhorted 'what to do with that bitch... leave her... she should be put in the fireplace to burn her alive...', telling so Balavva got up and walked away.

Then there... on the top of her mind... her grandson Saidoo appeared... Balavva felt mild exhilaration in her dried up breasts... and a pleasant wave of excitement spread through the whole of the bosoms...! But from behind him... she...! she, that wicked woman... that shameful daughter in law... Rajama comes around...! Tears filled in the eyes of Balavva and the road

ahead looked hazy... Hum... that wicked worm fled away from the dried up husband to desiccate him further... Balavva in her apprehension paced ahead and came near the platform beneath the

7.Simpigyara, a surname, meaning of the tailor; 8.Tamma, younger brother, also a fondly addressing of loved ones; 9.Vadyara, a community name and also a surname; 10.Talavara, a community name and also a surname; 11.Yakka, elder sister, addressing an elderly woman

Neem tree near *okali konda*¹². On that platform, Maruti of *Ramageri*¹³ was sitting. He saw Balavva and he spoke to her, 'What Balavvakka... How are you...'. Balavva looking at Maruti said to herself... look at this Marya... how robust he is...! He looks like the trunk of a babul tree... *Ham*... I should ask this fellow about Huseni's ailment... thinking so, Balavva asked, 'Maroteppa... how do these worms enter into anybody's chest...?' Maruti was serving in military... he came on his annual leave and he was going back within a day or two... He felt compassion for this aged woman, Balavva, and for courtesy sake spoke to her... Hearing Balavva he thought... look! How Balavva is paying back my courtesy... this woman is taunting at me...! Irritated Maruti asked caustically 'Worms...? what worms... entering whose chest...? Look Balavvakka... I have kept my chest clean... no worm would enter my chest... Don't come to mock me'. Balavva hurriedly narrated the whole episode of Huseni's illness clarifying Maruti and told what Kulgod doctor said... The knots in Maruti's mind were loosened and his anger vanished... Now he laughed a hearty laughter and felt tempted to tease Balavva a bit... and spoke to her... 'What Balavvakka... You don't know medicine for this ailment...? I tell you the best treatment for this... do one thing... firstly... keep Huseni hungry... don't give him meals... starve him for one full week... the worms without food will become weak...Then secondly... give him strong arrack daily in the morning and evening... for one full week...! Give such treatment for one week... I tell you Balavvakka... if the worms do not vacate Huseni's chest... don't call me as Maroteppa of Ramageri!' Prescribing this treatment Maruti let out a roaring laughter... His advice to starve Huseni for a week almost conflagrated Balavva's entrails... Disapprovingly she stared at Maruti... and look... this Marya's eyes are as red as burning coal... He must be already drunk...! Balavva turned and quickly left that place almost running...

And... again there appeared her grandson at the top of her mind... See this one...! Then he was only this much... about two elbows length... now he is so so tall...! Look at his trousers... they are concealing his feet... and the long sleeves of his shirt are touching the base of his palms! Balavva fondly whispered within her mind... 'Saidoo... *yappa* Saidoo...'. Look look... if I call my grandson why should this adulteress protrude her brazen face... and look how she combed her hair with a cross cleave in flocks of hair... she kept her head uncovered like *haruva*¹⁴ women...! Look... how she is grinning... showing all her teeth...! Ahaha...! You... you... the adulteress of the whole world...! This Husanappa... my son... is a poor gullible fool... If ever he banged her she would have been kept under control... *Hum*... who can wipe off the writing on one's forehead! She took my son like a monkey and made him to dance! After Saidu's birth... this... my gullible son went to to see his son... Then look at the joke this Rajama played with her husband...

holding the child before Husanappa she told... 'look... look at the face of my child keenly... is it's face is like the monkey face of yours? Ha ha ha... It could never be like your face!' My artless son came back and told me... 'yavva she did like this and this...!' Balavva intently tried to hold back Saidu's face at her vision... But a hazy face appeared there... and it also readily blotted and

12.Okalikonda, an artificial pond with stony steps which is filled with water at the festival of okali; 13.Ramageri, surname

transformed into that of Huseni... and then it gradually metamorphosed into that of Buddusaba, Balavva's late husband...! He was still moving his toothless jaws as if masticating something, as he always did while alive... His body was wrapped in white new cloth... Balavva remembered that she could get it on credit with great difficulty and with so much of importuning...

Exactly then Huseni appeared there before Balavva... Balavva stared at him thought... this looks same as his father... the same teeth less jaws and sunken cheeks... grey eye brows and stubble of white and grey mixed moustache and beard... eyes, as if frightened by the day light, buried deeply into the orbits... Balavva stood looking at him and Huseni also stood staring at her... His 'Adam's apple' as large as a mango seed... projected at the front of the throat... was moving up and down like the throat in a frogs... Growling at the throat with a harsh screech... scraping the phlegm in the pharynx... he accumulated the phlegm, turned to the his left and spat the lump... Then gathering his breath he asked 'w..wwh..ere to...?'. Balavva did not tell a word... He again gathered the phlegm and spat it and stared at Balavva inquiringly... Balavva in dread was looking intently at the red spots in the phlegm lumps... Huseni urged... 'Hum... I should go urgently... I must collect money from the debtors that purchased from the shop on credit... If I delay they will all go to their lands... Then I must receive bullying from Shivappa... hum... I should move now...', telling so he walked away hurriedly.

After Huseni left, Balavva stood and thought for a while and decided to go to the *shop* of Shivappa... She reached the shop and called Shivappa - 'Yappa...'. Shivappa sitting by the side of cash box looked out and said 'ham... wait Balavva...'. In those early morning hours only, some four to six people sat in the shop... Shivappa speaking to them this and that... locked the cash box and came out and sat on the platform, at the left side of the steps and asked - 'Hum... Balavva... came so early in the morning... What is the matter...?' Balavva was engrossed in something... Shivappa told 'What Balavva... are you meditating or what...?' and laughed. Balavva woke up and went hurriedly to sit on the steps in front of the door. 'No no... It is the passage... don't sit there...'. Then Balavva stood in front of Shivappa, and asked in low tone... 'Yappa... You have seen our Husanappa's son... isn't?' Shivappa laughed heartily and exclaimed 'Yaa... It appears... the memory of the grandson is stirred in Balavva'. Balavva suddenly sat down on the road besides the platform in front of Shivappa and blurted... 'Yappa... this is a delicate matter... please don't be angry... I have to make myself sure about something...'. Shivappa's face was contorted and he wiped his face from the napkin on his shoulder... Then feigning a smile, he called 'Sonappa kaka...'. Sonappa kaka came out and asked 'hum... what is the matter with Balavva...?'. Shivappa said, 'Look kaka... Balavva wants to get herself confirmed about

something...' and then turning to Balavva asked waspishly 'what is this headache Balavva... in these early hours of the morning! Divulge it...'. Balavva stretched her neck to such a length... breathing heavily she blurted, 'Shivappa... tell me... our Saidu's face resembles whose face in our village...?' Listening these words of Balavva, Shivappa and Sonappa burst into violent laughter... Ha hha hhaa... Ha hha hhaa...! Sonappa went into the shop and then a wild laughter gushed from there also... Ha hha hhaa...Ha hha hhaa...! Tell me... how many mortals should be in the shop... ? Hundreds... thousands...! Ha hha hhaa...! Ha hha hhaa...! The pains in the entrails of Balavva started multiplying... Contorting her face she spluttered trenchantly... 'Concubines... concubines...! They yap that the face of Rajama's son is like this fellow... like that fellow...! These doxies must have made merry with this or that fellow...! Adultresses... bitches...'. As Balavva was groaning why the roar of the laughter should increase two folds... three folds and so on...! It was not only the mortals in the shop who were laughing... even the cash box, the boxes of biscuits and sugar... jaggery and spices... packets of tea powder and yellow powder of turmeric... the weighing balance and cash box... all... all started bursting into laughter... one after the other... one after the other... Ha hha hhaa... Ha hha hhaa! And finally... the whole shop opening its mouth... so wide... roared the laughter like Enagi Balappa, the great artist of the theatre! *Hush*... after the laughter subsided there... where this Balavva did go...!

Balavva cooked *gonjala nucchu*¹⁴ for the lunch. Also she got some stale buttermilk from the neighboring Kalasappa's house and boiled it with turmeric powder and green chilly paste to make *majjigi amra*¹⁵... Huseni has shown up at the house in the late afternoon for the lunch... He was very much tired, entering the house he sat down and gave out a long exhale... Balavva was also sitting in utter dejection... She looked up at Huseni and remembered the shop and its roaring laughter and wide opened mouth... She wondered how the shop has not yet swallowed her son... and immediately grasping the meaning of her thought she dejectedly shuddered from fear... Huseni staring at her made out her agitation and asked 'What is the matter... are you alright...?' Balavva just nodded. Huseni with a deep sigh grumbled... 'bastards...!' Balavva immediately thought that the shop distressed her son also and became anxious... But Huseni's grumble was about the debtors... who purchased things on credit from the shop... 'you know *yavva*... they take away all the things as they are freely available on credit, whether they want them or not... And now they play blind man buff with me... when asked to pay the debts...'. Balavva once again slid back into her gloom... Huseni was in hurry... Prompting her, he said '*Hum*... hurry up... serve me my lunch quickly... I have to rush again for the collection of dues... Tomorrow is Thursday... market day in Gokavi... I have to go to Gokavi to purchase of groceries and also paints for the shop... *Yavva*... we are going to get our shop painted for *Sankranti habba*¹⁶... If sufficient amounts are not collected I will get scolding from Shivappa...'. Balavva got astonished at the enthusiasm of Huseni about the shop... and as if in trance she implored her son... 'that shop... that shop... my son... be careful about that shop... It would swallows you...'. Listening to Balavva's utterances, Huseni gathering all his breath made an attempt of a hearty laugh... and poking fun at

her, he told... `Yaa... do you think that the shop is a living human...! How can a lifeless material swallow a human like me...!' Then Balavva sighed, got up and placed a *silavar*¹⁷ plate before Huseni, served *gonjala nucchu* and poured the *majjigi amra* over it... While serving him also

14.Gonjala nucchu, coocked corn grits; 15.Majjigi amra, soup of buttermilk; 16.Sankranti habba, festival of Mkara sankranti, celebrated on 14th January.The day marks the end of winter season and the beginning of new harvesting season; 17.Silavar, aluminium.

Balavva remained as if immersed in gloom... Then sitting by his side, she watched her son slurping his lunch heartily...

The next day...

Huseni woke up much before the dawn... there was still darkness. After his usual course of coughing... he gargled and washed his face. Balavva boiled the tea... While both sat and drinking tea, Balavva told beseechingly `Yappa... I shall bake four roties of jowar... take them with you for your lunch...'. Huseni had planned in advance to eat in a hotel in Gokavi. Therefore he told vehemently, `no no... I am in a hurry... I must run to the shop immediately...' and he put on his shirt and left home for the shop. By the time Huseni reached the shop, Shivappa was already there... sitting on the platform outside the shop he was smoking beedi. When Huseni arrived he threw a beedi and match box on the road for Huseni... Huseni picked them and lighted the beedi... Shivappa told him `go to *Jogyara*¹⁸ Mutya's house... wake him up and bring him with his bullock cart quickly'. Huseni ran and within half an hour he came with Mutya's bullock cart... Huseni and Mutya together loaded bundles of gunny bags and got ready to start... Shivappa telling them to come to Hatapaki's wholesale shop in Gokavi, and he would be waiting for them there. He also told them that he would come by ten o' clock bus after his bathing pooja and breakfast. He then bade them farewell... Mutya and Huseni nodded and started to Gokavi.

The cart crossed *Vandi halla*, a small stream... At the two sides of the road there were fertile lands of black cotton soil... There were healthy robust crop of jowar and *kadale*¹⁹... The *kadale* crop was with young pods filled with juicy green seeds... Mutya told `Look Husanya... It appears the *kadali sulagayi*²⁰ are fleshy and quite mature'. Huseni's stomach was then empty and was growling... The sight of *kadali sulagayi* further whetted his hunger... Jogya temptingly told him, `Husanya... how about *kadali sulagayi*... do you fetch one or two bundles of *kadali sulagayi*...?' Huseni at once readied and got up with the intention to jump off from the running cart... Jogya told him to wait... and calling the oxen *ho... ho... stop...stop*, pacified those unruly ones, and made the cart come to halt... But before it completely halted, Husanya jumped and ran into the neighboring *kadale* field. Jogya warningly shouted `Yeh Husanya... come back quickly... It would be a problem if the owner of the field comes...'. Instead of bringing just one or two bundles of *kadali sulagayi*, Husanya brought it... clasping large mass of *kadali sulagayi* by his two stretched arms... and threw that mass into the cart. Jogya in surprise shouted... `Ya...! You fellow... you have destroyed some body's *kadali* crop completely...'. The unruly oxen pulling the

cart took the shout of Mutya for themselves and they suddenly started pulling the cart while Huseni was still boarding the cart... By such sudden pulling of the cart, Huseni lost balance and his buttock violently bumped on the rear end of the central pole of the cart and he fell down...! Let there be a curse on the logic...! Who knows why there should be a finger long sharp nail

17.Silavar, aluminum; 18.Jogyara, surname; 19.Kadale,horse gram, *Cicer arietinum* plant;
20.Kadali sulagayi, the edible mature pods of kadale

fixed at the rear end of that carriage pole of the cart! And it pierced into the anus of poor Husanya and his skin was neatly torn along his spine... about one foot long! Huseni lamented and shouted loudly...`Yavva...!` and he was laid unconscious in the middle of the road... In the sound of the ringing bells tied to the neck of the oxen and the *gudu... gudu...* sound of running wheels, Mutya looking ahead could not hear the wail of Husanya... When the cart started moving steadily Mutya thought that the oxen came under control, telling `Yeh Husanya... how much should you bring...` he turned back... and there he did not find this Husanya...! He thought that greedy Husanya must have gone again to fetch some more *kadali sulagayi*... Curiously he stretched his neck and looked behind... beyond the cart. Mutya shouted in shock... *Ha...!* There at the middle of the road, Husanya was lying as a lump bleeding profusely! The unruly oxen again took that cry of Jogyara as an inducement for themselves and started running wildly... Mutya pulled the reins... pacified continuously by uttering *ho.. ho... stop... stop*. The oxen got confused and they pulled the cart astray into a shallow trench by the side... and there they stood trying to pull away from the yoke... Mutya jumped off from the cart and untied them off the yoke,.. and pulled down the carriage pole. He tied the oxen to the wheels of the cart... and hurriedly ran towards Husanya...

Mutya sat by the side of Husanya and called him repeatedly... `Husanya... Husanya... Husanya...`. There was no response... He held Husanya's shoulder and jiggled... It appeared that the whole body got shaken... Jogyara worriedly thought... what... whether this bastard got already dead! In anxiety he pushed Husanya's shirt upwards and saw keenly... Then he heaved a sigh of relief. Husanya's ribs were making movements...! Mutya regaining his confidence slowly lifted Husanya... He was as light as a bag of cotton...! Huseni's was still bleeding! Jogyara laid Huseni in the cart and took out a good gunny bag of sugar and wrapped him within. Mutya then thought... this Husanya should have worn dhoti instead of *ijara*²¹... so that his body could be wrapped within dhoti instead of a gunny bag! Mutya kept the masses of *kadali sulagayi* in the cart at both on sides of Huseni to prevent his body from rolling, if the bullock cart moves speedily... Then he raised the carriage pole of the cart and tied the oxen to the yoke and brought the cart slowly on to the road. Mutya felt a dilemma then... what to do... whether to drive the cart towards Gokavi or towards Betageri...? He ultimately decided to drive to Gokavi. He thought assuring himself that if Shivappa objected, I would say that I rode to Gokavi for the treatment of Husanya. Then he shouted the names of the oxen and cracked the whip and made them quicken their pace speedily.

Shivappa was waiting for long at the shop of Hatapaki. He was worried for the delay of the arrival of the cart. On arriving at the venue Mutya confessedly narrated a neatly concocted story about the accident... Shivappa got confused... he grumbled - `ham...? Husanya fell from the cart...! How did that bastard fall down from the cart...? you are all disgusting people... You only

21.Ijara, pajama, trousers

exasperate me...'. He grumbled all the while. He thought if Husanya is taken to the government hospital there may arise complications and calling police and all. Therefore he told Mutya to bring Husanya to the hospital of Kalal doctor... At the hospital, Mutya and the compounder together lifted and carried Husanya into the hospital. The compounder again came out and carried away all *kadali sulagayi* from the cart... The poor entrails of Mutya lamented...

Huseni was moaning `yavva yavva...' all the while, while doctor and compounder were together stitching the laceration along the spine... They had to put not one two or three stitches... a total of thirty three stitches they had to make! For Kalal doctor it appeared as if he was stitching the mouth of a gunny bag! While Husanya was lamenting in great pain... Shivappa was shouting at him `You... son of an adulteress... why are you howling... shut your mouth' and Mutya was all the while consoling him `wait Husanya wait... it is only five minutes more... just five minutes... It is all over... all over... Just wait for five minutes...' and so on. The earlier stock of blood in Husanya's body itself was very meager... and now after the slitting of his body along the spine and an excessive bleeding... made Husanya acutely anemic so that his face appeared as if bleached and his eyes got sunk deeper into the orbits... He almost simulated a cadaver... Kalal doctor recommended that Huseni should be given injections of antibiotic daily for next fourteen days... He also enquired Shivappa, `Do you want me to prescribe some tonic for his speedy recovery?' Shivappa readily agreed and said `Ya... please prescribe... please prescribe doctor'. The doctor gave the prescription chits which Shivappa safely kept in the pocket of his under shirt... He paid the bill and told Mutya `Mutya... now drive straight to Betegeri... Take this Husanya to his house. And let us come for the purchases of groceries tomorrow...' giving these instructions he left for commission mundy.

When the cart arrived at Balavva's single roomed house, it was closed and its door was hasped. Mutya disengaged the oxen from the yoke and put down central pole of the cart. He opened the door, unfolded a mat and spread a gunny bag over it... He came out and carried Husanya from the cart and laid him on that bed. Husanya all the while was moaning... The young ones of the street crowded there. Mutya told those boys, `Ye... go and tell Balavva that Huseni has fallen from the cart and he is laid in her house... Go quickly...'. A group of boys stamping their foot on the road and started their vehicles... And screeching various tunes of horns... pim... peem... pom pom... pimpee etcetera ... running fast they drove away in search of Balavva... At that time... this Balavva was sitting in the house of *simpigyara* Sugunabai ... She was engrossed in listening to the *bala leela*²² of Sugunabai's son, Ranoji... Searching here and there... these boys sounding

their horns... pee... peem... ultimately rushed into Sugunabai's house and told Balavva excitedly... `Yamma²³... your Husanappa... and... and... your Husanappa... has fallen from the bullock cart of Jogyara Mutyappa... and... and... his ijara shirt... they are all blooded... Mutyappa brought him and... and he has laid Husanappa in your house...'. On hearing these

22. Bala leela, the miracles enacted at the time of childhood, originally by Krishna himself

words Balavva was shocked and sprang up and ran like the wind itself, towards her house... Sugunabai was standing within the threshold of the door of her house was shouting all the while... `Yeh Balavva... go slow... go slow... you should not fall... go slow... you should not fall...'. But how could it be of any avail to Balavva...!

By the time Balavva reached her house, there were people crowded inside and outside... Seeing Balavva they whispered `Ham... Balavva came' `Balavva came'... Amid such whispering crowd Balavva made her way and entered the house. Huseni was laid on a gunnu bag spread on a mat... Balavva stared at her son lying on the gunny bag... (Ha... my son's shirt is soaked with blood... Ha my son's ijara is soaked with blood...!) Shocked Balavva rushed and sat by the side of Huseni... Balavva in fact used to see every day the fresh red blood in the phlegm of her son... Hence, as if the brown colour of dried blood of Huseni's clothes did not affect Balavva much... she did not lament loudly... The wailing of Huseni `vanya... vanyaa' was heard to Balavva as calling her as `Yavva... yavva...!'. Sitting by the side of his knees she slid herself upwards and bent slightly over Huseni... and poignantly called him... `Husanappa... Husanappa...!'. Her tone was like a flame and it appeared as if flickered by her own breath... Huseni in response opened his eyes slightly... only this much...! (ha...! Look at my son's eyes... they are as red as the burning fire of coal...). Looking at Balavva Huseni paused his moaning just for a moment and then produced a lengthy... moaning cry... And... and it was as if Balavva was waiting all the while for this... and that very moment... Balavva burst into sobs and lamentation. Wailing she said `Ayyo... what happened to my son... how did you fall... you Husanappa... my son!' It appeared that Balavva was complaining about somebody... it also appeared as though consoling Huseni... At that very moment, Mutya entered Balavva's house and perceived the feeling of complaint in her wailing... As an explanation... he timidly uttered... `Look Balavva *chigavva*²⁴... he fell because of unnecessary haste... His haste only has brought this fate...'. Having told so, Mutya felt that he should not have spoken so... and overcome by an inexplicit guilt he became dumb for a while and stood with gloomy face... Then as if remembering a forgotten information suddenly, he said, `Ham... *chigavva*... I went to Shivappa's shop to collect the hire of my cart... Shivappa wants you to meet him urgently... *Chigavva* go and meet him immediately...'. Balavva did not apprise of his speech and she rose from the side of Huseni, picked the match box and went towards fireplace. `Do not forget *Chigavva*... go and meet Shivappa...' reminding her so, Mutya moved out... Seeing Balavva going towards the fireplace, the crowd moved out and a dim light of the dusk made its way into the house and slowly spread in the house... Balavva sitting before the fireplace, burst again into sobs... and with choked throat she uttered...

`Hh..ussa..nappa...!' And as if responding to this wail of Balavva, Huseni produced a long moaning... `vamyaaaa...`.

The jowar stalk discarded and thrown in the *dunghills* were put in fireplace as fuel... They began to burn in fireplace with red flames without smoke... An orange tinge was smeared by the fire to the entire inside of the house... The water in the pot kept over fireplace boiled... Balavva added a

23. *Yamma, grand mother; 24. Chigavva, aunty, mother's sister or paternal uncle's wife*

piece of jaggery and a little of tea powder... Dark decoction of tea was ready. There was very little milk in the house. She added whatever that was available... and decanted the brownish... dried blood colored tea into a cup. Taking the cup of tea kept in saucer she came to Huseni... Sitting by his side Balavva beseechingly called, `Husanappa... drink few gulps of tea *yappa*...'. Huseni opening his eyes looked at Balavva and opened his mouth only this much... this much only like the if nestling of a sparrow... Balavva hurriedly poured tea into the saucer and blew over it to cool... Then she trickled drops of tea into his mouth slowly... Contorting his mouth Huseni sipped the tea. As this trickling of tea into the mouth of Huseni was going on, there was a sudden bumping sound at the door... Balavva turned and looked... There, *Khanojar*²⁵ Kalla bumped the frame of the door and stood grumbling and he complainingly told, `What is this Balavva *chigavva*...! It is still evening... and you are sitting inside the house shutting the doors...'. This Kalla of *Khanoji* is night blind... If at all he had to move out after sun set... he would walk almost hopping to avoid stumbling... And if he bumps on anybody on the road, he would shout at them... `Why *yajamana*²⁶... have you kept your eyes in the house itself and came out?' Then he would jump his next step without listening to the answer for his comment... Now he was standing at the door of Balavva's house and grumbling. Balavva told, `Come Kallanna... I have not yet lighted the lamp *tamma*²⁷... It is dark. But door is open *tamma*... come in'. Kalla stood outside only and teasingly told, `Ye... let it be... let it be... What is the hurry in lighting the lamp... Let you light the lamp only after the sun rise...! It is only your affair...! *Ham*... whatever it may be... to you Balavva *chigavva*... Shivappa has sent a message... He told... you must urgently go to the shop and meet him...'. Telling this much he slowly turned back and stretching his legs he started to move by hopping... Engrossed in the confusion of indecision... Balavva sat dumb for a while... Huseni's wailing brought her back to the present... Huseni, held his mouth open for the next sip of tea... She hurriedly trickled the last sip into his mouth and asked... `Husanappa... do you want some more tea...?' Huseni moved his head negatively. Balavva lighted the lamp... Dull light spread in the house only multiplied the feeling of helplessness in Balavva... She sat immobile for some time by the side of Huseni caressing smoothly over his chest... Then as if predestined... she decided to go to the Shivappa's shop. `Husanappa...' she called... Huseni did not respond... He is sleepy perhaps, she thought. Then Balavva slowly came out of the house, closed the door slowly... hasped it and moved towards the shop...

The Petromax burning in the shop shed bright light in the whole shop... It was not any less than the daylight! As usual Shivappa was there by the side of the cash box, presiding over an

assembly of Sonappa *kaka* and others... about seven to eight people in the shop. Moths and beetles attracted to the light, were flying fast towards the petromax and hitting on its glass were falling down to the floor... The fallen ones were crawling. They would again try to fly to attack the petromax...! The flood of light in the shop flowed out through the door and it lay across the road as a trap like rectangular patch in front of the shop...

25. *Khanohar, surname*; 26. *Yjamana, master, elderly person*

Balavva trudged slowly into that trap of light and climbed the steps reluctantly, came up and stood at the entrance of the shop... Shivappa was weighing dates for the fasting Deshpande *rayaru*. He wrapped the dates in paper and handed over to Thippa, the emissary of Deshpande *rayaru*. He shut the box of dates and joined the incomplete discussion that was going on before... and all of them in the shop together produced peals of laughter... Balavva shrank by burst of the laughter and wriggled irritably. She tried to draw his attention and called... 'Shivappa...'. Shivappa looked at her and told complainingly... 'Look Balavva... how irresponsible is this Husanya... your son! His levity brings risks to my neck...'. On hearing this Balavva suddenly lifted her face and gazed at Shivappa... The tears in her eyes flashed like morning star... It appeared to Shivappa that Balavva's face was contorted and strange crinkles appeared on her face... Shivappa felt them as posing a sort of challenge... Suddenly his tone became mild and with a long exhale he told... 'He was taken to good doctor in Gokavi... Now get his wounds washed and bandaged on alternate days... I shall tell doctor Basu to come to your house and do it'. Now also Balavva did not speak... Shivappa gazed at Balavva for a moment and then as if decided something, he suddenly called 'Shivanya...'. Shivanya asked 'What *kaka*²⁷...?'

'In the bag inside there is wheat...bring one *soligi* of wheat...'. Shivanya went in and measured the wheat and brought it in a tin box... Shivappa then started to weigh a pound of jaggery... The jaggery on the weighing balance was a bit more... Shivappa removed that excess and threw it back into the box... He took the jaggery on the weighing balance, wrapped in a paper and kept it over the wheat in the tin box... Then Shivappa assuming a righteous stance at once told, 'Hum... Balavva... take these... Do one thing... for fifteen days give Husanya the food of wheat...'. Suddenly tears ran down on the cheeks of Balavva, and she stood immobile at the door of the shop... Shivappa now emphatically told her... 'Hum... Balavva... Take these... Customers are waiting here...'.

Balavva moved forward and picked and lifted the tin box. She slowly moved across the trap of the light of petromax on the road... Then she paced in the darkness beyond... towards her house where her dying son was laid on the bed of a gunny bag...

27. *Kaka, paternal uncle*