

.HARUM-SCARUM LASS, WHERE YOU HID YOUR MIDDY BLOUSE**

Basoo came running and sat by the side of Shivabasavva, his mother. Shivabasavva, sitting on the floor, on her feet, with knees bent upwards, was drawing milk by squeezing the teats of the buffalo... As she was stretching her right and left hands alternately to squeeze the teats of the buffalo, her blouse slid upwards, exposing half of her breasts, uncovered... Now, while she was milking with her right hand, and Basoo, sitting at her right, pulled up her blouse to release her right breast completely, and pushed his head to suckle! Shivabasavva felt a sudden tickle, and she pushed Basoo by her elbow, scolding him, 'Hey... what foolish boy this is...!' Basoo falling away at some distance, started to howl at once... The buffalo engrossed in ruminating and milking, was disturbed by the sudden howl of Basoo. It grunted in alarm, and jumped and kicked by jerking its hind foot. It moved and stood away from Shivabasavva... Shivabasava tried to pacify the buffalo, calling it 'Hov... hov hov...', and slowly caressing, she touched its udder and took the teat to milk. But, the buffalo withdrew the milk from that teat, and it kicked back... This was the teat from which she didn't draw the milk when Basoo caused such disruption... The buffalo gave birth to a calf, a buffalo bull, a few months ago... Shivabasavva would drain all the milk from the udder of the buffalo not leaving a single drop of milk for that young buffalo bull... Half a pot of milk was yet to be drained by her... but meanwhile, this Basya played mischief causing the loss... This loss of half a pot of milk made Shivabasavva very angry... Grumbling against the buffalo and her son, she stood up, took the milk pot and covered it by her seragu, then looked at howling Basoo lying on the floor. With disgust, she kicked Basoo by her left foot... Basoo's howl became more intense... She left the cattle yard, climbed up the platform and went into the kitchen.

This Basoo was a boy of five years... He was still feeding on the breast of his mother. Shivabasavva, with the intention of discontinuing his breast feeding, a year back, brought bitter neem leaves and was grinding them on a stone of the platform... Sonappa, her husband, looked at her intently... He was puzzled... if ever she was to grind green chilly, she should have done it in the kitchen, on the grinding stone there... He asked Shivabasavva...

'What is that...? What are you grinding here...?'

'Bitter neem leaves...'

'Bitter neem leaves...? Why are you grinding bitter neem leaves...?'

'This rascal Basya... he is already a grown up child of four... But he still persisting to feed on my

** *In Kannada language there is a limerick, which can be translated as follows:*

*Harum-scarum lass, where did you hide your blouse?
I hid my blouse in the thatched roof to protect it from rats*

breasts... To discontinue his breast feeding, I am applying the paste of bitter neem leaves to the nipples of my breast...’.

‘What...! Want to discontinue his breast feeding and applying paste of bitter neem paste to the nipples... ? Do you intend to starve that boy...?’

‘Why should he starve...? He will eat boiled grit of the corn till he can eat roti... He can eat roti when he gets all his teeth by another six months...’, Shivabasavva explained him all convincingly, but Sonappa shouted at her with anger, ‘Shouldn’t you have a little foresight...?’

Shivabasavva was surprised by the anger of her husband. ‘Why...?’ she asked in confusion.

‘You are asking me... ‘why’...! If he feeds on your breast, there will be only two mouths and stomachs to feed... me and you. And dry roti and cilly paste are quite enough for us... Look... if you discontinue the breast feeding of this boy, there will be three mouths to feed... and for this kid, you have to boil the grit of corn separately... And to soak that boiled corn grit, you would need some buttermilk... isn’t it? Where from do you get that buttermilk...? Keeping a buffalo of your own, you can’t ask for buttermilk from others... Then for buttermilk you should keep some milk, cutting from that, you are selling to the hotel ... isn’t it...?’ Shivabasavva realized her blunder at once! She said repenting, ‘Ayyo yavva...! God is great...! It went alright as you chanced to be in the house at this moment... Other wise... I would have applied this bitter paste on my breast...! I didn’t think of all these consequences...’. Then Shivabasavva immediately collected that green paste she ground in a bowl, and poured it out, on the road... A crow chanced to look at this bright green paste... Thinking that it must be some tasty food, it immediately called its kin by crowing... ‘kraw... kraw...’. A flock of crows gathered within a few minutes... They, looking left and right, hopped in joy towards the paste, pecked and tasted it...! They felt highly disappointed by its taste, and they flew away cursing Shivabasavva, crowing harshly, ‘crow... crow...!’.

This is how the heavenly happiness of the breast feeding of Basoo continued uninterrupted, till this episode of kicking him in the cattle yard, this day... He was already five years old... The secretion of milk in her breast was also very very meager, or it was almost nil... Basoo would suckle those dry breasts only, and swallow the saliva secreted in his mouth, thinking itself as the milk! Basoo was as lean as a stick insect... and his hunger was satiated only at his mental status, but it ever remained in his stomach as an conflagrating fact...! And he would be always humming the notes of cries due to the hunger...

Sonappa, was addressed by majority of villagers as Sonappakaka only, because, Yallappa of the grocery shop, Sonappa's nephew, called him so... Sonappakaka would be always calculating his monetary earnings, in his mind... so much by selling the milk... so much from the cattle dung... and how much from the crops...? As he kept on calculating in his mind, his fingers, would be folded and unfolded automatically... As he was ever engrossed in these calculations, the humming notes of the cry of Basoo would never bother him... Now also, the howling of Basoo, lying before him, just at arms distance, in the cattle yard, didn't reach him... He was sitting at the edge of the platform and winding fibers into a rope... Basoo cried looking at his mother till she was visible, before going into the kitchen... Then he continued his wail looking at his father... But Sonappakaka didn't heed to his cry... Then, Basoo rose up, climbed up the platform, and came to Sonappa... Leaning on the back of Sonappa, he continued his humming cry... Now Sonappakaka came out of his mental calculations, stopped the winding of the rope, kept the rope and fibers at his left and uttered... 'why...? what happened...?' In his utterance, disgust, anger and affection were all merged... all equally... Basoo clung to the thread of affection firmly, and told, 'hoom hoom hoom... yavva...' intermixing his humming cry. Sonappa looking towards the kitchen door shouted, 'Why...? What did you do to this Basya...?'

Sivabasavva answered from within, 'What should I do to him...?'

'But... he is crying...'.

'Hoom... he must be crying... What else should he do...! He brought us a loss of half a pot of milk...' telling so, Shivabasavva came out.

The word 'loss' frightened Sonappa... He exclaimed in alarm, 'Ham... What...! He caused loss of half a pot of milk...!'

'Hoom... We could not get half a pot of milk because of him...', she said, and narrated the whole episode cursing both the buffalo and her son. Sonappa pulled Basoo from behind and looked at him angrily... All of a sudden, he saw the teeth in the crying, open mouth of Basoo... He at once came to the decision and ordered Shivabasavva... 'First stop breast feeding this Basya from today only... He has got his teeth now... Let him eat roti and chilly paste like us...'.

'I too wanted to tell you this... While suckling he bites my breasts often... look here... they turned greenish due to clotting of the blood...' saying so, she pulled her blouse up, and had shown her breasts, lifting one after the other, and showing the green patches on them... Sonappa disinterestedly uttered 'Haam ham...' and picked the rope and fibers from the side, and again continued with his work. Shivabasavva requested, 'Then... please bring a few raches of bitter neem leaves yourself... I have a lot of work... I have yet to go to the hotel to give the milk...', and as she was telling this, she felt that a cat entered the kitchen... She hurriedly ran into the kitchen shouting 'husha... husha...'. Sonappa shouted at her, 'what... did you allow the cat to drink the milk...'.

`No... if I delayed just by a moment... the cat would have drunk the milk... I saw it only as it entered into the house', and she again reminding him said, `don't forget to bring bitter neem leaves...'. Sonappa continued his winding of the rope... But he had no peace of mind... He looked at Basoo with anger, and kept off the rope and fibers aside. He rose up and went out to fetch bitter neem leaves... Basoo sat still before the ring of rope, crying loudly sometimes and keeping silent sometimes...

After applying the paste of bitter neem leaves to her breasts, Basoo left the breast feeding... But his adjusting to the eating of rotis and cooked vegetables or chilly paste was not that easy... He didn't eat anything for two days... Shivabasavva was any how his mother... She felt burning of her own viscera to see her son starving... The next day, she took out two spoons of milk and added ten spoons of water to it, and used it to soak the boiled grit of the corn, and tried to feed him... She pleaded with her son, who turned his head away, denying to eat, and told pacifying him, `Look yappa... you are grown up now... And don't you want to go to school...? In the school they give you upama and milk... And you tell me yappa... do ever the school going grown up boys feed on the breasts of their mothers...? Come bala... Hoom... eat this... only two lumps... Look... it is very tasty...', consoling so persistently, she succeeded to put a lump of the boiled corn grit soaked in the milk... Basoo's tongue suddenly submerged in an unknown bliss...! Ah...! The sweetness of the corn grit merged with the salty sweetness of the milk brought him a taste, that he never relished so far... He started to eat joyfully... He eagerly waited for Shivabasavva to put the next lump into his mouth, holding his mouth open... Then he pulled the plate from the hand of Shivabasavva, took it in his hands, and began to eat himself... After this blissful taste of the boiled corn grit soaked in milk, Basoo had to face the devastating arrival of roti and the burning chilly paste... Basoo demanded only the boiled corn grit soaked in milk... But under any circumstance, Shivabasavva didn't want to reduce, even by a few spoons, the quantity of milk sold to the hotel... She tried to convince her son by sweet words... When they failed, she even threatened him... And when that also failed, what she did was, she applied little oil and salt to a hot roti of jowar and crushed it and gave such crushed roti to Basoo... Via all such phases, Basoo ultimately reached to the stage of eating roti with chilly paste or with boiled vegetables...

About one and half months after Basoo reached this stage of eating roti, features of pregnancy and associated ailments appeared in Shivabasavva... She started to vomit soon after getting out of bed in the morning... `vamyak... vamyak...!'. She felt fully exhausted... Sonappakaka started to clean the cattle yard himself, removing the dung. He brought water from the well as well... Bringing the fodder for the buffalo was already his work... But milking the buffalo could be done only by Shivabasavva... The buffalo, perhaps a gender sensitive one, would allow only Shivabasavva to touch its udder and to milk... And supplying the milk to the hotel was also her privilege... Sonappa was very happy and proud of the miserly management of the household by Shivabasavva... It would be normal to sell all the milk under normal condition in the house... But now, when Shivabasavva was pregnant and suffering from morning sickness severely... vomiting all the food she ate and no food was assimilated... even under such abnormal health conditions of

her, she would not keep even half a bowl of milk to prepare at least a cup of tea for herself... She sold all the milk to the hotel... Sonappa himself told her once or twice... 'Look... you are not appropriating the food you are eating... Keep a cup of milk for yourself... You can boil a cup of tea whenever you feel to have... After this morning sickness, when you start relishing the food, you can sell all the milk as usual...'. But Shivabasavva never took his words seriously, and said, 'no... why to incur unnecessary loss...'.

People knowing Sonappa and Shivabasavva, used to say, they were made for each other... They were both stingy ones... Sonappa would wear only a dhoti... rest of his body would always be naked... Whether it was cold or raining, he would not worry, and irrespective of the seasons, he would wear only a dhoti... Seeing his attire, the school going boys were calling him, 'Gandhi mahatma'... and 'Gandhi mutya...!' Poor boys... all half naked men were Gandhi for them...! Sonappa remaining so, half naked always, had a sky blue colored shirt with full sleeves, and a golden yellow colored silk turban... Infact, the turban was gifted to him by his father in law, at the time of his marriage... Whenever Sonappa wore the shirt, and the turban on his head, the people would understand that, he was on a tour to attend some marriage or some funeral... In the rest of the times, the shirt and turban would be kept in a bag, folded properly... Sonappa would keep naphthalene balls in the bag, so that the clothes wouldn't be damaged by beetles or cockroaches. He would regularly borrow the naphthalene balls from Yallappa of kirani shop, his nephew. His blue colored shirt and golden yellow coloured silk turban were preserved carefully for years together... Sonappa would often check, whether the naphthalene balls were still there in the bag or they were evaporated away... If they were evaporated, he would again ask for them from Yallappa... Some times, when Yallappa would be leisurely and in jovial moods, he would teasingly remind him, 'Haam... Sonappakaka... did you check your shirt and turban for the presence of naphthalene balls or not...? If there are none, the beetles and cockroaches may get into the bag and eat your shirt and turban... Then you may have to go for a new shirt to be stitched...'. Then, though Sonappakaka was sure of the presence of naphthalene balls with his shirt and turban, would say, 'Haam...! I almost forgot it... You have done good thing by reminding me... Are there naphthalene balls with you tamma... Please give some five to six here to me...'. Yallappa giving the naphthalene balls would say, 'Look... how foolish I am... By reminding Sonappakaka, I have to forgo these naphthalene balls...', and laugh loudly. Sometimes, Sonappakaka would ask, 'Tamma... aren't there these naphthalene balls that never melt away...?' Then all the people sitting in the shop would laugh heartily, and Yallappa would teasingly tell him, 'Kaka... why should you worry for such naphthalene balls... You are not purchasing them any how...', and the laughter in the shop would prolong for some more time...

Whenever women laborers would come together for weeding the crops, or for sowing the seeds or some such works in the fields, they would all discuss about Sonappakaka and Shivabasavva... Someone would start saying,

`Yakka... that Sonappa *mava*, maternal uncle, remains half naked throughout day and wanders everywhere in the village... And I think... that Shivabassi, his wife, must be wearing sari and blouse only because women can't stay like that, half naked...!'

Some other would immediately retort to this, `Ayya... have you gone and seen her in her house...? She might be wandering naked in the house keeping off her blouse and sari... Who knows it?' Some other would add another new thing and this discussion would prolong and would somehow include the story of Vimali also... This Vimali... went to the school up to fourth standard... While the discussion of Sonappa and Shivabasavva would be going on, this Vimali would utter her experience, `Ayya yavva... I don't know whether that Shivabasavva wears petticoat under her sari or not... For me... I tell you yakka... If I wear only sari, without petticoat under it, I feel as if I am naked... and feel as if I have no clothes on my body...'. Then all the women folk there, would start attacking that Vimali...

Someone would comment, `Yey Vimali... keep your vanity for yourself... Don't try to show it before us...'. Someone else would join immediately, `Leave such pride of yours Vimalee... Why should you wear such thin transparent sari...? If you wear such saris without petticoat, it would be as good as being naked only...'.

Another woman would tell her advising, `Look Vimalee... Now you began to come for these farm works... After two-three months of such works here, your thin nylon saris would be worn out miserably... Look at these thick cotton saris of ours... No need of petticoats at all... and they are durable also...'. And another woman would shoot another comment at Vimali, `Yey Vimalee... you should only celebrate these saris of your's...! Are they saris or thin transparent layers of plastic...? Even though you cover your breasts by the seragu of your sari, they are all visible... I don't know how you do not feel shy of such exposure of your breasts...!'

It would go on this way only... would start with this Sonappa and Shivabasavva and pass over to somebody else, or start with somebody else and reach ultimately to Sonappa and Shivabasavva... These villages are so only... the matters of somebody are always entangled with so many others... Let it be...

And of this Sonappa and Shivabasavva, if the Sonappa would plan to save ten paisa, Shivabasavva would try to plan to save at least fifteen paisa... Now she thought her unhealthy conditions also, as beneficial for the household... She thought calculating, that, if I couldn't eat my usual appetite of five to six rotis per day, it would save us daily half a seer of jowar...! For one week it would be about four seers... A good bargain... she thought! She would drain the milk from the buffalo, go to the hotel, would give the milk to them, and would come back and sleep tightly for the whole day... She became so weak that she felt exhausted even by walking a few steps... Under such conditions also, she used to manage somehow, to make roti and cook some vegetables for her husband and son... Once, she thought to send word to her brother in Kurubet village, to send his daughter for a few days, to look after her household due to her weakness...

But she immediately negated that thought, thinking why to incur extra expenses to feed one more mouth... and decided not to invite such headache... In such of her sufferings, this Basya used to trouble her... As he was habituated for breast feeding for a long time, and now for the sake of forbidding the breast feeding, he felt an incessant discomfort, and he continuously bothered Shivabasavva, persuading her always, to give something to eat, or to give rotis, again and again. Shivabasavva thought it would be better if Basya was admitted to the school... She suggested it to Sonappa, saying, 'Look... this Basya should be admitted to the school... If he stays in the house, he pesters me continuously... He will be always looking towards the basket of rotis, and asks for rotis again and again...'. This convinced Sonappa at once, that Basoo should be immediately admitted to the school... Very next day he took up that work.

Basoo cried wailing, 'Ayyo yavva... I don't want to go to school... I don't want...', and resisted. Sonappa, scolding him, said, 'You bastard... sitting in the house you are eating rotis frequently... all the day... you should go to school...', and he dragged him like a kid, all the way to the school. Sonappa as usual, was in his usual attire, half naked... The students playing in the ground saw Sonappa and began to shout... 'Gandhi mutya...' Gandhi mutya...'. Sunadholi teacher, the head master of the school, was teaching fourth standard students a song, 'That Ranga failed in school, who indulged in drinking tea, and smoking beedies...'. Hearing the din in the ground, he was angry and came out shouting, 'who are they...'. But by the time he came out of the class room, Sonappakaka came and stood before him... Then Sunadholi teacher understood the reason for the shouting of the students. His anger subsided and he smiled... But he quickly withdrew the smile on his face, and shouted at the boys, 'Hey... it would be all right if you play properly without making noise... otherwise I would thrash you, making you sit in the class room', and all the students in the ground immediately kept quiet... Basoo whose arm was in the firm grip of Sonappa's hand, saw the roar of the head master, and he immediately stopped his crying, and sobbed only now and then... When the Sunadholi teacher went back into the class room, Sonappakaka followed him, dragging along Basoo...

Sunadholi teacher objected to Sonappa, 'Yey... what is this Sonappa... while coming to the school atleast you should put on your shirt and come properly...'. Sonappa retorted bluntly, 'Yey... you are telling something new master... Is your school stationed beyond our village...? Is it in Gokavi town...? And this weather you know... is so warm... it is almost boiling...! You would advise me to get blisters on my body by putting on the shirt...!'

'Ohoho... I know all the details of the blisters on your body... Where from do you bring the boiling heat in this chilly weather of December...? You put on shirt and turban when you go for funerals... Shouldn't you put on shirt at least, while coming to the school...? Is coming to the schools is of lesser privileged than going for the funerals?', Sunadholi teacher scolded. Then understanding the futility of telling these things to Sonappa, he told him, 'Hoom... it is all waste to tell these things to you... Nobody can mend you... Hoom... tell me now. What brought you to the school?'

Sonappa poohed and told, 'Hey... what work could be there for me in your school... I came to help your work only... Take this Basya into your school... He has become a menace in the house...'. Sunadholi master said, 'No... it can't be done this way... In January or February, our teachers come for the survey, to find out children of eligible age to be admitted to the school... Then register the name of your son with them... Then in the month of June we will admit your son to the school... Thereafter he can come to the school...'. He said so and looked at Basoo. The boy was very weak and didn't appear to be even of five years age... Sunadholi master told again, 'and more over, this boy doesn't appear to be even five years old...'.

Sonappa challenged him, 'What you said...? He doesn't appear to be five years old...? Do one thing master... now itself... at this very moment... get this Basya a basket full of rotis... If he couldn't devour atleast six to eight rotis at this very moment, then you can tell me, he is not five years old...', saying so Sonappa produced a virtual date of birth certificate of Basoo! Sunadholi master said, 'Whatever it may be... as I have told you, send your son in the month of June... Now it is not possible to take him to the school'. But Sonappa could not be convinced and sent back, because, he deeply understood that, keeping Basya in the house was an affair of persistent loss! He came to the school with the determination to leave his son in the school by hook or by crook! Now he started to drill Sunadholi master... he tried to influence by naming Yallappa... convinced the constraints in the house by telling the health conditions of his wife Shivabasavva... And ultimately, he compelled Sunadholi master to accept, and he inevitably told, 'Hey... you the great man... please leave your son here, in the school, and go...'.

Then Sonappa pulled Basya by his arm before Sunadholi master with robust mustaches, and asked the master to hold his arm for a while... Sunadholi master was confused and hesitantly held the left arm of Basoo firmly. As he submitted his son to the charge of the head master, he warned his son, 'look... if you run away from the school and come back to home... mind it... I will skin you', and then addressing Sunadholi master, as if a warning, he said, 'Master... now it is your responsibility to keep him in the school... don't allow him to go back to the house till your school closes everyday...', and then said, 'Hoom... I shall take leave of you...', and walked back. Some school boy, trying to shout as 'Gandhi mutya...', looked at Sunadholi master, and became silent just mumbling Gandhee... Now, Sunadholi master asked Basya, 'Hey... what is your name...?' Basya's left arm was still in the firm grip of the teacher... Sunadholi teacher was fully clothed... white dhoti, full sleeved white shirt and white turban on the head... He had white and black mixed stout mustaches... Seeing such fully cladded robust man, Basoo shivered with fear... He didn't utter a single word. Sunadholi master waited for his answer... and then he looked up and said, 'look there...'. Basya, frightened, looked up. 'Look there... do you find those hooks in the roof...? If ever you run away from the school to the house, I would keep you hanging from those hooks... be ware of it...'. When Sunadholi master threatened him, frightened Basya involuntarily urinated...! Sunadholi master scolded, 'Thoo... you bastard...!' and called a boy telling, 'yey... take this boy and make him sit in first standard class room... Tell Rayanna teacher that I have sent this boy... and also, tell Rayanna teacher that he should not be allowed to go to his house...',

and sent Basya with him. He called another boy and told him to mop the urine of Basya with some rag...

Could all the sufferings be over just by sending Basya to the school...? Umhoom...! As the pregnancy progressed, Shivabasavva became more and more worn out... she looked like a skeleton just clad by loose skin, without much flesh... The food she ate, was very little and that too not digested and assimilated... She became terribly anaemic and her eyes were have lost their luster and were dull... Her skin assumed yellowish white complexion, like the one, suffering from jaundice... Black circles surrounded her eyes, and on the cheeks also, there were dark patches... The cheeks were all shrunk, wrinkled, and her facial bones appeared prominent, and protruded. Her arms and legs were weak, and they were as thin as blowpipes...! But her stomach was morbidly swollen... When she became so weak and had no stamina even to milk the buffalo, both Shivabasavva and Sonappakaka were frightened... When Shivabasavva went to the outskirts of the village to empty her bowels, the women folk that came there for the same purpose, were all frightened to see such worn out condition of Shivabasavva... Then the old woman, Lakkavva of Koni, said, 'Hey Shivee... what is this pitiable condition of you...? What happened to you...? First get checked by a good doctor...'. Other women pitying Shivabasavva, enquired, 'Hey yakka... You are terribly worn out...' 'How many months of your pregnancy...?' 'How about your appetite...?' 'Are you relishing your food? Do you feel hungry...?' and so on... If the pity showered by the fellow beings could cure anybody's disease, then there could have been no man suffering from any diseases on the earth... Food, sleep and medicines all together only can cure a man from any disease...

Sonappa seeing the condition of Shivabasavva, worried and said, 'Let us go to a doctor'. And a government doctor from Kulagod regularly visited once every week, on every Wednesday... They waited for Wednesday and went to him in chavadi, the village office... Pulling the lower eye lids, pressing the finger tips of Shivabasavva, the doctor made several observations, and checked her health condition... Then staring at Sonappa with anger, the doctor asked, 'Tell me you gentleman... Is this woman related to you...?'

'Ham... she is my wife...'.

'Gentleman... are you weary about your wife...?' Sonappa took it as a joke, and he laughed heartily exclaiming 'Yey...!'

The doctor said sarcastically, 'Hey... you gentleman... are you laughing...!? Understand... I am not joking... I am telling you seriously... Are you intending to kill your wife...?'

Sonappa now understood the seriousness in the doctor's words and he became frightened and again exclaimed solemnly, 'Haa...!' and drooped his head down...

`Does she take any food...?'

`What sir...?'

`Food... meals...! Does she take any food or she is kept on starving only...?'

`No... she eats her lunch and dinner... but doctor... she vomits all that she eats...'

`Hoom... Her body is not getting nutrients... she is severely anaemic... Iorn should be given... But it can't be given all of a sudden now in such condition of her... She is very weak... Now we must give her glucose... Once she gains some energy, then I will give her tablets... I prescribe few tonics. Give them regularly... twice daily, once after breakfast and again after dinner in the night... And she must take milk daily... Have you kept any buffalo in your house...?'

`Haam...? Buffalo...? Haam... yes... we kept one sir... It gives two and half pots of milk...'

`Hoom... let her drink milk in morning and in evening regularly... She must also eat fruits regularly... Then her health can improves gradually... She is pregnant too... Haam... gentleman do one thing... Bring your wife tomorrow, to the hospital in Kulgod only... We can give her glucose drip there... and also, she can be thoroughly checked by the lady doctor there...', doctor advised Sonappa.

Doctor said that he would give prescription for some tonics... But Sonappa didn't wait for that, and came back to the house with Shivabasavva... Even if the doctor had given the prescription, they wouldn't have purchased the tonics...

After consulting the doctor, both husband and wife felt relieved somehow, and their fear about the sickness was slightly reduced... They took a hint from the doctor's words, and thought that, it all happened because of not taking food sufficiently... And if stomach full of food is eaten, the sickness should automatically run away, they both thought confidently... But still, Sonappa asked her, 'How about that doctor's advice...? Should we go to Kulgod hospital for consultation about your sickness...?' Shivabasavva negated the proposal adamantly, and said, 'What goes of that doctor... he would tell hundred and one things for his benefits... He himself told no... That I must eat stomach full... I will start eating my stomach full from today only... It will cure me automatically... I don't want to go to any hospital...'. Sonappa agreed to her suggestion. After this, Shivabasavva started to push, roti and green chilly paste, into her stomach, forcibly, even though her appetite was constantly rejecting it... She could eat with a bit of appetite, if there was some leafy vegetables with roti... The neighboring women whenever found the leafy vegetables in the fields, would suddenly remember Shivabasavva, and plucked and brought it for her. With the boiled leafy vegetables, or the chutney, Shivabasavva could eat at least half a roti... If nobody found and didn't bring the leafy vegetables, green chilly paste would be the ultimate accompaniment for the roti...

Like this, Shivabasavva as if challenging her own stomach, forcibly pushed roti and green chilly paste... But her stomach couldn't bear it, and she suffered from severe amoebic dysentery... Her intestines were all squeezing painfully, and little amounts of mucus started to ooze out frequently... For two-three days she could go out to the usual defecating yard, that was at the outskirts of the village, for emptying her bowel... But, by the third day, she had no stamina to walk out of her house... She started to sit in the bathroom in the house only... then, in the mucus red threads of blood appeared... And, after two more days, she couldn't walk even to the bathroom... She lay topsy-turvy on the bed with her belly facing down, and kept on oozing mucus and blood continuously through the anus... She moaned with pain... 'vanya... vanyaa...!' It was Saturday... They had to wait till Wednesday for the arrival of doctor from Kulgod for any consultation... Sonappa felt blindfolded... He brought Yallappa from the shop, and showed the condition of his wife, and asked him, 'what should I do now...?' Yallappa called Shivabasavva loudly, 'Chigavva... chigavva...'. But Shivabasavva without showing any sign of response, went on with her moaning... 'vanyo... vanyooo...'. Her sari was wet on the portions of her buttocks, and swarms of flies were hovering around...

Yallappa was shocked to see the critical condition of Shivabasavva, and told gloomily, 'Kaka... the condition of chigavva appears to be very critical... We must immediately take her to a hospital in Gokavi... Otherwise... it would be very difficult... I will arrange for a bullock cart immediately... Quickly get ready to take chigavva to a hospital in Gokavi...', telling so, he had gone hurriedly... By another half an hour, the bullock cart of Killedar Lakshman arrived before Sonappa's house. Shivabasavva, who was groaning continuously, was very softly lifted and brought out on his bosom by Sonappa... He laid her slowly in the cart, on a gunny bag spread over thick layer of hay stalks... She screamed loudly, 'ayyo yavva...' with an unbearable pain... Sonappa sat by her, and Lakshman drove the bullock cart... But Shivabasavva didn't survive... Before the cart could reach Adaviswami Mutt, on the road to Gokak, Shivabasavva breathed her last... and her soul started a free journey to the other world...! In the loud sound of the moving wheels of the cart, Sonappa couldn't hear her last gasps...

As her groanings were stopped, Sonappa with hopes, called her, 'Shivabasse... Yey... Shivabasse...'. As she didn't respond, he intending to awaken her by tilting, Sonappa put his hand on her arm, and he came to know... that his wife Shivabasse was already dead...!

Sonappa didn't go for another marriage after the death of Shivabasavva... He became more feminine than a woman, did all the household works, cleaning the cattle yard, bringing fodder for the buffalo... milking the buffalo and supplying the milk to the hotel... managing all these works, he reared Basoo, a small boy of just around six. While sitting in Yallappa's shop, Yallappa would ask Sonappa, half teasingly and half seriously, 'Sonappakaka... why should you burn your hands for cooking your food...? Go for another marriage... If you permit me, I shall search a suitable girl for you... And... if you marry again, you know... you will be getting a new shirt and

another turban in addition... and, I will give you a bag to keep them neatly. I shall give you naphthalene balls also to preserve them...!’ The people sitting in the shop took it as a pure teasing, and laughed loudly... Sonappa exclaimed, ‘Yaa...!’ and joined them in their laughter... Soon after the sun rose, after doing his cattle yard duties, Sonappa would boil the corn grit... Then he would prepare soup of tamarind... The father and son, sitting one before the other, would devour the soaked corn grit in the sour soup of tamarind... And, though rarely, Sonappa would sometimes prepare rotis also... That day would be like a festival for Basoo... He would sit on his buttocks with folded knees, comfortably, and go on eating rotis... one, two, three... ... seven, eight... and so on... Then Sonappa would rebuke Basoo, and says, ‘Yey... Basya... what is this... the one, that is called as the stomach... of yours...! It is extending like an elastic bag... You have already eaten more than eight rotis... You... an ever hungry bastard...! It is enough now... Hoom... get up...’.

Sonappa never maintained good relations with the parents and brothers of Shivabasavva... But, her elder brother regularly invited her to the *okali* festival of Kurubet village, took her to his house for three days, and gifted her sari and blouse, every year... Also, every year, he regularly visited Shivabasavva’s house on of *Panchami* festival, would present her blouse piece, dry coconuts and jaggery, as per the customs, and he would immediately go back to his house, without even drinking a glass of water in his sister’s house. Sonappa or Shivabasavva never objected to it, and never asked him to stay back and have food in their house... Now also, after the death of Shivabasavva, her brother would often come to Sonappa’s house, and request Sonappa to send Basoo with him for a few days... Sonappa would readily grant his brother in-law’s request and send Basoo with him... Basoo would also go happily with him... He would keep Basoo for a weak or so, make him eat sweets and all, and would stitch him two pairs of new clothes and send back...

Sonappa had four acres of land... a field of fertile black cotton soil... If it received a single good rain, then, Sonappa would harvest at least twenty to thirty bags of jowar... He used to root out the jowar plants in the middle of the field, as the fodder of the buffalo, and he used the de-planted area to set up *khana*, the floor prepared for beating out grains from the harvested crop... Sonappa would begin to set up the *khana*, in the middle of the field, with the crop standing around... The people would tease him and tell, ‘Hey... this Sonappa is a queer man... He begins to set up the *khana* in the middle of the field and that too when the crop is still standing in the field... Who knows what is bothering him to make such a haste...!’

On Sankranti, the fourteenth of January, Sonappa would get up from the bed early in the morning, about two hours before the sun rise, at about four thirty only. He would quickly take bath, take out his blue shirt and the turban kept neatly folded in the bag, would wear a washed dhoti, and would put them on... After readying so, he would take something covered within a rag and keep it in a bag... That rag had been maintained and managed secretly by Sonappa, since the last Sankramana... He would keep the materials such as kunkuma, vibhuti, and others, required for the *pooja*, worshipping, and would also keep a small weeding sickle, in the bag. Then taking

the bag, and picking a pickaxe and a pot, he would walk hurriedly to his jowar field, much before the sunrise. At the eastern border of his field, there was a big mango tree... It was owned commonly, by Sonappa and his relatives, whose fields were adjacent to that of Sonappa. They all shared the mango fruits... Sonappa would keep the bag and pickaxe and fetch water from a neighboring well, and would sit beneath the tree waiting for the sunrise...

As the east would turn crimson, before the sun rise, Sonappa would become alert suddenly, and would keep himself ready with pickaxe in hand. And, as the sun would appear at the zenith, and his first rays strike the earth, Sonappa would run with pickaxe in hand, along the shadow of the tree... He would remember god *Lakkavva* with all the devotion and hit the land by the pickaxe to mark on the ground, exactly the edge of the shadow, which fell in the area earmarked for the *khana*... At an arm distance from that mark, towards the west, Sonappa would keep five stones as *Pandavas*... Then he would bathe the pandavas, apply vibhuti and kunkuma to them and worship them... he would burn incense sticks in their honor and would offer them popcorns as *naivedya*... Ofcourse, those popcorns would readily be carried away by the wind...! After worshipping so, he would bow down to the Pandavas, and then would wash the pickaxe and worship that also... Then he would lift the dhoti, tie it raised above so that it would not hinder him in his work, and would dig the field with pickaxe for about a foot and a half deep keeping pickaxe mark as the centre. Then he would keep off the pickaxe and take the small weeding sickle brought with him, and use it to dig and remove the soil, and would deepen the pit... After digging some depth, the tip his sickle would meet a stony slab...! Sonappa would remove the soil covering it, and would slowly lift it and would remove... Ah...! Then Sonappa would see a copper vessel... sitting safely in a pit surrounded by a dry wall of stones...!

After the sight of the vessel, Sonappa would prostrate before it surrendering himself to it... Then he would stand up and bow to all the directions with folded hands... and then he would ascertain that there is no body in the surrounding... In such early hours of the winter season, and that too on this day of festivities like Sankramana, who could be there in the surrounding...! Now he would take the vessel out of the pit, and worship it by applying vibhuti and kunkum... burn incense sticks and offer popcorns as *naivedya*... Sonappa would then blissfully enjoy the sight of his hoarding of the gold in the copper vessel... When he would touch the gold stored in the vessel, he would feel ecstasy, and his eyes would be closed automatically... And he would imagine the soft light of the sun something like... the fountain of the pearls' juice...! Sonappa would feel blissful when he touch those riches... and he would moan with the pains of happiness...! By then it would be an hour after sunrise... Now he would be in haste again... He would take out things wrapped within the rag, from the bag... would see the rings and necklaces, gold chains and nose rings and all... he would pick each one by his hand, would feel its weight, see it again and again... and then with satisfaction, he would keep it in the copper vessel... Thereafter, he would pour silver coins into the vessel... Then he would keep five naphthalene balls, borrowed from Yallappa, into the vessel...! He would lift the vessel and feel its weight happily, and would keep back in the pit surrounded by dry wall...! He would keep the slab over

it, and would fill the pit above the slab with soil... Then Sonappa would sprinkle water over that entire area, and would ready it to set up the *khana*... Sonappa would be eagerly waiting for this blissful occasion of Sankranti, throughout the year... He would accumulate the money collected by selling the milk, jowar, hay stalk of the jowar, dung, interests on the loans he extended, and from all the other sources, and would purchase gold and silver coins from that money... He would keep all the riches wrapped within a rag and would keep it wrapped under dhoti, at his waist... On the day of Sankranti, all the riches earned throughout the year would be transferred into the vessel kept buried under the soil in his field...

The people in the village wondered... this Sonappa earns so much and doesn't spend a single pai... Then where would his wealth go...? Thinking that, Sonappa might have kept all his wealth hidden in his house, a few professional thieves of the village, tried to rob... not once... for four times actually...! But actually, they couldn't get a single pai from their ventures... They looked in the manger... checked in the jowar bags pouring all the jowar on the floor, broke open the cupboards and dug the floor near the fire place and else where... The riches of Sonappa were all safe stored around his waist... But Sonappa feigned great loss, and told all the people wandering throughout the village... 'look... I had kept ten thousand rupees earned by selling the jowar in the kitchen... Bastards... the thieves have taken away all that money...'. The team of thieves listening to Sonappa felt so disgusted... look at this stingy fellow... he didn't keep any money and weeping now as if suffered great loss by the theft... And doubts aroused in their minds... did he really keep ten thousand in the kitchen...? But we searched everywhere... Where did he keep that money...? And they even started to doubt other members of the team... 'Did that Ramya secretly stole that money and kept it for himself...?' 'It must be that Kencha himself... That is why he kept away from us after our last attempt of the theft of Sonappa's house...'. Due to such doubts, tussles erupted and the team members quarreled among themselves... There after, they never attempted to steal from Sonappa's house...

Whenever there were no customers in the shop, Yallappa would tend to tease Sonappa, and he would ask, 'Kaka... where do you keep all your money...? You must be keeping your wealth buried somewhere... Isn't it...?' Then Sonappa would laugh loudly and say, 'Hey... Yallanna... yours is a big joke...! Tell me... Where from should I get money...? Our earnings would be just sufficient for our food and clothings... You must see the eating of our Basoo... Chhe che... it is unimaginable...! Look Yallanna... all the milk and curds from the buffalo is consumed by him alone...'. He would tell such lies and adding to it, and as if remembered now only, he would say, 'Haam... by this and that I somehow accrued an amount of around ten thousand rupees... those bastards... the thieves have stolen it away... And tell me... how can I have any money to keep buried...?' Sonappa would promptly furnish his accounts...! Yallappa would then say, 'Look... how cleverly our Kaka speaks... He tells lies so well... that they can hit on the head of the truth itself...! He might be spending a little for the food... but his expenses on the clothing must be definitely enormous...!' This would arouse hearty laughter in the shop... Sonappa would also join with them and laugh... But amid such teasing and counter explanations, gossips spread

throughout the village, that, Sonappa had kept hidden all his wealth buried somewhere... The youths in the village would talk among themselves...

`Sonappa must be having more than two lakh of money now... who knows... where did he hide it...`.

`You think it only two lakhs...! Hey it must be more than four to five lakhs...`.

`Fools... you are saying in terms of lakhs... Do you know how much is needed to make a lakh...? If it were lakhs of rupees, many gunny bags are required to fill them... How can he keep so many gunny bags buried...?`

They talked imagining the wealth of Sonappa... This gossip of Sonappa's hidden wealth had ultimately led to a strange happening in the village...

It was already eight to ten years after the death of Shivabasavva...Basoo must be twelve or thirteen... He failed thrice and remained stuck in the third standard only... Then it was harvesting season... Unusual to this village, a drama company came to the village and pitched their tent in open ground of the dried lake of Duragavva... All around the tent posters of dramas of Hemaraddi Mallamma, Saint Sakkubai, Raktaratri and of many other dramas were displayed... and songs were aired through the loud speaker creating an uproar there... All the young boys and girls crowded around the tent and stuck to the pictures of dramas displayed, seeing them with awe... Bringing them from there for their dinner became very difficult for the women in the village... Besides, due to the uproar by the loudspeaker, it was difficult for the people to hear each other... What all they could hear was the loud announcements made by the drama company... `you the patrons of the art and music... we are enacting the drama... The Village Girl... The Village Girl... in the grand stage set in your village... today night at ten thirty... Do not forget to witness this social drama... `The Village Girl`... do not repent by forgetting to see this drama...! Film star Janaki enacts the role of the village girl of sixteen years... Do not miss the feast for your eyes...`. The young boys and girls got it by-heart and they wandered in the streets shouting the same... `...dont miss the feast for your eyes...` and etcetera... Now actually the announcement by that drama company was unnecessary... these boys and girls only were enough...

After three days of the arrival of the drama company to the village, the owner of the company came to the shop of Yallappa... It was three in the afternoon... There were eight to ten people including Sonappa, who were the regular members of Yallappa's `royal` assembly... Yallappa was in the chair, by the side of the cash box... That black man with white hair, wearing a dirty dhoti and a coat over the shirt showing blotches of colours on its collar, left his chappals outside the shop and came in saying politely, `Namaskara to savakar...`, to Yallappa. As the assembly members, sitting on the gunny bags and tin boxes of oil and etcetera, looked at him curiously

while Yallappa nodded indifferently and saw him as to ask what he wanted... He looked around there, searching some seat for him to sit, and told, 'I am the owner of Chaluvamba Natya Sangha savakar...'. Yallappa uttered, 'Chaluvamba Natya sangha...!' in surprise. That drama man then said as an explanation, 'Haam... the drama company camping in your village savakar... I am the owner of the company... My name is Kadasiddesh...'. Yallappa said, 'Haam ham... come in...'. As Yallappa told so, Sonappa sitting on a nearby box, vacated it for Kadasiddesha to sit there... Kadasiddesha went and sat there...

Yallappa uttered 'Haam...?' as to ask, and looked at his face. He coughed and loosened his throat, and said, 'Nothing else savakar... I wanted to give you a free pass to visit our dramas...', telling so, he stood up and came to Yallappa, took out a green coloured, printed pass from the pocket of his coat, and handed it to Yallappa, extending both his hands... Yallappa uttering 'Hoom...' took the pass disinterestedly, and threw it in the cash box. Kadasiddesh came back to the box and sat telling, 'Please come to witness the dramas savakar... We feel very happy if enlightened people like you come and witness our dramas...', appeasing Yallappa. Yallappa was shrewd enough and he just laughed and said, 'It is all right... I shall try'. Kadasiddesha became silent, and remained seated on the box even afterwards... Yallappa looked at him as to ask, what else he wanted... and Kadasiddesh said, 'Savakar... I am expecting another help from you...'.

'Haam...? Help...! What help...?' Yallappa asked feeling alarmed.

'Nothing more savakar... Our dramas are going on well... our collections are also good... As this is harvesting season, the collections are excellent... But the only thing is... the neighboring villagers don't know our arrival here yet... Once they come to know that our drama company is camping here... then our dramas will run houseful...' Kadasiddesha told the same repeatedly.

Yallappa asked in confusion, 'For that...? what should I do for that...?'

'Nothing more savakar... nothing more... till the neighboring villagers know our camping here, I request you for your help... It would be a great help if you give the groceries on credit till then...'. Yallappa thought for a while, and said, 'Look... I can't give anything fully on credit... I can't bear such burden... Do one thing... Pay for two kilograms and take three kilos... And I don't give credit more than two hundred rupees... Take groceries like this... and you must clear the bills weekly...', Yallappa said, explaining the conditions, and then warned him, 'Haam... look if you run away without paying the dues... I wouldn't leave you... Mind it... I can search you where ever you go, and snatch away your harmonium tabala and loudspeakers...'. Kadasiddesh said with humility, 'No no... savakar... I am not such a person... I shall not leave your village till I clear all your dues... ones that feed on the breast milk of the mothers only struggles to survive... then how about those, feeding on the poison itself...! I never deceived anybody...', telling so, by pleading, and paying half the amount, he took jowar, rice, salt, oil etcetera... all that are required to cook their food for the day... On the very first day, Kadasiddesha broke the conditions laid down by Yallappa...

As Kadasiddesha went his way, Sonappa asked, 'Tamma... what is that... that black faced man gave you in the beginning...?'

'That one...? it is a free pass...'

'Free pass...? What is it for...?'

'It is a chit to see the drama without purchasing ticket... without paying any money. It is as good as an advance ticket for free entry into the theatre... The gate keeper would allow you on just showing this pass'.

'Hey... It is very fine... Then you would be daily going to witness the drama...! And dosing in the shop... Hey... it would be really wonderful', saying so, Sonappa laughed loudly.

'Hey... This Kaka imagines strange things... Did you see me going to any drama or cinema...? I don't go to any drama... I saw some drama when I was a boy only... After that I never saw any drama. I can never forego my sleep...'

'Then what are you going to do with that free pass...?' Sonappa asked eagerly.

'He gave me and I took it... It would be lying there in the cash box', said Yallappa. And as if it struck him then, he asked Sonappa casually, 'Haam Kaka... Do you like to go to the drama...? If you like to go, take this free pass. But be careful... these are cold nights of winter... You may have to take out your shirt from the bag and have to put it on...', and laughed.

Sonappa asked, 'If I show the pass, do they allow me...?', and he got confirmed about it. Then he said, 'Tamma... give that pass here... I can think about the putting on my shirt later...'

Yallappa gave the pass, and said, 'Then Sonappakaka would be regularly visiting the drama in the night... Look kaka, you have the responsibility of looking after that buffalo and your son, Basoo... Soon after the sunrise, in the morning itself, you have to make arrangements for the feeding of the both... And... look kaka, your buffalo and Basoo should not come here to the shop complaining against you...'. On this teasing of Sonappa, all in the shop laughed heartily... Sonappa also joined the chorus...

Sonappa as usual, in his half naked attire, without wearing the shirt, went for the drama in the cold night of December... The boy at the gate took the pass from Sonappa, and stared at him, with both, doubt and surprise... He asked Sonappa arrogantly...

'Who are you...? How did you get this pass...?', and he rejected the admission of Sonappa in to the theatre...

Sonappa was irritated and told the boy at the gate, 'Why tamma...? You seem to be arrogant... If we didn't give groceries on credit from our shop, you should have been starving today... Call

your owner... that black faced man... Who is that fellow... ham... that Kadasiddesha... Where is he...? Call him... I will tell what is to be told to him only...’.

The boy at the gate was confused... He called another boy, made him stand at the gate and went running to the owner who was in green room, for his make up. The boy told him all the detail and had shown the pass. Kadasiddesh saw the pass. He was frightened, and said, ‘Hey... this is the pass I gave to that shop owner... If he is hurt we have to starve tomorrow... Go quickly and apologise him... Take him politely to the front row of chairs and make him sit there... Go... go quickly...’. The boy came back running, and welcomed Sonappa standing at the gate... and led him to the front row of the chairs, and made him sit just at the right side, behind the harmonium pit... He requested to excuse him again and again... ‘I didn’t know you sir... Please excuse me...’. Sonappa told him bitterly, ‘Hoom... hoom... You appear to be very intelligent... Don’t try to show your intelligence before me... Headstrong fellow... Hoom...! Give that pass here and go away...’. The boy gave the pass and went back to the gate turning frequently and seeing Sonappa again and again... Sonappa kept the pass at his waist under his dhoti, without folding it, and sat on the chair...

And who would purchase a ticket for the chair in that village...? Therefore, the number of chairs placed there was very limited... might be around ten or twelve... And there was only one, was sitting on the chair... none other than this half naked, Sonappa... The people sitting behind, in the mat and floor sections, who were also very less in number, saw this man without shirt sitting in the chair... They thought... that man sitting in the chair at the front, not wearing a shirt and half naked appears to be our our Sonappakaka... But... is he our Sonappakaka himself... Our Sonappakaka can never purchase a ticket for the drama... Leave aside a ticket for a chair, he will never purchase a ticket even for the floor...! Therefore, definitely he is not be our Sonappakaka, he may be somebody from the drama company itself... they decided. (But later after a few days they came to know that he was Sonappakaka only, and he is visiting yhe drama with a free pass given actually to Yallappa of the kirani shop). While they were thinking about that half naked man, the third bell was rung, and the drama started...

After the invocation song, the actors came on the stage to perform the first scene... they were surprised to see the scene of this naked man in the chair, at their front... When they returned from the stage after the scene, they told other actors and actresses about the strange scene before the stage... and while they came on the stage they indicated the sight, signaling by winking their eyes mutually... All the actors were astonished... who could be this man enduring such cold of these winter nights... As it was winter season, and because of the cold nights, the actors of the drama themselves decided not to perform mythological plays, as some of the roles in those plays had to be half naked like this Sonappa... They were all wonderstruck, to see this half naked man sitting in the chair that would be biting cold, under the shower of chilly weather...

This Sonappa, who got admitted into the theatre daily, by showing the free pass preserved at his waist, sitting in cold chair at the front, became a laughing stock for the people of the drama...

They gave him a nick name as, 'the naked king'. If Sonappa didn't visit, some nights by chance, looking at the empty chair he sat daily, they would speak improvised dialogues:

– Aha... darling... our emperor hasn't turned up today to witness our drama... I hope he is doing well with his health... and the other would continue

– Aha... who is that emperor that comes to witness your drama... and the answer would promptly come for that

– Who else... the great warrior that fights the cold... the great naked king... the owner of the free pass...! and then all on the stage would laugh...

The boys of the cook party of the dramacompany, would go to the well, in the nearby street, to fetch water. They became accustomed with the people around the well, and they enquired a woman on the well,

'Yakka... a strange person regularly comes for our drama... In these cold nights of this winter season also, he comes without wearing the shirt... Who he may be...?'

The woman told, 'What...? man without wearing a shirt...? He must be our Sonappakaka...', and she said with surprise, 'But tamma... if he is spending money to see your drama... it is nothing less than any miracle...'.

The boys said, 'Hey... where does he pay for the ticket...? He is free customer with a free pass... There is a shopkeeper in this village... Yallappa or somebody like that... Our owner gave a pass to him... Taking that pass, this naked king attends the dramas daily... We can understand... the man who can't have a shirt to put on, can't purchase a ticket to witness the drama...'.

When these boys of drama were speaking so, Ramakka of Dandinavar came there... She was related to Sonappa... She scolded the boys of the drama company, and told, 'Hey you fools... What do you think of that man...! Don't talk like this else where... mind it... He has enough money to purchase this whole village itself... How much kilogram of gold he is having nobody knows... People say... that he has kept it buried somewhere... Who knows... where did he hide all his riches...?' The boys were astonished and enquired other people about this half naked man... and they confirmed the information given by Ramakka... The boys told this breaking news, the secrets of the riches of the naked king... to all the people of the drama company... They all felt mystified by hearing this news... All of a sudden, this half naked Sonappa became a myth... a mythological hero to all of them...!

'His name is Sonappa... 'sona' means gold...! Then what do you mean by Sonappa... he is none other than 'father of the gold'...!' - an actor would tell in prose...

And then, Janaki, the film star who never acted in any film, composed a lyric and would sing it...

Come darling, come darling, you my naked king

Bring that gold that ever glitters while you bring.

May be, this song had no meaning... but it had definitely a selfish motto... Such talks about Sonappa, by the artists of the drama reached Kadasiddesha, the owner of the drama company... On knowing this, he exclaimed...

`Aha...! Naked at the outward... and... solid gold at the inward...!'

The inner mind of Kadasiddesha allured him...

`Oh... you, run after me... come after me... I will
give the most precious possession for you...!'

And then...

Indra summoned Menaka... `What made you to remember me my master...' singing so, Janaki came to Kadasiddesha...

Indra said, you should strip off all the riches of that Vishvamitra...! Find it out where did he hide his wealth... somewhere buried under the soil... underneath the fire place or, there in the cattle yard... or beneath the manger...?

Janaki sang with enthusiasm...

Where are you goldy... goldy where you are...?

No sound replied her and Kadasiddesha, I am here... I am here... as they wished to hear.

In the beginning they were all teasing him as the naked king... a friend of free pass... and etcetera... Kadasiddesha was all boiling against this naked king coming regularly with the free pass when the collections were very meager... But now... if Sonappa wouldn't visit a single night, Kadasiddesha would feel as if incurring a great loss... Gate keepers boys and all the actors would also feel so sorry to see the empty chair of Sonappa... This way... that naked man... gradually became their obsession... and gradually he became more and more important for them... and ultimately he almost became their god himself...!

Then again Indra summoned Menaka and ordered her to find out the place where the gold is hidden...! And... Indra and Menaka made an elaborate plan... schemed... and hatched a plot...

That night in the drama... Janaki had a special make up... daily she used to wear a six meter sari... But today she wore a nine meter sari in old pattern... and that nine meter sari was all pressing on her hips and body, showing all her shapes so neatly and so arousing... Also, she tied her flock of hair at the back, slightly upwards of her head, as a bun... and the bun was surrounded by a garland of closely knit buds of jasmine... She put on a broad nose ring, the *nattu*, fixed at the left of left nostril... and she had already a makeup of her face... in addition to that, she had applied

extra rose shade on her cheeks, and blood red colored lipstick was smeared on her lips... She came on the stage singing an unusual irrelevant song to the running scene...

Come on you... the one who stole my mind...

Come on you... the one who stole my heart...

singing melodiously, she danced as to exhibit all her shapes, amorously, to arouse desire in the spectators... The youths, sitting in the sections of mat and floor, were all excited, whistled and shouted, 'once more...' 'once more...'. Sonappa sat absolutely immobile... He stared at her intently, with his eyes... unblinking and opened wide...! Keeping on dancing, she picked a garland of chrysanthemum and dahlia flowers, kept in a tray on the stool at the middle of the stage... then holding the garland by her extended hands, she took two more rounds on the stage, and then she suddenly climbed down the steps at the left side of the stage... and came straight way to Sonappa, who was sitting in the chair, just behind harmonium pit... She stood before him, smiled showering all her fondness over him as to arouse him, and garlanded him...! The people sitting on mats and on floor were all happy and shouted again and again... 'Jai Gandhi mutya...' 'jai Gandhi mutya...'

When the garland fell around his neck, Sonappa was shocked as if a snake suddenly surrounded his neck, and as a reflex action, he suddenly took it off from his neck, and tried to throw it away... Janaki quickly took the garland from his hand, and asked, 'Why savakar...? Why should you be so frightened...?' and then she said all smiling, 'You are encouraging us by witnessing our dramas almost every day... Therefore, our owner told me to felicitate by garlanding you... I garlanded on behalf of the owner and all the artists of the drama...'.

Sonappa babbled uttering 'yey... hey...' in confusion. The spectators who shouted so far as 'jai Gandhi mutya...', now began to shout, 'Yey... why have stopped the drama... continue the drama...', 'make her dance again...' etcetera and created a din... Janaki quickly took Sonappa's hand in her hands and pressed it whispering... I am eager to serve you... and then, she hurriedly went to the stage, and the drama resumed...

Sonappa felt an unusual cold filling his viscera... and he shivered suddenly... After eight years, he had the touch of a woman... 'Why should she... she, a beautiful damsel... coming down as though from the heaven itself... ham... yes... coming down from the heaven itself... why should she garland me...? She even pressed my hand holding in her hands and she whispered also...! She said whispering... that she was eager to serve me...!' It all looked like a myth for Sonappa... But he was all aroused, and in his mind, this filled, as a sweet delight... and he felt as if filled with a pleasant cold... It aroused the memory of Shivabasavva in him... 'But... Chhe chhe...! She was all lean and skinny... never filled my hug... she was like a fleshless sparrow only... Haa...! look at this woman... haam... what is her name...? Haam... yes... she is Janakee... Janakee... Janakee...!' Sonappa uttered her name again and again... 'hoom... look at this Janakee... she

filled all my eyes... can fill my hug too...! Yes... it is all true... but... but why should this woman come and garland me...! And and... what her whisper meant...!’

The womenfolk of the village, coming to the outskirts of the village for emptying their bowels, assembled after eight days, in the evening... and while sitting, they moved nearer to each other and whispered to each other... Through such whisperings of the women of the village, this matter of Sonappa and Janaki entered the public discussion...

‘Tangee... is it true... that woman of drama got entangled with this miser... Sonya...’

‘Hoom yakka... It is true...! Look what sorts of times have arrived...!’

‘In the middle of the drama only... amid large crowd of spectators... that woman came down, garlanded and hugged him...I heard...!’

‘Ayyo Narayana... Yakka... I never heard such things before...! Yakka... has that woman thrown away all the modesties of a woman... I don’t think she had kept any modesty...’.

‘Afterall... she is a woman of drama Gangavvakka... Leave her... look at this strange thing... This Sonya is a terrible miser... How could that damsel of drama get entangled with this miserly man...?’

‘Who knows yakka... I heard, after the drama, she came to his house day before yesterday... and stayed in his house till the early morning... She went back only when it was dawn...’.

‘Ayyo...! Is it so tangee...? Then it had already reached his house... I pity for that Shivabassi...! Tangee... how did you come to know this...?’

‘Ayya... this Gangavvakka’s brother, Ningya told me... Otherwise how could I know it... And you Gangavvakka... you must be knowing this...’.

‘Hoom... he told me also... He heard it from Musaguppee... he said’.

In this way, the news spread among the women folk and then entered the domain of the men... Those men who heard from their wives, scolded the wives telling, ‘Hey... you the women... you can create fire in water itself... Have you seen any such thing of Sonappakaka and that woman of the drama, yourself...? No... Somebody told somebody... and hearing that, some woman comes and tells you... and taking that as authentic, you are telling me as if you yourself have seen it...! This man you know... is a naked miser... he wouldn’t give away even a red nayapaisa to anybody... And that woman of the drama you see... is one that drank waters seven lakes... of the whole world... how can you imagine that she runs after him to get entangled with such a man...?’, and made them silent... But later, these husbands of those women themselves started spreading

the news... They would sit on the platform of the temple of monkey god, and would whisper in the ears of others...

`Kaka... did you hear this strange news...?' telling so, someone would arouse the interest in the people sitting there... Then they would tell all their imaginations regarding the romance of Sonappa and Janaki, the film star of the drama... If the women added only salt and chilly power to the news, the men added more of spices to it, and they made it more and more erotic...

The people added their imaginations and enjoyed telling hundred and one things... But an event they could never imagine and could never see, happened and that brought the closure of this episode...

What actually happened was...

That woman of drama, who garlanded, posed her lovely smile before him, whispered in his ear and pressed his hand arousing a forgotten feeling for a woman in him, came in the dreams of Sonappa frequently, and he was disturbed. His mind was all chaos... Wherever he went or came... Jankee filled in him, and she would appear before his mind and eyes, posing vividly... Now he even left going to the shop of Yallappa... He would keep on wandering in the jowar field amid the crop standing there...

This happened on the tenth night after that garlanding night... That night, when Sonappa was leaving the theater after the drama, the gatekeeper boy whispered in his ear, `Janakee akka is waiting for you savakar...`.

Sonappa uttered, `Haam...`, and asked in a whisper, `Where is she...?`

The boy escorted him to the corner of the tent, where Janakee was waiting for him, wearing a blissful smile on her rosy cheeks... When the gate keeper boy left, Janaki suddenly hugged Sonappa, and kissed him on his cheeks... Sonappa babbled, `Hey... yey...` and wiped his cheek rubbing, removing her lipstick mark... and asked, `Why... you called me...?`

`Hoom... you never came to me...' Janaki told feigning anger.

`Yey... I had lot of work... and more over... how and where to meet you... in our village...?`

`For that only... I have planned an excursion... Come... let us go to Gokavi tomorrow...?' Janaki asked blushing further.

`To Gokavee...? Why to Gokavi?`

`Just for the fun... I wanted to spend a few hours with you, till the evening... We will stay together in a room in some lodging in Gokavi...`.

`Hey no no... It is all unnecessary expenses...', Sonappa told his mind.

`No... you will not spend even a pai for this excursion... I wanted to stay with you for a few hours... It is my wish... therefore, I shall spend for this...If you wished for such an event... you had to spend for that. But hoom...! I know you would never wish for it yourself... You have no love for me...', Janaki said, feigning a deliberate anger on her cheeks particularly, playfully... Sonappa without knowing how to respond to such a frolick, he just babbled uttering, `hey...yey...', and stood in confusion.

Janaki told consolingly, `It is all right... I will teach you how to love a loving lady later... there after you can plan an excursion from your side... Now I have planned this excursion, I will spend my money... Haam... one thing you must keep in your mind... it should not be known to anybody in the village... Otherwise that would become big news in the village...`.

Sonappa was all happy for her proposal... He told, `Tomorrow morning... I would go along the Gokavi road, and wait at a distance... You come by the first bus... I shall board the bus there in the middle...'. After planning the next day's program, Sonappa came to his house. Basoo was already sleeping. He made him awake, and explained him in detail, `Look Basya... tomorrow... I have an urgent work in Gokavi... If anybody enquires you about my whereabouts, tell them that you do not know... and call that Balavva chigavva of neighboring house to milk the buffalo... give all the milk to the hotel of Basappa... look after the buffalo's fodder and water... take it out for grazing... And there are enough rotis in the basket... Ask for vegetables or curry in Yallapanna's house... bring it from his house and eat rotis... Be careful about every thing...`.

Sonappa woke up early in the morning, had his bath, put on his blue shirt and wore the yellow turban and walked up to Gunda Basappa temple, a mile and a half away from the village on the road to Gokavi... He stopped the bus there, and boarded. The passengers from the village asked him, `Yey Sonappakaka... why are you boarding the bus here...?' Sonappa gave some relevant answer and sat in an empty seat... But he was all worried, and thought how to manage to keep these people unaware of his adventures... He stealthily climbed down when the bus stopped at the court circle... He signaled Janaki, and she also climbed down, as if unaware of the existence of this Sonappa...

Perhaps, the room in lodging was booked in advance... When they went to the reception, they just handed over a key to Sonappa after enquiring his name, and told, `Room number sixteen...'. Soon after going to the room, Janaki called a room boy, and whispered in his ears something, and took out money from within her blouse, and gave three green notes of hundred, to the boy. Sonappa, so far never visited any lodge... He was thrilled to see the cot and bed... chairs and tea pie... The boy came back with two half bottles of brandy and two coco cola bottles... He kept them on the teapie and asked Janaki, `Do you need some thing to eat... some snacks...?'. She gave a list... He brought fried ground nuts, samosas and a few more snacks... Janaki gave him ten rupees as tips... Sonappa felt horrified at it... and he was very sorry for such spendthrift act of Janaki... That boy went out pulling the door...

Sonappa so far saw the brandy bottles that were already emptied... He never drank any brandy so far... He was a member of cooking party in betrothing or marriage ceremonies in the village... Then the host would compulsorily supply country arrack to the cooking team... Then Sonappa would get a bowl of that alcoholic drink as his share... He would be quite happy with that much only... Now here, there were two half bottles of the brandy... and all for himself... Sonappa looked at Janaki with surprise... She sat closely, by his side, and looking at his eyes she feigned shyness and drooped her head down... It was all a novel experience for Sonappa... He wondered for himself, on what counts of him, could this Janaki had fallen after him...! He sat with no words to speak...

Expecting adventures from Sonappa, Janaki waited for his movements... But, Sonappa, overwhelmed by all, sat immobile and also didn't utter a single word... Janaki asked, 'Why...? Why are you not talking anything...?' Sonappa tried to say 'Haam...' but it came out as a warm, dry breath as, haa...! Bearing an inviting smile on her face, Janaki said, 'Nothing else... since long you have not touched the body of a woman... may be due some sort of inhibition... towards that... it appears... that your mind is oscillating... You know... if you mind... I will stay with you permanently... Hoom... now, first you get your throat and body warmed... thereafter all the other remaining things...!' telling so, she laughed exhibiting all the lust on her face. Then she took the bottle of brandy and poured into a glass, mixed little water and gave it to Sonappa... Sonappa drank it in a single gulp... Janaki took the empty glass from his hand and filled it again and gave it to him... 'Take the groundnuts...'

'eat that samosa...'

'take this bhajee... it would be proper snack with brandy...', telling so Janaki helped him in drinking and eating the snacks... Sonappa ate the snacks and drank the glasses of brandy... Janaki thought that he would get the kick of the drink, just by drinking one half bottle, and then she should try to bring out the secret from him... But Sonappa remained almost unaffected, though a bit excited, when he finished a half bottle of the brandy...He didn't speak much, and he kept engaged himself with the business of drinking only... She told to herself - it is good that I ordered for two half bottles of the brandy...! After emptying the first bottle, she opened the second, and poured into the glass... On drinking two glasses more... Sonappa became very much excited and began to sway sitting on the bed, and started to laugh loudly... Janaki thought it as the ripe time, and she became alert... Kadasiddesh sent her with the advice... do whatever is required... even sleep with him if needed... but under any circumstance... you should bring the information about that hidden gold of Sonappa... Janaki knew that everything was dependent on her... Yes... it is all dependent on me... I must proceed with utmost care... Janaki thought it as an immense burden... Though she was the most experienced actress, she now felt blindfolded and she didn't know what to do and how to proceed with... She felt as if forgotten the very art of acting itself...

Janaki tried to overcome her crisis... aggregating all her confidence, she sat very close to Sonappa, touching her body to his... Sonappa excited, started to talk... babbling due to intoxication...

`Dell(tell) be(me)... How... how is id(it)... how you sday(stay)... with bee(meee)...?`.

The words of Janaki that she uttered before he started to drink were stuck in his mind... Janaki immediately lay flat on the bed, keeping her head on his lap... She staring intently into his eyes, said, `I shall leave the drama company to stay with you...!`

Sonappa laughed loudly for a while and told babbling... `leave the... draba(drama) gompany(company)...?` and he kept on laughing for some time... then he continued to speak again, `... if you... leave drabaa gombany... what would... what would you... what would you...` Sonappa struggling for the next word, uttered, `Haam...?` and patted on the stomach of Janaki... and suddenly remembering the word, he continued, `ham... dobaach... your dobaach... what would you eat for your domaach...?` and laughed again.

Janaki suddenly sat up and hugged him tightly... She put her chin on his shoulder and whispered in his ear as to arouse him, `I shall stay with you... and you will look after me... won't you? You will look after me no...`. Sonappa in his intoxication only, became alert and asked looking at her face, `you... you wand(want) do(to)... barry(marry) bee(me)...`, telling so he began to laugh as if hearing something very absurd... and then he fell flat on the bed... Janaki immediately felt the emergency... now I shouldn't postpone... yes I shouldn't postpone... otherwise he goes to sleep... thinking so, Janaki, put her chin on his chest, and staring at his eyes she asked...

`Nothing else... I am yours only... you can keep me in your house if you want or otherwise... you can keep me in your field only, in a hut... if you like...`.

Sonappa alerted and uttered, `In the field...!`, and rejected the proposal vehemently, by nodding the head vigorously... Janaki with her chin on his chest only, now stretched her hands around his neck, and pressing her breasts on his bosom... and pretending great fondness for him, she asked, `and... I shall be yours only... isn't it... I shall cook for you... and... and... I shall sleep with you...I shall ever remain as yours only... now tell me... where did you hide your wealth... where did you burry it all... tell me... I shall be your wife if you want... or I shall even remain as your concubine... tell me where...`.

When Janaki talked about the hidden wealth, the intoxication of Sonappa was suddenly lowered... and he sat up suddenly pushing that woman away... she fell at a distance on the bed... He babbled now, `you... a slut... I dow(know) your schebe(scheme)... you wand(want) do(to) kill be(me) by dringiging(drinking) be(me)... gome(come)... kill be(me)... dell(tell) your that... that... black faced owder(owner) of your draba(drama)... go and dell(tell) that black faced fellow... that... by doborrow(tomorrow) borning(morning)... your dent(tent) you dow(know)... your dent will burn... its flabes(flames) will rise... that high... Haam... gomes(comes) to gill(kill) be(me)...

and rob by(my) wealth... see your dent(tent) doborrow(tomorrow)... all burning with high flames... ha hhaa hhaaa...’.

Janaki was frightened... She thought... the things had reached beyond my control... and this naked king is creating din... if some people chance to hear his shouting, I will be straight way pulled to the police... and if a woman like me is got into the hands of police... it would all be over... they will tear me into pieces... I must first escape from here... Janaki quickly jumped off from the cot, opened the door, went out, and locking the door from behind she ran away... Sonappa babbling, ‘hey... where are you goig(going)... waid(wait)... I ab(am) dot(not) goig(going) to leave your dent(tent)...’, tried to walk towards the door, stumbled, had fallen on the floor... and he slept lying there on the floor only.

The room boy came casually, and found it locked from outside... He was surprised, and opened the door... He saw the man in blue shirt, was in deep sleep, lying on the floor...! He uttered... ‘Oh... it is overload party...’ and went away just pulling the door without locking it from outside. After the midnight, Sonappa awoke from his deep sleep... He was surprised and confused to find himself there in a furnished room... and he slowly recollected... He felt his head heavy... His stomach was burning with hunger... He ate all the snacks lying there, drank water and slept locking the door from inside... He woke up early in the morning and ran away from the lodging without intimating anybody... He came to the bus stand and boarded the first bus to his village... After getting down from the bus, he ran straight way to his field and walked throughout the field... There was no mark of any digging... He felt relieved and came to the house... And here in the village, Kadasiddesha lifted his tent that very night, and vacated without telling anybody in the village... He ran away without paying the dues of four hundred thirty eight rupees to Yallappa...

After this event in the life of Sonappa, no ups and downs occurred further... everything was as usual... buffalo...removing the dung and cleaning the cattle yard...milking...giving the milk to the hotel...the field and jowar crop...giving loans and collecting the interests on the loans... and above all these, Snkranti and hiding of the wealth in the copper vessel... buried under the soil in the jowar field...! This way, the gold in the copper vessel went on increasing... Basya studied upto fifth standard and left the school... He joined Sonappa, helping him in his daily works... Basya never bothered about the accounts... and whenever he asked anything about the accounts, Sonappa would warn him, telling, ‘Be involved in your work like a dog... never poke your nose in the affairs of the accounts...’. And more over, this Basya was also the most matching son of Sonappa and Shivabasavva... he was competing his parents regarding the stinginess...!

When Basya was twenty two, Sonappa found a girl from a poor family in Kurubet village, and brought her as his daughter in law, marrying her to Basya... The brother of Shivabasavva, Fakirappa, was also in Kurubet village... Infact he had four daughters of marriageable age... But

wife of Fakirappa, had forbidden her husband, to give her daughter to this Basya, telling, 'look... I don't want any of my daughters married to that Basya... People of that house are all like frogs in a well... croaking all the while... as, bucks... bucks... and bucks! Even they don't eat their stomach full... If given to Basya... they will kill my daughter keeping her ever hungry and starving...'. And the funny thing was, this girl from a poor family, who was married Basya, when she first came to her husband's house, was always worried about eating and eating... Fire of hunger was ever burning in her stomach... Sonappa under his strict vigilance and supervision, tamed that girl and gradually brought her to his family line of stinginess... She bore seven children... The government hospital midwife, Mrs. Jadimali, persuaded Basya's wife, Paroti, to undergo tubectomy since her third delivery... But Sonappa, Basya and herself, all wanted a male child... Ultimately she gave birth to a male child in her seventh delivery... But poor woman... due to unhygienic conditions, she caught tetanus infection... and suffered from tetanus... As usual, no proper treatment was availed, and, Paroti, pulling all her nerves, and bending her body vigorously, like a bow for two days, died on the third day... All the neighboring women scolded Sonappa and Basya, 'Poor woman... that Paroti could have survived if she was shown to a good doctor and got her proper treatment... The stinginess of her husband and father-in-law had killed her...'. And of the six daughters of Basya, three died... The eldest, named after her grandmother, as Shivabasavva, was fourteen now... She only looked after her younger brother, two sisters, father and grand father...

As the days passed...

Sonappa was nearing his seventy... and he was a bit weak now... He was suffering from asthma, and he would wheeze throughout the night, struggling to breath... Waking up in the morning he would cough and cough and would spit mouthful of phlegm... Besides, even a small injury on his body would become a large wound, and would take months and months to cure or would not cure at all... Basya with great effort got consent from Sonappa, and took him to the Kulgod doctor on Wednesday... The doctor told that Sonappa was suffering from the disease of sugar, *diabetes*... He explained that, sugar was lost with the urine... Sonappa felt very sorry about it... What a loss...! Sugar going with urine...! Sugar in market now actually costs five rupees a kilo...! Who knows... how much of sugar is lost every day...! Besides this loss, that doctor also prescribed some tablets to be purchased for Sonappa...! But, Sonappa strictly forbidden Basoo, to purchase the tablets... One loss, of losing the sugar with urine was inevitable... let me avoid the other loss atleast... Sonappa thought. But his grand daughter, Shivabasavva, said him advising, 'Yajja... you should not neglect... Please take the tablets... Tell appa to bring them...'. Sonappa chided her, 'Hey... don't worry... you my kid... You must know how to run the household spending very little money... Your grandmother was very expert... I wonder how you manage your family after your marriage... You must be careful about the expenses, my grand daughter...', Sonappa advised her in return.

Now Basoo was more than forty... He was worried that Sonappa wouldn't survive for long... One evening, after the lamps were lighted, Sonappa was wheezing, lying on his belly... Who

knows why, the memory of Janaki, the woman of the drama company, was aroused in his mind... Then Basoo came and sat by his side, and began to caress by rubbing softly the back of his father to soothe his breathing... Sonappa suddenly sat up, and looked at Basoo intently... Hum...! it was this Basya only...! he thought and heaved a sigh... He again lied on his belly and continued his wheezing...

Basya called him softly, 'Yappa...'

'Hoom...'

'I want to ask you something... you shouldn't feel irritated...', when Basoo asked hesitating, Sonappa again sat up suddenly and stared at Basya's face... Sonappa felt what Basya wanted to ask... and he lied back on his belly and uttered 'hoom...'

'And... yappa... people are telling me often... that... that... you had kept large mass wealth... buried under the soil...in a vessel...'

As Basoo told these words, the wheezing of Sonappa was aggravated and his breathing was disturbed for a while... and then it came to its normal on its own... and he didn't answer Basoo... He kept silent...

'Yappa... Is it true...?'

Sonappa again sat up and looked at Basoo intently, and as if found in Basoo, what he intended to see. He felt relieved, and uttered, 'Hoom...'

Basya was excited on hearing the confirmation 'hoom' by his father. He suddenly stood up and again sat down by the side of his father... Seeing the excitement of Basya, some suspicion crept into the mind of Sonappa and his wheezing was slightly aggravated...

'Yappa... let me ask Shivabassee to prepare a cup of tea for you...?'

'Umhoom...'

'Yappa... it appears, your health is not all right...'

'Hoom...'

'If something untoward happens to you...'

'Hoom...'

'And then...the the things you kept hidden may go to somebody... who knows...? That is why...', Sonappa stretching his hand, stopped Basoo, and said, 'Wait wait... wait till the coming Sankranti... I shall show it to you on that day of Sankranti...'. Basoo felt happy and went away, allowing Sonappa to wheez uninterruptedly, lying on the bed, on his belly...

After three months, Sonappa suffered a paralytic stroke... His right half of the body was all immobile... His tongue was pulled back and he couldn't speak... Uttering 'vo... vovoo...' and stretching his left hand, he struggled to tell something... Basoo was frightened... Arranging some money, he went with his relative, Kenchappakaka, to a desi vaidya in Ankola, to bring medicine for Sonappa... As per the suggestion of Yallappa, he brought pig fat and applying it to the body of Sonappa, he massaged regularly... That desi vaidya of Ankola gave a root of some plant... It was to be abraded with lime juice, and its paste was to be applied to the tongue... Sonappa understood the anxiety of Basoo... Struggling to tell, - don't worry... even if I am unable to speak... I will show you the place where I hid my wealth... - he would just utter vo... voov... and raise his left hand signaling something from it... Sonappa's attempt of speech sounded like the howling of a dog... Basoo would interpret Sonappa's attempt to communicate, as... I lost my speech my son... now how can I show you that place, where I buried my wealth... my son... - and Basoo would become more and more frightened...

Might be due to the medicine of that abraded in lime juice, Sonappa's tongue was slightly loosened and he could move it to a little extent... He could speak a few words, though stammering... Nasal tone was more prominent in his stammering... Trying to tell, wait till Sankramana, he would stammer... wneet... tmeenl samkrnaamamna... and he would move his left hand as though he was blessing Basoo... Anyhow, this boosted the confidence in Basoo... He thought, Sankramana is still three months away... till then his speech will be still improved... and moreover, it is enough if he will be able just to indicate the place... Thinking so, Basoo sincerely followed the instructions of the desi vaidya of Ankola, and gave medicines and applied the paste of the root punctually... As Basoo expected, Sonappa's stammering improved to the extent that it could be understood with some efforts...

The next day it self would be Sankranti... That night, Sonappa told Basoo to take kunkuma, vibhuti, incense sticks matchbox and keep them in a bag... After telling to take these materials, he remembered about the small sickle... but he could not remember its name... Sonappa struggled to tell by signaling... with much effort he could ultimately succeed and Basoo took it and kept in the bag... Then pickaxe and a pot were kept by the side of the bag... This time, there was no wealth wrapped within the rag as Sonappa could not collect the interests on the loans and couldn't purchase the gold, due to his ill health. He thought, when my health improves, I will tell all the accounts to Basoo and explain him what to do on the day of Sankranti...

Two hours before the sun rise, Sonappa awakened his son... Basoo, in anxiety, couldn't sleep whole night, and he was just now, feeling sleepy... When awakened, he was frightened and suddenly sat up on the bed... His all four children were in deep sleep... Sonappa told that he must take bath... Basoo bathed him and helped him to put on his blue shirt and wore him his yellow turban... Then Basoo also bathed and put on a washed dhoti and shirt... Sonappa told Basoo to put on a cap. Basoo wore his cap... Now Sonappa told Basoo to make haste... Sonappa took the

bag with worshipping materials in his left hand... Basoo lifted him, and made him sit on his shoulders, and held his left thigh tightly, with his left hand. Then he took the pickaxe and the pot in his right hand, and walked hurriedly towards the field... Basoo was all happy... spring of joy was pouring in his mind... While he walked carrying Sonappa, a few dogs felt the scene very strange, and they chased him barking... Basoo shouted back at them and gave his identity... The dogs recognizing him, told to themselves... hey... this is our Basoo only... and disappointed they, went away in search of some other interesting adventures... Basoo carried Sonappa enthusiastically to the field... He thought that, Sonappa would show the place where he hid the wealth buried and then he should put Sonappa down and make him sit there... After reaching the field, Basoo asked Sonappa,

`Yappa... where is that place... Where should I put you down...?'

But Sonappa kept on telling `take me to our field and then put me down... put me down only in our field...`.

Basoo stood, and chiding Sonappa, told, `Hey... yappa... have you forgotten your own field...? I am standing right there in our field... This is our field only`.

Telling so he put Sonappa down, and made him sit... Sonappa cried and told repeatedly, that it was not their field at all... Basoo laughed, and teased Sonappa for having forgotten his own field, and said,

`Yey yappa... you came to this field last year on Snkramana... thereafter you came here for harvesting... and then for carrying the bags of jowar. And you also came to collect the mango fruits... Within these six to eight months, did you forget this field...?' When Basoo referred to mango fruits, Sonappa immediately told stammering, `Haam... haam... where is that tree... Take me to that tree immediately...`.

Basoo, then suddenly understood the reason for Sonappa's confusion...

`Haam... now I came to know the reason for your confusion... You are not recognizing the field because of the mango tree...`.

Sonappa asked again and again, `Haam... ham... where that mango tree is...? Take me to that mango tree...?'

Basoo told elaborately to explain Sonappa, `A thing happened yappa... when you slept by this paralysis, I urgently needed money for your medicine... For that, and also, as the crop suffered due to the shadow of the tree in the middle of the field, myself and Kenchappakaka decided to cut the mango tree... We sold the timber and distributed the money to each ownership holder... I got money for your medicine and the field also became clean...`.

Listening to Basoo's narration, Sonappa wailed loudly 'Hwaaam...', as to be heard miles away from there, and, he fell with his face downwards, on his belly, unconscious... Basoo was shocked and frightened... Turning Sonappa, flat, laying him on his back, he called shouting continuously, 'Yey yappa... what happened... yappa... get up yappa... get up yappa...'.

All the nerves in the body of Sonappa were pulled tightly, and his body was lying as a dead wood, with his eyes remaining wide open...! And, in that dim of the dawn, Basoo, shocked and all drained out, pale and sapless, was sitting immobile, like a statue, by the side of tightly stretching stone like body of Sonappa... Basoo sat blinking his dull lifeless eyes, and intently staring at the farthest... seeing nothingness...!

And... there was enough time for the sun of Sankranti to arise and see such a scene laid here...