

In The Domain Of White Herons...

Parivya had left the house three days back...

And... he must be searched wherever the flocks of white herons were seen!

`Ha ho... you white herons... come down come down you white herons...! Ayyo... They have picked my land and lifted the well I dug... and and... look... they are carrying my field... my brothers...! Please come quickly... catch them... huryo...', shouting so, Parivya ran to catch the flocks of white herons... How could he catch them...? They fly away... `phurr...' and Parivya would cry loudly imploring them... And he would continue to run again in search of the flocks of white herons... The people that met Santarama on the way, told all these details...

Santarama, wandering in search of his father Parivya, was tired and feeling exhausted... And there, in the house, his grandmother Paravva was almost on death bed... and her condition was very critical... She was rudely handled by the police... Since that day she was lying in a semiconscious state... sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious... And her consciousness was also something like a trance... sometimes imagining Bhadragowda before, would tell, `Ahaha... you the son of my rival wife... come... come and see this document...'. And some other time, she would wail in pain, `Ayyayyo...', and would meekly beseech somebody with folded hands, sobbing and shedding tears, `No no... don't kill my timid son... Yappa... I bow down to your feet...', `Please understand yappa... my son had burnt his blood only to cultivate that barren land... please don't kill him...'. Paravva didn't take any food for last two days... and today morning, with much perseverance by Santarama, she took a few spoons of glucose water...

Santarama came out and was wandering from the morning... all around and away from the village in search of his father, by searching the flocks of white herons... Then he would suddenly remember Geeta... Then he would speak to himself with disgust, `Hoom... all the same... the same blood...! They must all be burnt... look... how cruel is this Belagavi...'... and he bit his lips in anger...

Hoom... but each house of our village had been maintaining close relationship with that very cruel Belagavi... Large number of blood relatives of this village Brahmines live in that Belagavi... and the relatives of Lingayata gowdas...! They are also plenty there... some are in DC's office, some are police, and some are traders keeping large mundi merchants, keeping shops and stalls... And a few from here have opened foundry and jinning mills... They had taken a large number of people to work in their foundries and mills from this village only... Some more people had built big houses and given them on rent...

Such Belagavi, a close relative of his own village, came under the imprecation of Santarama... If there were only thatched huts in Belagavi, Santarama would have already burnt them all... as he once did during his childhood, burning two huts by a magnifying lens... But this cruel Belagavi was all fortified in the concrete... and the concrete you know... was not inflammable...! Santarama spit, 'thoo...' with utter disgust... Walking directionless under the scorching sun, Santarama would look around, if there was any flock of white herons in the surrounding...

All these were the pathetic informations about Parivya of this village, who became lunatic and fleeing wildly, day and night in search of the flocks of white herons...! Parivya was the son of Paravva, of the caste of outer street... Yalya was the husband of this Paravva... The people of the outer street, holigeri, would talk about the good luck of Paravva, for she could manage to be the concubine of the village chief, Ramanagowda... People of other streets would talk whispering, secretly among themselves, about this news as an example of debauchery of the Gowda... Paravva used to call Parivya, when he was young, as Paragowda... The neighbouring women, to tease Paravva, and also to satiate their jealousy, would ask her, 'Ayya... you call this, your son, as Paragowda... tell us... of which village is this Parivya a gowda...?' Paravva would answer those women vehemently, 'Gowda of which village...? He is gowda of this village only... Don't you know... that son of a gowda will be a gowda only... Isn't it...?' Her counter question would definitely burn the viscera of those who tried to tease her... Paravva's husband, Yalya, would come to the Wade of Gowda daily morning, and would sit there, outside the Wade... And he would be running under the orders of Gowda here and there... to call this or that man... as an attender of Gowda... He would promptly serve as the legs for Gowda's orders...

When Parivya reached his twenty five, he began to cultivate the stony mound, called, *maradi*, of the Gowda. Yalya actually had to pay the rent for that stony land... But he never paid a single pai... Gowda also didn't demand for it... The Gowda knew that Yalya could never cultivate that stony terrain and didn't grow even a handful grains... The thorny shrubs and the stones in the land... frightened Yalya, and he promptly returned to the house, uttering, 'Yey... is it ever possible to cultivate such stony and thorny land... Who could ever call this as a cultivable field...?' The rents for the land, Yalya had to pay to Gowda were equated to the free services he rendered to Gowda... And the household expenses for food and clothing of the family were all met by Paravva herself... And the leather obtained from the dead cattle, whenever available, provided Yalya some arrack to warm his throat... In nut shell, the life of Yalya was without any botherations and could be considered as a happy one... Yalya became old aged prematurely, Gowda also became aged gradually... But Paravva became aged slowly... Parivya came of the age... Paravva chose a girl from her street only, and married Parivya with her... and got him a partner in the bed... Her name was Malli... It now became difficult to provide for the expenses of the household for Parivya... And moreover, the dead cattle now, were not available freely, as they were sold for money by the owners...! Then, Parivya thought of cultivating the stony mound of the Gowda...

Yalya said his son, 'What...! Are you going to cultivate that stony land...?Are you mad or what...! Who told you that it a cultivable land...? It is none less than any stony quarry...! How can you grow any crop there...?'

'Didn't I see that land...? As we took it for rent, we must cultivate it... Why should we leave it idle...? We may get very little in the beginning... But as we go on cleaning and cultivating it... we may get enough to feed us later... Moreover, when I don't get any coolie, what to do sitting idle in the house...?', Parivya argued with his father to strengthen his conviction of cultivating the land. He went for coolie till the afternoon, and went to the maradi in the afternoon... There were thorny shrubs all over the land as Yalya told to him... And who would say that there should not be stones in a maradi...! Stones had to be there, and they were definitely there...! When Parivya inspected the land, he felt, that the words of his father were just to hinder him...! Is it not possible to remove these shrubs...? Can't these stones be removed if I mind...? thinking so, Parivya looked at his arms with confidence...

In the evening, from the maradi of the Gowda, he came straight way to blacksmith Kalappa's yard... He waited at a distance, away from the others, and called, 'Kalappanna...'. Kalappa, pushing a piece of iron into the burning hearth, turned to look Parivya, and asked,

'What do you want...?'

'Nothing more Kalappanna... I wanted a pickaxe and a *sanike*, the tool to remove the soil...'.

'Pickaxe and sanikee...? Why do you need them? Is your mother dead...?'

Parivya answered, 'No no Kalappanna... our old woman is alright...', then someone of those sitting there asked, 'then... did your father Yalya die...? What happened to him...?' Parivya became angry, and he said curtly, 'Yey... not like that... I want them for the work in the field...', as Parivya strted to tell, all the men sitting there began to laugh and told... 'Yey... you are really an intelligent labor...! The people who hire you for work would give you the tools to work... Why should you carry them yourself...?'

Then Parivya told his decision of cultivating the stony mound of the Gowda... The men sitting there laughed loudly again for no reason. When all of them had their laughter, Kalappa asked, 'For that... what should I do...? Go and ask your mother... If she asks for picaxe and sanaki, the Gowda would readily give her... then you don't need any blacksmith and you don't need any iron...', telling so Kalappa made all there to laugh again... Parivya felt his body burning with anger... Let it be... It is their reign now... he thought and consoled himself, and pleaded again politely before Kalappa, for the tools... Kalappa put the question, 'Hoom... but how about the money...?' Parivya requested, 'Please give on credit... I shall pay you within one month earning by my labor...'.

`Yey... you fool... get lost... He tells... he is going to cultivate the land... and I must give him all the tools for that on credit...! Go and tell your old woman... She would suggest some way out... By that you can also lead a comfortable life sitting under the shadow of the roof, as your father could manage...', telling so, he said to the man pulling the bellow, `Yey... stop pulling the bellow', and took out the red hot iron by tongs and holding it on the anvil, he asked the person with hammer to hammer it...

Parivya waited for two – three minutes there... stood like a pillar, staring the hammering of the red hot iron. And then heaving a sigh, he left for the hut in the outer street of the village... Parivya came to the hut and sat leaning to the wall of the hut, in disgust... Yalya, sitting at an arm distance from Parivya, was gasping the breath with great difficulty, and wheezing due to asthma. Managing his gasping, he looked intently at Parivya... Then the wheezing of Yalya paused and Parivya alarmed, suddenly looked at his father with concern... Yalya then again wheezing, managed his breathing, and asked Parivya, teasingly, `Hhaam... you saw your stony land...? That is why you are sitting like this... with head drooping... and with so much of disgust...! I told you then only... it is no better than a stony quarry...'. Parivya suddenly retorted with anger, `Hey... sit quiet keeping your mouth shut... Not finding any strain of stamina in your buttocks... you left that land barren and uncultivated... now comes here to tease me...'. Paravva seeing Parivya immersed in disgust, worried and asked him with concern, `Yappa... what is the matter...?' Parivya retorted to her also in the same tone, as he did to Yalya,

`Hey... nothing... It is already enough from you... You needn't worry'.

Paravva was not the one that would leave the things to happen on their own... She said, `If there is nothing to worry... then why are you doing like a thorn pricked dog...? Why can't you tell the things openly...'.

Parivya retorted with disgust, `Hoom... tell openly...! The people there are throwing dung at me openly... I can't narrate all those here before you...!', and he with reluctance, he said the slanderous experience he underwent in the blacksmith Kalappa's smithyard, when he went there for a pickaxe and the other tool...

`Haam... that Kalya said so...! Just before seven to eight years tamma... he used to run behind me with infatuation... He must also have reached his autumn I suppose... Tamma has he lost all his teeth in his mouth...?', as Paravva told, Parivya was all irritated and blasted, `Keep quiet... they say... if the grandmother was worried about a roll of cotton, the granddaughter worried for her paramour...! You are chattering irrelevantly...', he gave vent to his anger making his face red... Paravva was astonished by his anger and uttering `Ayya...', she sat with her mouth open... Yalya, who didn't talk since Parivya rebuked him, now, who knows why, started to laugh loudly till his breath was stuck... Then he coughed vigorously as if his life was liberating through his crown, and then he laid wheezing vigorously... Parivya and Paravva were alarmed by his fierce cough, and felt relieved when he fell on his belly to wheeze... They both sat with their heads drooped,

worrying... Malli, the wife of Parivya, prepared tea for her wheezing father-in-law, and brought it in a cup to him... Yalya producing a sound of satisfaction 'hraam...', sat up, and drank it, gulping loudly...

Paravva looked bitterly at Malli, her daughter-in-law, that came to give her tea... She was hurt by Parivya's taunts... But, for what reason who knows... Paravva felt somehow convinced that, Malli, the devoted virtuous wife of this Parivya, herself was responsible for her son to criticize his own mother, so vehemently... She suddenly exploded and attacked Parivya, 'Ohoho... go and lick what you think as sacred... is this... this one... wife of yours, you think as the most virtuous...! A dickhead... ham...! criticizes his own mother... a fool...'. Parivya uttering, 'Thoo...', went out grumbling... Yalya actually longed for a hearty laugh... but thinking that, the cough and asthmatic attack may take over him if laughed, and therefore, he carefully converted that laughter into a meager smile...

When Parivya came for his dinner in the night, Paravva arranged for a pickaxe, a dragging tool, saniki, and also a broad sickle, and kept them at the door of the hut itself... In the evening, soon after Parivya went out grumbling against his mother, Paravva also stood up and went out straight way to the wade of the Gowda... She stood at the cattle yard as usual, and called the Gowda, 'Gowdare...'. It was evening... Gowdaru was listening to the 'Krishiranga', the field of agriculture, a daily routine program broadcasted through Akashawani Dharwad... Amid the voices of those radio artists, Gowda could hear this familiar voice, calling, 'gowdare', and he shouted to ask, sitting at his seat only, 'who is it...?'

'It is me... Please come out a bit...'

Gowdaru could immediately recognize the voice, and he came out asking, 'what made you come to me...'. Wife of Gowada, Savantrevva, also came out saying, 'who is it...', and looking at this Paravva, she went back contorting her face... She put off the radio so that she would be able to hear the conversation between Gowada and Paravva... When Gowda came there, Paravva asked, 'I need a few things... tell me whether you would give me those or not...'

Gowada asked, 'What are they...?'

'Tell me first... whether you would give me or not...'

'Hey... what this Paravee is...! Tell me what actually you want... I shall give if available with me...', Gowda said.

'Your son... Paragowda... wants to cultivate the stony mound you gave to cultivate... He wants pickaxe, saniki and a sickle...'. Gowda immediately arranged for them all and she brought them jubilantly... Then she thought to herself... that Parivya taunts me... I could arrange for these implements... could Malli arrange these...? But still... this my dickhead son scolds me only...!'

Parivya saw the implements kept at the door... He felt happy, came in, sat and waited for his dinner... Paravva, took a key tied to her ududara, a thread tied at her waist, and was struggling to open the lock of an old iron box... As the lock was not operated for years together, it rusted, and it was not opening at all... Malli, seeing her struggle for some time, asked Paravva, 'What is that...?'

'Nothing... This lock... it is not opening at all by the key...', Paravva said. Malli sat there by the side of Paravva, and took the key from Paravva... She herself tried now... Umhoom... the lock didn't respond to her also... Paravva told, 'go and bring some kerosene oil...'. Malli brought a lamp and poured some kerosene oil into the mouth of the lock... The rust in the lock dissolved and red drops of the oil trickled out... She poured some more kerosene... Paravva now turned the key with force, and the lock opened, making a clicking sound... Paravva uttered 'Haam...' with satisfaction, and as to avoid Malli seeing the contents of the box, told her, 'Haam... Privya is waiting for his dinner... Hoom... go quickly... give him his plate of roti...'. Malli, with disappointment, went towards the fire place... Paravva slowly opened that old tin box, taking utmost care so that it made very little sound... She moved her hand blindly in the box, sitting at the corner of the hut, under dull light... She got hold of something she intended to find in the box and uttered 'Hoom...' with satisfaction...and took out something from the box, kept hidden in her blouse... Then, locked the box again and pushed it to the corner... Uttering 'hoom...' with sense of pride, she moved near Parivya...

Parivya was eating roti with chilly paste... gulping the saliva secreted profusely in the mouth with roti... making sound... Paravva stood before him, took out the thing she hid in her blouse, and suddenly threw a bundle before him, saying, 'Hoom... take these...'. They were notes of ten rupees... turned reddish, as the rust of the box smeared on them... When the notes fell before him, Parivya was about to put a piece of roti into his mouth... He withheld it and looked at Paravva lifting his face with surprise... Paravva was brimming with pride... Yalya looking at the currency notes thrown before Parivya, was horrified and suddenly sat up... he was frightened as if he saw something unidentified like the death itself... Malli came there asking, 'Do you need somemore chillypaste...?' and seeing the notes of ten rupees lying before Parivya, she was also frightened and stood still... Paravva felt jubilant about some victory, and she looked intently at Malli, as if challenging her... She said, 'Look tamma... just pickaxe and a dragging tool would not suffice for the cultivation... to cultivate that land... you also need oxen and implements... Take this money and make arrangements for them as well...'. When Parivya sat still and silently... She continued... 'Why are you sitting like this...immobile! I kept this amount given by the Gowda in that iron box... for the our funeral, of mine and of the old man... That will happen somehow... First solve your problems regarding the cultivation of that land...'. Telling so, Paravva sat there by his side and caressed his back...

Parivya started to cultivate... About fifteen days after Parivya began to cultivate, the asthmatic attack of Yalya worsened and it became very severe... He sat leaning the wall of the hut, drawn in and driven out the breath making loud sounds, 'huff... huff...', it was so loud that it simulated the sounds of a blowing bellow in blacksmiths' yard... Breathing with great difficulty and wheezing, Yalya ultimately stopped both breathing and wheezing... It was afternoon, and Parivya was in his work in Gowda's stony mound... When Yalya stopped his breathing, Paravva fell unconscious... and when gained her consciousness, she sat silently by the side of the body of Yalya, showing only nonverbal responses to the people who talked to her about the death of Yalya... Malli and other women of the neighborhood wept singing the bravery and greatness of Yalya, and made his death an event in the outer street... The *kaudi*, a thick blanket like rag, stitched by Paravva, joining small pieces of old and new cloths was there to carry Yalya to the burial ground... Five men went to the burial ground and dug a pit to place him... Yalya was laid on the kaudi and men of outer street lifted picking the corners of it, and carried him to the burial ground... Paravva and all the women of the outer street went with the body, weeping... and they all poured handful of soil to burry him... This was how all of Yalya finished...

That very year Malli became pregnant... Paravva was all affectionate to that pregnant Malli... She forbid Malli to go to well to fetch water and made Parivya bring water from the well... And the work of Parivya in the stony mound of Gowda progressed... He purchased two old oxen and managed the cultivation works... And the rains were also proper... Six gunny bags and all the earthen pots in the house could be filled with the jowar harvested from that stony mound... The information that their stony mound was cultivated, and Parivya harvested better crop from that land reached the Gowda. He just said, 'It is alright... good thing happened'. The Gowda didn't show much interest about this... But Savantrevva, his wife, grumbled about it... Gowda had a son who was about four years elder to Parivya... He was married and settled at Thalakawadi, in Belagavi... He built a building consisting of twenty rooms, and two big houses in Belagavi. The rooms were rented to the students going to the colleges in Belagavi, and one house was also rented out. He was getting large sum as rent and lived comfortably in Belagavi... If at all he happened to live in Betageri itself, he wouldn't have permitted Parivya to cultivate their stony mound without giving rent of the land...

During such times only, once, Paravva went to the Gowda, called him to the cattle yard... She reminded him of his amatory with her during his youth...

Gowda gave out a hearty laughter, and told, 'Those were my youthful days... Savantri didn't yet come to our house...'

Paravva retorted, 'why... even after Savantrakka came to your house, you used to visit me atleast once in a week... You started to do so when Savantrakka went for the delivery of Bhadragowda...'

Gowda didn't want this discussion to proceed further and told, 'Haam... ham... then the days were like that... Hum...! why have you called me... Do you want those olden days to happen again...?'

'Hey... where is that sap in you and me...! It just came to my mind... and I wanted to know whether you too remember it... I tell you Gowda... when a woman gets entangled with a man, she would never forget things with him... but the man would forget all that within short time...'

'Yey... your memories are still with me... And... and... I have been helping you through out...'

'Haam... you gave money often... But now I have come to ask something special... do you give me...'

'I have fulfilled your demands always... last time you came and asked for pickaxe and some other implements... Didn't I gave them readily...? What do you want now...? Ask...'

Then Paravva threw her demand... 'Gowda... that land of yours... our Parivya is cultivating... You know... it is a stony mound... as good as a stony quarry... It is barren and even wild grass wouldn't grow there... And you have lands surrounding the whole village... And you know... Parivya is nobody else... he is as good as your son... He is struggling to cultivate it and he would get just enough to fill his belly... Show mercy on that boy also... Give that piece of stony land of yours to him...'

When Paravva persisted on her request, Gowda without any seriousness, said, 'OK... alright...'. But Paravva as if knowing the legal procedures, told him, 'Haam ham... Just saying OK is not enough... give it in writing... That would give me confidence'. Gowda laughed a hearty laugh saying, 'Hey... you have become very shrewd in legal matters...', and he took a white paper, wrote something on it and handed it over to her.

Paravva took that paper, rolled it and pushed in her blouse and covered it with the seragu of her sari... Then she came to her hut, jubilantly... She had shown that paper to Parivya and warned him not to tell this to anybody in the village. She kept it safely in her tin box and locked it... But Parivya didn't believe it... Paravva narrated whole episode that took place there in the cattle yard of the Gowda... telling what she said to Gowda, and what Gowda said to her... enacting it totally without any inhibition, with tone and facial expressions. Parivya was actually hurt at his heart and he kept quiet, remaining unenthusiastic. Paravva felt that Parivya still disbelieved it and she told him, 'If you have still disbelief regarding this... go and ask the Gowda regarding this, yourself...'. The Parivya nodded silently and went out... Just after fifteen days of this, Malli gave birth to a male child... Paravva called that child as Santaramagowda...

Santaramagowda might be two years old... then, Gowda suffered severe paralytic stroke... It was still twenty days for *Karahunnive* to come... His right half of the body was fully paralyzed... his mouth was pulled towards a side and saliva trickled through the corner of his mouth... The right

eye was pulled tightly and closed... His left eye was unusually opened, widely... as if, frightened by seeing something aghasting...! A constant expression of fright reigned in his open left eye... Whenever the people came to visit Gowda, they had to wait ahead in the cattle yard, and had to call him to draw his attention, 'Gowdare...'. The Gowda would ask then, 'who is that...', and then, on his permission, they would walk in with fear, to meet him... But now, the people rushed to the hall he was sleeping, without any fear or formality... and would see the Gowda lying on the bed paralyzed, uttering meaningless sounds, 'yaam... hyaam...'. Then they would say carelessly, 'Hey... look at this Gowdappa... how he is lying fully disabled...! Chu..cchu..cchu... poor fellow...!' And after going out, they would tell others, that the Gowda wouldn't survive any longer... Paravva would come daily and sit in the cattle yard... As she was belonged to the caste of the outer street, she couldn't go beyond the cattle yard to see the Gowda... She would eagerly waited for those who came out after seeing Gowdappa, and ask them, 'Yappa... how is our Gowdappa...?' They would say, laughing derogatorily, 'Haam... your Gowdappa...', walk and utter disinterestedly, 'the same...'. She sit there worrying, for hours and hours together, frequently uttering to herself, 'Who knows... how this Gowdappa is doing...!'

Bhdragowda, son of the elder Gowda, living in Belagavi came next day from Belagavi... He wanted to take the Gowda to Belagavi for the treatment there... But the Gowda, crying 'woom woom', wriggled in the bed, and hitting on the bed by his left hand, he signaled that he wanted to remain there in Betageri only...! It appeared that the Gowda decided to die in Betageri itself...! Bhdragowda then brought a doctor from Belagavi and arranged for the treatment of his father... A patent oil prepared by a desi vaidya of Ankola was also brought and Gowda's body was massaged regularly... The doctor and Bhdragowda visited Betageri frequently... The medicines were regularly administered... The doctor in his third week visit ascertained, telling, 'Hey... there is lot of improvement in the condition of the Gowda...', and he prescribed one more tablet to be taken before bed... After the check up and prescriptions and etcetera, the doctor went back to Belagavi... And in Betageri, about three hours after the departure of the doctor, the Gowda passed away... The body of the Gowda was kept preserved for two days as a large number of his relatives had to come from far off places... Paravva didn't take any food till the funeral of the Gowda was over... She was uttering to herself frequently, 'hoom... this Gowdappa finished his voyage...', something like a chant...

Before knowing the cruelty of this Belagavi, the important event that took place in the household of Paravva, was the digging of an open well in the land of stony mound, by Parivya... You could call it ambition, or even a longing... they were exemplary ones of this Parivya...! Just a boy born in the caste outer street, and a poor family... he was destined to bring dead cattle as if a gain of great wealth, and spend his life in the tanning of the leather obtained from that dead cattle...! Now look what did he achieve...! He became renowned among the farmers... Before digging this well... what happened was, he went to the stream flowing by the side of the village, along with his son for bathing... There, incidentally, he involved in the children's play... played by his son

and his friends... they dug a well in the sand at the bank of the stream... The inflorescences of aloe vera were brought and planted like the trees in the sandy patches, to make gardens during the play... They watered those trees in the garden, from the well they dug...! That children's play had stimulated Parivya... The mock well of the children's play was there and the well dug in the stony terrain containing clean deep dark waters was here...! While digging the well, when the water was first shown, Paravva asked for that muddy turbid water only and drank it happily...! Then, as if in ecstasy, she stood facing Yallamma temple near Saundatti and shouted excitedly... *Udho Udho Udho...* , hailing the deity Yallamma... She prostrated in that direction... Dumbstruck by his mother's ecstasy, Parivya shedding tears, climbed down to remove the mud from the well he was digging... Santarama was playing the game of digging well and cultivating a garden, in the mud lying at the edge of the well...

After digging the well, the people in the village began to talk differently... Some people told:

'Look at this Parivya... He must be a fool I say... Haam... he has dug a well in someone else's land... The stony land with a well filled with water would be wonderful for the cultivation of horticultural crops... Does Bhadrage Gowda ever allow him to continue there...?'

Some others told, 'When he had dug a well... why should he leave the land...! The land should be fixed for himself... No Bhadrage Gowda or none of the sort...!'

Somebody raised the problem of the ownership of the land before Paravva... Paravva stared at him with anger, with her eyes widely opened, and she scolded him... 'You... come... haam... here comes the son of my rival wife and tells the land is not yours...! You kid... you should understand... Bhadrage Gowda is not maddened to dig a well in somebody else's land... That elder Gowda... we must ever remember him before we light the lamp in the evenings... He gave that land to my son, in writing... Due to his blessings only we could get water in that stony land... otherwise... was it ever possible tamma...?' This information was spread in the whole of the village... Somebody went to Bhadrage Gowda on purpose, and narrated all these rumors to him... Bhadrage Gowda was a shrewd man... He knew that if he attempted to evacuate Parivya from the land hastily, due to tenancy act, it would have become more complicated. Therefore for the time being Bhadrage Gowda decided to keep quiet. To the people who came to inform him about Parivya, he just told, 'let the sheep go on grazing and let it become more and more fattened...'. And gradually, the people almost forgot that stony mound of Gowda cultivated by Parivya...

And amid such tumults, the grandson of Paravva stood up a new tumult...! Santarama was then studying in third standard... Paravva was much worried about the suffering of her grandson, regarding his going to the school daily... Many a times, she called him, feeling very sorry for him, would tell, 'Hey... yappa... my child... come here... Stay back in the hut only eating three times freely... Throw that school away... Eat your food and then come and be seated by my side...'. But Santaram was not agreeing to his grandmother's advice... He would say, 'No

yamma... I want to go to school...'. Then Paravva would celebrate her grandson's words, telling, 'Au... au my saradara...!', and would kiss him on his face...

How it came to Santaram's hand nobody knew... anyway, somehow, a magnifying glass reached Santaram's hands. He saw through it, the people who were wearing white clothes and exclaimed... 'Alalala... look at his clothes... hey... how much white they look...!' He told Paravva about it, 'Yamma... Look at the clothes of that man going there... His clothes look as white as the white herons...', and gave that glass to her hand. She tried to see through it... Her eyes were all dull due to cataract, and couldn't see anything that Santarama suggested... She told, 'Hey... you are telling me lies... I am not seeing anything you told...'. Santarama snatched the glass from her hand, saying, 'Hey yamma... your eyes are blinded...'.

Later, Santarama shifted from this game of seeing through the glass to another game... He held the magnifying glass in between his hand and the sun focusing the sun on his skin... He felt the burning of his skin... He played this game in the school, and burnt hands of his schoolmates... The summer vacation that came brought boredom to Santarama, as there were nobody for him to burn their hands...! He had that magnifying glass as the only companion... One afternoon, he held the magnifying glass in front of the sun, focusing the sun on the thatch of their hut... It appeared that it smoked there... Santarama felt it as a terrible fun, and held the glass like that only... There after, the breeze of wind enlivened the spark and the thatch caught fire, and started to burn... Santarama fled away... No further efforts of any magnifying glass were needed for the burning of the hut...! And there was plenty of wind also... Malli came out and started to wail and called Paravva in alarm... 'Yattee..., mother in-law... come out... come out immediately...'. Paravva came out in haste lifting her tin box only... The neighbors sprinkled water to their own huts... Another neighboring hut also caught fire... All the people started to howl with fright... And ultimately the menace of fire was over just by burning two huts, one of Parivya and a neighboring one...

Parivya thrashed Santarama in rage... Paravva took him in her arms and protected... She shouted at her son, telling, 'Do the burnt huts stand up again if you beat him like this...? Now think of ahead...'. Procuring a few bamboos, they stood up two temporary shelters at the evening itself... The next day, Kulakarni and Police from Kulgod thana came and recorded the losses... Now, those huts which were not damaged had to incur loss... They lost three to four hens...! After four days, two persons, wearing white clothes came to the village and sat in chavadi. They sent word to Parivya and his neighbor... They advised these telling, 'Look we will get you compensation for your losses... But you have to sign a statement accusing somebody, whom we suggest, as responsible for this incident... We know who are they... We prepare the statements... you just sign it or put your thumb impression... We will give complaint to the police against those culprits... And we will look after all the things about the case... you will get enough compensation also...'. Parivya was worried that his son may get entangled in the case... and with that fear, he told folding his hands, 'Hey... we don't want to give complaint against any body...'. They continued their preached further... But these didn't oblige them... Then, they said to

Kulakarni, 'Kulakarni sir, forward their applications to the government... we would take care of them there...'. Kulakarni called Parivya and the other to a side, and told them, '...look they are party persons... They have good hold in the government... They can get you good compensations... What I suggest is... give them their expenses to go to Bangalore... Government is there know...'. It happened good that Paravva didn't allow her box to burn... It had some more money... Parivya took two hundred rupees and gave them to Kulakarni... Kulakarni got Parivya and other's thumb impressions at five to six places on a set of papers... Later Kulakarni kept on saying that soon they would be getting the compensation... But it never came... They left waiting for that money... Parivya yoking bullock cart brought stones from the nearby hill... He built a stony house in the place of his burnt hut... It was the first stony structure in the outer street... Paravva celebrated it and attributed this to her grandson Santarama...

After burning of the hut, Parivya thought of discontinuing the schooling of Santarama... He felt convinced that, if someone goes to school, would get the destructive instruments like that magnifying glasses, and will tend to involve in destructive activities...! But, Paravva, who wanted her grandson to stay back in the house without going to the school, now opposed Parivya, and told firmly that Santarama, should go to the school... Parivya felt disgust about his mother... and thought that this old woman was determined to oppose all my ideas and block them... He felt unhappy about it and went away grumbling in anger... Santarama passed his SSLC from the high school in Betageri village... Then he insisted that he would go to Belagavi to continue his college education...Parivya objected to it with an equal zeal... Tug of war stood up between father and son... Santarama told, 'You needn't give me any money... I get freeship... and I shall also get scholarship... I want to go...'. Parivya countered it by telling, 'Freeship geeship... I don't know them all... Nothing is required... Keep lying in the village... We have dug the well... Just work in the farm...It would be more than enough...'. Ultimately Paravva arbitrated between them... and it was decided in favor of Santarama... Santarama went to Belagavi for his college education...

Santarama got his name changed as S. Ram, by tendering an affidavit before a notary... Putting on pant and bush coat, with hair neatly cropped... if he went in the street of Belagavi, who would recognize him as Santarama of our village...? He was handsome to look at... Paravva was frequently saying about Santarama, when he was a child, 'my Santaramagowda resembles our Gowda himself...!' Such S. Ram, once by chance, met miss Geeta, the daughter of Bhadragowda, and it led them both to become acquainted with each other... It was in the library of Lingaraj College... the library clerk, who was distributing identity cards to the students, called loudly, 'S. Ram Betageri... who is it...?' This Santaram hurriedly went to the clerk saying, 'It is me sir...', and collected his identity card... Geeta also standing there for her card, looked curiously at S.Ram... She thought... he is in my class only... he must be from our village only... With curiosity she went to him and casually asked, 'where from are you coming...?' She was a girl from Belagavi... it was very normal for her to talk to any boy... But... this Santaram, coming from a small village, sweated throughout his body... His heart made dhad... dhad... sound...!

When this unknown, strange girl came to him and talked freely with him, who just came from a small village like Betageri, he was almost pushed into bewilderment... Wiping the sweat on his face, he told, 'Betageri...'. Her face blossomed with joy on hearing S.Ram, and she said, 'Haam... That is what I thought... When the clerk announced your name I thought you must be from our village only... I guessed it right...'. Then she asked, 'Where are you staying...?' Santarama answered, 'In the boys' hostel here...', and he asked her, 'and... to whom are you related in our village...?' Geeta answered, 'Have you heard of Ramanagowda... he is no more now... he passed away long back... I am his granddaughter... daughter of his son, Bhadrageowda...'. On hearing that Geeta was daughter of Bhadrageowda, S.Ram experienced a sort of fear within himself, a sudden chill aroused in him that spread in his spine...! And he wanted to move quickly away from her, and said, 'I must go now...'. Geeta said, 'Hey... what is the hurry... anyhow there are no classes now...'. But S.Ram saying, 'No... I have got some urgent work...', moved away...

Who knows... what memories of Betageri were haunting that Geeta... She, might have visited Betageri rarely... sometime during some summer vacation in the past... Perhaps those haunting memories of Betageri might have pulled Geeta towards S. Rama... She developed great affection for S. Ram... She would stop him and speak to him whenever and wherever she found him, in the college campus or at the outside... She would ask him about the village... whether he had been to village... and so on... Year after year, their association became intense and it was taken by others as something special, and their news spread throughout the college campus... to such an extent that... their names started to appear on the walls of urinals... writings like, S.Ram + G.B.Patil... and so on... Santarama always wished and tried to keep aloof, away from all these complications... He thought that, he should leave Belagavi just with a good degree certificate... But the memory of Geeta would drag him nearer, inspite of his efforts to keep himself aloof... Besides, both of them passed the examinations regularly, and chose same subjects as major and minor for their studies, and both studied together in the same class...

And more over... what can anybody tell about the minds...!? In the next two years, the minds of these hot blooded youths were all rollicking... Santarama didn't ever remember his caste... Geeta, the daughter of Bhadrageowda thought that, life is a beautiful song, and she readied herself to join her shoulders with S.Ram to run the happy cart of their life... One day, Geeta persuaded S.Ram to come to their home... Santarama tried to avoid his going to her house due to his timidity... He told a number of reasons to avoid his visit to her house... Geeta didn't accept any of them... At last he clustered all his courage and went to her house... Geeta introduced him to her father, Bhadrageowda... He already heard of him this S. Ram, when Geeta told frequently about him to her mother... Now, as a boy from his village, and as he studied in the college where his daughter also studied, Bhadrageowda, out of curiosity, enquired S.Ram, 'You are from Betageri... Hoom... whose son you are...?' Now it came to the neck of Santarama... Then, compelled by inevitability, Santarama told the fact... The eyes of Bhadrageowda were suddenly raised... He uttered 'Haam...!' with a shock... Then he said, 'Ohoho...! You have become so much advanced to keep friendship

with my daughter...! Very good... very good...!' S.Ram shivered on hearing Bhadragowda... Bhadragowda coolly said him, 'You Santarama... son of Yalya... grandson of Paravva, my father's concubine... haven't you still remembered your identity...? After knowing your identity... you are still sitting here...! Do you expect some special treatment for you...?' Santarama immediately stood up from the chair and walked out... Before Geeta could come to the hall with the tea and biscuits from the kitchen, Santarama was already in the Congress road... Geeta asked her father with surprise, 'Pappa... did he go...?'

'Hoom... he had gone... If ever he sat further, I myself would have sent him, treating him with my chappals... You Geeta...what are doing...? If somebody is from our village, should he be our friend irrespective of his caste and other antecedents...? Do you know who that bastard is...? He is the son of cultivator of our stony mound, Parivya... there is an old woman of the caste of outer street... Paravva... She was the concubine of your grandfather... He is grandson of that woman... You are a thoughtless girl... You are bringing him to our house... Look... if you continue friendship with that bastard... it would not be tolerated... Mind it', Bhadragowda reprimanded Geeta... Then he told as if to himself, 'Wait... I will first kick out his father from that land he is cultivating... He dug a well as well... that is why I allowed him to enjoy the land for sometime... But looking all these now... It appears I have committed a mistake... and he has sent his son to study in a college also...!' Bhadragowda talked about his decision... Geeta shivered with fear...

S.Ram was boiling with insult... He was so angry that he wanted to burn that Bhadragowda... He remembered the magnifying glass of his childhood... Santarama thought... the house of this Bhadragowda is of concrete... It can't be burnt... He, putting on all white clothes... should only be burnt... Geeta appeared before his mind... I don't know whether she will speak with me hereafter... Santaram felt his head reeling... He came to his room in the hostel, and slept covering himself under the blanket... His roommate Shivalinga asked him, 'what happened Ramoo... are you not well...?'

'Haam Shivoo... it is just a headache...' answered Santarama... He remained stuck to the bed, and that night, he didn't even go for his dinner... The next two days, he didn't attend the classes... Geeta, on the very next day, when she came to the college, searched him in the class room, library and in canteen, everywhere... But she couldn't find him... The second day also she searched for him, and when he was not found again, she couldn't resist her mind, and enquired Ram's roommate, Shivalingappa. He told, 'Day before yesterday, he came to the room in the evening and slept... He tells it is just a headache... It seems... he is not having any fever...'.

'I want to see him... will you please take me to his room...?', Geeta requested. Shivoo knew about their friendship... He said her, 'Allright... come...', and took her to his room...

Geeta called Ram, 'come... let us go for a walk, some distance...'. Ram put on his pant and shirt and came out... Geeta and Ram walked silently... Clustering all her courage, with much efforts, Geeta said with a deep voice, 'Sorry Ram...'. Don't know why, Ram felt insulted further more...

`Look Geeta... I am of the caste of outer street... you are lingayata... your father... Bhadragowda is lingayata... I don't want any contact of you...', Ram expressed his insult by his illogical mumbling. His face was red with anger and he sweated profusely... He wiped off the sweat on his face by his hand kerchief... Geeta didn't respond immediately to his anger and remained silent... Again they both walked silently... They crossed Rex theater... Geeta began to speak softly... `Look Ramoo... leave aside those elders... I don't have any inhibition about these castes and antecedents... I sincerely feel all the people are alike... There is no need to be tamed by all these...', as Geeta went on telling, Santarama felt as if, Geeta stretched her hand into his bosom and caressing his heart softly... consoling him... Don't know why... tears burst in the eyes of Santarama... He stood still at the edge of the road... Geeta also stood... Santarama took Geeta's hand into his... Ha ha haa...! It was nothing less than a romantic cinema...! When the people moving on the road began to stare at them strangely, and even somebody teased them as Laila-Majnoo... Ram her hand, and he wiped his eyes by the left and right sleeves of his shirt... Both of them again walked... Geeta said, `Both of us are studying... After our education, it is enough if any one of us gets an employment...'. Santarama said `yes...', confidently, and now he again took her hand into his, without any hesitation, and held it firmly... They both crossed the statue of Kittur Channamma, and entered into the campus of court complex, and sat there on a bench...

After two months, Santarama received a letter from his village... After reading the letter, Santarama was deeply frightened... The letter said...

`your father Parappa had left home day before yesterday... on Friday... You must come immediately... Rest all in person... Santarama didn't understand anything, and without making out head or tail, he sat still with the letter in his hand... His head started to reel... Then he stood up suddenly, took a pair of clothes in suitcase, and ran to the bus stand... Catching a bus he came to Betageri... Soon after coming to the village, he came to know all the details...

It all happened eight to ten days back...

Bhadragowda came to Betageri from Belagavi... Soon after his arrival he invited the village accountant to his house for tea... He enquired the village accountant about their stony mound land, cultivated by Parivya...

`That stony mound land of yours sir...? Haam... for it Parappa Yallappa Harijan appears to be the tenant... If you can get a resignation letter from that tenant, I can remove his name as tenant in the records of the land, and I will record it as self cultivated...', the village accountant said. Bhadragowda nodded saying `Haam... ham...'. He was the man who drank soft waters of Belagavi... Inviting the village accountant, he came to know a soft way out for the problem of his stony mound land... Then he sent word to Parivya through somebody... Parivya came and standing in the cattle yard, called Bhadragowda, `Gowdara...'. Bhadragowda came out and sat on

the platform in the cattleshed... Parivya bowed down saying, 'I bow down to you yappa...'. Bhadragowda immediately started his attack and said :

'Yey Parivya... stop all this drama...'.

Parivya as if blind folded, said politely, 'Why do you say like this yappa... What did I do...?'

'Tell me now... Whose land you are cultivating...? Whom did you consult before digging a well in that land...? Don't you know that I am still alive...?'

Parivya sat down before the feet of Bhadragowda, that were held down the platform... and narrated politely... 'It is not like that my master... The elder Gowda, considering me as a poor man... thinking to provide me for my food and clothing... gave it to us in writing... We are eating a few lumps of food because of his kind deed yappa...'.

'Haam ham... eating four lumps of food...! And... you are sending your son to the college there in Belagavi... And he... that bastard... what is he doing...? Hiding his caste, and changing his name Santarama as S. Ram, or something like that... And he is flirting with the girls of higher castes...'. Hearing the tirade of Bhadragowda, Parivya felt his head reeling... a single stroke of Bhadragowda made him sapless... To tell something he opened his mouth and uttered, 'Yey...'. But Bhadragowda stopped him and shouted, 'What yey... you bastard... I thought of coming here after sending him to the jail... And now... if you put your thumb impressions on the papers I show, and stop cultivating our land, it will be alright... Otherwise... you know... the Hindalaga jail is very near only...'. Bhadragowda gave his second stroke. Parivya started to wriggle... He struggled in his mind thinking, what should I do now... what should I do now...! And ultimately, how he attained that courage god alone knows... he said, 'Look Gowdara... elder Gowdappa gave that land to us... He gave it in writing also... I shall not leave that land till I have his blessings...', telling so, Parivya came back to his house as if running... He felt utterly helpless and immersed in loathing... Paravva and Malli asked him about his meeting with Bhadragowda... and about his irritated state... Parivya didn't answer them, stood up suddenly and walked away to the land of that stony mound...

The next day, Bhadragowda went to the police station in Kulgod... Some one by name Kulakarni was the P.S.I., there... He wished him, 'Good morning sir...', and introduced himself, 'I am Bhadragowda of Betageri... son of late Ramanagowda... I am settled at Belagavi...'. Kulakarni uttering haam haam... welcomed him, 'come... be seated...'. When Bhadragowda sat in a chair, the PSI asked, 'What is the matter gowdare...? Have you any complaint to lodge...?' Bhadragowda bent over the table and narrated all the details of the land in low tone, and requested, '... you have to kindly help me to vacate him from that land...', and folded his hands dramatically... PSI saheb laughed loudly, 'Ha haa haa...' and said, 'Look sir... you are a gowda and I am a Kulakarni... How could it be right if we don't stand for each other...!' telling so the PSI laughed again... Bhadragowda felt relieved, said, 'Haam... it is very much correct... verymuch correct', and laughed. Then, Kulakarni sir said solemnly, 'Haam... now... tell me

gowdare... what is the estimate for this business...?'. For a moment, Bhadragowda didn't understand its meaning, and then suddenly flashed... He felt strange about the PSI in his mind... tells that we must stand for each other, and asks the estimate...! Then he told PSI, 'Please tell yourself... What I must tell is... this is not a case to expect much resistance... He is of the caste of outer street... none to support him...'. Kulakarni saheb replied, 'Look sir... we should also care for the risk we get entangled with... And more over, the higher ups in our department and the local MLA... all will always look at our hands and our pockets... Otherwise... you know... you are a gowda and I am a Kulakarni... and we should stand for each other... If the things were different, and not like this, I would have done your work without a single rupee you know...'. Playing a brief tug of war, that Kulakarni and Bhadragowda, settled it for one thousand... Bhadragowda immediately paid five hundred as advance, and Kulakarni took the responsibility of getting the thumb impression of Parivya, for the resignation letter...

Next day, as the day broke, the police van entered the village... Parivya, since Bhadragowda tackled him, day before yesterday, stayed much of the time in that land itself... He was also behaving like a lunatic... Sometimes he would weep loudly, looking at the well... and then, he would suddenly shout Udho udho udho... and would prostrate in the direction of the valley of deity Yallamma... He would look up towards the sky, and would cry and try to beseech the dead Ramanagowda, father of Rudragowda... 'Gowdara... you Gowdappa... yappa... look at me... save me from this destruction...'. Paravva now a worn out old woman, when came to know Bhadragowda's demand, she became terribly angry... She cursed Bhadragowda, 'Ayy ayya... you the son of my rival wife... had shown your wickedness ultimately...! You... the venomous son of rival wife... How could Paragowda leave that land...? Tell me... you the son of my rival wife... My Parivya abraded his body... abraded his body day and night... Then only that land became cultivable... Do you know... he had dug a well there... in that stony quarry... and more over... there is the paper tamma... there is a paper... My Gowda gave the land to Parivya... in writing...'. She narrated with anger and disgust, as if Bhadragowda was standing before her... moving her hand and head... Due to cataract, she was totally blind, and it was very easy for her to get anybody in her mind before her eyes... These days, she was regularly conversing with the dead Ramanagowda also...

Police came to the single stony house in the outer street, and asked for Parivya... Malli told that he left the house in the dawn itself for the land of stony mound... Kulakarni saheb sitting in chavadi ordered, 'drag him from there only...'. Such an order was enough for the police... they dragged Parivya from the field thrashing all the way to chavadi, and threw him on the floor, before Kulakarni saheb... Kulakarni saheb, moving his hand on his mustaches, calmly asked him, 'Are you Parivya...?' As Parivya answered 'Hoom yappa...', Kulakarni saheb got enraged and shouted at him, 'What hoom... you bastard... You are trying to appropriate somebody else's land as yours... you son of a slut... yey... thrash this son of a concubine...'. The police constables started to beat him recklessly... Parivya wailed and said grieving, 'No yappa... I shall die yappa... I didn't do anything wrong like that...'. PSI said to pause the thrashing... The constables moved

back kicking him, and Kulakarni saheb roared, 'Hoom... do you put your thumb impression on this paper or not...? Otherwise I shall get your body skinned...'.

Paravva escorted by Malli, came to chavadi, with a paper in her hand... She bowed to the feet of the PSI... 'If kicked you will lose all your teeth... you a concubine... (As it was, there were no teeth in the jaws of Paravva...!). Advise your foolish son to put his thumb impression on the paper...' telling so he pushed the old woman back. The old woman babbled masticating her toothless jaws... The PSI told the police, 'Yey... show this concubine what would be like a police treatment...'. The constables immediately lifted Paravva by both her hands and swayed her body... She was terribly frightened and urinated involuntarily... Uttering 'Thoo...', the police left her in the air, and she fell on the floor from above, collapsing... Parivya worrying about his mother, suddenly stood up, and crying, 'Ayyo yavva...', tried to move towards Paravva... Then, the police constables suddenly held him tightly, took his left hand thumb, pressed it on the ink pad, and within no time they got it pressed on the paper... The PSI then handed over the paper to Bhadrageowda... And in no time, Bhadrageowda handed it over to the village accountant, who was waiting there only... PSI Kulakarni warned Paravva and Parivya together... 'Look... if you ever try to enter into that land... it would be an illegal trespassing case... a criminal case against you... Then I will put you both in the Hindalaga jail... mind it...!'

Parivya carried the old woman something like a mass of cloths from the chavadi to his house... He was totally unaware of the outside... He felt he was all surrounded by deep stinking water... He felt himself as a fish in that water...! Yes... he was a fish...! And there were so many long necked white herons... all attempting to catch him and to engulf...! Flocks of white herons... Parivya suddenly shouted, 'Ayyo yavva... they are after me... yey yavva... yey Mallee... where are you...? They are poking their long beaks to swallow me... Ho ho ho...! Look there... that flock of white herons lifted and carrying my well... the well I dug... Ayyo yavva... that flock of white herons... lifted my land and carrying it away...', Parivya talking irrelevantly like this, at once screamed, 'Huryooo...' and ran out of his house and fled into the void... without any direction... He was calling those white herons flying in the sky... 'Ho ho... ho...' 'Yey you white herons... give me my land... give me my well...', screaming so, Parivya ran searching the flocks of white herons... Malli chased after him some distance, beseeching him to come back... But she couldn't reach him and bring him back... Parivya shouting haa... hoo... would chase if ever he found any flock of white herons... Hoping that he could catch them at last at the end of the earth... at least at the zenith... and he could snatch away his land from their hold, he had been chasing the flocks of white herons incessantly... They were flying and floating in the sky... and he, this Parivya was limping and stumbling on the earth...! And this Santarama... no no... S. Rama... he was searching them both...