

Laya¹...

*Shravana*² passed and *Bhadrapada*³ set foot in... and this year also, till now, no kites of clouds flying in the courtyard of sky could be seen. And when night descended, dull stars would gleam like the winking eyes, that were blinded by cataract, of some mortals degenerating in their old age, in the clear dark blue sky... Even mornings were as hot as mid days of *Vaishakha*⁴. And the breezes brought heat and shower of fire over the tegument and the dust to fill the eyes... The people in search of clouds would all the while raise their heads to stare at the sky and their turbans or caps would definitely fall off from their heads to the ground behind... and such repeated experiences of falling of their caps and turbans, led the men to hold the turban under their left arm... And those wearing caps would hold the cap in their right hand and batter it often on their right thigh... as if to wipe off the dust from it...! The plant kingdom without the life sustaining water were all withering and the waved-leaved fig trees and neem trees could draw water skimpily from the most hopeless depths and were trying to keep their viability... The cows and buffaloes lacking green to graze and water to gulp... were gasping like dogs... And for men... to sweat itself became exorbitant...

They organized processions of donkeys⁵ in the village to call the rains... and then the gay, *Jogyara*⁶ Yalla and courtesan Paravva walked in each procession grinning widely all the while. The *pujari*⁷ of *Hanamantadevaru*⁸, Hanamantappa urged *goudaru*⁹ and told, 'please arrange to perform *okali*¹⁰... it would definitely bring rains'. *Goudaru* repudiating him told, 'Look Hanamanta... you are seeing the hardship of the people... Since three years we received not a single drop of rain...! There is severe draught and all the crops... you know... completely failed... If we fix *okali* now, the people would die of heart break in the fright of expenses for *okali*... You see Hanamanta... god should give us first... and then only he could expect from us...'. In the village there were repeated processions of the donkeys and *Jogyara* Yalla and Paravva would definitely walk along grinning widely all the while... The young boys of the village were made to play *gurchi*¹¹... they, almost naked... only with a loin cloth on, would keep a baking pan upside down on their head and at the top of the pan would keep a lump of mud and decorate it with green grass. Then they would go to each house in the village and the girls or women of each -----

1.Laya, rhythm, confluence, extinction, tempo and time, cosmic rhythm; 2.Shravana,the fifth month of Hindu calendar,a month in rainy season; 3.Bhadrapada, sixth month of Hindu calendar, and a month in rainy season;4.Vaishakha,second month of Hindu calendar, and a month in summer season; 5.Procession of donkeys is believed to bring rains; 6.Jogyara, a sirname; 7.Pujara,priest in a temple that worships the diety in the temple;8.Hanumanta devaru, monkey god; 9.Goudaru, the village chief; 10.Okali,a water sports played as worship of Hanumanta devaru, in which the youths of the village throw water collected in an artificial pond at the two

or three women of a community known as *dombaru*. And these women of *dombaru* community are considered as the concubines of *Hanumanta devaru*;11.*Guruchi*, a ritual of calling rain.

house would pour water over that lump of mud on the pan... then the boys carrying the *gurchi* would whirl around singing...

*gurchi gurchee... what places
all did you visit and returned...?
I rambled before coming here
in the oceans and valleys... '.*

Kulakarni had repeatedly performed *abhisheka*¹² for *Hanamantadevaru*... He also organized the reading of *Virata parva*¹³ of *Mahabharata*¹⁴ in the temple of *Hanamantadevaru*...

Damsels of the village would brought dry soil from the fields, pour water and squeeze it to get a lump of mud and had made idol *Gullavva* out of it... They worshipped it on all the Tuesdays of *Ashadha*¹⁵. They offered *payasa*¹⁶ as *naivedya*¹⁷... and in the evening on those days, they all would take *arati*¹⁸ to each house in the village singing...

*Chant sisters, all you chant
Basava Basava...
And say that we bow down to
The feet of Basava...*

It appeared that the tones of those damsels were all sapless and debile...

This *gullavva* went and *Shravana* entered... It also passed without bringing rains and *Ganappa*¹⁹ of *Bhadrapada* came and he too had gone... None of these brought rains with them... With the fields that were all dry, people and cattle of the village were also getting dried... If it were only so much, who knew it would have continued like this only... The people alive could have lived till they finished their mundane businesses and could have passed away thereafter...! And it was nothing special to the people of this *Gokavi* province... it was all normal for them! But this time it exceeded the limit and reached an extremity...

It all started like this... It was Tuesday. As this day was *dedicated*²⁰ to the *presiding deity* of the *village*²¹... the farmers were forbidden to yoke their oxen and to work in the fields... In fact,

12.Abhisheka, the holy bathing of Gods; 13.Virata parva, part of story of Mahabharata, in which Pandavas completed their anonymity under the shelter of king Virata;14.Mahabharata, an Indian epic narrating the story of Kaurava and Pandava clans; 15.Ashadha, the fourth month of Hindu calaendar, marks the beginning of rainy season; 16.Payasa, a sweet dish made of milk, sugar and grit of wheat etc.;17.Naivedya, food that is dedicated to the gods; 18.Arati, waving of lamps before gods or human beings in order to hail the gods or human being; 19. Ganappa, elephant faced god, worshipped on the fourth day of Badrapada; 21.Dedication of a day, to pacify the god and obtain grace a day will be declared as dedicated to the god. On that day the

oxen would not be yoked and usual daily food like jowar breads etc., is not cooked ; 21. Diety of the village, usually some female god like Laxmi, Dyamavva or Durgavva are considered as deities of village;

what work was there to yoke the oxen in those days of severe draught...? But under such conditions also the farmers would regularly visit their fields in the morning hours, wander in the fields looking at the dry dusty soil... and they would return to the homes sighing frequently... By the mid day all the people would get shut in their houses, and nobody would be found in the streets... On such a Tuesday it happened... *Makalyara*²² Bharamavva, as usual, did the cleaning of the cattle yard in the morning, took the dung of the cattle to the open yard in front of her house, and battered the lumps of dung into *dung cakes*²³... As it was the *dedicated day*, she bathed and wore washed sari, and as it was forbidden to bake the roti of jowar flour, she baked the chapatis of wheat flour... By then it was already noon... The sun was very hot and scorching... Bharamavva worried about her husband Bhimashi who didn't yet return to the house... She thought in herself about her husband... 'Ayya... what could be any important work for this man at the outside under such sun...? It is scorching and so severe... It would be enough to crack one's head...'. Grumbling so she sat waiting for her husband...

There at the outside, the sun was pouring the heat to burn the soil and stones and all...! Bharamavva waiting for her husband casually scanned ahead, outside, screwing her eyes... She felt as if it smoked there in the open yard where she laid the dung cakes... Astounded Bharamavva stared intently at the dung cakes. Yes... her dung cakes caught fire and were burning...! Dry wind swiftly swept the smoke away and the dung cakes burnt like dry litter, and were turning into ash! Bharamavva rushed hurriedly towards the dung cakes, shouting 'Ayya...!'. That area was as hot as a baking pan... Bharamavva got terribly frightened, and ran back into the house, feeling let these dung cakes go to hell...! Running back into the house, she immediately shut the door! She was convinced that this was a devil's maneuver and nothing else...

When Bhimashi came home, he saw the door of his house was shut and locked from inside... He stood by the door quietly and tried to overhear the talks or sounds from inside... A streak of doubt flashed in his mind, and he held his ear close to the door... The quiescence reigning in the house only thrashed and penetrated his ears... Bhimashi knocking the door, shouted, 'Yey... what is this at the time of mid day...? Why have you shut the doors in such broad day light...?'. Bharamavva hurriedly unlocked and opened the door... poked her head out and looked towards the dung cakes briefly... and quickly shut the door immediately, behind Bhimashi entered the house... 'Yey... what is this...? Why are you shutting the doors?' Bhimashi asked perplexed. Bharamavva whispering told the burning of the dung cakes into ash and concluded... '...it must be menace of the *wind*²⁴...! Otherwise how could these dung cakes burn on themselves automatically...!' Bhimashi told irritatingly, 'Yey... the *wind* must be in your head... Hum...! she tells this is menace of *wind*...!' telling so Bhimashi opened the doors and went to the open yard where the dung cakes were laid... Bhimashi felt a sweltering heat there, and saw that all the dung cakes were burnt to ash... He thought that some lad might have thrown the burning butt of a beedi and it might have ignited dry grass around to burn these dung cakes...

22. *Makalyar, a surname*; 23. *Dung cakes, the dung of cattle and buffaloes is battered as flat discs and dried under sun, which are used as fuel*; 24. *Wind, evil spirits*.

While thinking so, he felt irritating heat at his pate as if his hairs were burning... He wiped his hairs and he was shocked to find the charring of his hair on the pate! Bhimashi at once jumped and ran into house and poured cold water over his head... Now he clearly understood the secret of burning of the dung cakes, immensely shocked and exclaimed... 'Ayyayyappa...!' He thought... if the clothes on my body were to catch fire...! Bhimashi shuddered even in that hot weather... and resolved at once... I should not step out of the house in the noon under such burning sun...

That very evening, the resolution of Bhimashi had to be extended for the entire village... What actually happened was... Shantabayi, wife of *Kulakarni*²⁵ persuaded her husband since four days... 'Look... the sun is so bright at the outside... Get our old cushions opened and the cotton in it thrashed... The cotton in them are all clustered and turned as hard knots... let them be burnt... you see... they keep thrusting at our back here and there and ruin a comfortable sleep...! There is such a good sun now... Please call that Husanya of *pinjara*²⁶ and get the cotton in the cushions thrashed and refilled...'. Not being able to bear her bothering, *Kulakarni* called Husanya that morning only, and put him on the work of the cushions... Huseni took the cotton out of the cushions and spread in the courtyard under the sun, and was thrashing it to undo the clusters and knots... Then all of a sudden the cotton under that scorching sun, caught fire on itself, and charred! Huseni was frightened and started to howl... 'Yey yey... ayyayyo...'. *Kulakarni* came to the verandah and saw the cotton burning and getting charred! He thought that this Husanya must have let a spark fall on the cotton in his absentmindedness while smoking, and caused this burning of cotton... He shouted in anger accusing Husanya, 'You... a harlot's son... I would take you as bonded laborer to compensate this loss...'. While *Kulakarni* was still shouting at Husanya... the dry hay like hair of Husanya began to scorch...! Husanya was shocked and ran into verandah rubbing his head and shouting 'Haa... hoo... ayyayyappa...'. *Kulakarni* was horrified... and he asked in whispering tone with fright, 'Yey Husanya...! What is this...? Are there wicked activities of black magic like *bhanamati* in the village...?' Huseni still rubbing his pate told... 'Yey... where from are you bringing *bhanamati* rayaru... It is the sun...! The sun only is burning!' *Kulakarni* got astonished and exclaimed in dread... 'The sun...! Is he burning all these...?!' He then stood shocked, with his mouth open... looking at the wind that was carrying away the ash of the burnt cotton...

As soon as the sun set, Bhimashi ran to the house of *goudaru*. As he entered into the house of *goudaru*, the *halaba*²⁷ of *Kulakarni* *Kagi*²⁸ Bhima also followed him and before Bhimashi could tell any thing, Kagi Bhima told, 'Goudara... *Kulakarni* told you to come urgently to *chavadi*... He is waiting there for your arrival...'. *Goudaru* told Kagi Bhima 'Hum... go and tell him that I

25. *Kulakarni, village officebearer that keeps revenue records and maintains revenue accounts;*
26. *Pinajara, sub sect of muslim community, professional cushion workers;* 27. *Halaba, attender for gouda and kulakarni;* 28. *Kagi, actually means a crow, but here it is a nick name*

am coming'. He then took his turban from the peg and holding it under his left arm pit... put on the chappals and walked towards the *chavadi*... On the way to *chavadi*, eyeing Bhimashi, *goudaru* queried 'Hum... what is the matter with you Bhimashee...?' Bhimashi walking with *goudaru*, told, 'Goudare... a strange thing happened today in the noon...', he started to narrate the episode of burning of dung cakes in the noon... But *goudaru* was more bothered by a different pinch... look at this *Kulakarni*... sitting in *chavadi* like a *mamaledar*²⁹ himself, sends word through his *halaba* to summon me...! Would the horns at the crown of his head used to wither if he ever walked a few steps towards my house...? When such ego problem was bothering *goudaru*, Bhimashi opened his mouth to tell about the burning of the dung cakes... *Goudaru* retorted impatiently... 'Yey you, Bhimashya... don't let out your embellished *purana*... tell it in brief...'. 'Yey... what this *goudaroo* is..!' Bhimashi thought in his mind and worried about telling the story of the dung cakes in brief... He started narrating slowly, trying to convince *goudaru*, choosing his words cautiously... '...today in the after noon *goudare*... my wife did batter dung cakes... And all of a sudden they got burnt in the afternoon...'. The impatience and anger in *goudaru* increased... He irritatingly retorted, 'Yey Bheemashya... what are you telling? You say... your wife battered dung cakes in the noon and they burnt in the after noon...!' The confusion in Bhimashi's mind multiplied and he clarified... 'Yey... no no... not like that *goudare*... the ones that were battered day before yesterday... they burnt first... and... the heat of their burning ignited the ones battered today morning... and they also burned...'. *Goudaru* told ridiculing Bhimashi, 'Ababa... it appears that you incurred very big loss... and I must conduct *panchaname*³⁰ and should have recorded... that and this... *Makalyara* Bhimasheppa has suffered an irreparable and enormous loss... and his losses must be compensated by the government... writing so I should submit it to the *mamaledar*... isn't it...? Get away you foolish fellow... coming here to report the burning of dung cakes, just worth four annas...!'. Bhimashi thought in mind... yey... what is this *goudaroo*... he is not understanding what I am telling... and Bhimashi started to explore a suitable way to convey the matter to *goudaru*... But by then, they reached *chavadi* and *goudaru* climbed the platform and sat there reclining to the *lodu*, by the side of *kulakarni*...

On seeing *goudaru*, *Kulakarni* greeted him... 'Namaskara *goudare*...'. *Goudaru* staring at *kulakarni* reciprocated... and he felt that a feeling of fright smeared on the face of *kulakarni*... and it appeared that he was terribly worried... *Gouda* got enthused... Bearing a happy smile on his face, he looked at Bhimashi... Bhimashi sitting at the edge of the platform was contorting his face corresponding to the tumult in his mind... *Kulakarni* with a tone mixed with fright, whispered to *goudaru*... 'Goudara... have you come to know the matter...?' *Goudaru* got so much enthused as to clap with jubilation... Hum... A stern warning must have come from the top only... may be a notice from the collector himself... asking to explain as to why he could not collect and remit the revenues from the farmers... That is why he is so much frightend... Who would now pay him the revenue dues, in these days of hardship of severe drought...! Let me

29.Mamaledar, taluk magistrate and revenue head of a taluk; 30.Panchaname, first hand information recorded before the elders and responsible officers or people

see the fun... will see how he can collect the revenue dues from the farmers... It appears that he is in need of my support to collect dues and therefore he is mellifluously caressing me by asking... *goudara* have you come to know the matter...! Come tamma... come... I will definitely enjoy this fun... thinking so in his mind, *goudaru* asked dispassionately, 'No... I didn't hear any thing... did *mamaledar* send any message...?' *Kulakarni* said emphatically, 'No no... If anything like that were there... I would have solved them there only... This is a different issue... and it is a very serious matter... It is the matter regarding the conflagration of our whole village... about the scorching sun...!'. The moment *kulakarni* said so, *Bhimashi* sitting at the edge of the platform suddenly raised his head and told 'Hum...! yes yes... that is right...'. The sudden intrusion of *Bhimashi* in their conversation surprised both *goudaru* and *kulkarni*... Keeping off the intrusion of *Bhimashi*, *Kulakarni* told *goudaru* expressing his fright... 'then it appears... it hasn't yet come to your experience... What happened today... you see... as my wife was pestering me since four days saying... the sunshine is very fine. Now get the cushion beds in the home refilled after getting the cotton in them thrashed... So I called *Husanya* today to refill the beds... *Husanya* was thrashing the cotton spread in the courtyard under the sun... Then all of a sudden the cotton caught fire and turned into ash... I thought it was the mistake of *Husanya* and took him to task... But before me only... the dry grass like hair of *Husanya* on their own caught fire and got charred...! *Goudara*... all the inflammable things lying under this scorching sun are catching fire...! We are facing a very dangerous situation *goudara*...!' *Bhimashi* as if waited for his turn, immediately started to tell, soon after *kulakarni* finished... 'Ham... that is true... that is true... The dung cakes laid in the open yard before our house also burned and charred all of a sudden on their own...'. Telling so he felt that he could tell it in the way *goudaru* could understand, and then he felt relieved! *Goudaru* first did not believe and felt it something like a blue moon story... how could any thing under the sun catch fire...it is impossible... he thought. But the experiences of *kulakarni* and this *Bhimashya* compelled him to accept... and after accepting it he got horrified... *ayyo devara*... if it were a village there would be hundreds of things that are inflammable...! If all of them caught fire and started to burn... how could our village survive from this calamity of conflagration...! Suddenly the dark waters of fright filled his entrails!... He asked in a panicky tone... 'Kulakrnyara... what would be our fate...?' His tone came as it were from his entrails... *Kulakarni* thought that this *goudaru* was more courageous, and he could think clearly without submitting to the gloom and get some solution for the crisis... But on the otherhand *goudaru* himself was immersed in total despair... *Kulakarni* spoke advising him... 'It is not of any use to become frightened and to lose our heart... We should immediately try to find some way out for this crisis...' and reminded his responsibility... They discussed with each other and immediately got the *dangura* beaten and announced in the village... 'you people in our village... children and women... and cattle oxen and goats... none of you should come out of the houses in the noon time... none should wander in the streets in the noon... *dum dumak*...'

29.Mamaledar, taluk magistrate and revenue head of a taluk; 30.Panchaname, first hand information recorded before the elders and responsible officers or people

*Talavara*³¹ Shivarayi beating his tabor announced in all the streets of the village.

The people wondered why such *dangura* was beaten and they came to *chavadi* one by one to know what the matter was... and crowded there. Whispering to each other they created a murmur... Bhimashi broke to them, whispering only, the shocking information... Some more elders of the village came and sat on the platform with *goudaru* and *kulakarni*. When the matter was heard they also got shocked and worried... The danger of conflagration of the entire village made them think of a way out immediately... When they all started discussing to find out a way... *Ainara*³² Rudrayya swami told... 'All of you know... that we the human beings are all insignificant mortals... We can't do anything for such curse thrown upon us by the god... Now we should surrender to the feet of *Langatada swami* of *Googikolla*³³... He is a *siddha purusha*³⁴... If we succeed to bringing him to our village... I think... he will definitely protect us'. Each one sitting there was feeling that it was a crisis beyond the human abilities and efforts, and they all promptly seconded the opinion of Rudrayya. *Goudaru* and *Kulakarni* agreed and said 'All right... let it be so...'. They all decided that *goudaru*, Neelannara Mallappa, Appayya mastarru and *Navalagyara Shivaputrappa*... these four would go to *googikolla* that very night, in a bullock cart after their dinner and would bring *Langatada swami* to the village... These four quickly ate their food and started to *googikolla*.

There were two routes for *googikolla*... one was via Kolavi village, which was stony and thorny... The bullock cart could not be driven along that way... Other was, via Gokavi town... to the southwest of Gokavi... To go by bullock cart one should go along this route only... They drove the cart along the ups and downs of the road... till it could run, and when the cart could not proceed further, they disengaged the oxen and put the central pole of the cart downed... They tied the oxen to the spokes of the wheel and put some hay stalk before them as fodder... Then they collected dried dung lying there and some fire wood, and ignited to burn with flames near the cart as a protective measure... Then these four men and *Pujara Maruti* who drove the cart, left in search of *Langatada swami* in that forest of *googikolla*...

This *Langatada swami* was a legendary swami throughout Gokavi province... He had long hair that matted as a broad plait that descended down, to cover his back, upto his hips... and his beard was long enough to reach down to his navel... He wore only a loincloth for the sake of decency... and the rest of his body was all bare... an open field... Some devotees with the faith that if he walks in the streets of their village, would bring benevolence, used to persuade him to visit their villages... While he was escorted to their villages, they would wrap his naked body with a new bordered dhoti... But when *Langatada swami* returned to the valley, that dhoti

31.Talavara, attender, and also a scheduled community; 32.Ainaru or Ayyanaru, priestly sect of Lingayat community; 33.Googi kolla, means, owl's valley, 34.Siddha purusha, an emancipated sacred man, a saint

would have shed off, from his body somewhere... Living of this *Langatada swami* in *googikolla* was like the breathing of the trees in the forests... Neither a hut nor any roof to dwell in... He would stay in any cave if he liked... otherwise he would abide in the emptiness within groups of trees... Once what happened you know... the devotees of Hallur shivapur village came to *googikolla* in a bullock cart carrying axe and sickles with the intention of building a shelter for *Langatada swami*. They thought that they should cut the trees and make a roof by using that timber to make a shelter... They also wanted to establish a mutt there...headed by *Langatada swami* ... They prostrated before the *swami* and expressed their intention... 'Yappa... it is so and so... we would build a shelter here for you to stay with comfort... Please stay under that roof and head a mutt... Please stay in the mutt and bless the devotees visiting the mutt... We... your devotees in the four directions of Gokavi... would bring and pour here the wheat, jowar and all... We will keep a devotee to cook food for you... and let the devotees also get a mug of gruel or a handful of cooked grit when they come for your *darshana*... That is all our desire...!' *Langatada swami* chuckled for a while and then suddenly became silent, and sat introverted... He sat so for a long time... The devotees of Hallur Shivapu sat still and waited for his blessings to start the work... After almost an hour, *Langatada swami* came out of his introversion and saw these villagers still sitting, waiting for his words... *Langatada swami* asked with surprise... 'Yey... you fellows... are you still sitting here...!' The people of Hallur Shivapur again expressed their desire and asked... '...yappa... give your blessings to start the work'. *Langatada swami* all of a sudden asked them, 'haam... tell me what day is today...?' The people thought that *Langatada swami* was asking this question to decide the auspicious day to start the work, and felt very happy... They told excitedly... 'It is *Ayitar* yappa...'. Swami told solemnly, 'Haam... it is *Ayitara*... look... a good thing happened...! Today is market day in Mudalagi village... Isn't it...? What you should do now is... proceed directly to Mudalagi... Hoom... hurry up... let your time not wasted here... start quickly... Otherwise the crowd in the market would get scattered and the shops would be shifted... go... go quickly...'. He sent them off and then he immediately melted away into the plant kingdom in the forest... The poor fellows of Hallur Shivapura...! Though they had no business in the market of Mudalagi, they drove to Mudalagi, and from there they drove to reach their village in the midnight!

This *Langatada swami* was said to mutter the prayers sitting in the void beneath the trees... Those who saw it would say that... his quiescent muttering sometimes would become as loud as singing... At nights also he would go on with the same business... sitting before the fire... The muttering of *Langatada swami* was like music... like singing songs... The learned people would also say... that *Langatada swami* was a *nadopasaka*... worshipper of sound! Who knew what it meant...? The chant that *Langatada swami* muttered was no song at all... that means... it was not the song as sung by we, the mortals...! It was like the singing of parrots and minas... of cuckoos

and... it was like songs of such seen and unseen birds in the forest...! And... and... you should not take this song for something that has a separate entity... No... It was like a musical note subsumed... was a phrase subsumed in a long musical concert... played by the whole forest...! And it was like a stanza... like a few lines in the whole song...! This *Langatada swami* living in *googikolla* was like a fish living in a pond... swimming from end to end... turning swiftly in all the ten directions in the water, without stirring the waters and not rendering it turbid and without disturbing the stillness of the waters... And the fire he burnt in the nights... how would it be burning...? It would be burning like twinkling of stars in the sky... without disturbing the serene ambience of the nights... burning to emit only this much of light that would amalgamate with the duskiness of the nights... To tell you in a nutshell... that *Langatada swami* existed there, like the breathing of the trees... blossoming of flowers in the dawn... and like the natural murmuring rhythm of the ripples of transparent waters flowing in streams... and... and.. that was why... all the learned people of Gokavi province called this *Langatada swami* as the worshipper of *laya*...the worshipper of rhythm and cadence... Might be so... might be so...! Looking at the *Langatada swami* one would always feel that... he had been in search of rhythm and cadence in everything... the rhythm in the inherent the universe... and merging with it... He had been searching the rhythm inherent in the forest and in the trees, in the bushes and in the creepers... and in the streams and brooks... rippling there along the slopes... and in the animals... squirrels and rabbits, foxes and boars... and in the insects and the worms living there... and then in the sunrise and the sunset... and in the boom and shrinking of the moon... and... and... in the showers of rains and in the breezes of winds... It appeared as if... he were envisaging and worshipping the rhythm in all... and all!

To the devotees who visited *googikolla* for the sacred vision of *Langatada swami*, he would always utter mystical articulations... `you mortals... you should search... go on searching... They are frightened of death and remained hidden... They are wrapped within the cadence and rhythms... hidden within the *chhandas*... the meters... to hide from us...! We should search and unravel those *chhandas*...the meters of that *rita* in which they remain hidden... What would they do then...? What else can they do... they should inevitably manifest before us...'. How can the laymen, coming to *Langatada swami* to get solution for their worries like... `yappa... we lost our buffalo...', `yappa... I have lost my ox...', etc., understand such mystical discourse? But they used to correlate strange solutions from his discourses and would happily go back to their villages telling, ` *Langatada swami* blessed us with solution for our problems... he told us to search... he told that we would get the lost buffalo (or ox) if we searched...

The devotees would narrate their sufferings and wail before *Langatada swami*... then *Langatada swami* would sometimes remain nonchalant or else he would suddenly get up and walk away somewhere... If *Langatada swami* remained sitting... the devotees before him would wailingly pray... `yappa... bless us with your *vakkye*..., the sacred articulation... Give us the solution for our sufferings...'. Then swami would say, `Yey... you mortals... this *vakkye* is not a trivial one... It is like *ksheera*... If it is there, there will be no dearth of food... and do you know what stands behind

this *vakkye*...? The same *laya*... the rhythm and cadence... and the same *chhandas*...! Do you know what this cosmos is...? There are only two things in it... one is the food! And the other is... the eater...! One who gets this food would find the realization of the *nada*... the sound and tone! And listening to such mystic utterances the devotees would be very happy... and they used to take the articulation of *Langatada swami* as an order for them to arrange *dasoha*...! And soon after their returning they would tell others in their villages that *Langatada swami* ordered to arrange *dasoha*³⁵. And therefore they would arrange *binnaya*³⁶ for the *ayyanaru*...! That was why in Gokavi province, all the *ayyanaru* had enormous devotion for *Langatada swami*. Now also Rudrayya, an *ayyanaru*, gave the suggestion to invite and bring *Langatada swami* to the village... On his suggestion these five people were wandering in the forest of *googikolla* looking for that *Langatada swami*.

These five men searched every nook and corner of the forest of *googikolla* to get the holy sight of *Langatada swami*... Waving the burning torches in their hands... they peered into the caves... marched up and down along the river *Markandeya*... and searching him, they peered amid the multitude of trees, bushes and creepers... After searching and searching for hours together... Ah...! look... look there...! They found him as a shining star sitting at the slope of the hill before the fire which was also burning like a luminous star...! He was sitting in *padmasana*... Seeing him these five men became so glad that they could not contain themselves... They ran up to him in ecstasy and prostrated before him with a loud wailing, '*yappa*³⁷... you are the only saviour for us now...!'. *Langatada swami* felt astounded... look at these mortals... they have come in this deep night... Hoom...! who can understand the sway of this human mind...? Thinking so, he stared at these... *Goudaru* and Nilannavar Mallapa narrated the grave situation they had been encountering... about three arid years that never saw a single drop of rain and prevailing severe draught... and that the poor people finding no work and food had been migrating to far away places of unknown provinces... and that the cattle and calves were all starving not finding a straw of grass and were becoming weaker and weaker... and that the villagers without any alternative had been selling the cattle to the butchers... They narrating all these one after the other... then at the end, *goudaru* earnestly told... '*Yappa*... all these are one thing... the ones, that we have been encountering frequently... but now the things have reached a drastic end... we are living in the fright of conflagration... fear of getting burnt... The things lying under the sun are getting ignited on their own and burn to ash...! We are all keeping our hopes on you... you only should save us... everyone in the village is looking forward to your arrival... You must come to our village *yappa*. Be kind enough to come and save our village from this havoc...'. *Langatada swami* remained silent for a moment and then as to cause no disturbance to the serenity of the night... sighed 'hoom...', got up whispering... 'come... let us search it...' and walked ahead of them towards the bullock cart... The oxen were yoked and *Langatada swami* sat in the cart... *Goudaru* immediately took out a new, broad bordered dhoti from his bag and wrapped it over the naked body of *Langatada swami*... The bullock cart reached the village about an hour after the sunrise... Just before entering the village, on the outskirts of the village, there was a *gaddigi*³⁸ of some sacred

35.Dasoha, arranging meals for the priests and public; 36.Binnaya, inviting ayyanaru for meals;
37.Yappa, father, a respectfull way of addressing elders and sacred people; 38.Gaddigi, tomb of
a sacred person or of a saint

person, on the bank of the stream. A room was built to cover it... In addition, there was an open *mantapa*, a wallless shelter... just a roof held up by eight pillars, at the left side of the room with tomb... The area with these two structures was fenced and it was called *Adavi*³⁹ *swami* mutt... Though it was a mutt there was no pontiff there... The saints or siddhas visiting the village used to stay there for a day or two... Now also the villagers made arrangements for the stay of *Langatada swami* in this mutt... The stream by its side was all dry... But the well in the mutt campus had waters in it... Around the mutt there were *basarigida*, wave leafed ficus trees and *neem* trees... spreading thick shade underneath. All the villagers were eagerly waiting for the arrival of *Langatada swami* squatting there under the shades of the trees...

The people and elders immersed in anxiety narrated again the situation prevailing... that was already narrated in *googikolla* by *goudaru* and *Mallappa*... *Kulakrni* with an air of sophistication, folding his hands requested... 'You are really the sacred soul... Kindly emancipate us from this acid test...'. *Langatada swami* uttered the word... acid test... acid test... twice within his lips and smiled just opening his lips slightly... And then he solemnly told, 'Hoom... you are right... this is a trying test only... The test of the your *laya*... the rhythm in you...! I have to find and reestablish the *laya* that you lost in the course of your life... that one... that should be consistent with the *laya* of universal humaneness... and that should concur with the foundation of the *srushti*, the nature, as well... I have to, now sing to arouse the rhythm that is to be inculcated in your mind and body! Hoom...! but... but... look *balagolarya*⁴⁰... I find a difficulty in it...'. The people before him became alarmed and whispered in anxiety... 'what... what is that difficulty *yajja*...' 'what difficulty is that *yajja*⁴¹...?' *Langatada swami* told with a tone that was imbibed with doubt, 'Look *tamagolarya*⁴²... this rhythm I have to pray for, is not for a single individual... the meter to be reckoned is for all the people of the village... for the whole community... Tell me how could single soul like me can sing to call the meter for such large multitude...?' The people sitting before him became gloomy... *Langatada swami* himself suggested a way out... 'Hoom...! Look *balagolarya*... In *Tavaga* and in *Sogala*... there are *siddhas*, the emancipated ones... Go to them... Pray and request them to come over here... Tell them that I am already here... If they too come... our song calling this *laya* and the meter would get strengthened... But one thing is there *balagolarya*... they are *siddhas*... they live as if dissolved in the surrounding... You may find it very difficult to search them...'.

Again two bullock carts were readied by fixing the arch like canes covered by wet *gudara* to provide shade to the passengers, and drove off to *Sogala* and *Tavaga*, one to each place. The fright in the bosoms of the people was perhaps understood by the oxen also... they rushed hurriedly towards their destinations without much shouts or whips! Dense dark waters of fear were collected as fathomless pools in the bosoms of villagers... They had no mettle to stay in their own houses in the village... They thought... now this *Langatada swami* has come... he is the

39.*Adavi*, forest or a wild location; 40.*Balagolarya*, means, you children, a way of addressing affectionately; 41.*Yajja*, grand father, a way of addressing a saint and sacred people; 42.*Tamagolarya*, younger brothers, addressing affectionately

most sacred soul... the *Agni*⁴³ god can never touch this saint... we can be safe in his vicinity...! And with such conviction the villagers resolved to move to the campus of *adavi swami* mutt. *Goudaru* thought... even if I forbid, they would not heed my advice... and he had to agree to their moving to the mutt... He told them convincingly, 'Look... I don't object you moving to the mutt... but if all of you want to move there, where is the place to accommodate you...? There is only that small open shelter... If all of you want to move and settle there... you must first erect a pandal around *adavi swami* mutt'... The people agreed to it and decided to raise a pandal... After deciding so, twenty bullock carts were yoked to bring Indian beech twigs (*pongamia*) to spread as roof, and drove off to *kundaranadu*⁴⁴... Centre poles of the carts, spare yokes, spare pillars and bamboos in the houses were immediately lifted to the courtyard of the mutt... After the sunset the male folk of the village dug pits, erected pillars and tied the poles and bamboos across on the top... By midnight the carts loaded with leafy twigs of Indian beech arrived and within no time those green leafy twigs were spread over the frame made of poles and bamboos and a pandal with a green was ready... People in excitement, shouted slogans... *Hara Hara Mahadeva*... *Changa bolo Changa bolo*... and came to *Langatada swami*, prostrated and besought again... 'yappa swami... you are the only saviour...', 'you should protect us *yajja*...!' Looking at those excited mortals *Langatada swami* smiled with pity... and thought in his mind... the people have built a pandal here... they would get crowded to raise a fair here...! He wanted to tell and convince them that it would make no difference in staying here or in their houses... but out of pity, his tongue did not move to tell so... He thought for himself... I am lame with no sap to move ahead... and these mortals are blind ones... how would our chariot move...? ...contemplating so he wore a wry smile on his face...

The next day before the sunrise, the people arrived with their luggages and settled in the pandal... Each family marked their own minimum space under the pandal and set their fire place there... *Goudaru* also shifted and settled his family in the *mantapa*... *Kulakarni* did not like to live in this crowd... He decided that he would stay in his house only, and perform pooja of the god *Krishna* regularly... He also decided to perform the *abhisheka* of *maccha saligrama*⁴⁵ and *korma saligrama*⁴⁶... The vicinity of *Langatada swami* gave confidence to the people settled in the *adavi swami* mutt... They looked like the snakes that had cast off their slough... and were filled with enthusiasm... They rambled around there within the pandal as if they were participating in a grand festival...

The cart sent to Tavaga returned after two days bringing the *siddha* called Balayya... Balayya did not agree to come at all... He told repeatedly, 'you... *balagolarya*... look... the wheel that has turned can't be reversed...'. But the elders persuaded with equal grit and told that *Langatada swami* of *googikolla* had already arrived and he only sent them to invite him. Balayya was surprised and asked, 'What...! *Langatada swami* of *googikolla* has already arrived...?'

43.Agni, fire, a vedic deity; 44.Kundara nadu, a region with fertile land and adequate rains;
45.Maccha saligrama, sacred stone representing incarnation as fish of lord Vishnu; 46.Kurma
saligrama, sacred stone representing the incarnation as turtle of lord Vishnu;

And... and... if he only has sent you to me... how can I refuse...? Come... let us go... There is nothing that *Langatada swami* not aware of...'. Then he stood up and walked with the elders. On the day the cart brought Balayya swami from Tavaga, the hut with thatched roof of *Kuri*⁴⁷ Fakira caught fire... As Fakira had already shifted to the courtyard of the mutt with his nanny and its kid, no loss of life incurred... But the fear of *agni*, the fire, was reinvigorated in the hearts of the people... The leafy twigs making the roof of the pandal were also fading and were drying...

The people, with all the anxiety, waited for the arrival of the bullock cart from Sogala and were earnestly praying to lord *Someshwara*⁴⁶ of Sogala for his blessings... That very night the cart from Sogala also returned... The elders had brought with them a queer saint... When these elders searching for *siddha*, ultimately found that saint... He was in deep meditation, sitting like a statue of stone... without any sign of awareness of the exterior... The elders standing before him were immersed in a dilemma... whether and how to awake him from his deep meditation... They were surprised and shocked to see a flush of tears burst from his closed eyes and flowed down on his cheeks...! He opened his eyes and the elders standing before him immediately prostrated... They were about to start to narrate their miseries... but the *siddha* raised his hand and indicated that it was not necessary, and said... 'It is all the frolic of that *marula Shankara*...!' Saying so, he stood up and walked in haste, saying 'hoom... come... hurry up... Let us move... *Balayya* and *Langatada swami* are waiting there...'. The elders were filled with immense faith in him and they believed that he would definitely put an end to their miseries...

After the arrival of the saint from Sogala, the elders of the village met the three saints and prostrated before them... It might be just an hour before the midnight... Requesting *Langatada swami*, Kulakarni said, 'You... the sacred teachers... I hope there is no further obstacle to commence the *rite*... would you kindly commence it now...'. *Langatada swami* smiled and looking at the other two saints, said, 'Hoom...let us commence our search before the sunrise...'. *Balayya* smiled and nodded... but the saint from Sogala sat indifferently...

The next day, before sunrise, in the dull light of the dawn... the rhythmic song of those three saints caressed the bodies of sleeping mortals in the vicinity and made them wake up... And what should we call that *rite* commenced by the three saints... was it a song or chanting...?

*O! Soma*⁴⁷... *O you you*
Pour waters from heaven
The rains... and let there
Arise tides and waves around
And you be the source
Of food that is nutritious...

All the people sleeping in the courtyard of the mutt got up in haste, poured cold water drawn from the well over themselves with the clothes on their bodies... rushed with dripping wet

46. *Someshwara, the diety of Sogala, a lingam. The temple is situated by the side of a small falls;*
47. *Soma, one of the important vedic diety.*

clothes on their bodies towards the room with tomb, and sat there in the front of the room, where the three saints were invoking the humane rhythm to take over the minds and bodies of the people of the village and to end the fear of fire...

*Come come... thou the
Meandering wells, dug
By Maruttu⁴⁸ the wind God;
Come, thou the waters that
Quenched the thirst of Gotama⁴⁹.
Come, O you the eternal
Flood, and that good old
Well of Chitrabhanu⁵⁰.
Come thou the noble
Gush of waters that
Bestows gratification*

...Like the cobras swaying their hoods to the melody of snake charmer's fife... the people sat there as if charmed... kept their eyes shut and tossed their heads like waving of the hoods of the snakes...! The songs sung by the three saints in *Ushnee, Brihati, Jagati... Virata⁵¹*... meters raised ripples in the atmosphere that percolated and aroused innocence in the people... they swung their bodies, sitting only... like the waving of jowar plants in the wind... The waving of their heads was something like the rhythmic tidal activity of the oceans...! As the three saints were singing their songs continuously... parakeets, minas, cranes... and a number of other birds congregated in the trees around... It was as if a big fair of innumerable birds was arranged there! They all started to sing their own songs... 'komyy... komyy', 'kodarr... kodarr'... so on... and it appeared that the birds were accompanying the three saints in singing...!

The day passed and night arrived... there after, the night passed and the sun rose... There the crowd kept on increasing in front of the room where the saints chanted... Some of them would move stealthily to have their food while others would be sitting with folded hands... The saints didn't eat anything... they ate only the quintessence... in the air and... and... transformed it in to the meters... The waves generated by the rising and falling intonations were continuously spreading all around in the atmosphere... in all the ten directions... When the nocturnal birds went to sleep during the day, the diurnal birds would start chirping... and the people that slept at night would take bath in the early morning, arrive and sit... those who remained awake during the night would go to their places in the pandal and sleep...

After the three saints commenced the *rite*, birds had crowded in the trees around the mutt... Then the people, including *goudaru* and *kulakarni* envisaged the rays of hopes... and particularly when the long necked white herons, which were rarely seen around recently, arrived there, the people

48.*Maruttu, a vedic diety, wind god that carries clouds and causes rain; 49. A saint that created vedic mantra; 50.Chitrabhanu, a gandharva, demigod. It also means rainbow; 51.Ushnee, Brihati, Jagati, Virata, these are meters of vedic mantras*

became so optimistic that they felt very sure that it would rain shortly... As the people remained immersed in enthusiasm the days passed by... one... two... without bringing any rain...! The leafy twigs spread over as the roof were again drying... the people were again worried about the incidence of fire and they again sent ten bullock carts to bring the leafy twigs of pongamia... They sprinkled water over the drying leafy twigs... As the carts loaded with the leafy twigs arrived, they immediately spread them over at the roof.

Now three days passed... The *siddhas* who were searching the *laya* continuously, holding the torch of their songs, now stopped their *rite*... They broke their fast... ate a banana and drank a cup of milk... The *siddhas* didn't tell a single word to the people that were held in between hopes and anxiety, sitting before them... The saints again shut their eyes and submerged into deep meditation... It appeared to the people, that worries pooled over the faces of the *siddhas* also...! Their uninterrupted *rites*, search for *laya*, performed uninterrupted for three full days did not bring even a small patch of cloud in the sky... The flock of parakeets, long legged white herons and pigeons... all flew away to somewhere, and now, only crows, minas and vultures remained there... The minds of people turned as fire places... all burning with terrible fright and worries... The *rites* run by three fasting holy souls for three days... the *nada yajna*... turned out to be futile... The people started to think... 'the God has forsaken us...' and they lost all hopes and sat in great dismay... Sitting unenthusiastically gazing at the faces of the saints, they sent out long exhales... They all felt themselves meek and helpless...

Look... look there... a faint smile appeared on the face of Balayyaswami of Tavaga...! Hopes reignited in the minds of villagers... Remaining in such a mood, Balayyaswami opened his eyes, and asked immediately... 'tell me... who is that...? The one in your village that makes songs? Bring him here... After listening to his song we will tell you the next thing...'.

Gouda was astounded... who could be that lad making songs in our village...! He scratched his head to no avail... Hoom...! There may be some foolish fellow engaged in such activity... he thought. He felt... the women must be knowing about him... and thinking so, he hurriedly came there where the women gathered in the pandal, told about Balayyaswami's instructions and asked them if there was any boy that made songs...

Soon after he enquired about the boy that made songs, gossips started among the women...

'Hey Gangavva... what is that...?' Patrevva asked.

'He said... a boy that makes songs is urgently required', Gangavva replied.

'The boy that makes songs...? But why...?' Ningavva asked.

'I don't know... He says the *siddhas* urgently want such boy...', Gangavva replied.

`For the *siddhas*...?', Kamalavva asked screwing her eyes.

`Hoom... for the *siddhas* only... a boy that makes songs...', Patrevva clarified.

`My mother... tell me my elder sisters... are they not going to sacrifice the boy that makes songs...?' some skeptic young woman asked alarmingly.

`Ham...? human sacrifice...? They are going to sacrifice a boy that makes songs...! May be so! It must be so my sister...', a number of women said, as a convinced chorus...

`Ayyo... look what fate is bestowed on us! And if they don't get a boy making songs, they may go for the sacrifice of any child...!' they all concluded.

`May be so... may be so sisters...' the whole flock whispered gloomily.

And immediately... this information was spread among all the women in the pandal, like the foul smell of a fart... that they are going to sacrifice a child...! Immediately, all mothers stealthily called their children and whispered something in their ears... And within no time all the children with their running noses that were wandering in the pandal suddenly disappeared...!

After sometime *gouda* again came to the womenfolk to enquire whether they could find any such boy... No one was ready to talk to him cordially and turned their faces away from him with reluctance... Then *gouda* searched for his wife in the group of women... *Goudati* Sharadavva was terribly angry, and in her despair she went to the shelter where *gouda*'s family settled... She was sitting there with her face burning with rage... When *gouda* came to her and enquired about the boy... she suddenly exploded and began to reprimand him... `Look look... don't yield to commit such a heinous sin to save the village... You will never get rid of the impiety of committing such blasphemy even after you undertake hundreds of rebirths...'.

Gouda was astounded... He got alarmed and asked his wife, `What...? what sin am I committing...?'

`What else is that...? Aren't you searching for a boy that makes songs...? Are not you arranging for the sacrifice of such a boy...?'

Gouda thrashed with his tongue all the womenfolk including his wife... `Who... the son of a whore told you that it is for sacrificing...? Balayyaswami of Tavaga introspected... why even after so much of efforts it did not rain... And to ascertain the cause, he told to bring the boy in our village that makes songs... He told they could proceed further in the *rite* only after listening to his song... I am looking for such a boy for this... You silly womenfolk... you would create hundred and one things out of nothing...! See... how such false and hollow information of the sacrifice is spread...! Ham... Now I come to understand... that... all the children that were wandering in the pandal licking their nasal secretions, disappeared all of a sudden and are not to be seen...! Do you know... that they can't even wash their buttocks properly... and you think them to be the poets of honour...!' Then *gowdati* hurriedly ran in to the pandal and told the fact to all the women... And within no time all the children licking their nasal secretions appeared, wandering again in the pandal!

Gowda did not find a single youth in the pandal... and he went directly to the temple of goddess *Dyamavva* in the village... There, a large group of youths were engaged in playing cards... When they saw *gowda* entering the temple shouting at them, `Yey... what are you doing here...?', they

suddenly stood up hiding the cards behind their back... *Gowda* feigned anger, and enquired, 'Do you... any of you... make... construct songs...? Do you know any such boy?' The boys got confused by *gowda's* question... they all knew that songs are to be sung only... Is a song something like a building...? How can it be constructed or made...? Thinking so they blinked... *Gowda* left them there and went to the temple of god *Beerappa*... Another group of youths were playing cards there, staking money... On seeing *gowda*, they all fled away inspite of *gowda's* persuading them to stop...

While *gowda* was wandering from temple to temple in search of a boy that can make songs... there, *kulakarni* was sitting in the corner of gods in his house... His wife *Shantabayi* told him about the demand for the boy that can make songs... A flash of doubt suddenly occurred in the mind of *kulakarni* about his son *Narayana*... He felt... might this bastard of a monkey, *Narayana* be making songs...? He then suddenly called 'Nanya... yey Nanya...'... This *Narayana* studied in a college in *Belagavi* for four years and passed his B.A., and he was sitting idle in the house... *Narayana* thought that his father needed something like sacred basil or something else for his *pooja* and might have called him for that... He went to his father and asked... 'what is it that you need *appa*...?' *Kulakarni* in his irritated tone ordered... 'come here...'. *Narayana* hesitatingly went near him... Then he told *Nanya* to sit down... Frightened *Narayana* sat hesitatingly... *Kulakarni* screwing his eyes asked, 'have you ever made those... those useless ones... the songs...?' *Narayana* immediately presumed that somebody has done a back biting... and he thought... who else could it be... *Haam*... it must be the maneuver by *avva* only... But how this *avva* came to know it... *Kulakarni* thundered again... 'haven't you heard my question...?' *Kulakarni* was unhappy about *Narayana*, for his opting arts combination to do his B.A., instead of taking science combination... Frightened by the shout of his father *Narayana* inadvertently muttered... 'ham... poems...? ham... hoom...'. *Kulakarni* shouted with anger... 'poems or songs... whatever it might be... tell me... did you write such non-sensical ones...?'. *Narayana* meekly nodded in affirmation... A flush of anger swept over *kulakarni*... this bastard... had made songs like whores of that *Goa*...! It is all my badluck... *Kulakarni* thought so and ordered *Narayana* to stay in the house till he completed the *pooja*... *Narayana* felt blind folded... I kept my poetry notebook at the bottom of my suitcase... When did this *avva* check that suitcase...? And why should *appa* get annoyed if I wrote poetry... confused *Narayana* lay on the cot in his room and went on thinking... Let me not ask this to *avva* right now... I shall enquire her when *appa* is not there in the house... And here, *Kulakarni* cut short his *pooja*... finished it abruptly by ringing the bell... got up and hurriedly put on his shirt, coat and black cap... and called *Narayana*... 'Hoom... Nanya...'. *Narayana* came hurriedly... *Kulakarni* ordered him... 'hoom... take that junk... your poems or songs... whatever that waste you have written...'. *Shantabayi* came out and saw that *Kulakarni* was ready to go out... She was surprised and told... 'You have not yet eaten your breakfast... Can't you eat the breakfast and then go...?' *Kulakarni* told, 'I shall eat my breakfast after returning... There is an urgency...' and he shouted again at *Narayana*... 'Yey Nanya... aren't you yet ready... bring your hapless face quickly'. *Shantabayi* in confusion asked 'Is *Narayana* also coming with you...?' *Kulakarni* told irritatingly, 'You go to your kitchen... get on with your

business... Stop all these trivial queries...'. Shantabayi went in grumbling and Narayana came out from his room with the notebook in his hand... *Kulakarni* told 'hum... come with me...' and they hurriedly walked towards *adavi swami* mutt...

This *gowda*, after wandering in search of a boy that could make songs and not finding any... was walking hopelessly back to the mutt... He turned back and found *Kulakarni* and his son Narayana were also walking in haste towards the mutt. *Gowda* waited for them to join him, and all the three together walked towards the mutt... *Gowda* thought in his mind... look at this *kulakarni*... he had his bath and *pooja*... and eaten his breakfast... all finished comfortably...! And me...! I am wandering under the scorching sun in search of an unavailable boy that makes songs...! With such feeling of irritation *gowda* told *Kulakarni*... 'You may not be knowing... They want someone that can make songs... I am terribly tired, wandering in search of such a boy...'. *Kulakarni* told jubilantly... 'Hoom... you searched for such one, and are going back empty handed... I have hunted one and am dragging him to the mutt...'. *Gowda* looking at Narayana asked surprisingly... 'that means... you mean... our Narayanappa makes songs...!' *Kulakarni* felt insulted... He told ironically... 'Hoom... he was in Belagavi for four years you know... there in his college they have taught him making these songs only...!' *Gowda* happily told... 'yey... very good thing happened... very good thing happened... Come... Naranappa... let us go quickly...'

Here in *adavi swami* mutt each one of the saints was immersed in silence... *Gowda* and *kulakarni* came and prostrated... *Kulakarni* whispered to Narayana to prostrate before the saints... Narayana prostrated before all the three saints... The three saints looked at each other, smiled and conversed silently through their eyes...

Gowda told, 'Yappa... this is Naranappa... son of our *Kulakarni*... Our Naranappa makes songs yappa... we have brought him to your presence...'. *Kulakarni* nodded agreeing... Narayana stood with his head down cast...

Then Balayyaswami of Tavaga articulately called this boy to sing...

Come *tamma*⁵²... come and sing...

Let us know the tone in your song...

Do you know...? That tone springs from the navel of the people, of all you villagers...

And that tone rises from the axis around which the mind of your village rotates...

Come *tamma* come... come and sing...

We want to hear the confabulations in your song... because

Those confabulations bear the mind of your village, like plants bearing their

Leaves and flowers;

Those dialogues contain the aspirations of lust and luxury of all of you...

Come *bala*⁵³ come... come and sing...

We should ascertain the pulse of this village by the song you sing...

And find the rhythm and cadence that is working in you all

And that we must read the meter of introspections of your village

Come *bala* come... come and sing...
Sing to reveal your bosom by opening its doors and windows...
And come... and sing to display your bearing and gait and

52. *Tamma, younger brother, affectionate addressing of younger ones; 53. Bala, child*

All that you preyed and devoured... and how you have been abiding here...

You *bala*... come and sing... cast away that shyness...

Narayana got confused... which one is the song... the one that this saint has been chanting or the one that... that one... which I wrote and should read now before him...? He has been consistently prodding and asking me to sing... But the one that I penned down can't be sung...! When Narayana was hesitating with such doubts in mind, *Langatada swami* spoke to Narayana...

'You *bala*... why you got filled your bosom with these waters of vacillation?'

Narayana in confusion suddenly uttered... 'no sir...' and biting his tongue suddenly, corrected himself and said, 'no... no swamijee... only thing... the one I wrote is a poem... poem to read... it's not a song...and... and what I wrote is... is... ham... it can't be sung...'.

The *siddha* of Sogala laughed loudly... 'khok... khok...'.

Langatada swami just smiled and Balayya asked enquiringly...

'*Bala*... how could any thing become a poem that couldn't be sung...?'

Narayana told in the tone to explain it... 'Sir... no...no... swamijee... It is not framed as per *chhandas*, any meter... it is blank verse... it is written to be read for oneself... not for singing...'. His explanation could reveal his confusion only...

'The one you wrote, I hope... can be read loudly at least...! Can it be articulated by the tongue in your mouth or not...? In the fair of *marula Shankara* the ink that can be washed away flown on the paper that is susceptible to fire itself is considered as eternal one...! Hoom *bala*... let it be so... let it be so only...' *Siddha* of Sogala told so and gave out a long exhale...

Balayyaswami told, 'Let that... that your blank verse or whatever else... read that only *bala*... the tone of your poem itself is the song... it is your song... It reveals what we want to know... we can see and hear the things we intend... Sing if you can sing or else read it out... It makes no difference...'.

Narayana opened his notebook... selected a poem... cleared his throat... readied... and announced as if he was participating in a poets' conference... 'The title of the poem is... Tradition...' and then he began to recite...

That one which summoned you
Cooing harshly was no more
Than the tone of an old flute...!
The dry trunk with patriarchal grey
Hairs and hard stalk that could never
sprout! And the fire you ignited
in your bosom is burning the tender
Fronds that dreamed to rejoice the

Spring time. And what about this
hunger of it...? Masticating the
tender web of life rampantly! Buds,
roots, twigs and flowers that are
juicy; crushed deeply to reach the
ovules and seeds! But this appetite
leading to dyspepsia
And now, Oh! This pain intolerable
In the viscera! Doctor... O doctor...
What formula? and what pharmacy
you prescribe... The doctor grinds
the same web of life to paste, and
It could only intensify the hunger!
And look there! It is engulfing its
own tail... relishing and headway
further to swallow the brains!
And now it invokes again to sum-
mon cooin...

As Narayana was reciting his poem... what those three *siddhas* were doing...? They were, all the while, focusing their intent vision... once on his bosom and next on his temple... alternately... once there... and next here... once here and next there...

And this *gowda*...? He could not make out the head or tail of the poem, and he was nodding all the while, feigning as if he was appreciating the beauty of the poem and its rendering...

And his father... this *kulakarni*...? He was all the while putting great efforts to suppress his anger and hold it under his control... was jamming his jaws one over the other to restrain... and wrinkles of tension appeared and disappeared on his temple now and then... He recollected with great disappointment the career of Narayana... all the four years in Belagavi he must have brooded over such futilities only... of writing this junk...! Nanya returned from Belagavi with a third class B.A. degree... I consistently persuaded him to take science course... had he obliged me he could have done an engineering course or something like that... But he was determined to belittle my image before that Vamana... that greedy cobrother of mine...! Nanya never heeded my advice... And that braggart Vamana... always boasts to tease me... `Our Seenoo you see Shamaraao... he is in very high post in Kaiga⁵⁴... Do you know...? He counts his salary in terms of thousands...!' Hoom... what should I say in reply to him about this hapless fellow... this son of mine...? What all I can tell is... he eats sumptuously and sleeps uninterruptedly... Hoom...! Dwelling in Belagavi for four years he wasted time and money on such futile writings... Such tumult in the bosom of *kulakarni* grew to such an extent that, ultimately he burst out and shouted... `you fool... stop reading that nonsense of yours...!' Narayana suddenly stopped his reading, uttering the last word incompletely... He was shocked, and looked at his father immersed in fear, with his mouth wide opened...

Now... a dense humid silence occupied the space...

Siddhas were still intently staring at the bosom and the temple of Narayana as if excavating some

54. *Kaiga, a nuclear plant in Kaiga, a village*

valid things there... They were immersed in their search as if unaware of the termination of the reading of Narayana... *Gowda* in confusion sat staring at the faces of *siddhas*, *kulakarni* and Narayana one after the other... The anger in *Kulakarni* was still burning... and he shouted at Narayana... 'get lost at once from here...'.

Then *siddha* of Sogala smiled and said... 'The rhythm remains stationed at the navel... what use is there by abusing the larynx...!' He told this much and again slipped into deep meditation... and tears burst from his closed eyes and flowed down his cheeks...

Now *Langatada swami* spoke solemnly... His tone was imbued with compassion... and he was gasping and it appeared as though he carried an unbearable heavy burden on his head...

'Look... you *balagolarya*... the situation is irrevocably stuck in a log jam...!'

Godaru asked in anxiety... 'Why yappa...'.

Kulakarni got alarmed, he forgot his anger by the shock and asked... 'Why swamijee... you sacred souls...? Do you mean that it would not rain...? Are we destined for destruction?'

Siddha of Tavaga, *Balayyaswami* said... 'Look *balagolarya*... All you people have lost the harmony of the rhythm... The moonlight that must be prevailing in your bosom is wiped away and you are sitting with the fire ignited in your cranium... In this boy that sung your song... we found a twinkling light... like the luminescence of a firefly in his cranium... But the walls of his bosom are all tarred and as black as charcoal... *Aggani* is not the exterior one *balagolarya*... it is firmly seated inside... right in your bosoms only... The *chhandas*... the meter of the bosom is all burnt and charred... The mild rhythm of sober moonlight that should prevail in the bosom is burnt and... and... your bosoms are filled with chaos of darkness... When such conditions are prevailing... what use is there of our songs, chanting rhythms and *rites*...! The clump of darkness accumulated in your bosoms remained unmoved and unaffected...!'

Gowda and *Kulakarni* were pathetic and they repeatedly asked... 'tell yappa... are we not going to have rains here...?' 'Kindly reveal you holy souls... isn't it going to rain here...? Are we destined for destruction...?'

The *siddha* of Sogala now articulated... 'Look *balagolarya*... if it were to rain and if the crops were to come up... first put out the *aggani*, the fire in your bosoms... Get the rhythms and *chhandas* of your spoilt life and deportment changed and corrected... And it is not going to happen here... You mined deep and destroyed the roots of the *chhandas* in this province... It is destined to burn only... In the earth... in the wind and in the sun... and in the bosoms of all the men... *aggani* is burning bright... And if you still feel that you should stay here... do that... but you would be the food for burning fire...!'

Gowda and *kulakarni*, buried in anxiety, asked... 'What should we do next... kindly guide us...'.

Langatada swami told with compassion 'Now nothing is left to rectify here *balagolarya*... You must first find new *loam*... must build new rhythm and new gait...! If you walk towards south...

there is the barrier of Tungabhadra river... and if you walk to the north there is the big barrier of *hiriholi*, river Krishna... Therefore proceed towards the *forests*... Move to those mountainous forest ranges, where the sages resided once... there from where the rivers arise... Forests mean... life with varieties of rhythms of gait and flight... meters of rippling currents of water flowing down the slopes and... and the blossoming of flowers... It is a rich source that yields new rhythms and *chhandas* for every search of yours...'

'Migrate towards those forests... wash your bosoms there by the sweet fragrance of the flowers... walk along the streams of crystal clear waters that show you unassuming freedom in their flow that is like dancing with delight... and learn new gait from them... And learn to grow naturally without killing neighboring ones... learn to give shadow, shelter and fruits to others... grow not to be an isolated entity and become a strand in the total meter, the *prabandha dhvani*... You must learn to accommodate...! And you know... there is an additional feature in human beings... that is, growing through sufferings...! Become merged and submerged with the rhythms of the forest and explore the humane feature of growing through sufferings to build a new healthy absolute human rhythm... *Laya*...! Hoom... move now... we will also start...'

Then the three saints stood up to leave... *Gowda* told them that bullock carts would be arranged for their journeys to their places... but they rejected, 'No no... no need... look out for the arrangements for your own movements quickly...' telling so they walked away... The broad bordered dhoti wrapped on the naked body of *Langatada swami* remained there, slid from his body.

The news that it was not going to rain... that the village would be conflagrated... and that the villagers should migrate to the forests... and that they should build all the new there for their life, reached the people of the village... and they hurriedly ran to *gowda* and *kulakarni* who were sitting still before the shrine in *adavi swami* mutt, gloomily, holding their heads in their hands... The people asked them... 'and... is it true that *Langatada swami* told to migrate immediately...?' *Gowda* just nodded reluctantly... The people said, 'If so... why delay then... let us move tonight only...'. Now it almost came to the neck of *gowda*... *Kulakarni* felt it as though some one was snatching away his life...

Gowda told... 'Look... is it ever possible to leave our village... our houses, temples and mutts... Is it proper to forgo everything just for the sake of fear of fire...?'

Kulakarni told... 'Look... is it possible to move leaving the gods and the temples...? Who would perform their *pooja* if we leave the village...? They only told it without considering the consequences... They tell... move from here immediately...! And you know... they are saints... they have no roots, relatives and no responsibilities... And more over... do you think the rains fail forever...? We may get the rains in the coming year only... Let us manage somehow this one year...'. The labors in the village contemplated about *gowda*'s complaint... moving away forgoing everything...! But what is there of ours to forgo here...? The people with small holdings of land thought... the land we have can be measured by extending thumb and little finger of our hand...! It is so much only... and that too is pledged towards the debts of this *gowda*... and there, where we are going to settle, we will get a piece of virgin land to grow our crops...What is here

of ours that forbids us to move to those forests...? Thinking so the people went away disagreeing with *gowda* and *kulakarni*... And they immediately started to pack their utensils and beds...

When *gowda* and *kulakarni* were taking rest lying on the cots in their houses, news reached them that the people were packing their beds and utensils and readying to move, leaving the village for an unknown forest... *Gowda* ran in hurry to the house of *Kulakarni*... They immediately sent words to *Talavara* Shivarayi and told him to beat *dangura* and announce in the village that nobody should leave the village... Shivarayi thought in his mind... that this would be my last service to this village... I shall be leaving the village for the forest tonight only... and he went to all the streets in the village to make announcement with *dangura*... He bashed his tabor and announced... 'listen to these orders of *gowda* and *kulakarni*... listen to these orders of *gowda* and *kulakarni*... It is decided by *Gowdaru* and *Kulakarni*... that no one should leave the village...'. *Gowda* and *Kulakarni* called *halabas* and told them their decision... But they frankly denied and told, 'No *gowdara*... all in my family have decided to move as advised by *Langatada swmi* of *googikolla*...'. *Gowda* and *Kulakarni* felt as if they lost their lives... How to perform their *gowdiki* or *kulakarniki* jobs if these *talavars* and *halabas* leave the village... Then *gowda* and *kulakarni* enquired their wives about leaving the village... They were already packing the things and were eager to move...! Then these *gowda* and *kulakarni* were compelled to move...

All the bullock carts in the village were brought and parked in the streets of the village... The people packed jowar and other food grains, vessels and utensils and loaded in the carts... They loaded millstones... The carts were filled with these goods only... There was no place for the cot and cushion of *gowda*... *Gowda* grieved deeply... There was no space to hold the *gowda*'s boxes as well... The people teased and told... what work or grandeur for this glittering gold in the greens of the woodlands... The village records of *Kulakarni* were thrown away... His writing desk, his ink pot and pen and all were left at their place only... *Kulakarni* requested... 'let all those things be thrown aside...but allow me to take this box of deities at least...'. The people denied and told him in earnest... 'everything there is to be built anew...'. *Kulakarni* looked up towards the sky and folded his hands...

After loading all the grains, pots, vessels, utensils, beds and millstones... the carts were yoked in the evening... Lanterns were fastened to the centre poles of each cart... As darkness descended the lights of the lanterns shone like the row of luminescence of fire flies... Women and children sat in the carts and all the men of the village including *gowda* and *kulakarni* walked along with the carts... The row of carts moving towards the forest appeared like a procession of marriage festival... *Gowda* and *Kulakarni* were still grieving in their minds... But the bosoms of all others were filled by jubilation...

The women sitting in the carts were exhilarant and exclaimed... 'Auv... auv...! Look... what a vast sky it is...!'

And the children looking at the sky and stars started to chant a rhyme...

No one is able to fold my mother's sari and
No one can count silver coins of my father...

And the women were rejoicing seeing the sky with innumerable stars scattered across, and they were telling among themselves...

`look... look... yey *yakka*... so much of these stars...!

Aren't they like the pearls scattered across vast sky...?'

And the children then started to sing looking at the moon...

`*Chandoo mama* come along...'

and

Chandappa Chandappa cherries there...

And look... bowl full of berries here...

and so on...

In the crowded procession of those people that was advancing in search of new light and rhythm, all of a sudden, a song sprang...! Someone was singing line by line in lead... and the rest were following him in chorus... Was that leading tone only of a single person or it included many...? Who knew...! *Kulakarni* suddenly remembered his son Nanya... and he called him loudly... `Nanyaa... Nanyaaa...'. But in the sound of the song, no one could hear his call... And moreover... now Narayana was merged with each one in the crowd... That song distributed joyous mood to all in the crowd... And that song was, as if composed by the entire community there... It was in accordance with the rhythm of their tread... It was like...

The vigor in ourselves
Is like wandering clouds
Emerging from the turn-
oil of the boiling oceans...

The vigor in ourselves
Is like the waves in the
Streams dancing down
Along the slopes of hills...

The vigor in ourselves
Is like the moonlight of
December arousing the
Passion in maidens' heart...

The vigor in ourselves
Is like springs of water
That run and halt but
Never comes to stagnate...

Like this... they made the song of finding their own vigor... of learning the new gait casting off the old one... of sprouting and blossoming of the trees and creepers... of building the new one...

They included all these in their song and went on singing throughout the night... And at the end of that night...

Ahaha...!

Look there!

The enticing sun was making his appearance in the east...!

All the people exclaimed... 'Ohoho...!' 'Auv... Auv...' 'Avvayya...' 'Look look... what an enticing sun arising...!' and rejoiced.

Ohoho...! and look here... look at these *gowda* and *kulakarnee*...

They were awed... staring at the rising sun, with their mouths opened so wide...! And they were so delighted and relishing the rich bloom at the eastern edge of the sky...!

Now they were unaware of their exterior, and they were immersed in the thought...

'Can there be... can there be... any other riches that could be greater than this sight of rising sun here...!'