

# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi

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U.G.'s maternal grandfather, Pantulu, was always eager to know what the future might hold for Krishna, or 'Kittu', as he called him [his grandmother called him 'Ramdu'], and had complete faith in Nadi astrology. One day, he took him to a Koumara Nadi astrologer he knew in Roypet. The astrologer received them cordially and inquired about their welfare. Seeing Krishna, he asked, 'Is he your grandson, Sir?' Pantulu replied, 'Yes, he is my daughter's son. I have brought him to you to know his future life. Here is his horoscope.' So saying, Pantulu handed the horoscope to the astrologer. 'Good, please wait.' The astrologer took the horoscope and went to search for the corresponding palm leaf book from ancient times.

It is said that the word 'nadi' means search. In Dravidian languages, particularly in old Tamil, these books were written on palm leaves (they were also written in Sanskrit, and though rarely, in Telugu). Many such books are popular in the Vaitheeswaran Koil area of Tamil Nadu. According to legend, Lord Shiva once incarnated as Bhruhu Maharshi. The Maharshi made earnest penance for a long time, attained higher levels of knowledge and powers, and prepared horoscopes of great people and future prophets on palm leaves. Pantulu consulted the Bhruhu Samhita, otherwise known as the Koumara Nadi astrologer. This gentleman was believed to have inherited the original literature of ancient times from his ancestors.

After an hour, the astrologer emerged with palm books written in Tamil. He was sweating profusely and apologized to Pantulu for the delay in searching for the correct horoscope. Wiping the sweat off his face with his upper cloth, he wrote down the whole horoscope of Krishna in Tamil, as written on the palm leaves. Afterwards, he translated it from Tamil to English and read it out to Pantulu before handing it over to him.

Pantulu paid the astrologer lavishly and took leave of him. He and Krishna walked to a typing institute. As the astrologer's manuscript got typed, Krishna observed the machine. The typist was not looking at the keyboard, though he typed speedily. Krishna keenly observed how his fingers were moving on the entire keyboard. He was surprised at the skill of the typist. Then they returned to Adyar.

On the return from Roypet, Pantulu was thoughtful and silent. Krishna attempted to talk to him and walked around him. He asked what the typed papers meant. Pantulu looked at Krishna silently for a few moments and spoke to him softly, 'Kittu, they say that if you read well, you will become a famous and a great person. So concentrate all your attention on your education. You must work hard. Do you understand?' Pantulu was imagining the great banyan tree lying dormant in the small seed.

Krishna expected something else from his grandfather. Had that Tamil astrologer babbled only this nonsense for so many hours? He suspected that his grandfather was hiding something from him and decided to find out the truth for himself in due course. Slowly, he left the room and walked out on the veranda. A number of children were at play there and he watched them attentively for some time.

Pantulu recalled his daughter's last words. On her deathbed, she had told him the same thing as the astrologer—the one matched with the other exactly. Her prophesy was not an imaginative wish. It was now clear that her words were destined to take shape in the future as reality.

### **Koumara Nadi Reading (1925)**

Vasista and Vaiwamitra offer obeisance to Goddess Parvati and discuss the tenth bhava (house of action, or karma) of the native.

Native's name is Gopala Krishna Murthy. Sitaramayya is the name of his father, and mother's name is Bharati. The planetary position at the time of his birth was as follows. Mithuna (Gemini) Lagnam. Sun and Jupiter in the Ascendant. Mercury, Moon and Saturn in the second house. Mars in the fourth and Rahu (the North Node) in the sixth house. Venus and Kethu (the South Node) in the twelfth house.

At this stage, Vasista says that the native will attain moksha in this very life.

Educational attainments must be very high. Endowed with versatility, imagination, intuitive perception and fluency of speech. He must attain prosperity through personal merit but there is no steady income and it will not be proportionate to his name and fame. He will have much more money than ancestral inheritance. Since he is distinctly spiritual-minded there will always be a kind of indifference towards money.

He comes in contact with great men very early in life. Breaks in education. Begins professional study in his twenty-third year but ends it abruptly.

After the twenty-fifth year he takes up the line of teaching or lecturing connected with an organization which stands for universal brotherhood and essential unity of all religions. That brings him wisdom, friendship with great men, increasing fame and reputation as a great speaker and respect of learned men. The nature of his work is such that he constantly travels and comes into contact with great men of different kinds and gains experience.

After thirty-fifth year, there is a change in life. Residence in foreign lands. There is an indication of constant and fruitless traveling around the world. Intense inward struggle. But the inner crisis will end up in good. He will be helped by a great teacher. He puts him on the right path. He will be helped by a woman who will help him to establish himself in foreign lands permanently.

Forty-fifth to fifty-fifth year are years of great importance in his life. He will be born again in his forty-ninth year. Becomes an international personality. He will always be on the move. Name goes to the four corners of the world. Blushing honors will be showered upon him. Books will be written on and about him. Great respect everywhere and in all lands. As years go by a great organization with huge properties and a great following grows around him to spread his teaching.

Fifty-fifth year or around, there is an indication of death under tragic circumstances. Failing which, he lives right up to a ripe old age preaching all the richness of his personal experience. Leaves his mark on the world as one of the great teachers of mankind.

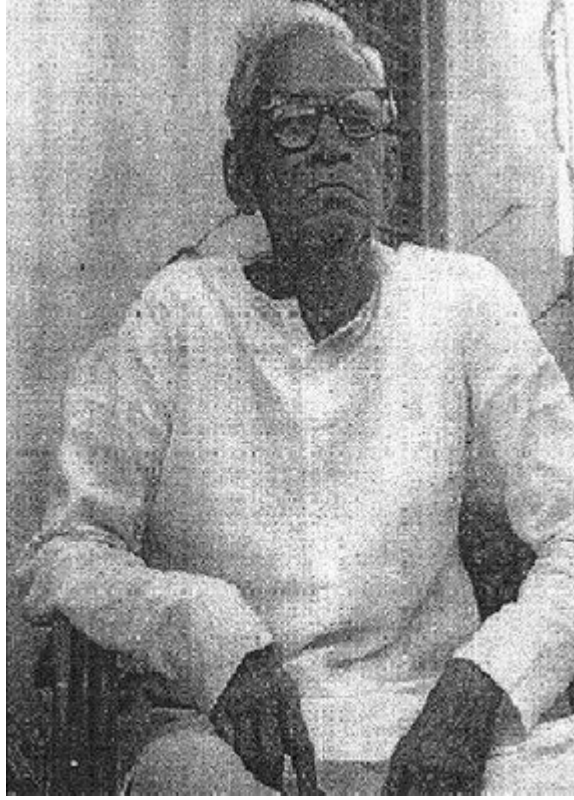
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Sri Uppaluri Sitaramayya

## The Lineage of the Uppaluris

A landmark in history, model of the religious and very storehouse of civilization and culture was Karmanaadu, a land of spiritual deeds in the Telugu country. The present Krishna district is the main chunk of this historic region. Machilipatnam, or Bunder (derived from *bandargah*, meaning seaport), has long been the headquarters of the district. It was said Lord Mahavira, the last Jain Tirthankara, once visited this area. In the bygone era, Buddhism and Jainism flourished here as state religions.

On 9th July 1918, a male child was born at 6:12 a.m. to Srimati Bharati—'Bharatamma'—the daughter of Sri Tummalapalli Gopala Krishnamurti—'Pantulu'—of Gudivada, and wife of Sri Uppaluri Sitaramayya of Tenali, at the residence of Sri Vemuri Chinnayya Rao of Godugupeta, in Machilipatnam. The Indian Calendar date was Kalayukta Ashadha Sudda Padyami Punarvasu Nakshatram. This child, 'christened' Gopala Krishnamurti—the future U.G.—would someday be acclaimed paraceptor of preceptors, world teacher and radical revolutionary beyond any logical comprehension. And now follows his ancestral background.

It is common everywhere for some to migrate from their native place to another place in search of their livelihood. Such people, thus having migrated, are often known after their earlier village. In Telugu families, the name of the place, in many cases, later becomes the surname. In salty soils of this part of the state, a herb known 'uppi' is seen everywhere. After the harvest, this type of whitish grass makes its appearance all over as a weed.

Some say that since sea salt ('uppu' in Telugu) is sold here, the place is known as 'Uppuluru', or 'Uppaluru'. A few Brahmin families left this place and migrated in different directions in search of their livelihoods or due to some other reasons. One such family settled in Nagayalanka of Avanigadda Taluk and was the first Uppaluri family on that bank of the Krishna River.

On the basis of the data collected, the name of the ancestor of this family is Bindumadhavaiah, alias Venkatappayya. His father or grandfather might have first settled there. He had one son Sitaramayya. Sitaramayya had three brothers of unknown names. Ramaseshayya was the son of one of them. He married thrice, Valluri Gopalam's daughter being his second wife. Pedda Ranganayakamma, Dr. Ranganayakamma and Chitti Ranganayakamma were their three daughters. The renowned revolutionary Telugu writer, Gudipati Venkatachalam, popularly known as 'Chalam', married Chitti Ranganayakamma. Their daughter, Souris, is well known for her stories.

The first wife of Sitaramayya had a son, Laxminarayana, by name. His second wife, Ramanamma, had a son, Venkatappayya. Sitaramayya also had a daughter named Durgamma. The life of his son Laxminarayana is not known in detail except that he had a son named Radha Krishna Murthy. Venkatappayya married Venkata Laxminarasamma, who hailed from the Davuluri family. In the later part of their married life they had one son. Venktappayya named him Sitaramayya, after his late father.

From ancient times, the lineage of families has been known by gotras, the ancestral saints of, in particular, Brahmins. Certain families are said to have descent from various rishis. According to ancient Vedic tradition, the gotra rishi of a family is the one who chalked out the path for the spiritual upliftment of that family.

The Uppaluri family are descendents of Atreya. Thus they are said to be of Atreya-sa gotram. 'Sa' is a suffix to indicate that a particular family is of a particular gotram. The Uppaluri family is 'triarushayam'—that is to say, their great holy known ancestors are three: Atreya, Archanana and Savasya.

There are a number of sects in the Brahmin caste such as Vydeeki Niyogi. Vydeeki Brahmins are scholars and their chief occupation is the priesthood. They prepare almanacs and they are, as such, astrologers also. The Niyogi is the revenue accountant and document writer in a village. Hence he is called Karanam. Kakatiya King, Ganapathi Deva (1198-1262), is said to have appointed this sect of Brahmins as Karanams in six thousand villages. Later on, these Niyogi families were known as Aaruvela (six-thousand) Niyogis.

Niyogis are well versed in worldly affairs and litigation. With hereditary sharpness of mind and knowledge, blended with push and tact, they swiftly move with the times. As such, they naturally become popular in the villages, but they are said to be egoistic, haughty and proud at heart.

From Kakatiya dynasty times till modern days, this sect of Brahmins are renowned all over for their scholarship intelligence, creativity, administrative ability and efficiency. The ministers, Akkanna and Madanna, of the Nawab of Golconda, Abdul Hasan Qutub Shah (1658-1687), were Niyogi Brahmins. Prime Minister Purnayya, of Tipu Sultan of Mysore, was also a famous Niyogi Brahmin.

The Uppaluri family belongs to a respectable lineage of Aaruvela Niyogis. By birth, they were intelligent and shrewd. A number of scholars were born in their lineage and made a name for their attainments in Sanskrit Alankara Sastra (figures of speech), prosody and grammar. They had a firm grip on Tarka Sastra (logic) and could as well recite a good number of Sanskrit verses from ancient literature. Some of their ancestors were seekers of Truth, were absorbed in philosophical contemplation, and became ascetics. Some occupied key positions in estates, but they were primarily agriculturists.

It is not known whether the Uppaluri family, settled in Nagayalanka, were Karanams or not. At the time of Sitaramayya, they had 100 acres of land. At the end of his primary education, the eldest son of Sitaramayya evinced interest in looking after agriculture. His second son, Venkatappayya, was brimming with energy and activity to achieve something great in his life.

After elementary schooling in Tenali, Venkatappayya completed his graduation in Machilipatnam and his law degree at Madras. In those days, lawyers commanded great importance in society. They were treated with greater respect than doctors, as a matter of fact. After the demise of their father, Venkatappayya entrusted the agriculture to his elder brother Laximanarayana and settled in Tenali.

In those days, Tenali and its surrounding areas were well known for their dynamism. A number of scholars, musicians, actors, literati, patrons of arts, social reformers and patriots were born there and earned name and

fame. Just as Paris is considered as the heart of Europe, Tenali had been regarded the Paris of Andhra.

Venkatappayya was of medium height, slim and of strong body and balanced proportions, with a fair complexion. His figure resembled that of elegant nobility. Indeed, he attracted all attention and admiration. His expressions were catchy. He was eloquent, dignified and commanding. His looks were sharp and penetrating. There was something heroic in him. His handwriting was attractive and always neat.

The basic nature of Venkatappayya was distinct from others. His life was adventurous and experimental. His individuality was prominently seen in every activity. He read and digested all the classical books in Sanskrit on philosophy, but his scholarship was not expressive. His intellect got sharpened under the influence of English education but he had his own strong convictions at heart. To achieve his desired end, Venkatappayya would face every hurdle, loss of money, and stress and strain with immovable determination. Compromise was out of the question for him. The strength of his will was unique. When once a thing was decided upon, Venkatappayya would never retreat under any circumstances, such was his adamant nature.

Once a lower court judgement went against a party that had no money to appeal. Venkatappayya felt convinced that the judgement was not just. So he himself financed the appeal to the High Court in Madras and won the case for his client just to secure justice. His colleagues at the Bar honored him for this unusual achievement and complimented him he was a fighter for justice and harbinger of Truth.

Venkatappayya's knowledge of law was impeccable and before taking up a case he used to judge it. Unless he was convinced that the case could be sustained by the requirement of law, he would not take it up. He was lured by justice and not by lucre. The talk of the town was that if justice was sought, it was only through this pleader.

Sometimes, in order to avoid the trouble of hovering around the courts, Venkatappayya would summon the parties and settle the dispute amicably outside of court. He was settling family disputes also similarly and nobody ever dared to comment against his solutions. As a lawyer, Venkatappayya earned a lot. In Morispet, he built a three-storied mansion, in those days unparalleled. Its compound was too long and spread all around. The street was thereafter known as Uppaluri Street.

The residence of Venkatappayya resembled that of a zamindar or a lord with a festive look all day. The dining hall was always busy with invitees as well as uninvitees; royal food was served to one and all. Fresh and new items were served for lunch and dinner. For spicy items and taste, ghee was provided, but not oil. Special items were made of ghee profusely during festivals throughout the year. The house was always full with men and material.

Venkatappayya was adamant and unyielding in temperament. He would go ahead as he thought proper and never cared for others' advice, however good it might be. He was egoistic, proud and indifferent, and rough and tough also sometimes. He was rude and crude even in small matters and made much ado. Sometimes he was perfectly calm and undisturbed while everyone else was on their toes. His pleasure as well as displeasure had no bounds.

In his lifetime, Venkatappayya bowed to none and was servile to none. He never danced to the tunes of others. People had therefore a type of fear and respect too for him. His words were few and always meaningful. As such, nobody ventured to confront him, face to face.

Venkatappayya was generous and kind at heart and provided food and shelter to a number of poor students. He awarded annual scholarships to deserving bright students. Whenever anyone destitute approached him for help, he always extended a helping hand. A statement of Venkatappayya was respected as an injunction order of the court. He never denied his word. For a selfish end or otherwise he never cheated anybody. Venkatappayya never yielded to any temptation in his lifetime. His honesty was well known all over and his word was honored by government employees as well as others. Venkatappayya helped very many to get employment and livelihood. He was called Annadata, or free giver of food.

In Tenali, Tripuraneni Rama Swamy Choudary was another lawyer. He was bar-at-law. Choudary was a rationalist and he revolted against the traditional values. Venkatappayya was a crystal of salt; Choudary was a piece of burning coal. But strangely, one liked the other. Whenever the Gandhian, Vunnava Laxminarayana, came over to Tenali from Guntur, he would be the guest of Venkatappayya and spend some time with him. Laxminarayana was the author of the popular Telugu novel, 'Malapalli'. Another Gandhian and veteran patriot, Konda Venktappayya, was a close friend of Venkatappayya.

Though Venkatappayya did not take part in the Independence struggle, he liked Mahatma Gandhi and had a soft spot in his heart for the Congress party. Perhaps for the same reason, like Gandhi, he didn't wear a shirt at home. He purchased hand spinning wheels for yarn making. Now and then Venkatappayya wore khadi clothes made of the yarn. He used to donate liberally to the Congress party.

Their ancestral property of 100 acres, at Nagayalanka, was enriched up to 300 acres. Thirty acres were allotted to mango, thirty for lemon, twenty for turmeric, and the rest for rice and pulses. Venkatappayya grew roses on one acre exclusively. The roses were the size of a palm, and Venkatappayya roses, as they were called, were in great demand in Bezawada market. The mangoes of his grove were yellow inside and very tasty. They were large and thin-skinned. In the season, Venkatappayya mangoes sold like hotcakes, at a premium.

In those days, tractors were rare in this area. In Madras, Venkatappayya got a tractor made in England. People used to stare at it, as if it had descended from the skies. Two persons were appointed for its maintenance. He made necessary arrangements for the happy living of the two persons. In those days, a coach pulled by a horse was considered as a status symbol, like the Mercedes car. The coach was well decorated. Venkatappayya appointed Peer Sahib to take care of his coach and horse.

Venkatappayya prayed three times a day—early in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening, in a closed room for half an hour. When he was on a pilgrimage, it would look as though a king was going out followed by his train of personnel. Besides family members, relatives and friends also accompanied him at his cost. A number of attendants and servants were there with him till his return.

Venkatappayya was generous and charitable towards all the needy. It appeared as though he was lavish. If any of his relatives spent luxuriously, others would reprimand him saying, 'Remember that you don't hail from the Uppaluri family to spend lavishly. He has fabulous amounts of money and can afford to spend it, but what about you?'

If a hundred rupee note slips from the hand and falls, it is customary to pick it up immediately in a humble manner and to bow to it, before keeping it in the pocket. If, however, it slipped from the hand of anybody from the Uppaluri Family, he would say, 'Oh probably it is destined to leave.' It was said that it was given away as alms. So goes the saying about the Uppaluri family's wealth and attitude—this may be a bit of exaggeration!

Venkatappayya very much liked to take up tasks not taken up by anybody till then. It was an inborn characteristic. The field of agriculture attracted his attention and he was ready with new experiments. He purchased barren land cheaply and toiled on it with fertilizers and manures. As luck would have it, there were bumper yields, which encouraged him to design new plans.

Venkatappayya succeeded in growing vegetables such as tomatoes, cauliflower, arrowroot, beetroot and cabbage, which foreigners relished very much. He obtained the necessary seeds from Madras and used the required amount of manures without any hesitation. His vegetables also had a heavy demand in Bezawada market. He purchased 100 acres of land near the seashore and doubled the cultivation. Once when the crops were just ready, a cyclone swept them all away. It occurred four or five times and the loss was so heavy that his other resources had to be tapped.

Venkatappayya was fully aware of the situation but he did not change his mind. He remembered the great King Vikramarka who is adored even today for his unparalleled determination and perseverance. That year the yields were doubled but in the market the rates were discouraging. The net income was hardly one-eighth of the investment. Venkatappayya boldly faced the situation, but his elder brother, Laxminarayana, broke down.

In those days, in order to whiten sugar, bone ash was used in the process. Such factories were very meager, just one or two in the entire state. Venkatappayya planned to start such a factory of his own and make good all the agricultural loss. Laxminarayana, his elder brother, opposed the proposal. Venkatappayya's wife, Venkata Laxminarasamma, protested vehemently against it. At her request, all near and dear tried to persuade him to drop the idea, saying that it was all against Brahminism to make business involving bones and that the prestige of the family would go to winds and waters. Venkatappayya paid a deaf ear to all of them. A factory was established near Tenali Railway Station. Not even a single Brahmin family attended the inaugural function.

His wife, Laxminarasamma, was in mental agony. Besides, his elder brother Laxminarayana was bedridden for some time and finally passed away. His son, Radha Krishna Murthy, detached himself from the joint family. The fortune of Venkatappayya began to swing to the other side gradually. Till then he had been an uncrowned king. His routine lifestyle also showed marks of changes.

Venkatappayya brought up his only son, Sitaramayya, with utmost tender care. The boy was intelligent and had a good physique too, with a fair complexion like his father. The handsome and active boy would impress everyone instantly that he hailed from a respectable family.

The style of Sitaramayya was different from his father's. He was not worldly-wise but gentle and soft. He was flexible also, unlike his father. Though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he was not at all proud, showy or boastful. He was sociable and moved with everyone in a friendly manner. Sitaramayya was a person of few words, with a strong zeal to learn more and more. With his sharp intellect he learned with ease, and accordingly, he studied and gained a grip on classical literature. To onlookers, he would appear thoughtful and contemplative but none could read his mind, his demeanour being deep and sober. He respected elders duly, would pocket insults calmly and coolly, and was kind at heart. A strong will lay underneath his bold nature. He was studious but did not want to continue his studies after receiving his F.A. (Fellow of Arts).

Venkatappayya desired to perform his son's marriage and started to consider different proposals put forth by different mediators from different places. In fact, a number of good proposals were forthcoming, but none was suitable. Alliance with the Uppaluri family was not ordinary. A proposal could be considered as suitable for them only if they could match in respect to status, wealth, ancestral glory and, above all, prestige.

It is customary in Brahmin families to verify whether the ancestry is spotless on either side of the parents of the bride or bridegroom for seven generations. Even if everything is satisfactory, the horoscopes of the couple should be in harmony with one another; if not, the offer is declined without any hesitation.

Mediators had been very active, but in vain. At last, a proposal from Guntur was accepted. The bride's father was a lawyer. It was a well-to-do and respectable family. The proposal was discussed at length in the presence of mediators. A draft decision regarding the date and time of marriage also was finalized. The date of the proposed marriage was fast approaching. Suddenly, Venkatappayya came to know that the bride's father talked ill of him with somebody and that there were some deviations from the agreed formalities.

That was enough. Venkatappayya flared up in anger. He sent a message to him, making their decision null and void. The bride's father then realized his mistake and appeared in person. He gave assurances that he would abide by the promises in toto, but Venkatappayya was adamant. 'I don't want to dupe myself by having an alliance with uncultured liars,' he roared.

Another proposal from Machilipatnam was brought to his notice. They had a distant relationship also. They were rich enough and the bride was the only child for them. It was considered as suitable in every respect. They thought of fixing up the engagement date. Unexpectedly, the grandmother of the bride passed away. The bride's father requested for postponement of the marriage by six months. For some unknown reason, he replied, 'We can't be passive all the time. If no other proposal is decided upon, then we shall consider your case, but don't await our consent.'

Sitaramayya's mother, Venkatalaxmi Narasamma, began to feel pessimistic about the situation. Their relatives advised Venkatappayya to accept one or the other proposals, ignoring small issues. He retorted, 'Unless I am satisfied in every aspect, I will not accept any proposal. There is no question of compromise - the country is not barren. It is governed by destiny none can stop.'

It is said that marriages are made in heaven, that man is instrumental and that everything is destined already to take place accordingly. As a matter of fact, birth, marriage, profession and death are ruled by destiny. While some say that everything is incidental, when these incidents are analyzed and explained in detail, some others conclude that they are inevitable. With what ultimate objective does destiny join two persons in a wedlock to live together and for how long? Does anybody know?

One day, at about 11 o'clock, Venkatappayya was talking with somebody in his room. It was a hot day. A marriage mediator came in sweating and gasping for breath. He bowed to Venkatappayya respectfully and approached his wife, Narasamma, in the inner room and prayed for a cup of water immediately. She gave a tumbler of buttermilk. He gulped all of it instantaneously and wiped his mouth with his upper cloth.

With all earnestness, he tried to broach his intention to her, addressing her most respectfully as mother. 'I have auspicious news for you. Believe me—I came actually running from the bus stop to you. Now it is the destined period for your son's marriage. Recently, my brother-in-law suddenly met me in Bezwada and provided me with details of an excellent match for your son. Immediately, I rushed to the spot and made necessary

enquiries. It is the best of all the proposals, you have considered so far.' At that moment, Venkatappayya stepped in. He nodded his head at him and asked 'What is the matter? In hot sun you rushed in and started gossiping.'

'Most respected Sir! Let me submit that it is not at all gossip. I came to know about an excellent match. If you please...' So saying he stood up with folded hands before Venkatappayya. 'Alright, why do you hesitate at this stage?' Venkatappayya, so saying, removed his shirt and hung it on the hanger.

'Your pleasure. The bride hails from Tummalapalli Family. Her father is Gopala Krishna Murthy Pantulu, the most revered Sanskrit scholar—Ganapati, as you know. He is a renowned lawyer, like you. I submit that their ancestry is spotless. They are at par with you in respect of wealth, status and nobility. Pantulu has three daughters and no sons. However, he adopted a boy of the same gotra. The eldest daughter was given in marriage to the Yellamraju family but unfortunately she died during delivery. The second daughter is the daughter-in-law of the erstwhile diwans, namely the Valluri family.'

He stopped for a while, wiped his sweating face again and again, and added, 'Kindly listen to me—the youngest and the last daughter is an embodiment of all beauty and virtues. She is well read as well as devoted. By birth perhaps, she knows how to respect elders and to organize her home well. They do not hesitate to give dowry as you deem it fit, besides fulfilling all the formalities suitably. In my opinion, it is the most suitable match. The rest is in your hands.' The marriage mediator was an experienced person in the field of suggesting alliances. He pleaded impressively with his gestures and noddings, as well as the appropriate intonations and modulations in his voice.

When he first heard that the bride hailed from the Tummalapalli family, Venkatappayya felt happy and inquisitive to know more about the proposal. 'I see! Yes, I know about the Tummalapalli family already. I remember having seen him. It is a very good family,' he said. The mediator felt overjoyed when he noticed such a positive response from Venkatappayya. Then he added, 'Just one more word. Gopala Krishna Murthy seems to have an association with some society at Madras. As such, he has acquaintances with some British people there. It is learnt that a European lady established it.' Venkatappayya replied, 'Yes. It is the Theosophical Society. Annie Besant established it. She has utmost regard for Vedic religion. I saw her some time back in Rajahmundry.'

His wife, Narasamma, was all the more pleased on noticing her husband's reactions. 'Now, will you kindly go ahead?' She told the mediator to do so. He jumped with joy, 'It is my fortune now to approach them tomorrow itself. May I take leave of you?' He got up to go. She insisted, 'It is already lunchtime and you may please join us. You can relax for a while and take leave in the evening.' She thus invited him for lunch, in the usual hospitable manner. He readily agreed, thankfully.

The said mediator proceeded to Gudiwada and introduced himself to Pantulu. He added, 'It is my great fortune to meet you, Sir, in this context. The bridegroom hails from Uppaluri family. I know that I need not explain who they are. His father also is an eminent lawyer like you. I also learned that you know one another a little. He is the landlord residing in that glorious three-storied mansion. The bridegroom is the only son for them and the heir-apparent for their entire property. The youth is handsome and well-behaved. He has a great regard for elders, like everyone else in the family. So it is undoubtedly a suitable match, in every respect, such as status, wealth, etc. If you may kindly furnish me with the horoscope of the bride, it will be studied.' He humbly paused.

Pantulu's wife, Durgamma, listened to him keenly. She turned to her husband and added, 'There had been some distant relationship for us with them.' Pantulu replied, 'Yes, some such thing is there. I heard of Venkatappayya some time back. I had seen him in the premises of Madras High Court a number of times. But what about dowry and other formalities? Are his expectations too high?

The mediator answered, 'No, no, sir. He is not greedy. He wants a daughter-in-law hailing from a respectable family. And I am glad to inform you that he stands by his word. Whatever is said of him elsewhere - I dare say that he is good for his word. Whatever you wish, I am sure, is within your reach. Kindly give me a hint of it and I will make him agree to it.'

Both of them discussed all the details in this regard. Durgamma, handed over a copy of their daughter's horoscope. The mediator instantaneously landed at Tenali and narrated everything to them without any loss of time. The sister of Venkatappayya accompanied by two other elderly housewives, started for Gudiwada.

At Pantulu's residence, she was received with utmost respect. The bride was most beautifully dressed and

ornamented, and introduced to the visitors. The sister of Venkatappayya was immensely pleased with her. They returned home by the evening.

Durgamma was all in praise for the bride. She exclaimed to her sister-in-law, 'What a stunning beauty—she looks like the goddess of wealth, Laxmi. She is most suitable for our Sitaramayya. If they stand, one beside the other, they will look like the great legendary couple Rati and Manmadha. The bride is well behaved and virtuous. Her melodious song on Lord Krishna is reverberating even now in my ears. What a voice! Oh! Now, there is nothing else to think of—the only delay is in going over there and fixing up the date of marriage.'

Later, Venkatappayya and Gopala Krishna Murthy Pantulu personally discussed all the details frankly and freely. One developed regard for the other. The engagement was arranged and the date of marriage was fixed on an auspicious day. A green light was given for invitations to be printed right away.

It appeared like any other ordinary wedlock. No one dreamed that it would lead to an extraordinary event, yet the alliance of the Uppaluri and Tummalapalli families prepared the necessary ground. The Uppaluri family had considered a number of proposals, as a matter of fact. Indeed, in all, six proposals were declined in the final stages, due to some reason or other. Only the seventh one was finally accepted and confirmed.

When invitations were ready for distribution, someone commented to Pantulu, 'All that glitters is not gold. Tin also appears like silver sometimes. It is learned that the property of Venkatappayya is in a fluid stage. He is neck deep in debts. Don't be deceived by appearances.' Pantulu coolly replied, 'Well, what is there in my hands? We should act as directed by the Divine Director. We are simply instrumental. Everything is governed by Divine will and destiny. Having invitations in hand, withdrawal is totally ruled out. It is a disgrace to shirk a promise. One had to bow before the Divine decision.' Thus, the serpentine coil of fate was sealed.

[links](#)



# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi



## The Saga of Pantulu

The plant *Acacia arabica* is called 'tumma' in Telugu. These thorny trees grow everywhere whether water is available or not. One place in the Krishna District where there are innumerable tumma plants is called Tummalapally. At one time a number of Brahmin families relocated from Tummalapally to Bezawada for their livelihood. Tummalapalli Gopala Krishnamurti—'Pantulu'—belonged to one such family. His ancestors worked as teachers in the Chitty-Guduru Sanskrit School and some of them started residential Sanskrit schools. The sons as well as daughters in their families were Sanskrit scholars and poets. Probably due to this reason, a proverb, 'Even if they sneeze, Tummalapally people seem to utter something in Sanskrit,' came into force.

It seems that he was born in 1865 or so. He had a brother named Bala Ramaiah. Pantulu thought of learning some professional course to flourish in his life, so from childhood he rose up by hard work, step by step. It is said that he studied in a Christian institution at Machilipatnam and later received his F.A. (Fellow of Arts) there. In those days, lawyers were treated with high regard in the society. Chances to earn a lot in that profession were many, so Pantulu proceeded to Madras and joined the Law College, staying in a small rented room in Triplicane and preparing his own food. He lived in a disciplined manner and in his leisure time taught children so as to have additional income.

Like the other members of Tummalapalli family, he studied and assimilated philosophy books thoroughly. He also used to contemplate spiritual matters, besides reading about them. He implemented all traditional good customs in his life. While searching for proper knowledge to achieve his life's objective, he came under the influence of the Theosophical Society. There he came into contact with Tallapragada Subba Rao, who was also

residing in Triplicane, and who originally belonged to Kakinada. Under his influence, Pantulu's life entered a new phase.

Subba Rao was a close associate of Madame Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society. He was well-versed in Hindu esoteric knowledge. Both of them used to go to the Society center at Adyar. Pantulu came into contact with Blavatsky and Col. Alcott at the Society.

During the second half of 1890, the most important person in the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant, visited Bezwada while touring in India. She spoke eloquently about the spiritual lore of Hinduism. Pantulu approached her and donated a little money from his earlier savings. Afterwards he took part in the activities of the Society. His way of life began to change.

Pantulu completed his law degree and started his practice in a small room at Bezwada. He was considered as an intelligent lawyer and he was elected as secretary of their Association.

It is not known who was his first wife for she passed away before bearing children. His second betrothal was to Annapurnamma, a daughter of Challamraju Satyanarayana. But destiny had its own scheme of things in store. Ineluctable fate dealt a deadly blow. In spite of being in the pink of health, his fiancée died two days before their marriage. Everybody was paralysed by the pathos of the situation. After some time, her father surprised everyone by offering his second daughter, Durgamma, to him, but for some reason or other Pantulu refused. After a great deal of persuasion he reluctantly relented and started his family life afresh.

In the human scenario, the plot of destined drama winds and unwinds itself with unknowable and unpenetrable cause and effect, replete with fateful meetings, relationships, comingling and meaningful coincidences. This phenomenon is known by modern thinkers as synchronicity. It suggests that there must be a hidden meaning in relating with people which aims at a specific purpose. By pitchforking Pantulu and Durgamma as husband and wife, inscrutable Fate designed and determined its imperious and impervious formula.

Durgamma was twelve years old when she married. She was strikingly beautiful and her well-chiseled features, glittering eyes and sweet voice animated her countenance. She was short of stature but of balanced proportions, well-acquainted with household chores and had profound knowledge of sacred scriptures. Her religious roots were deeply-embedded. She was the embodiment of an ideal wife and the soul of traditional Hindu womanhood.

The marriage with Durgamma brought prosperity to Pantulu, as timely rain yields bumper crops to the farmer. He constructed a house at Bezawada and earned fabulously as a popular lawyer. He purchased a number of plots at Bezawada as well as a number of fields in Gudiwada area. They had no sons but they had two daughters, Rukminamma and Saraswathamma. They adopted a boy of his brother Bala Ramaiah named Jagannadham.

After purchasing fields in Gudiwada area, Pantulu desired to shift from Bezwada to Gudiwada. In 1903, on the road from Gudiwada to Bantumilly, he purchased an old tiled house and a lot of space around it. He started construction of a good mansion for his family.

Meanwhile, learning that Col. Alcott had come to Machilipatnam by steamer from Madras and was staying with Vemuri Subbarao, Pantulu rushed to Machilipatnam to meet him, informing him of his donation to the Theosophical Society. He invited Col. Alcott to Gudiwada. Accordingly, Col. Alcott was his guest for a day. He promised Col. Alcott to provide a good building for Theosophical Society at Gudiwada at his own cost and pledged that he would work for the Society.

During a short time, his mansion was completed. Around the building there was a compound wall; there were two pillars before the main house. There were also niches in the walls to place oil saucer lamps. Opposite to the compound gate, there was the main door of the main building. On the left side of the main door, there was a room for an iron safe. The jewels of the women and handbags of gold coins, besides bundles of currency notes, were placed in the iron safe. Important promissory notes and other valuable papers were also preserved in the safe. Pantulu attended to all court affairs and transactions in the same room. To assist with his work he had a clerk.

On the right side of the main door, there was another room. It was an office and drawing room. In that room, a number of cupboards contained law books as well as literature on the Theosophical Society. A number of

philosophical books also had an important place there. In between the cupboards, the Hindu daily was placed in an orderly manner in bundles. Further inside, there was a dining hall, adjacent to which was the kitchen. The bedroom was to the left of the hall and the prayer room was attached to it; there was also a cellar with a large safety chest in it.

Very near the kitchen, there was a well with ample water. Just like his earnings, the water level never decreased. In the yard, there was a big tulasi (basil) fort, decorated in a majestic way with turmeric and vermilion, and provided with niches in which to place the sacred lamps. In the yard near the compound, a number of trees such as pomegranate, almond, mango, etc., were planted. For worship purposes, plants like red china rose, jasmine, ever-blossoming red jasmine etc., were also planted.

At a little distance from the main building there was a verandah. There were some rooms also in the outer house. Children were fed in there and sometimes in the afternoons, sitting on crude native cots, womanfolk used to have afternoon rest while gossiping amongst themselves. At the end, the necessary number of latrines were provided. A number of additional rooms were built to provide accommodation for cooks, servants and other dependents. Their distant relatives also had a separate hall for their occasional visits.

On the right side of the house, there was a wooden staircase made of Rangoon teak, at the top of which, on the front side, was a balcony made of wood with diamond-shaped cuttings. On the left side Pantulu had a special prayer room always under lock and key that others were not allowed to enter. On the backside he had his bedroom. There was an almirah, a writing table and four or five teak chairs. The rest of the upstairs was a common hall. The hall was used for philosophical discussions and reading etc. In the hall, a small, special room made of straw was specially constructed for visiting ascetics.

Though Pantulu did not directly participate in the Independence struggle, he supported it in his own way. He had direct contacts with top leaders in the state and donated liberally to the movement.

In 1918, the Library Movement infused patriotism, political activity and desire to serve the country and the people. For this movement Pantulu purchased a number of books and presented them to the library. He had contacts with national Andhra leaders like 'Desodharaka' Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao Pantulu, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetaramayya, Kompalle Hanumantha Rao, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, 'Desa Bhakta' Konda Venkatappayya and others.

During those days, 'Vignana Chandrika Mandal' was popular among the public. Komarraju Venkata Laxmana Rao was its chief editor. They were selling historic novels, biographies and other books of a hundred pages for a quarter of a rupee. Pantulu assisted this agency for its development. He also established 'Saraswathi Niketanam' to publish a number of philosophical books. 'Poornayoga' and 'Dharma' by Sri Aurobindo, the saint of Pondicherry, were translated into Telugu and published.

Avanindra Tagore's 'Bharata Silpa' and the Noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore's 'Upanyasa Manjari' were among its important publications. The great classical philosophical book, 'Maha Gnana Vasistha', was also printed. This publishing agency was patronised by Pithapuram Zamindar Surya Rao, Mungala Zamindar, Nayani Ranga Rao, and Vissanna Peta Zamindar, Mothe Ganga Raju.

Pantulu was first among the chief patrons. The names of Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao, Ayyadevara Kaleshwara Rao, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetaramayya, and Kompella Hunumantha Rao, appeared later; the author of 'Malapalli', Vunnava Laxminarayana Pantulu, was also one of the patrons.

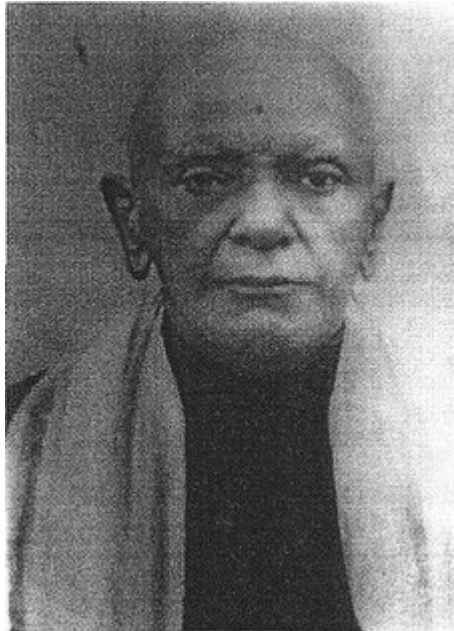
In 1913, in the town of Bapatla, agitation was started for Andhra State on a linguistic basis. In 1914, large-scale meetings were organized for the second time, now at Bezawada. Pantulu attended the meetings and contributed for their success. He convinced a number of his associates also to donate. These meetings were attended by many eminent people from all over the Andhra area, including Kandukuri Veerasalingam Pantulu and Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham Pantulu.

Pantulu proceeded to Machilipatnam in 1914 to meet Annie Besant when she came over there in connection with the anniversary celebrations of Noble College. After the meeting, when somebody was about to introduce him to her, she said, 'He is not new to us. The Society knows him very well. He does not need any introduction to us.'

In the last leg of the 19th century, two German social activists, Sultaz and Reifflljen, started the Cooperative Movement among the small agricultural landholders. The rural economy had collapsed under the octopus grip

of usurers' hegemony. They coined the slogan, 'One for all and all for one,' and mustered the helpless farmers to be united as 'One society for one village.' This movement gained momentum and a thousand cooperative banks came up in Germany. These ripples also effected British India. In 1898, the State of Baroda started the Mutual Aid Society for small landholders.

In 1904, the Movement opened its first cooperative bank, in Kanchipuram. The British Indian Government passed the Cooperative Society Act. The Shymala Rao Vittal Cooperative Bank started 'Cumulative Deposit Scheme' in 1906. It slowly spread to other parts of British India.



Tummalapalli Gopala Krishnamurti

It was a strange irony that Pantulu, who was himself a rich landlord, lent money at government-approved rates called 'dharma vaddi' from a cooperative bank to help poor farmers. It was a small incident that was said to have triggered this. A poor farmer named Ramayya, who had two acres of land, was known to Pantulu. Ramayya had borrowed the sum of Rs500 from a local moneylender for the marriage of his daughter. Several years elapsed but he could not pay it back. The moneylender confiscated his land, house and other valuable things, thus rendering Ramayya to rubble. Indeed, Pantulu, who might have heard several such cases as a lawyer, consoled him for his baneful situation and extended his helping hand by leasing land to Ramayya to start his life afresh.

Pantulu was dead against social injustice. As an upholder of basic human values with committed convictions, he decided to rescue those impecunious farmers he could. On humanitarian grounds and with deep sense of social awareness, he decided to start a cooperative bank at Gudiwada, the first of its kind in Andhra.

One day he assembled all the small holding agriculturists in town and explained at length the benefits and advantages of a cooperative society to overcome the huge debt traps of the cruel moneylenders.

The uneducated and innocent farmers listened to him attentively and pledged their total support. Since he was on the forefront of personal involvement, their response was electrifying, as many people placed great faith in him. As seed capital they contributed Rs2,623.

Thus the Gudiwada Cooperative Bank came in to being on 9th July 1915. He was the first Founder Chairman of the Bank and he served up to 1918. He was regarded the pioneer of the cooperative bank moment in Andhra. Later the bank became well-established and turned into the Cooperative Urban Bank.

In 1919, Mahatma Gandhi addressed a public meeting in Ram Mohan Library at Bezwada. Pantulu attended the meeting and donated to the Congress party.

In 1921, Gandhi visited Bezwada for the second time. Koonala Poornachandra Rao, of the old town, an admirer of the Congress party, invited Gandhi to his house for lunch. Gandhi agreed on the condition that Poornachandara Rao should donate Rs1,116 to the party. Pantulu was also one of the special invitees for the lunch. In that context also he contributed to the Party.

Also, in 1921, All-India Congress meetings were organized at Bezawada. Many national leaders like Chittranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Roy, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others attended the meetings. Pantulu likewise actively participated in them and further contributed to the party.

In 1929, Gandhiji again toured in Andhra and visited Machilipatnam. Pantulu paid his respects to him and donated accordingly to the Party. Gandhiji recognized him and enquired about his welfare esteem. Thus Pantulu took active part in political and social movements, with zeal and patriotism. His friends and close associates affectionately referred to him simply as Tummalapalli Pantulu or Pantulu Garu.

In spite of many avocations, he had a great attraction for the Theosophical Society, its objectives and its teachings. Not merely a liking but verily a thirst for it. Indeed he was completely identifying himself with it. His one and only lifetime objective was to become a perfect Theosophist. He wanted to rise to philosophical heights and make his life purposeful. By following the Theosophical path, he sought to attain Salvation.

Pantulu strictly respected tradition and Vedic religion on the one hand to attain this goal; on the other hand he benefited from the support of the Theosophical Society. It appeared like riding two horses at the same time. There was not full agreement or any association between them and it led to conflicts within himself.

Pots prepared at the same time may appear to be similar but they may not rest properly on a pad. There may be a defect or dent in their making. In the personality of Pantulu, lack of coordination might have led to his internal conflicts and dual attitudes.

Some time back when he met Col. Alcott in the house of Vemuri Subbarao, he had promised to provide a building for the Society at Gudiwada. He also promised to work for its development. Accordingly, Pantulu started the work to fulfill his promise. By that time, branches of the Society were already established in Bezwada, Nellore, Guntur, Eluru, Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Visakapatnam, Vijayanagaram and other towns. A branch was also operating in Hyderabad, in Nizam State.

Without begging or borrowing, he wanted to provide a building from his own funds for the Society. His will was powerful and the work was completed in 1916. In central Gudiwada, a big building was summarily made ready for the Theosophical Society.

On the upper floor of it a separate hall was allotted for the Esoteric Society, a very important branch of the Theosophical Society. On the ground floor a hall was provided with necessary facilities for discussions and meetings. A number of rooms were also attached to it. Furthermore, four rooms were constructed on the roadside of the building for rental purpose, the income of which was utilised for maintaining the Lodge.

For its inauguration, representatives from all over the state were invited, besides from the Adyar Center. A close friend of Pantulu, Chittamury Subbaraidu, took active part in organizing the function. Annie Besant, the president of the Theosophical Society, sent her good wishes for the function. George Arundale, Jinaraja Dasa and others also extended their greetings. The building was handed over to the Society. It was said that Pantulu was the first person to construct such a palatial building at his own cost for the Theosophical Society.

Thus an inseparable bond was formed with the Society. It was attracting all the members of his family towards it like centripetal force. This foundation was laid down for an important future event. The necessary ground was prepared for the commencement of the making of a great history.

On the top of the building, a cement statue of Lord Sri Krishna playing his flute was erected. The passers-by felt as though the real Sri Krishna was standing there. The building was called Krishna Nivas.

Pantulu was not hefty in appearance but his personality was commanding. He had a golden complexion with catchy features. His look indicated a strong desire for knowledge and his nose, a strong will. His broad chest reflected a noble-heart. He looked sharp.

The wisdom of Pantulu was invisible. He could easily please the British judges with his fluency of expression in English. He would stretch out the legal points this way and that and sometimes twist them to defeat his

opponents, but he was never unscrupulous. He never tried to win cases on the basis of false evidence.

Though he never sought out advice from anybody, he would not hesitate to advise others. By nature he acted as he liked and as he believed.

Some of his friends did not like that he lent money to the needy and used to comment, 'A man of your stature is not expected to lend money like a mere businessman. Will moneylending earn you name and fame?'

Pantulu would reply, 'There is nothing wrong in what I do. It is not business in my view, it is a kind of social service. I am helping needy persons and charging only lawful interest from them.' Thus he justified his service to the poor.

At the time of repayment to him he was strict regarding calculation of interest as well as the period. Only after the amount was totally paid would he lend money again for a fresh period.

Similarly, when the crops failed or due to flood or any other reason, if the lessee did not pay the rental revenue on the fields, he was not considerate. He used to argue, 'When there was a bumper yield, did you give me excess revenue? Why should I lose my due income? It won't do.'

His external appearance and internal personality sometimes differed with one another. He was both closefisted and generous. He appeared as double-tongued to his friends; they could not understand why such a rich man was so close-fisted.

'Yes, by hard work and breaking my head, I took care of every pie of my income. I knew the value of money and how to respect it. If we do not respect our hard earnings, will it stay with us? The managing of money is as difficult as the earning of it. That is an important principle.' Thus his commentators were silenced.

Though he was of medium stature, his white dhoti and turban added to his dignity and dominance. He always wore the turban whenever he went out. He was a man of few words and his facial expressions made him appear a reserved person.

In those days it was the practice to provide food and other facilities to poor boys. Pantulu remembered the difficulties of his boyhood days. He provided food for one day in a week to such poor boys, and he saw that his friends also joined him. He could not tolerate disrespect. Give respect and take respect was his policy.

Once, due to absentmindedness or some other reason, a weekly boarder boy was indifferent towards him in a marketplace. Next time as usual when the boy came to his house for food, he angrily shouted at him, 'Have you already become blind with arrogance? You are not able to recognize elders and respect people properly?'

Pantulu was not easily approachable for friends or relatives, who ever they might be. They were kept at due distance. He was veritably perfection personified and endowed with an inflamed sense of discipline. He opined that discipline defines the character of a man and determines his success in life. He observed strict timings in his routine, like German philosopher Immanuel Kant, at 6:30 A.M. daily worship and prayers, breakfast 8:30 A.M, Lunch at 12:30 A.M. and going to bed at 9:30 P.M. Early in the morning he used to wake up 4:00 A.M. to read books and letters. Indeed he made at a routine for everybody in the house.

The eldest daughter of Pantulu, Rukminamma, was married to Yellam Raju Harinarayana, who was from a rich family. At the time of the birth of her son Gopalam, she died at Visakhapatnam. Vemuri Chinnaiah Rao, son of Vemuri Subba Rao of Machilipatnam, married his second daughter, Saraswatamma. Both the son and the father were lawyers. Chinnaiah Rao had a son named Narasimha Rao and two daughters, Rajyalakshamma and Subhadramma.

links



# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi

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## A Seraphic Being

Bharatamma, the third daughter of Durgamma and Pantulu, was born in 1902. Soon after, Pantulu's life changed its direction and his success in every field grew by leaps and bounds. His every wish was fulfilled at once. All his dealings were as if imbued with a Midas touch. Sentimentally, he believed that the birth of Bharatamma was at the root of this prosperity. Whatever might be his expenditure, there was no decrease of wealth at all—all the more it was increasing. He believed his daughter was Iswarya Lakshmi, the goddess of fabulous wealth.

Pantulu paid utmost attention to his daughter's welfare. He didn't want that she get even slightly hurt while playing outside, so playmates were invited into the house. She was not allowed to go out. If necessary, two attendees would accompany her out, with many necessary precautions. He would feel restless if his daughter's return was delayed, even for a short while.

Whatever she wanted, her desire was instantaneously fulfilled. If any particular article she wanted was not available at Bezawada, Pantulu sent a person to get it from Madras, so as to please her. If he happened to be angry at any time, simply a call from his daughter would immediately make him calm.

Once, while playing at home, Bharatamma tore an important court document. If it had been anybody else, Pantulu would have torn that person into pieces. But he did not utter even a single word. At the time of going out on any very important work, he would ask Bharatamma to come towards him for good augury.

In those days, girls of high families rarely went to school for education. They learned enough at home to read and write. It was an important decision to educate Bharatamma in a school. She was a smart student. She could recite anything after just one reading, even tongue-twisting Sanskrit verses and was at the top of her class. Her skill in reciting verses, without even a single pause, was lauded by everyone.

Bharatamma participated in elocution and other contests and won a number of prizes. Her eloquence was

wonderful and it was extremely difficult to argue with her. Every time, the opponent would fall flat before her. She was a lawyer's daughter indeed. People even used to call her the lawyer's daughter, not by her own name. 'The bird is small, but its clamor is too loud,' was the remark made about her. She could very swiftly grasp the weak and strong points underlying any issue at hand.

Her memory was astonishing. Whatever she had learnt in her childhood, she could recite accurately. She did not like showiness and empty words. Because of her dazzling, divine beauty, it appeared as though an angel had committed some sin and had been born as her. Bharatamma's complexion was like the color of turmeric inside the root. Her round face and well-shaped head were commanding. Long black hair added to her natural beauty. Her sparkling eyes were sharp also, at the same time. In stature, she appeared somewhat short.

While moving about in the house, it was felt as though the goddess Laxmi was moving about. She represented an ideal, traditional Brahmin woman. Her gold ornaments lost their color and existence and got dissolved in her complexion.

It appeared as if she became devotional, even from infancy. All important religious books were read and assimilated by her. Every day, as a rule, she read a part of the sacred book, *Bhagavatam*. She very much liked Meeraheji and her devotional songs. In heart and soul, Bharatamma was a devotee of Lord Sri Krishna. Every cell in her body was filled with Sri Krishna. She was considered as the second Rukmini Devi, who is a consort of Lord Sri Krishna. She had a vow not to sip even a drop of water till her prayers to the Lord were completed. Now and then, while praying to God, she was having a trance—Bharatamma was such an ardent devotee. Standing by the side of a statue of Lord Krishna playing on his flute, she had a photograph that was preserved very carefully.

Bharatamma recited the sacred Ashtakshri mantra, or the eight-lettered phrase, 'Om Namo Narayanaya,' always by heart; the casual word she would often repeat was, 'Krishna, Krishna.' For her, the entire universe was filled with Krishna; he was omnipresent. Everything was given to Krishna, for no one, in all the world, owns anything.

She would wake up early in the morning, have a cold bath and wear perfectly clean clothes. Sandalwood powder made damp, turmeric-smeared rice, turmeric powder and vermilion (kumkum) would be taken in small dishes, on a silver plate, to the sacred Tulasi plant, planted in a small fort at the center of the yard. She would take a large tumbler of water and another with cow's milk also to perform the ritualistic prayers. Going around the divine plant thrice also was a part of her daily morning prayer. At the time of taking food, a morsel of it would first be offered to God and then kept aside. After the meal, that morsel would be fed to crows and other birds outside.

A stray street dog would keep watch at the gate but would not step in. Bharatamma used to provide a little food to it twice daily, in a dry clay dish. Water, too, was provided. Whenever Bharatamma went out, the dog would follow her, wagging its tail till she returned home up to the gate.

Outside, near the cracks in the walls, ants used to appear and Bharatamma used to feed them with a little broken rice. A number of sparrows used to flutter all around. She used to provide bunches of paddy for those birds. Once a sparrow laid eggs in a small pigeon-hole in a wall. Unfortunately, the eggs slipped down and some of them were broken. Bharatamma pitied them and the rest of the eggs were placed back inside the pigeon-hole immediately.

Sankranti is a very important festival. Usually, every year, it is celebrated on 14th or 15th of January, when the sun enters the constellation Capricorn. Before the main gate, colored line diagrams of different designs are drawn with powders. Bharatamma was an expert in that art. A beautiful, colored chariot would make its appearance on the ground and nobody should walk over it on that day. She also developed skill in embroidery, knitting and sewing. A tablecloth was thus, specially prepared for the idol of Sri Krishna to be placed on it.

During leisure time she played all sorts of country games with pebbles with the neighbouring young ladies. Gambling with dice was one of the important games for them and Bharatamma was the winner always. It was said that no one could defeat her.

Some people attract by external beauty while others are internally beautiful. In Bharatamma, one was blended with the other equally. She had a rare spiritual, seraphic glow.

She could attend to all household work skillfully. She was shrewd with work, such that she could grasp the

implications of any job, in no time. Nobody needed to remind her, since she could anticipate, herself, what should be done and acted suitably.

Sometimes, without taking the earlier consent of elders, she would take decisions in appropriate manner. Nobody questioned her decisions, since they were correct. Her spontaneity was unique.

In Gudiwada, Bharatamma made her presence felt, everywhere, in the entire household. She was helpful to her father, as well as her mother, in their respective work, including daily prayer arrangements, without feeling any stress, or strain and she looked after daily administration dynamically. Her mother, Durgamma, was immensely happy with the manner in which the young girl was looking after everything in the house as if she was a real guardian of it.

Her inexhaustible energy and capacity for household work was unfaltering. She had astounding qualities of a rare nature for handling the household and prayed with diligence for many hours a day.

Bharatamma was soft at heart. She was calm, gentle and tolerant. She dealt with everyone with a personal touch. If a situation warranted, her anger was controlled and there was no external indication of it whatever. She was straightforward, broadminded and kind. Her self-respect was unyielding. She was scared of sinful life.

She was impelled by great compassion for the poor and needy into inordinate generosity. Her heart melted whenever she observed anybody in distress. If any favor was sought of her, she never said no to anybody, which often left her own needs suffering.

Once, during Sankranti days, she gave away a silk saree to a trained bull-player. It was a costly saree. Noticing it, her mother remarked, 'Oh, My God! There is a heap of old saris in the house. Will anybody give a silk sari as alms?' Bharatamma replied, 'Will anybody hesitate, this way and that, at the time of alms giving? At that moment, it struck to me to give it and I gave it away; that's all. In the town very many people gave away old saris to him. Unfortunately, none gives a strong and good sari. All right, I gave it away. By my alms, is our property reduced in any way?'

On another festival there was a feast. One batch was fed and a number of other guests were yet to come. Already it was late. Bharatamma observed that the servant maid was tired and hungry. She immediately provided her a leaf plate full of food, with all the items served on it. Her mother noticed this and wondered at her service. 'Is it not the usual practice to feed the servants after all others dined? What emergency is there to provide food to the servant maid right now and moreover, sumptuously!' There was a streak of anger in her words. Bharatamma replied, 'Oh my god! Krishna! The poor girl has been toiling from dawn with heavy work till now. She is dead tired and ravenous. My heart melted and I fed her. Is it a sin to do so?'

Bharatamma was a young girl when she started to look after her sister's children—Meenakshamma and the infant, Gopalam. She literally transformed herself and played the mother's role. Bathing, dressing and feeding the children became part of her daily routine. Very patiently, and carefully, without getting irritated, she took care of them. On either side of her bed, cradles were arranged and she used to swing them, with suitable ropes, singing melodious lullabies.

Her voice was musical by birth. She used to sing the verses from *Bhagavatam* and enjoyed to recite verses of the chapters *Gajendra Moksham* and *Prahalada Charitra*. There was one on the life of Lord Krishna which she liked most. It runs very smoothly, commencing with 'Kastoori Ranga Ranga.' In its appropriate tune, with ascending and descending notes when it is sung, all the listeners would be spell-bound. Bharatamma used to get herself totally absorbed while singing it. The listeners would have all ears and no eyes while she crooned and she, too, would gradually slip into slumber.

Durgamma's mind used to leap into some invisible and hazy levels. She would have reveries of the past. The thoughts of their elder daughter would move her to tears. Durgamma had sung the same lullaby while sending her children to bed and Bharatamma learnt it from her mother. Now, while listening to Bharatamma singing it, Durgamma would experience an inexplicable disturbance. She could not know why.

All these responsibilities and activities, perhaps, paved the way for future motherhood for Bharatamma. With this experience as a background, would this motherly girl nurture her own offspring in the future?

The Serpentine coil of fate united Sitaramayya and Bharati, as husband and wife, in August of 1915.

With great pomp and glory, their marriage was celebrated in Gudiwada and attended by one and all in the town. For three days, all the Brahmin families could not light the stoves in their homes. All their servants and workers were hosted for a week. For a number of days, everybody was discussing the grandeur and decorum of the marriage. The time of ceremony was considered to be a highly auspicious one for that year.

And so, Bharatamma, a daughter of the Tummalapalli family, stepped into the compound of the Uppaluris, as a daughter-in-law. Within a few days, Venkatappayya had a good omen, a favourable judgement in a longstanding High court case. He was jubilant and linked his legal success to the coming of his daughter-in-law.

Laxminarasamma took the utmost care of her most beautiful daughter-in-law. She would not allow her to face even the slightest strain. To exhibit her pride of having the most beautiful daughter-in-law, she invited all their acquaintances for a grand lunch. She couldn't help but stare at her while she moved about in the house, like a light. In fact, Bharatamma was considered too tender to be exposed to sunlight. Whenever a new person looked at her, she would perform the necessary remedies for the probable evil looks of the visitor. She felt extremely happy to observe the utmost love bond of the new couple, one for the other. She began to become earnest and eager to see the fruit of their sacred love.

In the course of time, her attention for her daughter-in-law gradually decreased for some unknown reason. Laxminarasamma began to feel jealous of her daughter-in-law which further converted itself into even hatred! Then started the naggings and bickerings of the mother-in-law. She began to be afraid of the beauty of Bharatamma! The proverb that the goodness of a mother-in-law is as true as the softness of a knife began to be proved as correct.

Bharatamma could not understand her mother-in-law's change of heart. She executed all the commands of her mother-in-law most obediently. But the naggings were fresh always. Different types of servants were busy at home but Bharatamma was always overloaded with work and drudgery. She was made the target of unpleasant comments, sharp strictures and insults, which would hurt her feelings daily.

The mother-in-law could not bear even the presence of Bharatamma. As if there was inherited enmity; she was cruel and rough. There was an excellent rose garden for the Uppaluri family and there was a great demand for the roses. But Bharatamma was never allowed to wear even a single rose in her hair. A rose was sold then, for two pies.

In the early days, when the daughter-in-law stepped newly into their home, the mother-in-law personally combed her hair into a long braid with flowers at the top of the braid. But now? The daughter-in-law should not touch even a single mango fruit during the mango season, except when the mother-in-law gave it.

What was the mother-in-law avenging? Nobody could guess it. How much venom was hidden beneath her beauty? What a terrible cheat! The mother was also thinking, perhaps, that her most beloved son might be enamored of his wife and keep away from her in time. Hitherto, her son had been affectionate and attached to the mother. But now, Bharatamma might lure him to her own side. The mother-in-law had turned into a sadist and had begun to torture the daughter-in-law, thus gratifying her own repressions, disappointments and dissatisfactions.

However, whatever might be the severity of tortures and insults hurled on her, Bharatamma maintained her respect for her mother-in-law. The elderliness of the mother-in-law was always given due regard. Whatever the mother-in-law hurled on her, for Bharatamma, her mother-in-law always had an honorable status. Bharatamma patiently tolerated everything, like Mother Earth, who is kicked, ploughed, walked upon, tilled and even drilled. Bharatamma contained everything in her heart of hearts; in fact, it was a part of her cultural heritage to do so.

Bharatamma considered the whole of her silent agony as a legacy of her earlier births. Fate decided accordingly and scribbled it on her forehead! 'During my earlier, innumerable lives, I don't know whom and whom I had tortured and insulted. Wouldn't those sins yield the fruit? During this lifetime, all of them I am reaping at the same time. Yes, I must put up with all of them.' She argued within herself and philosophically resigned herself to her fate and fortune.

Not only that, she did not want to react in any way by hurting her mother-in-law's feelings, belittling the father-in-law or wounding her beloved husband's heart—why should she commit a sin again? If magnanimously, all the hardships were tolerated at least in the next birth, he would be happy, she thought. While she was facing all those difficulties, day in and day out, she was uttering the most sacred name of Lord Krishna. All the insults and tortures were submitted to him totally.

Sitaramayya was observing the agony of his wife. But he could not venture to utter even a single word to his mother. His mother had been everything for him. She was an incarnation for him. He had respect for her and he was, at heart, afraid of her. He was rather timid. However, when left alone, he was pacifying his wife and consoling her affectionately.

On the other side, the glory of Venkatappayya tended to decline. He was facing losses in every field. There was no agricultural yield. There were no proper crops. When the fields were about to yield a good harvest, there were sweeping cyclones. He was not receiving his due amounts from others. He had to hesitate to get his three-storied building white-washed. His borrowers were avoiding him. One or two rich persons cleverly submitted insolvency petitions and escaped from his demands. Venkatappayya was financially too weak to fight out such cases in higher courts, with personal interest.

It was his turn to borrow money in large amounts. He was selling away some of his land to repay the debts. The time was adverse and heavy. So to speak, his walking stick turned into a snake. All the erstwhile weaklings who depended on his mercy turned indifferent. The factory was under lock and key. The tractor was sold away. The horse died and subsequently, he gave away his carriage as alms.

Till then, there had been a continuous influx of cases, though some of them, which were clearly unjust, were rejected by him. Now he was no longer in demand in the court. Perhaps the public felt that he became weak, financially, as well as on the legal front. Even the casual cases he came across did not evince much interest in him.

At that time, an old friend of Venkatappayya, belonging to Sangam Jangerlamudi Village, recommended a peculiar case to Venkatappayya to take up. He believed that if Venkatappayya took it up, he was sure to win. He came to know that there had been one or two old promissory notes idling with Venkatappayya.

The litigation was about the property dispute among brothers. In short, a part of the litigation should be managed indirectly, the rest of it would involve creation of forged documents, with the help of the old promissory notes. The remuneration would be about thirty thousand rupees. Venkatappayya appeared to be listening to the entire proposal. Suddenly, he turned wild and shouted, 'Had it been anybody else, I would have instantaneously necked him out. Since you are known to me for a long time, I am sparing you. Simply because my financial condition is not quite sound, how could you foolishly think that I would stoop down meekly? Everyone in the town is aware that I would not degrade myself, even at the point of a bayonet. How could you have the audacity to suggest such a case to take up? You, rascal! If you linger here, even for a moment more, well, I may lose my temper. Get lost immediately. Never appear before me—for life.' The person was shocked at Venkatappayya's reaction and rushed out.

For a while he questioned himself, 'How could this person know about the old promissory notes?' Immediately he questioned his clerk. The clerk tried to bluff for a while. But before Venkatappayya, he could not but confess the truth and consequently he faced dismissal.

Venkatappayya was facing difficulties from every direction but he did not lose his serenity. His self-confidence continued to be firm. Like a philosopher, he faced the upheavals with a steady mind and composure. The old saying is that, 'The cost of an elephant is always a thousand rupees, whether alive or dead!'

Bharatamma arrived at her paternal house ten days before New Year's Day. Her mother, Durgamma, had already learned about the dwindling of the properties of Venkatappayya and that he was in debt. She was also aware of the tortures and agony of Bharatamma at her in-law's house. Bharatamma had been like a golden angel. But now—with sunken face and eyes, hanging cheeks, weakend, slim body—Bharatamma appeared before her mother. Indeed it was a heart-rending situation for Durgamma.

But Bharatamma did not utter even a single word against her mother-in-law. She did not try to ease herself even by indirectly criticizing her mother-in-law. The searching questions of Durgamma failed to elicit any information from Bharatamma.

'Lord Krishna is omnipresent. Everything takes place as per his will. He is the creator. It is not known why He has been testing me like this. It is my duty to withstand this critical period.' Bharatamma thought, within herself, unperturbed at heart.

Sitaramayya arrived one day before the festival. Bharatamma felt very happy over his arrival. On seeing him, Durgamma frowned at him silently and kept indifferent. The son-in-law was received coldly and no special treatment was extended to him. The father-in-law, Pantulu, nodded at him, enquired about their welfare casually and went out.

Durgamma gave vent to her anguish and passed caustic remarks indirectly against the mother-in-law of Bharatamma. The family name was at stake. The wise saying of golden days is true in respect to the Uppaluri family. 'Our great grandfathers drank ghee. As such, don't you feel the smell of it all around us now?' Thus goes the saying. We ran after the Uppaluri family and my innocent child had become a victim for it. We never knew or guessed that they would behave in this manner. A number of acres of land were disposed of to clear debts all over the town. Weren't they? Having been born in a respectable, orthodox Brahmin family, if business is resorted to with bones, well, is it not a self-perishing, devilish act? After everything is swept out, what is the fate of the future children in the family? Somebody long back cautioned us that all that glitters is not gold. By that time already, everything was decided upon. What is the use of weeping over spilt milk? Unknowingly, we plunged ourselves, neck deep into a slush. How can the taste of anything be known without tasting it? Now everything is clearly visible in true colors!

Bharatamma was taken aback when her mother set free her sharp tongue like that. She could not think as to what to do. She felt ashamed and sank into her shoes. She felt nervous and totally upset. A guest, that too, no less than the son-in-law, was treated indecently and discourteously. Bharatamma became indignant over it.

She rushed to her mother and shouted, 'If you talk repugnantly like this, it is as good as insulting me. Is this your culture? Is this the standard of your decency? Even the people of lower strata, who earn their daily bread by hard labor, will never treat their sons-in-law in this manner. Till now I have been having a great regard for you as a symbol of Hindu womanhood following Vedic culture. I wished to follow your footsteps, in settling as a ideal housewife. You are my role model.'

Bharatamma gasped for breath for a while. She continued, as if under the influence of some spirit—'Remember one thing! I am now the daughter-in-law of Uppaluri family first, and then, only, your daughter. First understand it. If you don't give us our due respect, we lose nothing. Our value and prestige will not diminish, whether recognized or not. Ups and downs are common in every family. Tides and ebbs are there. Wealth and poverty are like the two sides of a coin. Persons should be respected, but not their wealth. That is culture. For life I have to live there. I cannot keep quiet if you point your forefinger towards us. None approached you to give your opinion on our problems. Unasked, why do you come forward with your foul tongue? Don't embarrass yourself by poking your nose into our family affairs. We live by ourselves. Under no circumstances will we ever seek your shelter. We have our self-respect. If you cross your limit, I'll commit suicide in your presence, breaking my head.' After emotionally shouting at her mother, with expressive gestures, she burst into sobbing continuously, hiding her weeping face between her knees, while sitting, leaning against the wall.

Durgamma was aghast at the whole incident. She got up, tongue-tied and left the hall. After one hour, everything subsided. Bharatamma approached her husband and begged his pardon for the improper behavior of her mother. 'My mother has, so to say, a hasty tongue—somewhat termagant also—after my elder sister passed away. I have been everything for my mother. She gets disturbed, literally speaking, when even a fly touches me; her motherly feelings are turbulent. Kindly don't take her words to heart. You came over here for me but not for their treatment. I am deeply hurt by their attitude. I am forever yours. You are most respected by me in the world. You know it well. Kindly bear with her. I pray that you may forget her rattle. Further, let the whole thing go submerged here only.' She thus pleaded with her husband, with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Sitaramayya knew the nature of his wife well. He understood all the turmoil in her heart. He said softly, 'I know your feelings and as such, I don't take her words seriously. What has happened, has happened! My dear Bharati! Please don't shed tears any longer,' and hugged her to his heart gently.

The next day was the New Year's Day. On that day, Durgamma tried to present new clothes to the daughter and son-in-law, on a silver platter. Bharatamma declined the gift ferociously saying, 'We are not dependents of anybody, nor shameless. We, too, have self-respect. Yesterday you wounded our hearts with repugnant words and today you are coming forward with your gift. We are not the persons to be tempted by it. You may as well give them as alms to the poor and needy. Let them feel thankful to you. You can have heavenly blessings also.'

We don't lose anything if we don't wear new clothes today.'

Durgamma entreated her daughter to accept them, in vain. Her father's appeal also fell flat before Bharatamma. Finally, Durgamma approached her son-in-law and begged his pardon saying, 'I committed a great mistake; I could not but talk to you discourteously. Please don't take my words to heart. On this festive day your minds should be free from unpleasantness. Kindly ask your wife to accept my gift and comply with my request. She may perhaps agree!' But Bharatamma was firm. 'Whatever may happen when once I take a decision, it is final. That's all.' The festival of the New Year passed by as per Bharatamma's will.

Venkata Laxminarasamma was totally upset with the financial strain. All the wealth was evaporating like camphor powder. Her mental tension led to high blood pressure and consequently, to paralysis. She was bedridden.

Bharatamma was attending to her and looking after her every need as if she was an infant. Dressing of hair, bath, clothing, feeding, etc., were taken care of duly. Nature calls were no exception. When the patient suddenly started to vomit, Bharatamma bent forward and collected it, in both her hands joining together like a bowl. Massaging her legs and fanning her with a palm leaf fan till midnight, were also a part of her routine.

Bharatamma did not hate her mother-in-law. She did not approach her plight as tit for tat. Bharatamma treated her with due respect and regard as usual, with kindness and affection.

Venkata Laxminarasamma was stunned at the nobility and service, extended by her daughter-in-law. She felt ashamed of her past behavior. She was in tears of repentance. With a hesitant voice, bending her head and looking down, she uttered, 'Bharatamma! You are the light of our family. We are blessed to have a priceless jewel like you with us. I tortured you inhumanly, for no fault of yours. I slashed you with my tongue. I was haughty, cruel and dictatorial. I am a terrible sinner and am now reaping the fruit of what I did. Your agony did not go to waste—I am now cursed. You are the embodiment of forgiveness. Even if you pardon me with a broad heart, God won't. Hence my present plight. I could not understand your nobility. Now my repentance is torturing me. I have no daughters. Even if I had, perhaps they would not have attended upon me, like you. I have realized my grave mistake. But God denied me the opportunity to correct it. All right. I should be punished. Will you kindly excuse me magnanimously? I shall breathe my last peacefully.' The mother-in-law pleaded for mercy again and again.

Bharatamma was disturbed when her mother-in-law appealed to her for pardon. She replied, 'No, no. Unnecessarily, you are attributing non-existing things to yourself and lamenting. I don't have any hatred for you. You did not torture me nor was I put to trouble. All these things are common everywhere. Everything happens according to Destiny. You are merely instrumental. That had been my view all the time. What am I to excuse you? Between us no such requests have any place whatever. You are as respectable as my mother. If you request me to excuse you, it is said that my longevity decreases. Kindly do not talk in such a manner with me and forget the past. It is my duty to serve you in order to get salvation. This is a unique privilege for me, unlike all others. In the future, if I get bedridden, should not my daughter-in-law look after me and nurse me?' Thus spoke Bharatamma softly, affectionately and tenderly.

Venkata Laxminarasamma attempted to lift both her hands and to extend them towards Bharatamma as though she was the Goddess of Forgiveness. Bharatamma immediately caught hold of her hands, bent her head and bowed to her.

After a few days, Venkata Laxminarasamma lost her speech. The soul started to try to leave the body. One day, at about midnight, while Bharatamma was trying to make her sip a spoonful of the sacred Tulasi water, Venkata Laxminarasamma passed away in the lap of Bharatamma.

Along with wealth, his life-long partner had passed away and the painful separation made Venkatappayya shed tears for the first time.

In October 1917, Bharatamma became pregnant. A seed was sown to uplift the Uppaluri family to the skies. Venkatappayya felt happy to learn that he would become a grandfather in a short time. It would be a solace for him in his present lonely life.

One day, an old widow stepped in with the firm support of her walking stick tick-ticking on the floor. She called Venkatappayya in a familiar tone, 'Venkatappayya! I learn that my granddaughter is in the family way. Is it so? I came over to see my child. Her unparalleled service to her mother-in-law is appreciated by everybody

everywhere. Such an exemplary woman will definitely be blessed with an exemplary son! He may altogether change the horoscope of the family itself! The time of arrival of a new daughter-in-law and a cow, are said to alter the horoscope of the family totally. Where is my granddaughter?' She called out in a commanding voice. Before she stepped into the next room, Bharatamma came out and bowed before her, touching her feet. The old granny lifted her up softly and with a smile, blessed her. 'How I wish to give away my longevity to you! Come back from your paternal house with an excellent child in your arms. I will come again to bless my great grandson! Best of Luck!'

While leaving the house, she looked at Venkatappayya and noticed his melancholic mood. 'My dear fellow! You are gloomy like a fool. Neither bodies nor wealth last long! Don't you know it? Your progeny will definitely flourish in the future! Your grandson will restore the prestige and dignity of your family and even elevate it to a peak level. I shall take leave of you. It is getting dark. This old woman will have to grope in the dark if I linger any longer.' So saying, she left.

Even from childhood, Bharatamma was a devotee of Lord Krishna. Every part of her body—every cell of it—was manifested by the name Lord Krishna. Everything was Lord Krishna for her. Lord Krishna was omnipresent for her. Her faith was firm like a rock. She believed that the growing embryo within her was a boon of the Lord. The child would be born with a trace of the Lord or 'Divine Amsa'—all her earlier austerities and prayers would yield a Divine fruit. She firmly believed that her son would earn universal name and fame, thus salve even paternal, as well as maternal generations.

Every mother desired her motherhood to be an extremely pleasant and happy one. Depending upon their cultural background and noble heritage, such desires and wishes take different shapes naturally.

Just before leaving for Gudiwada, Bharatamma bowed to her father-in-law and touched his feet in the customary manner. He blessed and presented one hundred sixteen rupees to her, and said, 'I wish that your trip will be a happy and a fruitful one. With wide-open eyes, I will be awaiting your return with my grandson in your arms. On receiving the news of your delivery, I will send Sitaramayya immediately. Many years passed by for this house, after children crawled and smiled all around. I pray to God to shower his grace on you.' Thus, she was given a touching farewell.

Ever since she came to know about her daughter's pregnancy, Durgamma had been restless with eagerness to see her beloved daughter. Golden complexion, best conduct, supreme intelligence—all are interwoven in her daughter. As such, she began to anticipate that her grandson would be extraordinary in every respect. It is said that interest is dearer than the principal amount!

On the arrival of her daughter, Durgamma was in ecstasy, as a matter of fact. Her joy knew no bounds. She attended upon her pregnant daughter very carefully, to the best of her ability, in view of the extreme tenderness of the embryo. Bharatamma hadn't any freedom at her in-law's house. Now, at her paternal home, she had a sort of satisfaction. She had complete rest, without any responsibilities whatsoever. Her devotion and prayers were in full swing.

From her childhood, Bharatamma had a separate room for herself. In those days, she had gathered peacock feathers, bead garlands, Kondapalli toys, small coloured glass tube garlands and other things to play with. In the cupboard she carefully preserved storybooks of ideal and pious housewives besides puranic books. Sri Krishna wears a peacock feather in his head. As such, Bharatamma had a special liking for it. During her childhood days she believed that a turmeric smeared feather would give birth to a small peacock feather, when hidden in the pages of a book. Bharatamma recalled those days smilingly. For very many years, a portrait of Krishna, playing his flute, had been hanging on the wall. Now, the portrait of his mother, Yasoda, feeding child, Sri Krishna, in her lap, had a place on the wall.

Sitting alone in her room, she had a number of reminiscences of her childhood. A type of fragrance emanating from that room was very pleasant. She moved about in that room for a while and opened the cupboard. She browsed through some of the books. There were books containing rituals and vows associated with different types of prayers. Suddenly she remembered and recalled a particular one. Sitting on the doorsill with legs on either side of the sill, rubbing the drop on the sill with the right forefinger, a song had been sung. Bharatamma hummed that song within herself for a while.

She was spending her time more and more for devotional prayers. She was meditating hours together and getting unaware of her surroundings. Her mind turned inwards and she resembled the great lady ascetic, Meerabai, who had absorbed herself totally with the supreme spirit. She was keeping herself away from

everything and keeping quiet and indifferent. She was behaving like a guest who would leave after a short time.

Bharatamma was evincing no interest in ornaments. After attending to the daily routine in the morning, she was staying in her room. Food was not felt attractive or tempting any longer. But she was particular of taking milk, spiced with a little saffron, which would strengthen the embryo.

Throughout the day, Bharatamma kept herself busy with meditation and uttering the sacred name of Lord Krishna silently. Whenever she slept, she slept for hours and hours as if she was in the grip of some supernatural power. She felt happier to lose herself in such a deep sleep.

Durgamma felt disturbed and tried to wake her up with a great difficulty. After a while, as though she just descended from a super-heavenly plane, she would look at everyone, expressing her annoyance, silently, for disturbing her. Durgamma felt afraid of an evil spirit's influence on her daughter and got the necessary remedy done, according to local beliefs.

One day Bharatamma did not emerge at all from her room. Being terrified, Durgamma pushed open the door and was taken aback to see her daughter leaning sideways in an unconscious state, in padmasana posture. Two people lifted her up and gently placed her on a bed. It was thought that she might be weak and so swooned. After a while, Bharatamma came to her senses and questioned, 'What happened? Why have you all flocked around me?' She was told that she fell unconscious. She replied, 'No. I don't think so. Perhaps, I visited some unknown heavenly planes. I was extremely happy then.'

Durgamma cautioned her daughter that if a pregnant woman did not take due care of her food, anything might happen. 'At least for the sake of the embryo, nutritious food should invariably be taken,' she added.

At the time of prayer, Bharatamma felt some overflowing dynamism, with a divine touch, within herself—the touch that would control her life.

In Hindu families, it is the usual practice to celebrate what is called 'Seemantam' for the pregnant woman, after the embryo attains an age of six months. It is a woman's function.

Accordingly, Durgamma planned to celebrate it in a big way. An auspicious day and time were finalized and pendals with palm leaves were erected before their house. The entrances were decorated with green mango leaf garlands and thresholds were smeared with Turmeric and vermilion spots prominently on them. Different types of tasty dishes got prepared at home in large quantities. Invitations were extended to all the ladies in the neighborhood as well as rich cultivator families.

Bharatamma liked peacock blue color. She got a costly blue saree from Bezawada. Bharatamma had a special oil bath. She wore the blue-colored silk saree and her braid was also decorated with flowers. Durgamma ornamented her daughter with her own jewel as well as the other jewels she had. Bharatamma was asked to bow to five aged hoary housewives and touch their feet. Then she bowed to her mother similarly.

Two ladies stood on either side of her and caught hold of her arms, softly, while she walked, gently, to a specially decorated chair. Then, both her forearms and wrists were richly ornamented with bangles. Bharatamma appeared like a perfect and complete woman. Two eyes were felt insufficient to appreciate her supreme beauty.

Bharatamma was participating in the function happily. But, in her heart of hearts, she was thinking of her Lord. 'Body present, mind absent'—so goes the common saying.

The function was followed by a grand feast. Durgamma felt very happy and thrilled over it. After everyone left the dining hall, Durgamma reviewed the whole function for a while at heart. She was afraid that some of the invitees might be jealous; the evil looks of some might be harmful. Thus thinking, she got the necessary remedies performed.

While going over to Machilipatnam on some work, Sitaramayya got down at Gudiwada on his way to meet his wife. His mother-in-law received him cordially this time and inquired about their welfare. He received due respect and treatment wholeheartedly from her.

After a lapse of three months, Sitaramayya was meeting his wife. He noticed something new in her looks. Her eyes looked like bright, glowing lamps. Perhaps pregnant women may appear like that! Sitaramayya looked at

her affectionately and said softly, 'My dear! How are you? Is your health all right? Father asked me to convey his best wishes. Your friend, Tayaru, got ready to come over here for your Seemantham function. But due to some sudden, unavoidable reason, she had to stay home. She apologized for the same. By the way, Bharati, the tiny plants you planted in the back yard are now flowering nicely.' Sitaramayya thus narrated all the details in a pleasing manner.

Bharatamma was pleased and smiled at him. She asked, 'How is my father-in-law's health? Is he all right? Is the cook preparing and providing proper food and other things carefully? She has been somewhat lazy and absent-minded. Added to it, she is deaf also!'

Sitaramayya replied, 'Don't bother! Everything is all right. Your absence is conspicuously felt by everybody there; we had to sell a little land and I looked after it.'

Both were silent for a while. Bharatamma breathed heavily and, keeping the subsequent, financial problems that crept up after her mother-in-law's demise in mind, she remarked, 'Don't get disturbed. Kindly seek employment for yourself. Let us not be dependents on anybody. We should not hang heavily on anyone. We can live by ourselves. After the delivery we will join you wherever you may work. Let us live a contented life.' She looked at him calmly and tenderly.

'Bharati! I am already on the lookout for a job. I applied to Andhra Insurance Company and in that context, on my way to Machilipatnam, I got down here. How can I go via Gudiwada without meeting you? Our relatives are helping me to get the job, definitely. The past is vested with God,' he said.

Bharatamma felt very happy and said, 'Believe me! You will get the job with God's grace. My intuition tells me so. Don't worry hereafter,' she assured him convincingly.

In the evening, before leaving for Machilipatnam, Sitaramayya advised Bharati to take care of her health. 'Take timely food every day. If your wish takes concrete shape and if I get the job, I will write to you.' Bharatamma had carefully saved some money earlier. She gave it to him, saying, 'Keep this amount with you. It will help you to meet your expenses.' Sitaramayya declined the offer, 'No, Bharati! I have sufficient money with me. Keep it with you.' But she insisted and thrust the money into his pocket, saying, 'I don't need it. Kindly you take it!'

Bharatamma looked at her husband steadily for a while; suddenly she felt a wave of fear in herself, just for a moment. Again, her looks followed him up to the end of the street on his way to Machilipatnam.

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From her childhood days, Bharatamma had the habit of alms-giving. If anybody expressed a liking for anything in her position, she would give it away without any hesitation. She never liked to keep things for herself. She had no special attachment for any particular thing. In her childhood, she was lavish in alms-giving.

Whenever anybody came to their gate and stretched his hand for alms, he never left with an empty hand. She was keeping a basket full of rice, always ready, for this purpose. Besides, small change, too, was kept ready, in a small tin. On hearing a voice at the gate, Bharatamma used to rush with alms.

At nights, every day, an old man used to come, carrying a yoke with alms bowls and small ringing bells on either side of it. On hearing the approaching bells, Bharatamma would proceed to the gate without any loss of time. He used to bless her whole-heartedly to have all-round prosperity in her life. For a few days, there had been no ringing of the bells. She was expecting him every night and after a few days, she came to know that he was no more. The sad news pricked her kind heart; she felt his disappearance a lot and she remembered him. The charitable nature never left her.

One evening, an ascetic person in saffron clothes approached their gate and begged aloud for alms. At that time, Bharatamma was in the prayer room. On hearing him, breathing heavily, but walking steadily, she carried a small basket filled with rice, along with a few coins also, to the gate. The person at the gate looked like Lord Siva, with matted hair and dressed in saffron. She had a devotional feeling towards him, bowed to him and passed on the alms to his pouch. The coins were later given to him, hoping to have his blessings.

The ascetic glanced at her and closed his eyes for a moment. After a while, he declared, calmly looking at her, 'Child! My pouch is full now. I don't need to proceed further for alms. Shortly, your pouch will be full and your prayers will yield the fruit as you desire. You will have an excellent son and you will attain salvation.'

Usually such ascetic persons blessed housewives, saying, 'May your married life last long!' or, 'May your longevity be quite long!' or, 'May your progeny flourish!' For some unknown reason, the ascetic did not bless her like that!

As the pregnancy advanced further, the body of Bharatamma became bulky, due to an increase of water content all over. She was gasping whenever she tried to walk, as if she was not carrying a normal child. The child inside was felt as too heavy. On her golden skin, black streaks were appearing. There is a belief that such color is an indication of a masculine child. As such, people began to predict the birth of a son, who, as per the faith in the community, would help his ancestors to skip over a particular zone in the hell—'Punnamanaraka.'

Bharatamma was performing her daily prayers regularly. While Bharatamma slept on a cot, Durgamma slept very near her cot, on a mat. Who could know the exact time when the mother's help would be required?

As soon as Bharatamma went to bed, she was getting dreams and the dormant activity would wake up and manifest itself in a thousand ways during her sleep. After she woke up, it would appear as though the dream was reality and all the world around was an illusion. The whole experience was, perhaps, due to her mental agitation and devotional ecstasy. She was getting drowned in ardent devotion.

Delivery days were fast approaching. The elder daughter of Durgamma had died after giving birth to Gopalam at Visakhapatnam. Durgamma, therefore, became overcautious and it was decided to arrange for the delivery at Gudiwada, taking all the necessary precautions. However, there were discussions in the family. Another sister of Bharatamma, by the name of Saraswatamma, offered that the delivery could very happily take place at her house. She was the wife of Vemuri Chinnayya Rao of Machilipatnam. Saraswatamma sent a message to her mother to that effect.

Bharatamma also agreed to go over to Machilipatnam. Durgamma got an auspicious day fixed for the journey. She offered her prayers in the local Bheemeswara Temple and offerings were made to the Lord. It was the journey day.

At the time of their departure from home, according to the local faith, Washerman (Dhobi), carrying soiled clothes, was asked to come towards them as a good augury. Bharatamma went round the paternal house and the sacred Tulasifort in the yard in particular. She stepped out of the house and got into the cart. Unexpectedly, two Brahmins also came towards them, in the opposite direction. Everyone felt that all these omens indicate supreme happiness for Bharatamma. She left for Machilipatnam.

Her sister, Saraswatamma, took immense care in fixing up the midwife also. An experienced person, in whose hands there had been many happy deliveries, was fixed to attend on Bharatamma.

In her house a room was perfectly cleaned and kept ready exclusively for the delivery. The window doors were closed and covered with curtains. In those days, dark rooms were allotted for delivery. In a small niche in that room, a castor oil lamp, alone, was allowed to glow. A hurricane lamp was kept ready at hand.

Bharatamma reached Machilipatnam, along with Durgamma and a few servants. In the allotted room, a portrait of Lord Krishna playing the flute was mounted on the wall. Whether it was already there or whether at the request of Bharatamma, it was hung there—is not known. The cot had coarse cotton yarn woven on it and was kept ready by the time Bharatamma arrived from Gudiwada. Their prayer room was adjacent to the delivery room. Bharatamma lay on the cot and while looking at the portrait, she uttered the sacred name of Lord Krishna, always. Everybody was anxious and eager for her delivery.

According to the oral calculations and predictions, Bharatamma would give forth a child in the period 30 June to 2nd July. But there are no signs of pangs for Bharatamma; so Durgamma began to doubt the prediction. Bharatamma was not physically strong by nature. Due to an anemic condition, she looked pale. But her eyes were bright and twinkling. She believed that the delivery would be easy. Though she was active at heart, at the same time, she was very eager to have the delivery at the earliest and ease herself. She began to imagine her blessed son in her beloved arms.

She began to imagine that her son would be like this or like that and so on. In her imagination, her son would appear for a while and fade out suddenly. She tried to create a definite picture of her son and retain it in her imagination. But she failed.

Therefore, she was able to imagine a hazy son in her mind. Suckling the child, bathing him, sending him to sleep, singing a lullaby, etc., were her mental functions. In her dreamy state, a sudden cry of the infant would be heard and she would get up with a jerk and look around. She would notice her mother, fast asleep nearby and later realize that she had had a dream.

She would look at her stomach and would say to herself, 'Ah! The child is still here! I dreamt that he is weeping!' There was some movement inside. It was not a dream. It was a fact. Perhaps with a desire to come out, he was slightly struggling. 'That is why my beloved one is moving his hands and legs briskly! Be patient my dear! I am more eager to see you! How can you know my eagerness! Minutes are passing on as if they are eons. I am counting days. With wide open eyes, I am awaiting your arrival!' Thinking like this, she was once again plunging into sleep, continuing her dreams.

Suddenly, on 3rd July, pangs started for Bharatamma. The pains were increasing more and more. They were unbearable. She started twisting this way and that. It was though at any moment the delivery might take place. But there was a decrease of the pains and they disappeared!

The next day, again, the pangs started, as on the previous day! Bharatamma could not bear the pain. It was thought that the child was on the way. Hot water was kept ready in the room. The midwife was ready at hand, near the cot. But the pains disappeared as quickly as they developed. Thus six days elapsed with false pains appearing and disappearing, telling on the nerves of Bharatamma.

It was the 8th July. At midnight pangs started extremely, violently and painfully. She was twirling and twisting and started shouting loudly. People around were terrified. Doubts of her survival were sprouting out at their hearts for the first time. There was gradual aggravation of pangs. It appeared as though the earth was having pangs and quaking.

Everybody was on their toes anxiously awaiting the delivery at any moment. Bharatamma was fluttering like a leaf in a cyclone. To prevent the turning of the child into horizontal position, the midwife tied a cloth tightly on the stomach of Bharatamma, in vain. As if unwilling to enter the world, the child turned away. The midwife put forth all her experience and skill, and with a great difficulty, turned the child into a normal direction and remarked, 'The little insolent fellow is tumultuous.'

Soon after, the hues and cries of Bharatamma reverberated all over. Everyone was perturbed and the gray-headed midwife, herself, was looking aghast.

There were indications that a new being is going to enter this illusory world, making its way through the mother's womb. Slowly the head started to gleam out. Immediately, Saraswatamma noted the time. Bharatamma was whirling and twirling continuously.

Thus took place the incoming of a stranger into the world. It appeared as though a hill pierced its way out through the earth. It seemed to be a spiraling king cobra living inside a cavern at the root of trees came out when a forest fire was spreading all over.

A babe was born. An old lady rang a silver plate significantly. As soon as the infant came out he started to cry kar-kar—as if he was reluctant to come out of an erstwhile dark area into a darker world. It was extremely difficult to keep him at peace.

Bharatamma was very much exhausted. She had a completely relaxed breath as if she unloaded a very heavy weight. The dreamy expectation of the mother, for nine full months, came to a culmination on that day. She felt as though she unloaded a very heavy weight. Bharatamma was very much tired and began to breathe easily after the delivery.

She had been waiting for nine months to become a mother and cherished her motherhood. Her waiting had come to an end at last.

The gifted fruit of all her earlier prayers was in her hands, in the form of a child. The midwife very carefully examined the child whether all the limbs were all right or not. With the help of a thread, she severed the umbilical cord that had been hitherto connecting the child to the mother. Thus the bond was cut, once and for all.

The waist of the mother was tied up all around. The infant was given a bath and exposed to benzoin incense

and carefully made to lie on the soft linen near the mother. Later the consecration was performed. Members of the family had been eagerly awaiting the birth of the uplifter of the Uppaluri lineage. He was now born. It was Suddha Padyami of Ashada Month, Kala Yukta year. The birth star was punarvasu. The time of birth was 6:15 A.M. As per the English almanac, it was 9th July 1918.

The midwife received more emoluments than agreed to earlier. New sarees also were presented to her by Durgamma. She also said, 'In Your blessed hands, a dangerous period has passed over. We cannot forget your help in our lifetime.' The midwife replied respectfully, 'At one stage for me, also, my hands and legs have stiffened, unable to decide what to do. I struggled at heart and I doubted even the survival of your daughter. This is an abnormal delivery. She had pangs seven times like cyclones and I had never seen such a difficult delivery earlier.' The midwife bowed to Durgamma and left.

Durgamma prayed to God in innumerable forms, for saving her daughter from the terrible jaws of death. When she would go to Gudiwada she would get special worships performed in her daughter's name, in Bheemeswara Temple.

Bharatamma was slim by birth. But she had Himalayan strength at heart, though weak physically. By this delivery, her body was butted, squabbled and wrangled everywhere. By looking at the blessed infant sleeping soundly in the linen, again and again, Bharatamma forgot all the earlier torment, as if in hell for the past seven days. She was experiencing a great tranquility, as if touched by a magical herb. She was experiencing supreme happiness now. All the hair on her body stood like bristles. She was shedding tears of joy. As usual, her imagination started functioning in full swing.

'Oh! This child is the Divine gift of my Lord Shri Krishna. He graced me with this gift. Therefore this child is born with specific purpose. My longtime desire has materialized. Like a great treasure he will be taken care of, he shall be brought up in the same manner as Yashoda Mata brought up Lord Bala Krishna. His graceful gift, childish gossip, all sorts of pranks will make me forget myself and the world. In a special manner he should be brought up since he has a bright future. His name and fame will make my birth a historic one.'

In this manner, Bharatamma began to imagine about her future, with her infant son by her side in the bed. Though her body was painful, as if crushed by an elephant, her mind was full of ecstasies. When she would slip into sleep her inner conscience would reveal entirely new realms.

She was listening to a melodious flute. It was not known where it was coming from. From Brindavan? From Gokulam? She ran and ran but could not find Muralidhar. It appeared that the music of the flute was emanating from a nearby place. She ran in that direction. She felt that she was approaching it but the music was going floating in the air. Whatever speed she was moving with, she could not know the whereabouts of Krishna. While floating in the sky, she suddenly fell down, uttering the words, 'Krishna, Krishna.'

Durgamma heard her daughter uttering, 'Krishna', 'Krishna', and woke her up with a great difficulty. Bharatamma opened her eyes as if she descended from a different plane and stared around. After a moment, with a feeble voice, she asked for a little water to drink, recalling her dream. The mother in an infant's bed may feel more thirsty to avoid it. Durgamma prepared a special fluid of Chebulic Myrobalan (Karakkaya in Telugu) fruit and kept ready. With that solution, Bharatamma's palate was satisfied. She was listening to a sweet music of a divine flute clearly.

After three days making her dreams completely a mere illusion, Bharatamma had an attack of pleurisy. She was running a high temperature and it was felt that paddy grains get parched on touch, in her hot body. With extreme weakness and paleness, she stuck herself up to the cot like dried skin of a fruit. Her golden complexion was smeared by a thin black hue. The lively grace of her face was turning dim. In those days it was said that when a mother in a child's bed is attacked by any disease, even Lord Brahma cannot save her.

Doctors administered treatment, to no avail. The condition of Bharatamma was turning grim, causing anxiety. Bands of wet cloth were applied on her forehead again and again in vain. Medicines also were becoming ineffective. Even a fluid diet was not received properly by her. Added to it Bharatamma began to develop hiccups: Her feet and legs were getting out of control. Her body began to become rough and stiff gradually. She was feeling drowsy. But she was uttering, 'Krishna, Krishna,' in a low tone as if she was in a delirium state.

Though she was struggling for life, her dreamy world continued to be active. Her imaginations were centering round her son.

The child was weeping aloud continuously. Bharatamma heard his cry and got up. The cradle was empty. Where have all my people gone? Not even one is seen. Why? How did they allow him to go out? She began to run in search of her son. She could hear the cry of the boy, but where is he? Nowhere he is seen. Bharatamma felt impatient and uneasy, listening to his continuous cry.

At last, at a far off place under a tree, Bharatamma saw her son. She tried to pick him up and hug him eagerly. But she could not approach him. On the other hand, the distance between the mother and the child appeared to increase. What is this mystery? The boy is clearly seen and his cry is distinctly heard but the child is beyond reach. Why? Is this boy getting away from her? Suddenly the child's cry was not audible. In her very presence, how could the boy disappear?

She felt her body very light like a cork. She felt as if she was falling into a valley. Bharatamma tried to bawl out in vain. She was gazing all around in a helpless condition. She was terrified. She observed some heavenly beings travelling in the sky, carrying empty palanquin. She stretched her hands towards them for help. They were waving their hands to come up. She slipped down into the valley. Nothing was visible there. It was a dark den. 'What happened to the child? What is happening to me?' she vaguely questioned herself.

Bharatamma groaned aloud for a while. She was uttering the word, 'Krishna, Krishna.' Durgamma got up immediately and asked her daughter, 'What happened child, any bad dream?' Bharatamma opened her eyes a little. She remembered that she had fallen into a valley. But how is she now here? She stared at everything. Durgamma felt that her daughter had had a bad dream and she took rectifying steps against its bad effects. A little medicine was given. Bharatamma felt relieved a little and her mind was active again.

She felt that her dream could not be an empty dream. There was some inner meaning for it. 'Will I lose him? Or will he lose me? No, no, I don't care for me. But the child should survive and live safely. He is the boon of Lord Sri Krishna.' Thus thinking, Bharatamma began to meditate for a while. The secret suddenly struck at her heart. The doors towards the future were opening. The secret of her life became clear to her. 'Krishna' is the root of the entire world—cause and effect relationship, activity and inactivity in the world. There is always an ultimate goal for His actions. Krishna is the protector and rescuer for the world. He is the Ocean of kindness. Why does he separate my son from me? All this is a play for Him. He is the director of the worldly drama.

Bharatamma was recalling a few lines from Bhagavatam at her heart. 'Depending upon the turbulent condition of the river and in the channels, innumerable sand particles join one another, continue to move together and separate from one another. In a similar way, in the great flow of time and in the illusionary world, a number of living things live together and get scattered. The birth of a living thing to another living thing is illusion. The bond developing between them is another illusion. Those bonds are as a matter of fact between the bodies but not the living things. Death is a period of recess for the living thing. In this illusionary network, the beings who wear bodies are awaiting that recess period.'

Bharatamma thought to herself that she was born with an ultimate purpose; after it is fulfilled, she had no place on the earth. For the sake of the birth of a child, with a divine purpose, her body was used as a tool. Why should she be afraid of death? Thus thinking, the mind of Bharatamma gradually settled to peace.

Does her desire remain unfulfilled? Will all estimates and plans get upset? After a seedling is planted, will it not be provided with water? While a birth is taking place, will not the necessary precautions be taken care of?

The thoughts of Bharatamma developed like waves in an ocean and began to move about her son. For her, the child was the central point.

In the heart of hearts she had a very important idea to express out. She was feeling restless and anxious. She thought of her son who had been occupying her tender heart for a while.

After her, who will look after her son? Who will take up the responsibility of his future? Who will support him? Who should be entrusted with this heavy responsibility? Should it be entrusted to her husband who had been loving her in thought, word and deed? Probably not. For a moment on her mental screen, the image of her husband appeared and disappeared. Then who else?

Thus thinking, again and again, finally, her thoughts took a concrete shape. She felt calm at heart and breathed easily.

Yes! If this responsibility is entrusted to 'him', her wish will be completely and correctly executed. Her son will

not feel her absence at all. Though he is motherless, he will not be unprotected under his shelter and care. Her son will grow happily. Her ambition will definitely be achieved.

Bharatamma moved this way and that in her cot and beckoned to her melancholic mother to come nearer. She told her in a feeble voice, 'Please send word for father. I have to talk to him specially.'

Doubting the survival of her daughter till her husband's return from Gudivada, Durgamma asked her daughter in a convulsive tone, 'Please speak out to us, we will inform your father.'

Bharatamma nodded across and uttered, 'I, myself, should talk to him. Send word for him immediately.' A messenger rushed to Gudivada, for Pantulu. At Gudivada, for some unknown reason, her father desired to see his daughter and he was preparing to come to Machilipatnam. Pantulu felt depressed and demoralized on receiving the message. A nameless terror showed in his face. He controlled himself and proceeded to Machilipatnam.

'Bharatamma! Your father has come! Please open your eyes,' Durgamma stuttered.

Pantulu looked at his daughter in the deathbed. All his heart was squeezed on seeing his child in a horrible condition. 'Oh God! What sins did I commit? My eldest daughter had passed away and the wound is not yet healed. That agony is pounding up again and again at my heart. And now, an innocent child: She is not even sixteen. Is her longevity only that much? Lord! How can I be stable enough to survive? Why am I given such horrifying punishment?' Pantulu was tremulous at heart.

Bharatamma slowly lifted her eyelids and looked at her father with satisfaction. She tried to speak out something. She wetted her lips slowly with her tongue and moaned.

'Our daughter is trying to tell you only, specially, something. We have been waiting for you with wide open eyes,' said Durgamma.

Pantulu sat near his daughter's head and holding her hand in his, looked into her eyes, tenderly touching her forehead and hair, he asked her, 'Speak out without fear and without any hesitation, my dear child.' Bharatamma gathered all her sinking energy and muttered, 'Father.' She looked at the cradle and the infant. Pantulu understood that she wanted to say something about the child. He was very attentive. Besides Durgamma, Saraswatamma and all the others were around her cot. Outside, the sky was cloudy and the wind was blowing fast. There were indications of rain. Small droplets of rain started to fall here and there.

Bharatamma thought over again and again as to what to say. Lord Krishna occupied her heart, totally. She thought of Him for a moment and began to speak out slowly, in a low tone.

'Father, he is not an ordinary child. His birth is unique. He is the boon of my Lord Krishna. I believe that his birth is purposeful. In the future, he will attain great heights.' Bharatamma looked at the child again and said, 'It is definite.' She was gasping for breath. The room was perfectly silent. Pin-drop silence prevailed all over. Outside the room there were trickling sounds of raindrops.

The disappearing energy traces were again gathered and she said, 'Father, do not bring him up like an ordinary child. Please create a great philosophical and spiritual atmosphere all around and in such background, only, he should be brought up, literally.' She breathed heavily for a while and again said, 'Only in your utmost care, he can attain my desired supreme standards of life. My conscience is sure of it.'

While lying on the deathbed, Bharatamma spoke out her heart, clearly, to her father. It is said that an oil lamp gives a brighter glow before getting put off.

Bharatamma felt that her husband as well as all others, could not execute her will properly. So she entrusted this heavy responsibility to her father only. She had a great respect for her father. She had immense faith in him. Her husband might marry again and beget a number of children. Under the care of a stepmother, her son could not receive necessary care and attention. Her son would be simply one among the many. A person who should create history, might perish insignificantly. His genius would develop properly to get him name and fame all over the world, only under the care of her father.

Her father responded to her, without any hesitation. 'Your world is as good as the Holy Veda for me, my dear child. As directed by you, very carefully, and attentively, I will bring up your son. I will provide all the

necessary spiritual atmosphere all around him. You are my Goddess of Prosperity. I will not violate your word—believe me.' He was about to shed tears for a moment. Grief was suppressed with a great difficulty.

Bharatamma appeared to be pleased by her father's promise. She looked at him thankfully. Yet, Bharatamma stretched her hand towards her father and opened her palm, suggesting to him to swear, 'Lake-like mother and rock-like child.'

Pantulu was bewildered at his daughter's suggestion. Immediately he was moved to tears. For a moment, he closed his eyes and spoke to her with a rather firm voice, 'My dear, I abide by my word. If I violate it, I am bound to have mean births in the future. Can I have higher ones? I am swearing in the name of God. I promise you, that by my thought, word and deed, I take up the responsibility of your son, as you desire.' Under any circumstances, whatever they may be, I will not leave him under the care of anybody else. I will protect him as if he is the heart of my hearts. Believe me, my dear child,' he said with a quavering voice. Agony gushed out of him like a squeezed sponge.

Durgamma was very much perturbed. With a tremulous voice she asked Bharatamma, 'Anything else? Please speak out, dear.' She, too, wanted to share the responsibility. It was clear that Bharatamma was approaching her end. She thought for a while and muttered, 'Mother, do not beat him. Do not rebuke him, never hurt his feelings, let him never feel my absence. Look after him like your own child. This is my last wish.' Bharatamma was breathing heavily. The motherhood in a woman's life is clearly a visible manifestation of God's handwriting.

Her father again said, 'You need not repeat your direction to us again. It is divine direction for us. I stand by my promise. I will fulfill it as if it is the performance of the last sacred Yagna. Till I breathe my last, I will never violate my promise. Please be assured of it, without giving any scope for doubt at your heart.'

He soothed her reassuringly, on an emphatical note. He was a man of burning integrity, a moral code of certainty, a strong cognisant of the deep conviction, a passionate spirit imbued with tradition. A word given to a dying person was a law into itself, a divine obligation and bounden duty.

That the prophecy shall be on the way to fulfillment? Has the boy destined to sit on a spiritual throne? Was it a wishful thinking of motherly instinct?

Durgamma was standing by the side of the cot sobbing, tears rolling down her cheeks. The elder sister, Saraswatamma, wept and wept and her eyes turned red. All their relatives were standing aside, with gloomy eyes.

The heart of Bharatamma felt relieved of all the heaviness. She knew her father thoroughly. He would always stand by his word. As such, her son would reach supreme heights under his care. Bharatamma would no longer be afraid of death. She was ready for it.

The last moments were approaching fast. Her son was sleeping in the cradle. He was brought to her, to have her affectionate last looks at him. There was immense happiness in her eyes while looking at him. It appeared as though the face of Bharatamma was reflected on her son's face.

The last hours of sunset cast strange, oppressive, eerie light inside the room. The atmosphere changed all of a sudden. The rain started. The modicum of flame from the earthen lamp started flickering like a rattling dying bird, vying with dying of Bharatamma.

At a distance on the trees, the birds were making all sorts of queer sounds. The eyes of Bharatamma were rolling-up and unsteady. Eyelids were heavy. Her body was very cold and sweating; heartbeat was becoming slower and slower.

Bharatamma was losing consciousness and her lips were moving very little indistinctively. Perhaps she was uttering, 'Krishna,' 'Krishna.' Her eyes became heavy pupils and moved unsteadily; stupor encircled her. Her body was drowning into an abyss, her life was sinking into an immense void.

The bird of life in her body began to flutter its wings to go away; the eyes of Bharatamma were closed once and for all. Her breath became faint. She was lifted from the cot and made to lie over a mat on which already some old clothes were spread. A little Tulasi water was forcibly slipped into her mouth; she appeared to have swallowed it. The lamp in the niche began to flutter. The reptile on the wall made a fearful cry. There was a

thunderbolt somewhere outside.

The goddess of death that had been following Bharatamma like a shadow which took her into Her arms and embraced her. The hamsa (symbolic celestial bird which dwells in the human body) in her, spread its wings and flew away to unknown spheres. The body of Bharatamma became totally still and there was a bright lightning outside. The lamp in the niche got itself put out. Her signature in this world is full-stopped, as if the seraphic being completed her fate-allotted mission on earth. All the astrological calculations went nose dived before ineluctable destiny!

The whole house was plunged into deep sorrow and the cries disturbed the sleeping child in the cradle; he woke up and his cries joined the rest. On that day, the history of Bharatamma came to a close at 7:30 P.M. It was 16th July, 1918.

Uppaluri Seetaramayya considered seven proposals for his marriage. Bharatamma's proposal was the seventh one. She had severe birth pangs, seven times and the son was born. Seven days after his birth, she passed away. Perhaps in the future, the life of this child would be linked up with the number seven.

The neighbourhood people remarked, 'How cruel fate robbed his mother immediately after his birth? Nothing more unfortunate can be imagined than the motherless child. Who knows what future lay before him?'

Seven days after giving birth to a son, Bharatamma died and the family of Pantulu was paralyzed by the pathos of fate. He lost two wives and two daughters. Only an iron-willed man could withstand and surpass, to the onslaught grief.

links



# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi

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Rukmini Devi and Durgamma, 1943

## The Advent of a Prodigal Grandson

Without enjoying the fragrance of life, like a nipped bud, without enamored motherhood at all, at the age of hardly sixteen years, Bharatamma passed away. After performing her funeral rites at Machilipatnam, Pantulu and his wife, with the infant child in their arms, along with their adopted son, Jagannadham, returned to Gudiwada.

For the onlookers, they appeared like breathing dead bodies and walking skeletons. The wife of Jagannadham received the infant from the arms of Durgamma and placed him in the cradle. Necessary remedial steps were taken against evil looks on their journey.

On entering the house, Durgamma swooned on the cot, overpowered by grief. All the thoughts were shooting up at her heart painfully. All that had happened was like a nightmare. She had raised her daughter with utmost care and affection. She would never return again. Durgamma was lying on a cot, as if she was paralyzed, motionless like a corpse.

All the relatives, friends and other well-wishers, visited them one after the other sympathetically. Pantulu leaned in a Narsaraopet easy chair, calmly like a karma yogi. It was not known whether there was a volcano or a forest fire in his heart. At that moment, all his attention was on his wife only. He knew the agony of his wife at Machilipatnam. He was aware of the difficulty for her to come back to normalcy.

Even after one day, Durgamma did not get up from the cot. Her entire body seemed to be frozen, forgetting all

its functions. Durgamma did not touch even a drop of water. Pantulu approached her and gently said, 'Durga, take something. Gather your wits. There is no other way to go. Can we pass away along with others? But someday we should. Durga! If you fast like this, what happens to your health? If you stand up, then only, the home will be like a home.' He turned to his daughter-in-law and asked, 'How is the child? Is he fed?' She replied, 'Yes, he is asleep.'

Durgamma gathered her energy and got up in her cot. She knotted her hair and set right her dress. She feebly said, 'I am neither hungry nor thirsty. I gulped something which tasted like a poison. Durga! The body has some functions to perform. We need to take some food, at least for even to weep we need some energy. Don't we?' So saying, he asked his daughter-in-law to get some milk for Durgamma. Accordingly she brought hot milk in a silver tumbler. Pantulu gave it to Durgamma, adding, 'Please take it; and take rest.' She touched the tumbler and it felt hot. She asked her daughter-in-law, 'Look here! Give me cold milk. This is too hot!' The daughter-in-law brought cold milk for Durgamma and took away the hot milk.

'Durga! There is someone here for me, waiting outside! I am going to the Lodge. Somebody has come from Madras. How long will you hold the tumbler in your hand like that? Drink the milk please,' he said softly.

Jagannadham performed all the rites and rituals of Bharatamma. He has a great regard and love for her. After all, she had been a child in his arms. He was unable to believe that this most beloved sister passed away.

Pantulu received a condolence message from Adyar and other places in the state besides from his friends and lawyers.

On receiving the news that Bharatamma died, Sitaramayya felt shocked. He recalled her words to him when he went to Gudiwada a few months back. Venkatappayya sank into his shoes on receiving the heart-rending news. 'Oh, my God! I have been awaiting you with my grandson in your arms! Now, your demise instead! I never dreamt that I'd have to receive such terrible news!' Thus he lamented.

Within a few days after his daughter's death, a friend of Pantulu came running to him with fresh news, 'Have you heard this ghastly news, Pantulu? It seems your son-in-law is marrying again on this coming Thursday. Only 15 days back he lost his wife. What urgency had he to marry within such a short time?'

On hearing the shocking news, Pantulu was aghast! Awestruck. Slowly he recovered his senses, in spite of unpalatable bitter feelings, and replied, 'They may have their own urgencies, if not today on some other day. He should marry again since he is so young,' in a choked voice. 'That may be true, but does it carry any propriety to sit again, as a new bridegroom, when the embers of his dead wife are still hot?' questioned his friend.

Upon knowing this, Durgamma zoomed up with volcanic rage and scolded them for their ruthless, diabolical act. Pantulu pacified her, 'It is all Divine will. Don't get upset.' Later it was known that Sita Ramaiah re-married post hastily because he has to perform his late mother's death ceremony on that year. Only a married son was entitled to do so, not a widower. However, the majority of relatives could not digest this. The stigma remained forever.

Even a fountain of water gets dried up gradually when water is pumped out continuously for a long time. Similarly, the financial conditions of Venkatappayya deteriorated day by day. Earlier, he lost his wife and now his daughter-in-law passed away. It was absolutely inevitable to have feminine dexterity for any home to run smoothly. How long can anybody pull along alone? The vacancy should be filled in without fail. Sitaramayya married again within 15 days. The name of his wife was Suryakanthamma and she hailed from the Nidamarthi family. He was 21 years old and all his long life was ahead.

The earlier attempts of Sitaramayya for a job became fruitful. The great freedom fighter, Dr. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, had established 'Andhra Insurance Company' by that time, and, with a favourable word from Vemuri Durga Nageswara Rao, Sitaramayya got appointed in the insurance company.

Sitaramayya started his family life afresh, and, as such, his role as a father in bringing up his son had almost ended after becoming his biological father. The innocent child lost his mother immediately after his birth and he was separated from his father under peculiar circumstances.

Relatives at Gudiwada felt deep pity for the child who was deprived of his mother. An elderly woman said, 'One whose birth leads to expiry of mother lives to establish special quality and go beyond boundaries of his native land to attain name and fame,' by quoting a Telugu proverb.

Meenakshamma and Gopalam, the children of Rukminamma, their eldest daughter who had died earlier, were already under the care of Durgamma. Now, the child of Bharatamma joined them. Jagannatham, too, had his own children. Though so many children were there in the house, Durgamma was feeling the absence of Bharatamma always. She was remembering her daughter and her movements, in every corner of the house and in association with every article in the house. The decorative designs and figures drawn with different powders on the floor by Bharatamma had been as fresh as they were. The manure provided to Tulasi was still fresh in the fort. The clothes of Bharatamma were still hanging on the clothesline in the yard. Durgamma was imagining that her daughter might step in at any time, as if returning from outside.

Pantulu wanted his wife to come to normalcy. 'Durga, this immense grief is a punishment. It is a sort of training for us. We have one and only aim before us. Our daughter entrusted a heavy responsibility to us. Setting aside everything we have, to strive hard towards it. Please don't lose yourself. You are the backbone of the family. You know philosophy well, still I am repeating it. The relationships such as wife, husband, daughter, relative, friend, etc., are all illusions. God is the only reality. He is the director of the grand drama of the world. We are merely playing our roles allotted by him. When the scheduled scene is over, we disappear. The great wheel of time is rolling on eternally and we are small particles on its rim to fall out. We must strengthen our minds and carry on, as per the Destiny. Death is natural. We must understand the divine play and pacify ourselves. We must fulfill our responsibilities. Do you know that the name of our daughter has a special meaning? Bharati is the name of Goddess Saraswathi, or the Goddess of speech and education. The letter *Bha* stands for light. Thus, the last word of our daughter is a torch in our hands showing us the path to go along.'

They thought that they might go on a pilgrimage to sacred places to have a change of place and attain mental peace. But later they gave up the idea in view of the difficulties involved in taking the infant with them. However, in the name of the son of Bharatamma, clothes were distributed to poor children. Necessary remedial prayers and worships were performed in the house to neutralize the effects of evil spirits, if any, around them.

In order to keep his wife's mind occupied, he invited a 'Bhajan' party from Bezawada to come over to them, along with their orchestra, to stay with them for a week. Accordingly the invitees were singing devotional songs, adapting classical tunes and in accompaniment of their different musical instruments, daily, early in the morning, evening and at night.

It was not an ordinary devotional songs party. They were ardent devotees who sung in praise of God, forgetting even their food and water. The house of Pantulu reverberated with the songs, and the vibrations generated pulsations in the entire body of every listener. The listeners and participants in the concert felt as though they were in a different celestial world.

The mind experiences such an inexplicable, supreme state, and, as such, it is called Sabdabrahma (or God) in the audible form. Form, such form, the real ascetic knowledge emanates. Mere scholarship without devotion is nothing but babbling. Listening to devotional music continuously is more absorbing than scholarship.

Keeping the son of Bharatamma in her lap, Durgamma used to sing devotional songs and to lose her external consciousness. Gradually she overcame the immense grief and melancholy and attained balance of mind. She stopped to recall her sad experiences and even if they disturbed her, she was controlling herself.

Previously at the time of usual daily prayers to God, her mind was not steady. She could not have peace of mind. But now, her mind was peaceful, due to some unknown reason. At the time of worship, she started to listen to OM...OM... again and again in a low tone. She could not know from where it was emanating. Sometimes she was having visions of unknown realms at the prayer time. Now and then she was seeing divine light too.

Thus her devotion gradually started to get elevated to high levels. Not only that, she began to feel some invisible presence nearby always. One day Durgamma noticed a 'hand' on the wall, which scribbled some 'mantra' and disappeared. Was it a mere illusion or a mental distortion?

She put forth her strange experiences before her husband. He was pleased to know all the details of her unusual experiences and commented, 'You are blessed, Durga! I have been meditating for many years and yet I am not as lucky as you are. Please go ahead. Your path gets cleared. Some day, some great invisible person may give you initiation at the right time. Another important point, Durga! Please keep your experiences as your own. They should not be revealed. Don't publicize them. It is the rule.' So saying, Pantulu congratulated his wife for her spiritual progress.

Ascetics at different spiritual levels, philosophers, scholars and logicians used to visit Pantulu, and he hosted all of them happily. Thus, necessary foundation was laid for the transformation of the residence of Pantulu into an important Philosophical Center.

Durgamma started to attend to her domestic work normally. Jagannadham, the adopted son of Pantulu, went to Bezwada. After adopting him, Pantulu got him educated and also gave away a share in his property. After marriage Jagannadham settled at Bezawada as a lawyer.

Pantulu believed that everyone should work hard and rise up by self-effort. He did not like anybody to idle away all the time by spending away ancestral property.

The son of Bharatamma was not fortunate enough to enjoy his mother's affection and milk. He did not relish cow milk or buffalo milk or tinned milk. The milk was not digested and led to loose bowels. He developed a little cough also. They searched for a wet nurse. In those days, just delivered woman of poor families would be hired for feeding. It was learnt that a woman belonging to the Goud community had just delivered a child and she could feed another child also. Her name was Gouramma. She was called for immediately, to come and meet Durgamma.

She could not believe her ears. She was wondering whether she, a poor woman belonging to a lower strata in the society, might suckle a child from a rich brahmin family? She observed that the child was handsome and healthy like a God's gift. His complexion was yellow like a cucumber.

Gouramma felt that it was her good fortune to take him into her arms. She felt thrilled and anxiously tried to suckle him. But the child was indifferent. Gouramma patiently tried to make friendship with him by lulling him and fondling him tenderly. After some time a sort of concord developed between him and his 'hired' mother. He allowed Gouramma to suckle him happily. Gradually a type of bond developed between them. Thus, every day she was coming over to their house three or four times to suckle the child.

Gouramma knew that Brahmins observe the highest level of cleanliness generally. As such, she was cleaning her breast thoroughly before feeding the child. She, too, was very clean and tidy and she enjoyed to suckle him; she did not know why, perhaps it was due to the monthly emoluments she was receiving from Durgamma, or due to any other unknown reason.

Meenakshamma and Gopalam, the children of late Rukminamma, were also being looked after by their grandmother, Durgamma. Their father married again and he was away. Thus it happened to be the responsibility of Durgamma to look after the three children. Meenakshamma was 6 years old and Gopalam three or four. Meenakshamma plays with her young brothers, looks after them and assists Durgamma in her household chores.

When Bharatamma was alive, she was keeping Meenakshamma and Gopalam in cradles and swinging them singing a song. Similarly, Durgamma was swinging Bharatamma's son in a cradle and singing the same song. When Bharatamma was a child, then Durgamma was singing the same song 'Kasturi Ranga-Ranga' which was praising Lord Krishna's childhood heroics, who killed the king Kamsa as a boy. The heart of Durgamma became suffocated when she sang the song recalling the childhood of Bharatamma. The grief was associated with memories of the childhood of her deceased daughter. Music has nostalgic memories.

The usual naming ceremony which is carefully performed in Brahmin families was not performed in the case of the son of Bharatamma. Considering the Birth-Star of the child, sometimes a suitable name would be selected. In the case of this child, the function was not thought of due to some unknown reason.

The mother of the boy was an ardent devotee of Lord Sri Krishna. She was telling that her son was the boon of Lord Sri Krishna. As such, everybody thought that 'Gopala Krishna Murthy' would be the appropriate name for the child. Everybody used to call him 'Krishna' or 'Krishnudu'. Pantulu used to call him 'Kittu'. Durgamma used to call him as 'Ramudu' because her husband's name also was Gopala Krishna Murthy, and it was forbidden in Brahmin families for the wife to utter her husband's name.

After some time, due to some unknown reasons, Gouramma was discontinued and the boy was fed with cow milk. The milk did not suit him, and, as such, they searched for another wet nurse. Another from a herdsmen community came forward to feed the child.

At the age of five months, he started rolling on the floor and he was resisting to go to any new person. There were indications that the child had some likes and dislikes, even at this age. He was able to recognize grandmother and sister, Meenakshamma. He was smiling at them. They were enjoying to see his toothless open mouth.

At the age of seven months, he was crawling fast and he was hiding himself behind something or the other, hoodwinking everybody in the house like Lord Bala Krishna. Everybody had to search for him anxiously.

After the child started to crawl freely, Pantulu wished to know the field in which his grandson would thrive in the future. Accordingly, at a distance, in a corner of a room, some money, a book and a pen was separately arranged, and the child was allowed to crawl towards them. They observed that the boy caught hold of a book again and again three times.

It was believed that if a child picks up money, in the future the child would earn lots of money; if the child selects a pen, it would indicate future decent service as an administrator; and if the child picks up a book, he would be a great scholar or a learned person in his life.

One evening, Krishna crawled out of the house silently into the yard and sat under a Pomagranate tree. He had a toy in his hand. Behind the house, there were some fields and a snake crawled over the compound wall and slowly moved towards him. No one observed it. It approached the boy and coiled on itself in his vicinity. The child did not observe the snake at all. He was keenly looking at the toy in his hand.

From inside the house, Durgamma came out to gather the clothes that were hanging on the clothesline. She noticed the boy under the tree and wondered, 'Oh my God! When did he come here? How?' Thus thinking within herself she approached him but suddenly she was shocked to see the coiled snake near him. She began to perspire heavily, her heart pounded at a high rate and she stood motionless, petrified to the core.

She thought of picking up the child for a moment, but any disturbance might make the snake harm the child. The boy, too, might get disturbed and he, too, might place his hand on the snake. Thus thinking, Durgamma stood like a statue.

The boy was not bothered about his surroundings. Now and then, he was moving his head and hands this way and that way as if summoning somebody towards him. He was smiling happily now and then.

The other inmates of the house came out and they, too, were shocked to observe Durgamma and the child. They were thinking that anything might happen at any moment. Somebody ran out through the other door to fetch a snake charmer.

After a little time, the snake unwound itself and crawled further towards the boy. Durgamma felt as though she was dying. Suddenly perspiration formed on her face like beads. She breathed heavily. Her body trembled like a leaf. Her eyes transfixed— motionless. The snake was approaching the boy slowly, and at any moment, the boy might be tempted to stretch his hand towards the glittering snake. Durgamma felt that the time was standing still while she was thinking of God and praying for help.

The snake steadily crawled forward as if it was gazing at the child towards the wall. It was a long snake of a couple of arm lengths and light brown in colour. The child spontaneously looked at the moving snake with wide-open eyes. He did not try to catch it.

All the onlookers were observing the child, and the snake, with wide open eyes, attentively, till the snake completely passed by him, because, at any moment, it might turn back and bite him.

The snake crawled up the wall, and it was observed by the boy, attentively, till it disappeared. After the snake disappeared totally, Durgamma gathered all her energy to pick up the child, instantaneously, and hugged him. Everybody felt immense relief on the exit of the snake. Some divine miracle saved the child; otherwise everything would be in utter ruins. They felt that the child escaped from a danger, miraculously, on that day.

The snake-charmer rushed to catch hold of it, but he was disappointed. He searched for it on the other side of the wall in vain and returned. He said, 'Yes, it was moving about in the fields and observed by many. I have been already trying to catch hold of it. Please don't be afraid. It cannot escape from my grip. In a day or two it is doomed to die in my hands. For the present, I will send you a few enchanted seeds, collected from Peer Saheb, residing in Masjid area.' So saying, he took leave of them.

Within a short while, the seeds were received and Durgamma got them sprinkled all over the yard, to prevent the entry of all sorts of harmful creatures. Durgamma smeared a little sacred ash on the forehead of Krishna, and followed other protective principles for the welfare of the child. She had taken a vow to offer milk to the snake-god, residing in the anthill. She would donate a little money also to the temple as a sort of homage to Him.



It had been observed that the boy was appearing to be inactive and sickly for the past few days, like a snake, which gripped in soil. He was drowsy and dull also. Durgamma could not find the reason for such an odd condition of the child. Was it due to sickness or influence of an evil spirit? Medicines were ineffective. Suddenly it struck her that the child was getting drowsy and dull immediately after feeding. Durgamma scented that the wet-nurse was putting a minute mass into the child's mouth just before suckling him.

Immediately Durgamma shouted at her, 'You cunning creature! What have you just put into the child's mouth? Come on! Speak the truth!' The woman first denied for a while and finally confessed that she had been addicting him to a little opium, so as to protect her nipples from his painful bites. She pleaded for mercy, but Durgamma immediately paid her the due amount and turned her out. Krishna was fed with bottled milk afterwards, in spite of his disliking.

Once on a festival day, while everybody was busy, Krishna suddenly disappeared. He had been playing with his toys till then, in that room. All of a sudden, where did he hide himself? Meenakshamma searched and scanned, finally she located him in a corner, underneath the trellis cot. Immediately she shouted, 'Granny! Here he is!' Durgamma bent down and noticed that the boy was sitting as if he was practicing Yoga like Buddha. She was shocked to observe a dead scorpion nearby. It was covered by a number of ants. A train of ants was crawling over the legs of Krishna and he was unmindful of them. He looked like a little idol in the temple.

Durgamma quickly caught hold of the child and brought him out. She shook off all the ants from his body and cleaned him. While dressing him in a little shirt, she wondered within herself, 'What type of a child! Indifferent to the crawling ants on his body! They might have definitely stung him too. Oh, my god! What a wonder!' A servant removed the dead scorpion and cleaned the area near the cot.

If Krishna wanted any attractive article, it should be in his hands immediately. It was impossible to distract his

attention from it. If Durgamma tried to terrify him, mentioning the name of the devil, he would pay a deaf ear and continue his demand. Generally children like to be lifted up into arms. But Krishna was different. He would appear as though he did not need any help or support of anybody.

If anybody distributed edible things to other children, before giving them to him, he would refuse to take them. Even if those things were collected back and given to him, then, also, he would not accept them. That is to say that he felt that he belonged to a superior cadre. He liked to occupy the top-most place--always.

Generally, children are afraid of darkness, but Krishna was never afraid of anything. He was fearless.

While he was playing with toys, if other children approached him, he always invited them to play with him, and he was offering his toys to them in a friendly manner. While he was eating anything, if a young or old person stretched his hands before him, he would always give it away to him, without any hesitation. Noticing such behaviour in Krishna, somebody remarked, 'Your grandson is *BholaShanker*. He never says *no* to anybody.' Selflessness was perhaps a special characteristic of the child.

At the age of eight months, at nighttime, if the child felt the urge to urinate, he would slowly slip down the cot to crawl away a little distance for that purpose.

Once he fell down from the cot dorsally. Durgamma rushed to lift him up. Already on the head of the boy, a bump was formed. But the boy did not cry. While applying a little wet lime on the bump, Durgamma thought within herself, 'This kid is made of steel stuff'.

He was growing teeth one after the other. An auspicious day was fixed for feeding the child with solid food for the first time. A gold-coated bowl contained the necessary sweetened soft rice and the child was fed with a silver spoon. These two articles were used long back for his mother's similar ceremony. The same set of articles was used, for the same function, in case of other children also.

For the first birthday function, new clothes got stitched for him. Pantulu ordered for a silver thread to tie around the waist of the child. A golden chain garlanded him. Afterwards, the first annual death ceremony of Bharatamma was performed on a large scale. Jagannatham, and his family from Bezawada, Saraswathamma and others from Machilipatnam, came to Gudivada to attend the ceremony along with other local people. Bharatamma had a photograph of herself standing by the side of Lord Krishna, playing His flute. That photo was in the prayer room. Durgamma helped the boy to garland his mother's photograph.

When she was alive in the month of Sravan, for Krishnastami (Lord Krishna's birthday), Bharatamma was making special arrangements and organizing the function on a grand scale. A familiar child was dressed like Bala Krishna and decorated. She was drawing little footstep prints of Bala Krishna with fine starch powder on the ground from outside into the house. She was feeling at heart that Krishna was entering in. An idol of Krishna was placed in a swing and she was swinging and singing songs. It was a Hindu religious custom.

Durgamma was imagining that if Bharatamma had been alive, she would have celebrated the birthday of Lord Krishna with her own son, dressed as Bala Krishna.

In memory of her daughter, Durgamma dressed her grandson as Bala Krishna. Silver tinkling bells were tied around his girdle and anklets. He was made to wear gold ornaments. A peacock feather was perched on his head with the help of a cloth. He appeared like Lord Bala Krishna for Durgamma.

Motherly affection is the sumum bonum of all creation. Mother is the supreme of all living beings, sources of all sustenance. She is the 'Empress of the Empyrean Heaven of the Almighty.' As such, Durgamma, by her inherent nature, epitome of unalloyed motherhood, fountainhead of love, affection, caring, and acme of feminine instincts. Durgamma was bringing up the boy with all her love and care. Yet, the boy had a special liking for his grandfather. Pantulu was busy with outside work and he was away. But whenever he stepped in, the boy used to rush to the door to lead his grandfather in. He was always with his grandfather as long as he was at home, clinging like a limpet.

Noticing the inseparable bond between the grandson and the grandfather, Durgamma used to wonder at the affinity. 'The whole day, the child has been with me, but as soon as his grandfather is seen, he forgets me totally and gets attached to him. Grandfather seems to be everything for him!'

Pantulu was a disciplinarian. But there were some relaxations in the case of his grandson. He did not utter

even a single word against the child. There was no 'no' for his grandson. But he did not pamper him. He was silent and looked grim by his childish pranks.

One day, while playing happily, the child leaned sideways and his hands and feet began to shiver. The body was getting twisted all over. Durgamma was terrified and she started her own treatment. There was no improvement. These infantile convulsions appear in the children at even years of age, such as two, four, six, etc. There was a belief that there would be improvement, if the mid-point of the eyebrows is scorched with a fresh smoldering tobacco coil or cheroot.

The boy was struggling with epileptic fits. And Durgamma was feeling helpless. Some powders were mixed with honey and fed to him. By that time, Pantulu returned home.

After a little time, the boy became conscious and gradually became steady. It was not known which treatment was effective. He appeared to have hiccups for a while but soon became calm. The boy felt easy and got up. With a wet cloth, Durgamma cleaned his whole body. The toes of his legs were straightened with jerky movements. The boy appeared weak and he was fed with a little hot milk. In ten minutes, the child was normal and active. Durgamma smeared a little sacred ash on his forehead.

Every night, Durgamma was feeding him with soft rice morsels of food. One day, when she started feeding him, he refused to eat it and began to spit it out. He was nodding his head across. Durgamma tasted the food a little and noticed that it was saltless. 'Oh! He is able to recognize tastes, also,' she thought. On another day, the boy refused to drink milk to which sugar was not added.

While Pantulu was performing his usual prayers in his prayer room, Krishna evinced keen interest. He would watch the entire proceedings with rapt attention and observation. Slowly he began to imitate his grandfather. He developed a real passion and unquenchable thirst for devotion.

At the age of about two and half years, he himself smeared the sacred ash on his forehead and attempted to meditate, like his grandfather, sitting in Padmasana posture. Even after his grandfather got up, Krishna was continuing his meditation. It looked very strange for a small child to meditate steadily. When his grandfather was away, Krishna was entering the prayer room alone, to meditate as usual, and pray to God with folded hands. Durgamma was surprised at his devotion and showed it to all others. The onlookers used to think of 'Bala Dhruva' and 'Pralhada' while observing his meditation. Being pleased with the attention and devotion of his grandson, Pantulu presented him with a silver plank to sit upon and pray to God. The boy was happy with the presentation and ran about the house, shouting, as he liked. He was on cloud nine.

Pantulu had a special prayer room on the first floor. None was allowed to step in. One day his grandson followed him up to the door of the room. Immediately, Pantulu pleasantly asked his grandson to have his prayers freely on the ground floor, only. The child was perhaps disappointed, a little.

At the age of three years, the birth time hair of Krishna was ready to be offered at Tirumala. The presiding deity was Lord Venkateswara. The child had a strong liking for travel. He was always first at the gate.

Now it was journey by train, all the more. The entire party reached the railway station and awaited the arrival of the train. Krishna was more eager than everybody else. The train was whistling while entering the platform. The approaching coal engine train looked like a black devil for some people. Wondering at the sight of the train, along with all the others, he entered it. The carriage was already full of passengers. Sitting near a window, on the lap of his grandmother, Krishna very much enjoyed to see the moving outside scenery. They got down at Bezawada and proceeded to the house of Jagannadham. They spent half a day there, and all of them went to Tirupati by train.

Krishna was now in the lap of his grandfather. He was very cheerful throughout and they arrived at Tirupati. From the foot of the hill, everyone started to walk up the hill. Durgamma carried the child for some time and the wife of Jagannadham also came forward to carry Krishna. The bus route was not yet planned by that time, and, as such, every pilgrim had to walk up the hill.

When they reached a particular spot, at the foot of a hillock, called 'Stars Hillock', a sort of cloth-covered palanquins called, 'Dolis', were available to carry the passengers further up. Krishna wanted to travel by a Doli. Pantulu fixed up a Doli for Durgamma and Krishna.

Krishna enjoyed the new type of transport. The Doli carriers were, naturally, very much tired. They reached the

'Knee Pass' and rested for a while. After some time, they reached the top of the hill. It is called Tirumalai. Durgamma and Krishna were first to reach Tirumalai. Later, Pantulu, Jagannadham and others joined them. The boy felt happy at reaching the top of the hill earlier than others.

They stayed in a choultry, and there were so many new faces around Krishna. He was thrilled in the new surroundings. Moreover, he was going to see God! That idea made him all the more ecstatic.

All the happiness vanished when he was told to get shaven tonsured his head. It was a totally unexpected situation. He turned back and resented it vehemently. All sorts of persuasions from everybody could not move him from his stand. Even threats were in vain.

Krishna ran up and down as he liked. Pantulu caught hold of him skillfully, but the boy was struggling to escape from his grandfather's grips, crying, 'No. No, I don't want to give my hair. No, I won't.' Durgamma pleaded with him in a humble manner, 'Please cooperate. It is a vow. Please listen to us.' The boy was indifferent. 'Let him be god or let him be the grandfather of God—I don't care. I don't offer my hair to him.' Thus shouted Krishna adamantly.

Pantulu requested him to cooperate with him. 'Kittu, I will purchase a new English hat for you. You can have a new pair of chappals also.' But the boy continued to struggle, to run away. On seeing the barber, with a razor in hand, his shoutings increased all the more. His face turned red. He warned the barber that he would twitch him with his nails if he approached him.

Pantulu and Jagannadham lost patience and caught hold of him firmly, against his will. Very quickly, the barber sprinkled a little water on the head of Krishna and shaved him. Krishna had to yield to their force, and he was grumbling all the while.

While looking at the shaven hair on the ground, Krishna commented in a low tone, 'What a God! What does He do with my hair?' Durgamma tried to convince him, 'No, no child. Don't say that. If you give God merely your hair, he will give you whatever you want.'

After the bath, they proceeded towards the main temple. There was a long queue of pilgrims. Pantulu was carrying his grandson in his folds. The boy was still angry at heart, at all of them, for forcing him to give away his hair unwillingly. In the queue, also, he was pinching everybody. He was making faces at them like a monkey. But he appeared smooth and handsome, so the other pilgrims ignored his mischief and smiled at him. He was expressing his anger on God in this manner.

Pantulu asked his grandson to bow to God. Krishna unwillingly bowed to God and appeared to have questioned him, 'Why do you want my hair?'

After coming out of the temple, also, Krishna continued to be angry and serious. He did not talk to anybody. Sitting in a corner, he was scratching his shaven head. He did not compromise. He was not afraid of God. After some time he turned calm and said, 'Oh God, You forced me to act against my wish, so I will never come to you again. Why do you want my hair? What do you do with that? I will never come to you again. I will never give you my hair. Do what you can!' In his own way, he expressed his inner feelings in this connection.

It seemed to be the natural characteristic of this boy to resist and fight out any issue with anybody, and everybody, if it was not liked by him.

At the age of four, Krishna developed infantile convulsions again, seriously, and fell down suddenly. He began to struggle like a fish out of water. Medicines did not work. Pantulu performed special worships to Lord Shiva, who conquered Death. Everybody was helpless. Durgamma, too, prayed to God in her own way. After some time the condition of Krishna improved, and he became normal.

Besides, the boy was having severe stomachaches now and then. He was trying to withstand the pain, but sometimes, he could not. Durgamma got him treated for it. The stomachache abated by itself, whether medicines were given or not.

Krishna was developing a cough also. He was getting tired very quickly. It appeared as though it was disturbing digestion, and the alimentary canal. Fasting was considered as the best medicine. He could not eat or drink anything. By fasting for a day, his health was restored to normalcy.

It was observed that Krishna was very intelligent by birth and wiser than all others of his age. He used to observe everybody keenly and imitated them. He was accompanying his grandfather to different types of performances of artists such as 'Harikadha,' and he was imitating them for the amusement of all others.

When his grandfather was away, Krishna used to wear a dhoti, shirt, and a turban, like his grandfather. He was sitting in the office of his grandfather and imitated him in his gestures. Knotting of eyebrows, nodding the head, etc. If anybody happened to notice him at that moment, he was feeling shy and getting out of his grandfather's chair. Sometimes, he was sitting in a majestic manner and behaved suitably. He was thus very skillful in imitation.

In the house, he was hearing comments on other persons very often. A distant relative once stayed with them for a few days. Durgamma did not like her. She commented, 'Subhadramma is a glutton. She always wants to eat something or the other. She is a potbelly. She can very easily gulp in the pot full of rice. It is a wonder how she digests it, though she does not move from her seat. What a lazy Lubber.' Krishna heard Durgamma's comments on Subhadramma.

That night, when Subhadramma was about to take her food, Krishna approached her and asked, 'Show me your pot belly. How can you eat a pot full of rice?' Then, Krishna turned to his grandmother and asked her, 'Granny, were you not referring to this person a little while ago?' Durgamma was shocked. She realized that if she loosely talked before him again in the future, he would plunge her into the soup.

Krishna liked Lord Ganesh very much. Elephant trunk, big belly, winnowing basket-like ears, short stature, and other odd features of Lord Ganesh, attracted him very much. Lord Ganesh is believed to destroy all hurdles that any devotee may have to face day to day. Krishna had a special liking for Lord Ganesh. Every year, in the month of Bhadrapada, on Suddha Chaviti day, an idol of Lord Ganesh, made of clay, on which golden coloured powder is slightly applied, is placed on the worshipping platform. Very many kinds of leaves were collected and brought for the worship of Lord Ganesh. A special umbrella, in a square-form, is decorated with leaves, flowers and fruits and arranged for the Lord. Special sacrificial grass, poa Cyno Survoides, was procured for this purpose. After the devotional worship, it is a practice for the devotee to offer ball-like round cooked rice cakes and milk-porridge to Lord Ganesh and pray for his grace.

Gopalam, the son of late Rukminamma, suddenly developed infantile convulsions one day and began to writhe this way and that. Durgamma noticed it and called for help. Pantulu was talking to somebody in his office room at that time. Immediately he rushed in. It was a case of convulsions. Doctors were called for to treat him. Within a short time, the situation deteriorated and Gopalam died, plunging everybody into grief. Krishna was shocked. A little while ago, a boy playing with him and talking to him, suddenly passed away. Krishna could not understand how Gopalam died. The body was taken to the burial ground outside the town. There were no rituals for the child. He was simply buried. Thus Meenakshamma lost her own brother.

One thing was clear to Krishna, a dead person would never return back to him, to play with him or talk to him.

The house of Pantulu was often visited by a number of palmists and astrologers. Once, a devotee of Shiva visited Pantulu. It was believed that he would prophesy the future of anybody by looking at the face of the subject. Pantulu was always asking his grandson to bow to such visitors and receive their blessings, since the great capabilities and abilities of those visitors were not known.

The devotee of Shiva observed Krishna, closely, for a little while, and closed his eyes. Later, he informed Pantulu that the boy had the grace of Shiva. 'The boy has a great future; he would bring name and fame for the family in the world. But there are some misfortunes and perils, ahead for the boy during the infancy period. With the grace of Shiva, the boy will overcome all of them. Please bring him up carefully.'

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Krishna liked his cousin, Gopalam, very much, but he did not know it earlier. He could not express that he had love for him. While moving about in the house, Krishna felt the absence of Gopalam very much. However, in due course of time, Krishna ceased to be sad in this regard.

After a few months, while playing at home before all others, Krishna became unconscious. Durgamma began to weep, 'My God! Again a test for us, a bad time for us! Why are you testing us like this? Oh God!' This time it was not convulsions because the limbs of the child were normal. His hands and legs were not shaking. Durgamma sprinkled water on his face and rubbed his cold feet. The boy was still. Durgamma did not know what to do.

Her heart began to beat fast. Pantulu was out of station. Somebody rushed for the doctor and the doctor examined him carefully. The pulse, as well as the breathing, seemed to have stopped. Was he alive or dead? Somehow, the doctor did not like to declare him as dead. The glow and liveliness in the face of the boy did not disappear. Within a few minutes, there was a little movement and low breathing. The doctor could feel the pulse-beat also. After five minutes, the boy got up as if from a deep sleep. The doctor was unable to understand what had happened to the boy.

Durgamma immediately went to Bheemeswara Temple and worshipped God. Her grandson was fed with a little propitiated food immediately. Durgamma was perplexed and terrified. A few days back, one grandson died. The condition of this grandson had been causing anxiety. He was very wise, but his body appeared to be very weak. Would this weakling survive and live long?

On the next day, Pantulu returned home and he was informed of what had happened. He asked his wife to be brave, saying, 'Durga, don't get disheartened; this boy has infancy misfortunes for some time to come. Everything is governed by God's will.'

'I am losing my mental balance with day-to-day perils and anxieties about the welfare of this boy. I am very much worried, perhaps there is something wrong in my prayers. It is not known why God is testing us.' Thus, Durgamma expressed her helplessness.

'As I already told you, everything is governed by Destiny; we are instrumental.' Pantulu replied in a philosophical manner. Within a few days, again, Krishna had convulsions, for the third time. His limbs began to shake and his head was leaning sideways. The body was having sudden, jerky movements, time and again. Medicines were ineffective. Prayers also did not yield any fruit. Durgamma collapsed down in a corner of the room, weeping continuously. It was said that this disease is hereditary. Pantulu remembered that he, too, had it in his childhood days. He lost hopes of survival of Krishna. Perhaps he, too, would die like Gopalam. Somebody in his past birth was cursed to be born again, to live with them for a predetermined period, and die.

The boy was made to lie over on a mat on the floor. Everybody lost hopes of his survival. Time appeared to have been frozen. After a little time, the legs and hands of Krishna became normal, and every limb began to function normally; he opened his eyes slowly, and looked at everybody. He breathed heavily, once, and got up. Durgamma embraced him affectionately. Everybody felt a sense of relief.

Very rarely, a child faces infantile convulsions three times like this and survives. Indeed, he has conquered the Death like Lord Shiva—somebody commented. 'Well said!' Actually Krishna was born on the special day when Lord Shiva appeared as *Kalasamhara Murthy*, that is to say, the day on which Lord Shiva conquered death. Moreover, that was the day when Markandeya was blessed to live forever by the grace of Lord Shiva,' remarked another lady, raising her eyebrows. Thus, Krishna was considered to have the grace of Lord Shiva. It appeared that the boy had a special characteristic of virtual deaths and rebirths time and again.

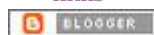
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Thus, time was rolling on. Durgamma was narrating a number of stories, interestingly, to Krishna at bedtime. The classical stories of Prahalada, Dhruva, boyhood of Lord Sri Krishna, etc., were interestingly narrated and the boy used to get his doubts cleared then and there. She was sometimes feeling it difficult to answer some of his questions. 'This little fellow is asking such questions which none had raised hitherto,' she was thinking within herself. While listening to stories, Krishna was gradually slipping into sleep. But the next day, he was asking her to commence the story exactly where he stopped, to follow it on the previous day. Durgamma was wondering at his memory. Thus, the stories of Prahalada and Dhruva induced devotion at his heart, in his childhood days.

After a few days, Krishna started to sleep with his grandfather. He might have probably thought that there were no more new stories for grandmother to tell. Pantulu used to tell him a few new, as well as old stories. His method of narrating old stories was new and interesting.

Krishna would ask his grandfather questions like, 'How does the wall-clock ring? Why should it be given a *key*? How does a single engine pull a train of railway carriages?'

links



# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi

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## The Sprouting of the Seed

Pantulu remembered the prophecy of his daughter, Bharatamma. As per his promise to her when she was on her deathbed, he planned to create a wonderful philosophical atmosphere in his premises.

Scholars were appointed to daily chant the Vedas. Early in the morning, Purushasooktam, Namakam and Chamakam were recited following the prescribed rhythm. Some persons were assigned the recitation of 'Vishnu Sahasranamam,' 'Siva Stotram,' and verses from 'Oundarya Lahari,' of Shankaracharya, and other classical verses were also recited daily.

Pantulu was inviting scholars from all over India to take part in philosophical discussions. His premises was transformed into a nucleus for dissemination of Vedic philosophy and spiritualism. The theories of karma, Rebirth, birthlessness, Brahman, salvation, non-duality, etc., were reverberating there as if it were a saintly abode.

Important gurus, heads of monasteries, preachers, ascetics and others were visiting the premises of Pantulu. Every nook and corner of the building, every pole or wall in the premises, seemed to chant nothing but vedic verses and maxims such as 'soham,' 'tatwamasi,' 'aham bramasmī,' and 'adjhato brahmajignāas.'

Thus the surrounding atmosphere was suffocating as the boy was shepherded to breathe, live, eat and sleep under a specially chosen 'spiritual ciborium.' The preparatory ground is part of a vital movement of spiritual flowering that was to blossom in his later life.

He was very much pleased and elevated with this ambience instead of playing with friends. The spiritual ground had become his playground. No ordinary boy would prefer this cloistered spiritual existence. Day by

day he became more attracted of the noble proportions of this strange spiritual journey. Most of the boys of his tender age were unaware of the existence of this glorious and glowing 'New World.'

Thus Pantulu molded his own life in accordance with traditions of ancient times on one hand, and he was having exemplary devotion and attention to the Theosophical Society on the other.

Pantulu succeeded in modifying his house as a spiritual and philosophical center for the sake of the development and progress of his grandson. He spent much money and time to achieve his objective. His sole objective was to abide by his promise to his daughter and prepare the necessary ground for realization of her prophecy. He could now simply wait for the future transformations, in the life of his grandson, to take place.

Until he developed comprehension, Krishna did not know that he was motherless. He had been thinking that his granny was his mother. He had no father also. Everyone had a mother. Why not he? Where had she been? Why? He asked his grandmother, 'Where is my mother?'

'God took her away.'

'When does she return?'

'She won't.'

'Why?'

'God keeps away good people with Him.'

'Then how can I see my mother?'

'God should be meditated upon.'

'What happens then?'

'God will be pleased with your penance. He will appear before you, and He asks you to ask for whatever you want. Then what do you want?'

'I will ask him to show me my mother.'

'Then He will immediately show you your mother.'

'Afterwards, will she stay away with me?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Because she is an angel.'

'What does she look like?'

'You imagine her as you like.'

The boy became thoughtful; and he could not imagine her features, like this, like that, and so on. Then? He could not imagine her because she was an angel and angels are invisible.

Krishna inquired about his father. 'He was somewhere as an employee. At his convenience, he would come to see you.' That was the answer. The boy was not informed of his father's remarriage, and that he had some children.

He thought within himself, 'After I grow enough, I will make penance and please God. I will ask him to show me my mother.'

Pantulu was performing prayers and worships regularly. He began to sit, along with his grandfather, and

observe the process of worship, keenly, every day, as usual. The other inmates of the house were wondering at his attention and concentration of mind.

In North India, there was a great devotee by the name Surdas. He was blind by birth. But he was singing a number of devotional songs on Lord Krishna in accompaniment of his single stringed musical instrument. It was said that when Surdas began to sing melodiously, Lord Bala Krishna was sitting behind him and enjoying the devotional songs.

In those days, there were paintings of Surda and Bala Krishna in some houses. Some people who observed Pantulu and Krishna in the prayer room were comparing them at heart to Surdas and Bala Krishna.

Even in early childhood, Krishna was very much devoted, and Pantulu was wondering at the immovable concentration of the boy. He was a little proud of his grandson and he arranged a separate prayer room for the boy. Krishna was not allowing anybody to step into his prayer room. A number of pictures and idols of different gods, and other worship material, were arranged in the room as he liked and he was worshipping God in his own way.

Earlier, Krishna was sleeping with his grandfather on the same cot. But now, he was provided with a separate cot. But at midnight, whenever he woke up, Krishna was sneaking into the bed of his grandfather. To his great surprise, when Krishna woke up in the morning he was finding himself on his own cot. He could not know how he was coming back to his own bed. Later, he could understand that his grandfather was carefully bringing him back down, without disturbing his sleep, to his own bed. So whenever he wanted, at midnight, Krishna began to crawl underneath the cot of his grandfather and slept there only. What the boy wanted was the proximity of his grandfather, whether it was on the cot or beneath the cot. Grandfather was all-in-all for Krishna.

By the time he was five years old, Krishna was mentally sharp and his memory was powerful. He impressed everybody with his ability to recite anything in a very short time.

In the early hours of every day, the house was resounding with chantings of Vedic verses. The surroundings also were reverberating with them. Krishna would wake up gradually while listening to the recitals and gradually he, also, began to recite them.

The sound vibration of the sacred verses travelled through the air and touched the boy. They naturally entered his ears and vibrated the eardrums. They, in turn, transmitted the vibrations of sound through the small chain of bones and activated the auditory nerves. Thus, the sound waves emanated from an external source, traveled in, and the pulsation was exciting and activated the glands of the body also.

Sometimes, without knowing what he was doing, Krishna involuntarily got up from the bed and walked up to the place where the verses were actually recited. He sat there in a semiconscious state. On some days when there were no recitations, he got up and turned his attention towards the chanting room. Everything was silent there. But after some time he felt that he was listening to the recitals, though there were no such recitals actually.

In those days, he memorized a number of philosophical books like the Panchadasi and Nishkarmasiddhi. He was able to recite the verses from them just like any other elderly scholar.

If anybody asked him to quote a particular work of a verse, he was able to recite it without any loss of time. If anybody asked him for the context and reference of any particular verse, he could answer him completely and the listeners were surprised at his memory. Everybody used to say 'The bird is little but its clamour is splendid.'

One day Pantulu told Krishna, to the surprise of the boy, 'Kittu, I am going to Madras. Will you also come?'

Pantulu wanted to take him to Madras and the boy immediately answered, 'Oh! Ready. Wherever you want to take me, I will come with you, Grandpa.' The boy had a fascination for travel. Moreover, the present journey was by train. He asked him again, 'When are we starting for Madras?'

'Tomorrow itself,' replied Grandfather with a smile.

The boy did not sleep properly on that night. Now and then, he was looking out through the window for the dawn. Thinking about Madras and dreaming of it, he had a disturbed sleep for a while.

Early in the morning, he collected his clothes and was ready to go. He did not take his food properly. Both of them went to Bezawada and travelled by train to Madras. Krishna felt that it was a great experience for him to travel by train. It was the first time for Krishna to step into the compound of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. He was wondering at the persons, buildings and atmosphere all around. He felt as though he stepped into the a new world, unknown to him hitherto.

In the evening, he was walking alone along the beach, collecting interesting shells. From behind, some gentleman approached him and began to collect a few shells for Krishna.

The boy looked at him and wondered for a while at his pure white, even, perhaps, whiter than jasmine, dress. He had a supernatural attraction for Krishna. The boy thought within himself, 'Is he a divine being? Why is he here?' The gentleman walked forward on his own way. The boy stood still, looking at him till he was out of sight. How to describe him? How to know who he was? Whom to ask?

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Bangalore was the summer resort for Pantulu. In the Basavanagudi Temple area, he was staying in a rented house near Shankar Mutt. He used to take children with him also. This time, Narasimha Rao, son of Saraswatamma, accompanied him, besides Meenakshamma.

While staying at Bangalore, Pantulu performed the first alphabet learning ceremony for Krishna. According to the Kannada Tradition, the boy was dressed in a long coat, a loose pajama and turban. He was taught the alphabets at an auspicious moment for the first time. There was a grand feast also. Krishna had a photograph with all of them.

On return from Bangalore, Pantulu sent his grandson to a nearby local school. Till then, Krishna had been like a free bird in the air. Now he did not like to be governed by the timings of the school. He started to abhor the school itself. Perhaps the innate energies and intellectual abilities get crushed in the framework of school life and consequently the children are turned into heartless robots and pygmies.

Krishna had to go to school and so he was going, without evincing any interest. He was getting irritated often. The facial expression of the teachers and their behaviour were repulsive. In the school, punishment was felt as more important than teaching.

Krishna was classified into a special category by virtue of his social status. Apart from that, he would never go unnoticed wherever he might be. He attracted attention and admiration.

He would always be boisterous, full of childish pranks, chirping, jostling, and blithe. He was totally carefree—cares none—adventurous, audacious, strong willed, steadfast. He was kind, humane, considerate and generous. He was talkative, quick witted and excess money would be at his disposal.

He had an ardent handful of admirers. The gravity of his presence was much sought after. The dividing line between Krishna and other boys was like the perfume of a flower and of a fruit.

Krishna had a number of friends in the school. Atluri Venkateswara Rao was his best friend. For him 'Krishna was like a ripe, white Guava fruit (psidium pyrifera) in complexion and handsome. He was born in a rich Brahmin family, but he did not care for the distinctions in the society. He was highly sociable and friendly,' is what he said about Krishna.

In some holidays all the friends used to assemble at the 'Mound of Tarts' and play there amidst ruins of 'Bouddha Aaramas.' Mound of Tarts was a huge area, which was a hub of religious activities of yore. Jainism and Buddhism flourished as state religions of ancient Andhra. In the course of time, disciples debauched with loose morals, hence it was abandoned. But the derogatory usage prevailed.

Now and then, these boys would get old copper coins here and there in the ruins. Krishna avidly used to collect these coins and preserve them carefully.

He was never going to a hotel alone. A number of friends always accompanied him and he was meeting with the bill, whatever the bill amount might be. If anybody stretched his hand and asked Krishna for a book or any other article, he would instantaneously give it away. He did not care to acquire anything for himself. 'This article is mine, so I should have it—none else.' Such thoughts were never entertained by him.

In those days, 'Black Bird' brand fountain pens were very costly. Krishna was using it. Its nib was long and sharp like a needle. He would get it to school and sometimes pierce the table with it. All the classmates looked at him and his action in wonder. He knew that the pen became useless and he would not care.

After a few days, he would bring another pen and spoil it again in the same way. If, however, one of his friends, by name Raghava Rao, asked him 'Why do you spoil a pen like that?' He would smile and reply 'simply for fun!'

He would freely distribute balloons brought from Madras to his friends and used to play with them. He had a special affection towards poor boys.

One day, as usual, Krishna appeared to be inattentive in the class; he was talking to a boy next to him in a low tone. The teacher noticed it. 'Yes, here is a chance for me to fool Krishna before all his friends!' he thought. The teacher continued his lesson and completed it. 'Krishna, have you understood the lesson?'

He replied immediately, 'Yes, sir!'

The teacher then asked him to tell what he had learned. He clearly explained the entire lessons, to the utter dismay of the teacher and all his classmates. The teacher was perplexed. 'This kid appeared to be inattentive throughout the period. But how is he able to narrate my lesson?' he wondered.

In the arithmetic class, as usual, Krishna was sitting inattentively. He was absent-minded. The teacher noticed it and asked him to recite a particular multiplication table. The teacher was embarrassed when he got up and recited the whole table in a moment, without even a single mistake. All the teachers in the school did not come across such a student earlier. They could not understand him and his nature.

When once Krishna opens a book, he would feel that he had already learnt it. If he casually listens to anything, also, he won't forget it; everything was ready at his fingertips. The boy would simply recite anything, after hearing it just once only. He had the capacity to recite tongue-twisting Sanskrit verses easily. His pronunciation also was absolutely clear and emphatic. Elderly scholars appreciated his magnificent recitals and considered him as a child prodigy. They used to say, 'By virtue of his earlier great births, he has the highest mental abilities now.'

Krishna was going to school, just for the sake of going. He had neither interest nor taste in curricular education. Why? Pantulu could not answer his own question. He was getting old day by day. Anything might happen at any time. People, alive yesterday, might not be so today, he thought philosophically. 'All my anxiety is to keep him on the groove. My sole aim is to keep up my word to his mother!'

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Of late, Krishna had been coughing and Durgamma started her domestic treatment. He was given decoctions of black pepper and dried ginger mixed with Jaggery. The boy was spitting out sputum also and he was getting exhausted quickly. One day in the sputum, a streak of blood was observed and everybody was annoyed on seeing it. Pantulu felt that it was not an ordinary cough and immediately planned to take Krishna to Madras for treatment. Krishna was happy to know about his trip to Madras and he was not mindful of his cough.

Pantulu consulted a number of expert doctors in Madras. Necessary tests were conducted. The doctors thought that the existing condition might lead to Tuberculosis. Pantulu was nonplused. In those days, a TB patient would die soon. No effective medicines were discovered in any system. 'Nature Cure' was the only rescue for TB, but it was felt as a prolonged treatment.

Fortunately, Pantulu himself was well versed with the 'Science of Nature Cure' treatment. His personal library contained a number of Indian as well as foreign publications on the subject. He had been practicing what he read. Immediately Pantulu started to treat his grandson for TB. Tub baths, clay baths, sunbaths, etc., were important components of naturopathy. Diet was changed. Boiled vegetables, fruit juice, goat milk and its products, were his daily special diet.

Early in the morning, Krishna was performing special exercises, in association with prayers to the Sun, facing the rising sun. Pranayama was a must in the morning; if anybody suggested any new medicine, Pantulu did not hesitate to administer it. It was learnt that cod liver oil, in small doses daily, would develop internal resistance for the boy. Immediately it was ordered for and obtained from Madras. Its flavour and taste was very

unpleasant. At the very sight of it, Krishna was scared off. His hues and cries were uncontrolled.

Durgamma pleaded gently in a humble tone, 'Please, please, Rumudu! Unless you gulp it in, the disease persists and you will become weaker and weaker day by day. My dear! You should not have had this malady. We all are also getting exhausted with anxiety. All the worry of your poor grandfather is about your welfare only. If you turn adamant and refuse to take the medicine, well, what else have we to do? Please gulp it in a moment!' thus her persuasion would make him open his mouth, though unwillingly, closing his eyes and nostrils. His grandmother would put in two tea spoons full of cod liver oil and he would swallow it. It's unpleasant taste on the tongue continued, even after gargling with water. He had to put up with all the trouble every day.

Added to the oral discomfiture, Krishna was asked to wear a small loincloth and stand in the morning sun. Cod liver oil was applied all over his body and he was exposed to sunlight.

In response to all the treatment and pranayama, the cough gradually abated and disappeared totally. The cardiospasm, however, persisted and Krishna had to fast to overcome it.

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Apart from hide and seek, and other playful enjoyments, Krishna used to invent innovative ways of playing. Each time he would come out with a new plan. Closing all the doors and windows of a room, Krishna would stay inside while all his friends would be outside. A small hole would be made in the window door for his friends to peep through at him, one by one. Inside the room, he would have a mask of a tiger, and make all sorts of gestures to amuse his friends. The children called it shadow play.

The macro scheme of Pantulu, for futurity and its impact, was very effective on Krishna. The deep love for philosophy and spiritualism gradually spread in the body and mind of Krishna and got embedded. Probably that was the reason for his dislike for formal schooling. He started to concentrate more and more on the essence of all education, i.e., self knowledge, before completing seven years of age.

The mansion of Pantulu had been the abode of philosophies. A number of scholars were appointed, on a monthly salary basis, to discuss an item, every day, thoroughly, among themselves, such as 'Upanishads,' 'Dakshina Murthy Stotram,' 'Brahma Sutras,' 'Bhagavadgita,' other philosophical books, and commentaries on them, along with their own commentaries.

Krishna used to listen to them with rapt attention to them within himself. He would be quite thoughtful while trying to understand the Vedic philosophy. 'I must reach the peaks of philosophy and know the self. I must attain salvation. But how? By penance? If so, how, when, where? By chanting the sacred mantra ad-infinitum? Somehow or the other, I must attain salvation. I am determined to attain it at any cost.' Hitherto he had been desiring to ask God for the boon to show him his mother. But now Krishna would request for ways and means of attaining salvation.

Krishna used to read classical stories, biographies of yogis, histories of 'Prahlada,' 'Markandeya,' 'Dhruva' and other great devotees of God. Whenever he attentively read anything, it was assimilated immediately. Sometimes, while reading such books, Krishna was getting totally absorbed and getting elated. 'I, too, should be as great as 'Prahlada' or 'Dhruva,' he used to think within himself. Krishna used to dream that he was flying over the Himalayas and making penance there. Thus thinking and dreaming, he would enter slumber, his only aim being to acquire knowledge of self—to attain salvation.

The seed had been carefully planted in fertile soil. It had sprouted and the tender roots were spreading, slowly stretching, absorbing strength from the soil, as it were. On the surface level, the plant was growing firmly upwards, spreading its branches in several directions.

The seed with its fire of spiritual life would yield a harvest of light; one had only to wait and watch.

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There is a temple for Monkey God Anjaneya Swamy in Gudivada. Anjaneya is an ardent devotee of Rama. He is well known for bravery and boldness. He is a symbol of strength and devotion. Anjaneya Swamy is also called 'Bajarangabali' in many parts of India and people believe that if sincerely anybody adores him, saying 'Jai Bajarangabali,' the devotee gets immense strength. All the evil spirits and ghosts will vanish by mere mention of his name.

Children have a fascination for Anjaneya Swamy. Krishna also had faith in him and he was his great devotee. As such, at his convenience, Krishna used to go to the temple to pray to him. He used to pick up a little vermilion from the feet of the idol and wear it between his eyebrows, in the traditional manner.

Krishna was making a number of vows to Swamy and requesting him to fulfill his various desires. Krishna was offering coconuts to Anjaneya Swamy thankfully. Gradually, the number of promises of Krishna to Swamy became too many for the boy to abide by. If he could not, oh, no! Anjaneya Swamy would be offended! Thereafter, Swamy would not care for him. It is said that all mistakes of a servant would be forgiven if the servant prostrates before the master. But this principle won't work with Anjaneya. He is not Bhola Sankar to be pleased always. Somehow or the other all the promised offerings should be submitted to Swamy without fail, instead of facing his terrible divine wrath.

Krishna wracked his mind intently and suddenly an idea struck him. Supposing that Krishna could procure sufficient money to purchase heaps of coconuts, he should offer them to Anjaneya Swamy in the temple. The priest patiently would break them all and piously offer them to Swamy. Then he would return half the number of pieces to Krishna, as propination. What to do with all of them?

How to collect a number of persons to take them, or to distribute them, from house to house? How to carry so many half coconut pieces from house to house? Where is the way out? Incur the divine wrath? Oh, no, no!

Suddenly, a question flashed in his mind. Though Anjaneya is omnipotent, why did he allow the indebtedness of Krishna to increase to colossal magnitude? Did he not know the glaring limitations of Krishna? He definitely knew it. Then? There is no solution for his problem.

In 1925, it was announced that the Golden Jubilee celebrations, of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, would be organized on a large scale at Madras. Pantulu planned to attend with family to participate in the celebrations. Delegates were expected from all over the world. Arrangements for lodging, etc., of all the Indian and foreign participants had to be made carefully. The number was expected to be quite large and, as such, Pantulu thought that he would be a mere insignificant visitor, inspite of his close proximity. He hesitated to go. But his mind was frivolous. It was oscillating between yes and no. Pantulu discussed the matter with his wife at length.

Krishna followed the discussions keenly, and he, for himself, wanted to attend to the celebrations. When he had gone to Adyar for the first time, he was fascinated by the ambience there. Then, he felt he should visit that august place once again. Now, the chance has come. But his grandfather was in two minds, causing disappointment. A golden chance is being missed.

The desire was growing stronger and strengthening on all counts. It took a strange hold of him. The whole desire stood on a single point, suffocating as it were. Earlier he used to beseech Lord Anjaneya Swamy for help, and his desire had been fulfilled without fail. But now, Krishna was conscious of all his myriad dues to the Lord. If requested, Swamy would immediately ask, 'You have not kept up many promises to me. Now how could you dare ask for a new one? First clear out the old dues. Then, only, I would fulfill your desire.'

Krishna dropped the idea to approach Swamy, crestfallen. Yet, his avid desire to go to Madras resurrected strongly, once again, with multiple fold. But he was helpless. Thus, cogitating deeply, he fell asleep, dreaming about the Adyar trip.

The next morning, by the time he got up from the bed, he was informed that the trip was confirmed. He was overjoyed and over enthusiastic. At last, his desire materialized. But how did this happen? He did not beseech Swamy. Then? He could not know how the decision was changed overnight... how this miracle occurred.

After prolonged thought of this miraculous happening, suddenly a new idea was unveiling itself before him. Had he stumbled upon a fantastic thing anew? Yes!

Behind this journey, a very stronghold force was there. A power-studded, odylic will was crystalized. It dawned, that absolutely his mighty thought force was worked out, which bended his grandparents to succumb. Hereafter, he can achieve whatever he ardently wishes for.

In ancient times, the saints, and other ascetics, were able to curse, if displeased. They were suggesting ways and means also for deliverance. If it was possible for them, why not for me? If they had power of penance, I have purity of heart. Yes! thought, word and deed, I can achieve desired results. When I grow up, I shall definitely

enhance my willpower immensely.

The new way of thinking in him began to settle and stabilize itself, steadily. Without depending upon Gods in the temples and relying upon anybody else, Krishna wanted to achieve what he wanted, by himself, with his newly acquired force. This is an outstanding example of where will prevailed over matter. Thought is a potent force and powerhouse.

At the age of seven, he came to know the innate and inveterate power of thought. Thus, Krishna crowned himself.

Pantulu went to Adyar with family to attend the celebrations. He actively took part in the organization of the celebrations.

Krishna observed the different items of the program in his own way. He was enjoying his stay there. A number of Europeans and others were also present. He observed their behaviour, dignity and demeanour. The surroundings appeared like a brave new world altogether.

One evening, under the great banyan tree of Adyar, Krishna observed an inspiring speaker, addressing the august gathering in English. She was clad in perfectly white dress, like an angel, just descended from the heavens. He did not know who that divine messenger was. He could not understand what she spoke. He could only guess that she was a great person and that was why the audience was spellbound.

He was thoroughly thrilled, enthralled, and an ardent desideratum engulfed him to learn and speak English, fluently, like her. He should fearlessly converse with Englishmen, like them, and get their applause also.

Krishna stood stock still, looking at her with wide-open unblinking eyes. Her fluency and sweetness of speech could impress anyone. Krishna totally forgot himself and where he was, while the great eloquent speaker usurped his attention, totally, all the while.

She concluded her talk and left the dias. After some time, Krishna became conscious of himself and the surroundings. His whole body was felt as having some exciting currents and ecstasy.

Later Krishna learnt that she was Annie Besant. Pantulu told him that she was called 'Vasantha Mata' by the Telugu people. Krishna observed that his grandfather had a few European acquaintances and that they were talking to him freely. Krishna felt a little proud of his grandfather.

Pantulu could understand that his grandson liked Adyar and the surroundings. He, therefore, thought that if Krishna would be educated there, his ambition would be fulfilled without any difficulty; the prophesy of his daughter, too, would become a reality also. It would therefore be wise to educate Krishna at Adyar; Pantulu thought that he would be relieved of the anxiety about Krishna's future. He decided to admit him in the Guindy National School, under the management of the Theosophical Society.

Durgamma also was of the opinion that the mischievous pranks would come to an end. Maybe a change of environment would bring desired results as normally happens with recalcitrant boys.

Krishna was happy over the change. New things are interesting while old ones are disgusting—so goes the local saying. Krishna could happily get rid of abhorring teachers at Gudivada. The grandfather and grandson went to the Guindy school. The buildings and the atmosphere were fascinating. Pantulu told Krishna the method of teaching was altogether different. 'Children are not beaten with canes here in the name of discipline. The teachers consider the viewpoints of children. They don't behave like dictators. They have a new approach.'

Krishna reacted. 'Yes, Grandpa, I will join this school.' Pantulu got him admitted in the school as well as the hostel, remitting all the necessary fees. Necessary dress and other things were provided to Krishna. Pantulu left for his lodge wishing that his grandson should become a perfect Theosophist. His admission in that school was, perhaps, the first step in that direction.

Pantulu told Durgamma that all their anxiety about Krishna had ended at last. No more worry about him, he thought. The boy would be on the proper track for progress, at Madras. Durgamma was disturbed at heart for leaving her grandson there. It was the first time for her to keep him away from her. Pantulu stayed away at Madras for some more days to attend to some other work and Durgamma left for Gudivada the next day.

In the new surroundings and among new persons, Krishna felt lonely. He had a liking for the change, and a little dislike too. None could converse with him in Telugu while a few converse in Tamil but many in English.

After two days, a dignitary was visiting the school and he would address the students also. It was directed that everyone should come to school neatly and well dressed, without fail. All the arrangements were made to receive the important person.

When he entered the class, everybody got up from their seats, respectfully, and bowed to him. He too smiled and nodded at them and took his seat. Krishna was stunned to see him. 'Oh! This gentleman helped me long back to collect a few shells on the beach! Then I wanted to know who he was. Good. I am happy to see him now here!' he thought within himself. He keenly observed the dignitary and his expression. He was Jiddu Krishnamurti, popularly known as 'Krishnaji.'

Krishnaji addressed the students slowly in English. Krishna followed him attentively. But after some time he lost interest. The personality of Krishnaji was commanding. The speaker appeared to be more attractive than his speech.

After four days, while Pantulu was talking to somebody at his lodge, he suddenly noticed his grandson at a distance, walking towards him. Pantulu could not believe what he was seeing. This little fellow is coming walking, all the way alone, from Guindy!

Krishna approached his grandfather slowly and stood before him. The boy appeared very much tired. Pantulu asked, 'Have you walked up all the way?' The boy silently nodded. 'In this city, the boy came over alone, to Adyar from Guindy.'

'How bold he is!' Pantulu wondered. But should not the boy be reprimanded for absenting himself from school?

The visitor, while talking leave of Pantulu, looked at Krishna for a minute, remarked, 'How attractive are the eyes of this boy?'

And after a little while, Pantulu softly questioned the boy, 'What happened?'

'Grandpa! I am confused in the school. I don't like it. I spent sleepless nights. I will not stay there!' replied Krishna decisively. He felt happy for coming out of the school premises.

'Then you shouted that you did not like the school at Gudivada. Now this school is repulsive. Well, God knows which school you like!' Pantulu was uneasy and disturbed at the decision of Krishna. Till the moment, Pantulu was thinking that the problem of his schooling was solved.

Krishna was silent and adamant. He was not afraid of his grandfather's reaction. No question of going back to the school; he stuck up to the same decision.

Pantulu tried patiently to convince the boy 'Kittu! This is a great school, unlike Gudivada School. Only children of great people have their education here. Everybody cannot be admitted here. If you wish to be a great person in the future, you continue here. You will earn name and fame also. We have been hoping that you'll become a great person in the future. If you come away like this what does all this mean?'

'I don't know all that. I shall become great studying at Gudivada school only. Not here. Everything is confusing here. I won't read here!' Krishna repeated.

'Are you fond of our house?' asked Pantulu. 'Nothing. I won't study here. That's all.'

Pantulu knew the stubborn nature of his grandson. It was impossible to convince him or to change his view. He could not be forced. Even if he was forced, he would definitely run away. 'Alright. Destiny governs everything. We are only instrumental.' Pantulu reconciled himself. He was however unhappy over the wastage of hundreds of Rupees in this connection.

One may be able to take a horse to a pond but one cannot make it drink, however tasty the water may be. Krishna's attitude was worrying Pantulu. The boy was sitting in a corner. He wanted to take him out to make him cheerful.

'Kittu! Shall we have a joy ride? Or shall we visit the famous zoo?' asked Pantulu. In earlier days, Kittu would have jumped up, but now, he was not enthusiastic.

He could very easily guess the motive behind his grandfather's proposal. 'No, I am not interested,' was his brief reply.

In those days, tourists and other visitors to Madras, could have a bird's-eye view of Madras while hovering in an airplane at the rate of Rupees 5/- per head. Once Pantulu and Kittu had that experience. While flying in the air, through the clouds speedily, Krishna was observing the great pilot, who was driving it. The pilot was a great hero for Krishna. The pilot was sitting in the front in a dignified manner to fly the plane. How lucky! Krishna wished to travel in a plane and tour the entire world in the future!

Krishna had many fanciful imaginations in those days. He desired to become the engine driver of a train so that he could see many towns. He had enjoyed a number of classical stage dramas. He was particularly observing the viewers, who clapped, shouted and applauded when the climax scene was being enacted. Krishna wanted to become a great actor and get overwhelming appreciation from the audience. Krishna had many such reminiscences of his early childhood. Now, Krishna's aspirations were altogether different. His sole aim was salvation, 'knowing the self' was the only goal for him.

Young children get attracted by different fields and they choose some one or other in those fields as their heroes. They admire them and imitate them. But as they grow up their aims to achieve in life also change. The backgrounds of individuals vary and hence their objectives. Spiritual thinking was deep-rooted now in Krishna; and all other earlier aims had become simply childish and trivial. His outlook totally changed, completely transformed, metamorphosed into different nuances.

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Soon after, Krishna started to comprehend things and happenings around him clearly; his grandfather attracted his attention. The daily routine, behaviors and style of Pantulu were very keenly observed. Under his shelter, Krishna gradually modified and moulded himself carefully. There were a number of great traditions. For Krishna, Pantulu was a hero of the heroes! Hero worship was prominent in the juvenile psychic life of Krishna. In his young mind an emotional bond with his grandfather was already formed. As such, the juvenile faculty of Krishna's imagination was active around Pantulu.

This mental bond was sensitive and delicate. It was pure and chaste. Krishna's mental investment for strengthening this bond was so much that even the slightest blow or distortion to it could be intolerable.

The Theosophical Society had been providing food to all the members in these specified rows. One marked for traditional and orthodox people, namely Brahmins. The other row for others.

On that day, Krishna had a flash of a new idea. Whether it was to test the honesty of his grandfather or merely a casual incident. Krishna caught hold of his grandfather's hand and pulled him towards the second row of boarders; he sat near a plate and asked his grandfather to sit next to him. All the people felt happy when Pantulu joined them in the row. They invited him cordially. Pantulu had no other way to go than to sit with all of them and take food. He faced a lot of discomfort but exercised restraint and formally finished his meal.

Both of them silently walked to their residence. Pantulu was fretting and fuming at heart. 'This fellow knowingly or unknowingly dragged me to that row. Why did I not resist him? What happened to all my wisdom? How unfortunate!' Thus thinking within himself, Pantulu had been, till then, suppressing his anger. Immediately, after coming home, he burst out at his grandson.

'You think you have done a great thing today! Don't you? Have you lost your senses? You forced me to eat along with beef-eating barbarians. You ruined our tradition and family prestige. In my life I never committed such a sin till today. Now, today, I have become a sinner. The prescribed expiation alone will make amends for my guilt. People who violate the customs are doomed. People who slipped down from righteous heights were punished severely in ancient times. A red hot iron rod was applied on the tongue of the guilty person! Now, after I return to Gudivada, I shall have to undergo the order to clean myself. I stand polluted now.'

Krishna was shocked at the violent reaction of his grandfather. He did not anticipate such a violent outburst. What a wonder! Did his own grandfather really react like that? Some time back, Krishna observed his grandfather donate some amount to Guduri Ramachandra, who had been working hard to eradicate

untouchability and to uplift the scheduled caste persons in the society. His grandfather promised the social worker all his cooperation in the future also. Did the same grandfather shout at him today like this? Krishna began to question himself, with astonishment for his grandfather's behavior.

Ramachandra was a bachelor. He had inherited a lot of wealth and he collected donations in Krishna District area. With Gudivada as his center for his social service, Ramachandra had been influencing the entire area to achieve his noble goals. 'Congratulations, Ramachandra! You have been doing a great service. You are a real disciple of Gandhiji' commented Pantulu once, in admiration of his service. Did this same grandfather shout at him today like this? Krishna found himself entangled. What is all this? Something is wrong somewhere!

The same individual is behaving in two different ways. Two contradicting personalities in the same individual? One is internal; the other is external! Each opposing dramatically. There are inconsistencies. One does not agree, or match, with the other—great ideals on one side and traditions which could not be questioned (or violated) on the other side. How can there be a balance between them? Their basic nature is itself an artificial conglomeration!

For the last few years, his grandfather had been his hero, the ideal to follow and a personality was appearing dim and smoky. Krishna felt severely disappointed. He felt hurt at heart. A question mark was staring at him.

He was in deep agony to the blatant hypocrisy of his grandfather, who he venerated as his demigod, who he thought of as a symbol of virtuousness and worthy of emulation. He could not digest it. He was shocked to the bones.

They returned to Gudivada. Pantulu entered the house by the back door. He asked a servant to get a dish full of salt immediately. He added water to it and applied the clay to his entire body. He appeared like a clayman for Krishna. Hot water was made ready for his bath. Pantulu used coir, but not soap to rub and clean his body for his bath. Standing in the sun he cleaned himself again with a towel. Wearing dry clothes, Pantulu entered his prayer room.

Durgamma bathed Krishna thoroughly and mildly remarked, 'See what you have done! Your grandfather's lineage had been as pure as fire. No one ever did anything against Brahminism in this house so far!'

Krishna never felt guilty or felt sorrowful as a result of this unpleasant episode. In fact his grandfather's honesty and philosophy of his personality are put to an acid test, which shattered his 'hero image' of the grandfather. He asked himself again and again, why this rank hypocrisy? Deadly dichotomy? Was he not as hollow as the inside of a temple bell?

After one hour, Pantulu came out of his prayer room. He preserved the papers given by Koumara nadi astrologer in the iron safe carefully. Later, when his wife was alone, Pantulu informed her all the predictions. Such personal matters were always kept confidential. Both of them discussed the issue of the upbringing of Krishna with utmost care in every respect.

Krishna still remembered the Golden Jubilee celebrations at Adyar. Particularly the magnificent speech of Annie Besant, under the banyan tree, continued to be fresh in his mind. He wished to address a gathering, on the same lines as mother Besant. Then, how? Where? How to get an audience for him? Suddenly an idea struck him.

One afternoon, when everyone was having a nap, Krishna dressed himself like his grandfather and combed his hair. He put on the chappals and slipped out of the house. He called some street urchins who were roaming here and there. He beckoned to them and said, 'If you just stand before me for a few minutes, I will give each one of you five coins.' They did not believe the boy. They thought that it was a practical joke and they did not care for his words. Mischievous children were not new to them. Some thought that it was a fancy dress and wanted to know his activity more in detail.

At a short distance from his house, there was a mound. He stood upon it, and asked all the passersby to stand before him. They gathered around him near the mound. He coughed a little, and adjusted his throat, like any other public speaker. He started to address them in his own way. He did not know what he was telling them. His speech consisted of a number of Telugu words as well as English stammerings. There was no coherence between the sentences; it was simply gibberish.

Krishna tried to imitate Mother Annie Besant in gestures and facial expressions. Nobody could make out heads

or tails of his lecture for ten minutes. Then he asked them to clap in appreciation of his speech. Everybody clapped and smiled at him. He humbly bowed to all of them and stepped down the 'dais.' Immediately Krishna took out the small coins from his pocket and distributed them to his listeners. It was not known why he distributed money. They all left the spot smiling at him.

What he did today, in his own way, indeed, an indication for his hidden talents of a future eloquent speaker. Whether willing or not, Krishna had to join the same school, at Gudivada. Whatever it might be, Krishna had a lot of freedom, at Gudivada. There was no such freedom in Guindy National school. In the name of discipline, there were a number of restrictions. Everything should follow the time-table strictly. Every student should sleep at 9 o'clock at night, whether sleepy or not. Though the students were not caned or punished, though the school was adapting new methods of teaching, for Krishna, it was abhorrent. He simply did not like that system. If his freedom was restricted, Krishna would never tolerate it. He wanted to be like a free bird, in and out. 'The coarse gruel in free life is found better than milk porridge in a slavery den': A Telugu Proverb.

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Krishna continued to be indifferent towards school education. Pantulu tried his best to persuade him to be attentive to school work. Krishna always paid a deaf ear to his grandfather's advice. Pantulu thought of providing a special tuition at night. Soon after the dinner, Krishna was sent to a tutor daily. A servant boy of about twelve years of age, should accompany Krishna, with a bright hurricane lantern in hand. There was a touring Cinema hall on their way. Krishna and the servant boy were listening to the songs and dialogues, while going to, and returning from, the tuition. Krishna was tempted to see. One day, he decided to play truant to the tuition class. He warned the servant boy not to inform them of the matter at home. Thus both of them attended the film show and returned home. Now and then, the two boys used to attend the film show and specially the servant boy was very much thrilled. Added to the film show, Krishna was purchasing many peppermints. In those days, the theaters were having oil engine generators. To wind and unwind a reel for projection some time was invariably required.

One day, after the film show was started, the two boys entered the theater and slowly stepped towards two vacant chairs and occupied them. After 15 minutes, in order to change the reel, the show was suspended and lights were switched on. Then, in that light, to the astonishment of Krishna, he was occupying a seat next to his grandfather. Pantulu noticed the boy and was very angry. But he controlled himself.

After returning home, Pantulu began to chide the servant boy, in the presence of Krishna, 'You rascal! Both of you are cheating and hoodwinking us. Aren't you? Kittu has to go alone for tuition all the way at night. So you are asked to give company to him. But you have connived with him. How long have you both been going to the film shows like this? Speak out the truth. Otherwise, I will tear you into pieces!' roared Pantulu.

The servant boy shuddered and pleaded for mercy, 'Sir! I am not guilty. The little Pantulu warned me that he would kick me if I inform you. Till now we have seen five film shows. This is the truth—kindly forgive me sir.'

Pantulu nodded at him and said, 'Alright! What had happened had already happened! In the future, if Kittu threatens you again, tell me! I will look into the matter! If I come to know of your joining hands with him—beware. I will not spare you!' Then Pantulu rebuked his grandson, 'If your schooling falls flat like this, and if your special tuitions are also neglected, what shall I do for you? Tell me!' The boy was silent.

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After returning from Adyar, Krishna's desire to learn English well, increased. He started to read the English periodicals of his grandfather, daily, whether he could understand or not. Whatever he could understand, was assimilated immediately.

Krishna purchased Sankara Narayana's dictionary to look for Telugu meanings of difficult English words. His vocabulary thus increased gradually. The popular J.V. Ramanaiah's English and Telugu grammar and Wren and Martin's English grammar helped him a lot to learn the language. Thereby he could score eighties in examinations. His grip on the language became gradually stronger and his confidence, elevated.

A few days back, at the time of going over to Adyar, to attend the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Theosophical Society, Krishna realized that the mind had tremendous willpower. By utilizing that power, he had been satisfying his petty desires. This personal ability strengthened his independent attitude and increased his self-confidence. He established supremacy over all the other children of his age.

Krishna observed keenly that his desire was requiring some time to be fulfilled. He could not know the reason for the delay.

The will power of Krishna was revealing itself on various occasions. Half the number of desires were being fulfilled. Was he wishing an incident to take place just before the actual incident, or was it merely an accidental coincidence?

For Krishna, the school was nothing but a jail. So, he was often trying to find out ways and means to escape from it. One day he strongly desired not to go to school. But how? What reason or explanation should be put forth at home? He thought over again and again. Ah! Unless it rains, a holiday can't be declared, therefore, it should rain today. So it rains today! Definitely it rains...yes, it rains! So thinking and wishing for a rainfall, again and again, he was going. Yes, it is getting ready! At any moment it begins to rain—at any moment. Miraculously the sky became cloudy and it rained heavily. The school declared it a holiday for immense pleasure of Krishna.

On another day, he wanted to stay away, at home—but how? There should be a direction from anybody to him not to go to school. Some order should come to him. Somebody should ask him not to go to school! Yes, the order should come. It has to come now. Now—itself—at any moment! His desire or will was strong and sticky! It did not leave his mind at all. Within a few minutes, Durgamma called him and said, 'Ramudu, don't go to the school today. A grand feast is scheduled in the afternoon. A number of guests are also expected to arrive from neighbouring villages. Your help is required, and, as such, I will convince your grandfather about it. Meanwhile, you attend to the urgent things! I shall look to others in the kitchen!' Krishna felt very happy.

One day, as soon as he went to the school, his friends informed him that, except for the last period, they had no work for the rest of the day. Krishna smiled and replied, 'Very simple! That teacher also won't come to school!' His friends had a doubt, 'How could it happen?' He assured them, 'Yes. The teacher won't come. While he is having fever, how can he come to school?'

'How do you know it?' they laughed. 'The teacher can't come—will not come—to the school. We have a holiday!' replied Krishna.

He did not like that teacher. A few days back, Krishna wrote the word, February, with a wrong spelling. The teacher punished him for it, and made him write the word correctly, twenty times, on the sand. That teacher was the first person to beat Krishna. So he should be the first person to suffer from fever—none else. 'My word won't go to waste! By this time already the teacher might have had fever! How can he come to school?' Krishna repeated his prediction.

Within a few minutes, the school peon came to the class and announced, 'Children! Your last period teacher is having fever, and he applied for leave. You can go home now!' The friends and other classmates of Krishna wondered how it all happened as Krishna could foretell.

A relative of Pantulu used to come to Guduwada from Machilipatnam now and then. Whenever he came, he was bringing 'Machilipatnam sweetmeats' with him. The sweets were very popular. Children used to call him 'Sweetmeat uncle.'

One day, while returning from school, Krishna thought of special sweets. 'How I wish that the uncle may visit us with his wonderful sweets! He might have already arrived at home!' So thinking, Krishna stepped into the house to find the 'Sweetmeat uncle,' and then he stated, 'Oh, Uncle has already arrived.'

On the table, the sweetmeat packet was waiting for him. Krishna opened it immediately and disturbed the sweets to all of the children. Krishna observed that the servant's children were also there, looking at Krishna and the other children with sweets in their hands. Krishna instantaneously jumped up to distribute the sweets to those children also. Durgamma was a little angry and remarked, 'Ramudu! Uncle brought the sweets all the way from Machilipatnam for you affectionately. You are distributing them to the servant children! Are you the great Karna of Maha Bharata?'

'Oh! This! A simple edible item. While we are eating the sweets, those children were gazing at us. They also want to eat them. Nothing is lost if they also enjoy eating sweets. What is wrong in it? It is my pleasure!' said the boy. Durgamma kept mum on hearing him.

One day Pantulu asked Krishna to convey a message to one gentleman by the name of Venkata Rao, 'Kittu! His residence is on your way to the school. Ask him to meet me urgently.'

On his way to the school, Krishna met some friends. They all went to the school talking to one another happily. Krishna forgot his grandfather's errand. He returned home in the afternoon for lunch and suddenly remembered it. Pantulu asked him, 'Did you pass my message to Venkata Rao? The fellow has not turned up so far!'

'Grandpa! I went for him. He is out of the station!' bluffed Krishna. Next day, early in the morning, Venkata Rao came to meet Pantulu, and informed him that he had gone to Guntur the previous day.

One day, while at school, Krishna all of a sudden wanted to go home. He did not know why he had such a desire then. He slowly approached his teacher and said, 'Sir, my grandmother has fallen sick at home suddenly. A message has just been received.' So saying, he took leave of the teacher and went home.

To his great surprise, his grandmother was really sick at home. He approached his moaning grandmother slowly. She beckoned to him and said, 'Come on, Ramudu! I have been thinking of you and you have come. Will you please go to the doctor and get me the medicine?' There was no one else to attend to her at that time.

Durgamma's journey to Machilipatnam was postponed several times. On that day, she was strongly determined to visit her daughter, Sarswatamma, without fail. She informed her husband that necessary arrangements should be made. She was busy preparing sweets and savories. Krishna came back from school. In the air, he could smell ghee emanating in the kitchen. He went straight there and saw freshly prepared edibles neatly arranged in the basket. What is special today? He pondered for a while, picked up one sweet and started eating. He took some more and distributed them to the servant's children who were playing in the backyard.

Meanwhile, Durgamma hurriedly emerged from the bathroom. Krishna asked her, 'Where you are going? Why did you prepare sweetmeats?'

'Today I am going to Machilipatnam to see your aunt. It was a long-pending trip,' said Durgamma.

Krishna said immediately, 'Why would you go? Aunt will be coming here soon.'

'Come on! You naughty boy! Do not play with me. How do you know?' she questioned.

'That I do not know. But her arrival is certain. Wait and see,' he said very confidently.

After a few minutes, Pantulu came running: 'Let us start early. There is little time left.' So saying, he went inside to change his clothes.

All of a sudden a horse drawn carriage halted before the house.

To Durgamma's surprise, her daughter Saraswatamma emerged from the cart along with her son, Narasimha Rao.

'How come you are here? We are about to start to your place,' uttered Durgamma in bewilderment.

'We waited for your early arrival. You did not turn up, maybe you are busy with household chores. So we came here,' said Saraswatamma casually.

'Did you inform to anybody about your journey before hand?' Durgamma asked with a tone of surprise and disbelief.

'No! We took a sudden decision. Why you are so surprised?' she enquired eagerly.

Durgamma was stunned. 'How could Ramudu foretell your impending arrival? How is that possible?' she said astonishingly.

'What is that?'

'Just now Ramudu informed me of your arrival here. Now it has become true. How? I was baffled. What

prolepsis!'

Maybe this is an example of 'a child premonition one and the same equal to God's prediction' (quoting a Telugu proverb *baala vaakku Brahma vakku*), said Saraswatamma, appreciating Krishna's mental prowess.

Nearby in the school an old woman would sit out daily and used to sell homemade sweetmeats to eke out her livelihood. Krishna would buy, now and then, a few eatables for his friends.

In the course of time the old woman noticed a dramatic change in her business. Whenever Krishna makes purchases, she would sell the remaining stuff in no time. She thought, 'The boy was my lucky mascot!' She would be expecting every day, avidly, for Krishna's 'Boni' (lucky penny).

One day she offered more sweets for the single coin and pleaded happily not to pay extra money. Krishna surprisingly asked her, 'Why?'

She wore a luminous face. 'Abbayee! (little boy) your hand is very lucky for me. Once you make a purchase that is sufficient, the rest would be cleared off in a short span of time. Hence these extra sweetmeats are being given for my satisfaction,' said the old woman in a gesture of appreciation.

'No!' Krishna said. 'I would not take anything free of cost.' He paid the balance amount and left. Krishna regularly would buy from her. After a few months the old woman disappeared. Later it was known the old woman died in her sleep.

One day Krishna and his friend, Raghava Rao, went to a shop to purchase something. The shop was crowded. Krishna had a habit of handing over money beforehand, as such, he gave one rupee coin, lo, the shop owner asked for his requirement. The owner instantly took the coin and put it into his box. Krishna waited for his turn. After a while, to Krishna's astonishment, the shop owner demanded the money again, forgetting he had already taken it.

Raghava Rao argued that the money had been paid. But the shop owner refused to believe. Some heated words were exchanged.

Krishna stood silent without interfering. He again handed over another coin without any hesitation and obtained the article, and left the shop, to the utter surprise of his friend.

'Why you did not question him? Why did you tamely surrender for his fault?' argued Raghava Rao.

Krishna said coolly, 'If I could loss one rupee today, tomorrow that fellow would lose heavily.'

'How?'

Krishna did not reply. After a few days Raghava Rao came to know that the shop owner met with an accident and was hospitalized.

Krishna thus was getting all his desires fulfilled, by virtue of his own will and confidence. Day by day, the worship in the temples, the vows of the devotees to gods, and other related programs lost grip on Krishna completely.

'When I have the capability to achieve what I want, with my willpower, if I depend upon idols, does it not belittle my own powers? Why should I underestimate my Himalayan self-confidence? There are no powers at all in the idols. My own planetary power is enough for me!'

Afterwards, Krishna did not go to any temple. He did not accompany anybody to such places. He started to think that he was self-luminous. As such, different gods in temples (including his favourite, Karanji Anjaneya Swamy of Bangalore) faded out from the mind of Krishna.

The great yogi Andhra Vemana questioned, 'Why wear the coloured clothes, go to temples and have ornaments required by the stony idols? Does God require food and clothing?'

At the very young age of seven years, Krishna developed immense dislike for God. He turned his back towards God. God was totally 'routed out' from his consciousness.

In agreement with the Septennial cycle governing his life from the time of his birth, in an unimaginable manner, this is the first of the different transformations in his life.

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That day Krishna went to school as usual. Many of them were not present. He asked his friend, 'Where did they go?'

'Our classmate's mother died. They all might have gone there,' he replied.

Immediately, Krishna searched for his house and went there. Heart-rending weeping, cries and sobbings were coming from within. Krishna went in and found his friend sitting in a corner crying for his mother. Some relatives were consoling him. In the Central Room, the dead body was lying on a palm leaf mat. Near the head of the corpse, an oil lamp was lit. Relatives and friends were all there.

What is meant by death? What happens to the person after death? Where does this person go? Are there heaven and hell? Really?

Generally children are afraid to go the burial ground. It is said that is an abode of ghosts and that they take possession of children. If anybody wishes to go there, elders dissuade him.

Krishna followed the corpse to the burial ground, without any fear, whatever. He observed the funeral rites and the actual burning away of the body. He was not at all disturbed; he thought that all that was natural. Except the inquisitiveness to know the proceedings, Krishna did not feel anything in that context.

Somebody conveyed the news to Durgamma that Krishna went to the burial ground. She was upset on hearing it. Within a little while, Krishna returned home. 'Stop there! Have you not gone to the burial ground? Why?' she shouted.

'Why not? I wanted to go; and I went there. What if?' he retorted.

'You have no commonsense at all! Your grandfather would be wild with you. Children should not go there. They get terrified and later suffer from fever.' She was interrupted and Krishna cut short her remarks. 'No, I am not at all afraid. I am alright--no fever. Nothing.' She instructed him, 'Remove your clothes. Take a bath. Keep those polluted clothes under the pomegranate tree there! After your bath, enter the house!'

Krishna could not know the reason for taking a bath on return from the burial ground. He, however, took his bath and came in, Durgamma smeared a little sacred ash on his forehead. With the help of a stick she shifted his clothes to some other place and purified the whole area by sprinkling a little turmeric water.

On that day Krishna came early from school as he was tired, went to bathroom washed himself and straight away went to his room, changed his clothes and slept like a baby in the fetus.

After some time Durgamma stepped into his room to collect the soiled clothes. She picked them up and she was about to go, her eyes turned towards the window.

She was taken aback! Shock waves of fear transmitted all over her body, her heart pounded violently, when a snake coiled on the window grill like a hanging garland. The distance between the cot and the window was about five or six feet. Petrified Durgamma, without making any noise, gathered all her strength into a focal point and dragged the cot towards entrance door. Immediately Krishna opened his eyes and shouted at her, 'Why you are dragging my cot?' He stood up. Durgamma silently waved her hand showing the window. By this time the snake started unwinding going outside.

Strangely Krishna was not afraid of it. He kept quiet and watched keenly. It was large, ash colored, and had shining skin with white dots. The snake slowly uncoiling started slinking without Fizz but it's fissilingual tongue moved incessantly in and out. It slithered out slowly by scaling a nearby compound wall. The rays of dying evening sun flashed on the snake's satin smooth skin like a mirror's reflection. It sneaked out of sight.

Durgamma said to herself, 'My God! What is this? Had I not seen what would have happened?' She recapitulated a similar incident which occurred years ago, when Krishna was a toddler.

Now from where did the snake come? Since how long was it there? Why didn't Ramudu notice it? When she enquired, he said negatively, 'I am not aware of it!'

A snake catcher was called. He scanned the vicinity thoroughly but in vain. However the small cleavage on the outside compound wall was closed by stones and plastered with mud.

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Pantulu was completing sixty years of age that year. As per nadi astrology, it was predicted that he would pass away that year. So, as per the tradition, a large-scale function was planned for that day of completion of 60 years (Shasti Poorti). Relatives from different places arrived. Palmyra pendals were erected. Green leaf garlands decorated all the thresholds and gates. A large fireplace was specially constructed and the cooks were busily preparing special items.

Pantulu knew the forecast. Yet he was cheerful and busy. An important item of the celebrations was the remarriage of Pantulu and Durgamma. The invitees were anxious to see the bride and bridegroom! But Durgamma was depressed at heart. She knows the prediction of her husband's death during that year was haunting her. However she was participating in the celebrations in a traditional way.

The whole house was wearing festival looks. But the attention of Pantulu was more on his grandson and his future. If the prediction proved to be true, then who would look after Krishna? Who would shoulder his responsibility? Jagannadham might take up the responsibility for the time being but, in due course, he might neglect him. Everybody could not manage with the recalcitrant boy, Krishna. He had his own characteristics, unlike others.

Pantulu could give large amounts of money for looking after the boy. But also who could receive the affection for his grandson? Pantulu was doubtful of the prediction because he was quite hale and healthy. The ways of Destiny are always unpredictable. In what form, and when, he might be devoured by Death, none could guess. There are a thousand and one entries for Death to step in for him. 'Everything is governed by God's will. What am I after all—to escape from it? I am merely an instrument,' he thought. Naturally, by relationship, people would inherit ventral properties, but as for their personal relationship, they'd not adopt the cherished ideals of philosophical learnings envisioned by Pantulu for Krishna.

Pantulu looked at his grandson who was jumping and playing; his heart was moved on seeing the innocent child. 'How to leave him? How could he live without me? He without me! Who could fill up my vacancy? It is said that Krishna would reach supreme heights in life, but am I destined to leave him—once and for all? What shape would his life ultimately take? What might be the turn of events and what difficulties? Who might be giving him necessary support in life? Oh God! After me, all the responsibilities of him are vested with you. You should look after him and guide him. You are responsible for his birth. So be kind and protect him.'

Pantulu sent word to his grandson to come to his room. Within a moment, Krishna was in his grandfather's room, gasping for breath.

'Kitty, sit steadily for a while. I have to inform you a very important matter. I don't know how to tell you. I am afraid that you may be disturbed to hear it. You may also be afraid to listen to it. First sit down calmly and steadily,' so saying, Pantulu looked at his grandson anxiously.

'Come on, Grandpa! What is that? Tell me immediately. I have a number of activities on hand. I left them and ran up to you,' asked Kittu, looking out through the window.

Pantulu questioned Krishna, 'Can you live without me?'

Krishna replied, 'Of course, but where do you go? Why? Even if you go, you will come back. Won't you?'

'Suppose I go to a place from where I will never return. Then can you live without me?' Pantulu again asked him. Krishna could not understand what Pantulu meant easily.

After a moment, Krishna looked at his grandfather steadily and said, 'You are not going anywhere, you are staying. You are fooling me. Are you not?' Krishna wanted to go out quickly.

Pantulu had to speak out the truth: 'Nadi astrology predicted that my life is coming to an end shortly. So...'

'Oh! That man! We met him at Madras. You mean that man?' asked Krishna.

'Yes, same person. He hinted that I may die during this year. I am worried about your future life in my absence.' Pantulu tried to observe his grandson's reaction.

Krishna coolly and indifferently listened to him and asked, 'That is alright. What arrangements have you done for me? First tell me the details.'

Pantulu was shocked at the response of his grandson. He expected that his grandson would be upset by the prediction. He imagined a different type of reaction.

'What a change! What a growth in the boy! Sometime back, as a child, he was attached to him all the day. He was so deeply attached to him and was the apple of his eye. But today, he toppled all my imaginations and he is considering death as a casual affair? My death is natural in his view, as if I may go on a long pilgrimage—wonderful kid.'

Thus thinking at heart, Pantulu felt a great sense of relief and answered, 'Kittu, Yes. You are well protected. I have written my will in a systematic manner. Accordingly, you can live happily. The rest is left to destiny.' He did not reveal the details.

'So you mean I need not be afraid—you have taken all necessary precautions? I can live somehow or other. But Grandpa... How will you die so suddenly? No, you won't die. That Nadi prediction may be wrong,' replied Krishna indifferently.

Nadi astrology was considered as most reliable. But in the case of Pantulu, it failed. Due to unknown reasons perhaps the Destiny itself has changed. Or had the 'Vaksiddhi' (word power) of his grandson altered the prediction? No one knows.

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In 1926, while touring the Andhra area, Krishna visited Bezyawada. He stayed with Raja Gopalachar Lyengar. It was publicized that his addresses were scheduled at the Museum Hall, on Machilipatnam Road. The local theosophists, Hindu scholars, and others, attended the meetings. Pantulu also was present for the meetings, along with this grandson.

Krishnaji hailed from the Andhra area. He was wearing a lace bordered Dhoti, lalchi and gold laced upper cloth. He was reflecting an ideal Andhra. With beaming face, powerful looks and facial expressions, Krishnaji had an extraordinary attraction. Everyone liked to look at him, time and again, unblinkingly.

The speech of Krishnaji in English seemed to be understood partly, and a part of it was not understood by Krishna; though he was not very attentive throughout his speech.

Krishna desired to see him again. He observed that everyone considered Krishnaji like a heavenly-chosen one.

'After I grow up, how would it be if I could talk to him? Anyway, I must talk to him someday,' decided Krishna, being very much attracted by Krishnaji. 'Grandpa! People say that Krishnaji is a Telugu person. But why did he speak completely in English? How he does not know Telugu? He did not talk to anybody in Telugu,' remarked Krishna.

Pantulu did not reply immediately. He was thinking of something else then. He clarified 'Kittu! English is Royal language. It is the language of the government. One should necessarily know that language to talk to great people.' Pantulu tried to read his grandson's thoughts. He added, 'If you also want to talk like Krishnaji, you should regularly go to school. But you don't go to school. Even if you go, you don't learn anything. How can you become great?'

Krishna continued, 'Where was Krishnaji educated?'

'In London!'

'Who were his teachers?'

'Englishmen—the white people!'

'There you are! So he is able to speak so well. Had he also studied at Gudivada school—could he become so great? No. Grandpa! Send me also to London for education. I will become better educated than Krishnaji. You shall see me as a better speaker also!'

Pantulu smiled at him. 'You little brat. You want to go to London alone for education? First read well sincerely here. Afterwards, London!'

He further added, 'English is the Royal language. The white speak it.'

'I should learn English well to be able to speak to great people. Command of the language is required. Afterwards, for higher education, I must go to London,' repeated Krishna, within himself while going out.

Krishna paid more attention to learn English. Whenever he could, he used to read some English books or the other. He started reading newspapers also aloud and began to improve his pronunciation. Whenever he came across anything interesting in any paper, he was cutting it and preserving it to read it again and understand it. In a short time, he could grasp different idioms of the language himself. He developed a little ease in expressing himself. Though none was before him, he began to speak aloud, as if he is addressing a gathering. He was improving himself.

Pantulu was a principled person. He was time conscious and a time schedule was followed in everyday life also. For example, lunch was scheduled at 12 o'clock. It was a statutory rule.

Krishna did not like such a rigid frame of life. He might be ravenous but he could not have food till 12 o'clock. So he thought of a clever solution. With the help of a stool, he was reaching the wall clock to move the long hand of the clock conveniently and keeping quiet. At the stroke of the hour, he was getting his food, whenever he felt very hungry.

After the lunch was started, he used to observe his grandfather's movements when Pantulu was otherwise busy or taking rest. Krishna was setting the clock to his convenience.

This trick could not work for many days. One day, as usual, Krishna adjusted the clock and waited for the clock to ring. He did not know that a few minutes earlier Pantulu rewound the clock. When the clock started to ring, Pantulu was perplexed a little and opened the cupboard to look at his watch. It was reading 11.30 A.M. For a moment Pantulu could not guess where the actual fault was. After the lunch, Krishna was caught red handed, when he was setting the wall clock.

'Oh! Now the cat is out of the bag! All these days, you have been meddling with the clock. Haven't you? Why?' questioned Pantulu. 'Yes. Food is not provided till 12 o'clock. I am feeling hungry. What to do? This is the only solution, ready in my mind. That's all!' replied the boy.

He could understand the predicament of the boy and ignored it, surprising his smile. He could not decide whether to chide the boy for his mischief or appreciate him for his intelligence.

Krishna liked to know the mechanism of everything on hand. He was very inquisitive to know 'the why and the how' of everything. The wall clock had been attracting his attention for a long time. One day when his grandfather was away he removed the clock from the wall and carried it away to his room. He bolted the door.

With the help of a screwdriver he dismantled the clock, totally, and all the parts of the clock were separately examined carefully. Krishna was confident to replace them in their respective positions carefully. The clock was re-assembled and hung on the wall, within a few minutes. It appeared perfectly alright, but did not work! The pendulum was given a number of swings. He tapped the clock here and there. But it did not work. He did not know what to do. It was left silently on the wall.

In the evening Durgamma complained to Pantulu that Krishna meddled with the wall clock. 'He is too mischievous to tolerate. I am getting tired of him. He can't be quiet. None can anticipate his acts and their consequences. A perfect clock has become useless in a few minutes!' commented Pantulu, and sent word for a

mechanic. The clock was first carefully checked up by the mechanic; and then he made it work in just a moment.

He remarked, 'Sir, I don't know who meddled with. It was rearranged in a perfectly orderly manner, as if it is handled by a skilled mechanic. There was a small lapse near the key reminder. That's all. If that, too, was properly rearranged well, you would not have sent word for me!'

Pantulu appreciated the sharp intellect and understanding capacity of his grandson. But such a highly intellectual child is not interested in his schoolwork. Why? Pantulu had no clue for it.

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For summer vacation, Pantulu planned to go to Bangalore along with his family. From Machilipatnam, Saraswatamma, with her children, Narasimha Rao, Subba Rao, Rajyalaxmamma from Bezwada Jagannadham and his family also joined them. One day, they all went to Modern Hindu Hotel at Bangalore. Already the hall was full and the family rooms were on the first floor. They were walking up the steps and a server was coming fast down the steps, with tiffin plates in both hands. It so happened that he clashed against Krishna. One of the plates pierced the forehead of the boy. There was instantaneous profuse bleeding. Krishna was silently bearing the wound, as if nothing had happened. Pantulu was disturbed and commented, 'Kittu, see what happened? Why don't you be just gentle enough. You go on jumping up like a grasshopper. Why did you cross him? Oh My God!' Krishna was immediately taken to the nearby hospital for necessary treatment and dressing. It took many days for the wound to heal up, leaving a permanent scar on his face.

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# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi

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## The Dichotomy of the Mind

Pantulu had a special prayer room on the first floor of his house, exclusively for himself. Others should not enter the room. Photographs of great people of the Theosophical Society were there, in that room and there, portraits of Mourya, Maitreya, Jesus and Koot Hoomi had a special place. A photograph of Annie Besant, in meditation, dressed in a pure white dress, and sitting on the skin of a tiger, was prominent among them. Pantulu used to meditate, daily, in that room for one hour. After he enters the room, the house remains completely calm till he comes out—that was a routine item for all in the house, every day.

One day, while Pantulu was in his prayer room on the first floor, a child in the ground floor began to cry continuously. The mother could not control her. Everyone was upset and afraid. As anticipated, Pantulu rushed out of his prayer room ferociously and slashed at the child, in the mother's arms, ruthlessly. He shouted, 'Get the hell out of the house! All riff-raff gathered here and ruined my meditation. All my vows are violated. How awful!' So shouting, he rushed out. Like a whirlwind.

Anybody should get ablated in his wrath. The infant's body was immediately inflamed and writhed in great pain. It was a shocking sight for Krishna, who watched silently. Never before had he seen him like that; nor did he believe that he could act in such an inhuman manner. A shudder ripped through him. He felt as though he was beaten. He was unable to see the misery of the crying child unabatedly.

The strokes on the body of the child were a question mark for him. From childhood days, everybody preaches in the society, 'Anger is your enemy, calmness is your protector. Children are different forms of God,' etc. Many more such statements are being dinned, again and again. They all appeared like question marks for Krishna.

'Is this the same grandfather whom he considered an embodiment of high values? Is this the same person renowned as a great meditator? It is said that meditation ushers peace. Is this that peace? It is said that meditation gives bliss. Is this a bliss? By meditation, concentration is supposed to be increased. Is this the effect of concentration? By meditation, complete control is said to be attained. But complete control is lost by

meditation?' he questioned.

All of a sudden, Krishna developed disregard, light heartedness and despise for his grandfather. Pantulu had descended to the level of a hunter and a butcher—a cruel and inhuman act. Krishna took it to heart and became deeply depressed.

His nascent, crystal-like mind began to think differently. His sole aim of life itself changed into a question mark. That powerful question mark was going to play a very important role in his quest for Truth in the future. It was going to be the foundation or basis for his search and research for Truth.

Krishna was known for his lavishness among his circles. He did not care for money. He never knew what frugality meant. He never hesitated to spend. Any amount of money could be spent easily by him. If money was not given as much as demanded, there would be so much shouting that his demand had to be honoured, under any circumstances. He was obstinate by nature if he was not satisfied. His grandmother would be the target for his demand. She used to think, 'Next time, not a pie will be given to him.' But if he would ask for money again, she would readily comply, though she did not know why.

Suddenly, the cupboard of his grandfather attracted his attention. That is all! The amount was spent, whenever he wanted, as he liked.

In the name of school fees and other requirements, he was taking money and he was remitting it in the school, as fees, in the names of poor students. He was providing books and other stationery also. One day Pantulu questioned the propriety of his expenditure. 'If money is earned by hard work, then, only, its value will be realized. I am struggling hard to earn money and you are spending it away in no time. There should be some limit and control for your expenditure—you understand?'

Krishna felt unhappy with the remarks of his grandfather. He was angry. 'Am I spending your money? What are you doing with the income of my mother's property? You may treat my expenditure as from my mother's money.'

Pantulu was shocked with this reply. 'Oh! You have the cheek to ask me accounts of your mother's income? All right! Are these thoughts your own or is anybody poisoning you? To spend for anybody and everybody in the town, you don't have heaps of your mother's money, Mr. Krishna Murthy,' Pantulu pungently retorted, looking at his grandson with apparent anger.

Pantulu wanted to control the expenditure of Krishna. He locked his cupboard and the keys were kept secretly. However, he was giving him necessary money for his daily expenditure. The money was not at all sufficient for Krishna. Without spending money, there was an itch, tickling his fingertips. He was hissing like a cobra. Immediately, he opened his grandfather's cupboard with some other key. The cupboard opened itself very easily. Krishna became a master in opening his grandfather's cupboard whenever he liked to take money—as much as he wanted.

Pantulu observed that money was missing from his cupboard, which was locked by him, securely. How was the money disappearing? One day Pantulu observed his grandson opening the cupboard. The grandfather was angry and questioned him, 'Taking away money like this without permission is theft. Theft is a crime. Do you know that?'

Krishna coolly replied, 'If you give me as much as required, why do I resort to theft? There is no other alternative!'

'Wonderful! Since I did not meet with your lavish expenditure, you committed theft and are justifying it! In my family, there had been no criminals. I can't understand from where you imported this habit. Some time back people hoped that a young man like you would become a great man in the future, in the course of time.'

Krishna didn't pay any heed to his grandfather's remarks. Pantulu was tired of him and gave away the keys to Krishna, sarcastically saying, 'You take away the keys and spend as you like! Will you kindly at least note the actual amount you have taken on a paper and keep it in the cupboard? The cash balance is not tallying, who knows how much the clerk, also, is taking away?' Without any hesitation, Krishna took the keys from his grandfather.

In 1916, the construction of the building for the Theosophical Society at Gudivada Center was completed. Pantulu named it 'Krishna Nivas' and handed it over to the Society. On the other side of the building, there were some rooms and they were let out to shops, like a Shoe Mart and Book Depot. The rent was utilized for maintenance of the building. The clerk of Pantulu was collecting the rents.

Sometimes they were paying only half the rent, saying that the other half was taken away by Krishna. Pantulu was getting angry and was unable to guess what his grandson was doing with all of the amount.

Once Pantulu obtained the bills of Krishna from the stationery shop. Three dictionaries were purchased! Any sensible student would buy one dictionary!

Pantulu asked Krishna why he bought three dictionaries. Krishna calmly replied, 'One for me. The other two for my friends!'

'Oh! Then you can, as well, provide dictionaries to an entire class. What do you lose?'

'I have no objection.'

Pantulu was unable to decide how to bring him round.

Next month, it was the turn of the shoe shop to send a bill for four pairs of shoes. Pantulu turned to the clerk and ordered him to ask the shopkeepers not to give anything, either in cash, or in kind, to his grandson.

Subsequently, there was a short payment of rent. Pantulu asked the clerk for the reason. He submitted, 'Sir, as directed by you, I asked them not to pay the rent to Krishna. Accordingly, when they refused to give him money, it seems that he had threatened them.' He added, 'They are afraid of him, and they were unable to turn him back empty handed.'

For a minute Pantulu was silent. He said, 'Let him come home. I shall thrash out the issue today.' He turned to his wife, who was standing at the door, and said, 'Have you not spoiled him? You have been very lenient towards him, and so he is wagging his tail as he likes. Tell him that I have to cut it! Control the fellow!'

Durgamma expressed her helplessness. 'Oh! My God! How to control him? He does not care even a twopence for me. He heckles me. If I advise him, he frowns at me and threatens that he would quit the house, once and for all. No. No! I am helpless!'

After some time Krishna came home happily. His grandparents were silent on seeing him. Perhaps Pantulu's heart melted, like a little lump of butter, on seeing the innocent child. But he pretended to be angry with him and said, 'We have been fulfilling your childish desires, as you like. Still, your expenditure has been always on the increase; there should be some limit and control for it. Have I earned for the sake of everybody in the town? Are you threatening the tenants? What do you mean? Are you the superhero of the town?' Krishna paid a deaf ear, totally, like an ascetic. Pantulu again continued, 'Can you ever know the value of money? If Dhanalaxmi is not given due, she won't stay, beware! I am unable to understand your nature. I don't know how your life will be in the future! You give a instantaneous rebuff if I advise you about anything. I don't know how to get along with you.'

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In the month of Aswin, every year, Dasara Festivals are celebrated. When Bharatamma was alive, the festivals were organized on a grand scale. For nine days, the 'Court of Dolls' was kept arranged in a glorious manner. For her, it was a sacred Yagna. All the dolls that had been collected from her childhood had a place in the court. Most of them were idols of Sri Krishna, in different colors and sizes. They were made of clay.

In some houses, at the center of all the dolls, a pitcher and an idol of Goddess were arranged. Bharatamma used to place a large idol of Sri Krishna, also, at the center. Friends and neighbours were invited to receive fruits, turmeric, vermilion, betel leaf and a nut set. With the death of Bharatamma at the house, celebrations were stopped.

Dasara days usher in those memories for Durgamma. During those festival days, she used to distribute annual tips to all the servants, employees and others. Krishna was active in his own way during the festivals.

One year, during Dasara festivals, a new idea flashed in his young mind. Immediately, he procured the keys of the iron chest of his grandfather and opened it. There were small handbags containing gold coins in the iron safe.

He quickly brought them, and came out, going towards the bazaar. Some poor street people were moving hither and thither. He called them by waving his hand. They promptly assembled in front of him. He distributed gold coins one by one. In disbelief, their eyes were protruding. Unbelievable! Are they dreaming? Is it an illusion? No, they are real gold coins glittering in the sunshine. They thanked him, bowed their heads, and ran away as fast as they could.

Pantulu came to know of it. He was startled, aghast, for a few movements his senses were paralyzed and fossilized; he was unable to digest it.

Durgamma was petrified to the roots of her being, afraid how her husband would react. It is a kind of careful investment accumulated over a period of time. In a jiffy—all gone!

Time froze. Deep silence pervaded in the room. Krishna stood like a Buddha statue in the pagoda, devoid of feelings. His face was like a sphinx in the Egyptian desert, touched by nothing, moved by nothing.

For Pantulu, the very thought of it was maddening. Many images, scenes and promises, rolled in his mind's eye. He waded out from the sea of his reminiscence and slowly gained his composure.

He said in a quite voice, devoid of anger, 'Kittu, are you fully sober or is your mind off balance, utterly? Are you fully aware of what you are doing? When you were spending lavishly, we reconciled ourselves, that you were childish and innocent.' He stopped a while, wiped off the sweat from his face with a towel and continued 'but today, like a simpleton, or a stupid who does not know the value of the gold, you committed theft and distributed the coins like shells to all of the passersby. Are they free pebbles on the seashore to give away as you like?

'How can I understand your erratic acts?' Pantulu was unable to decide what to do or what to say. He kept mum, gazing at his grandson, for some time. Krishna sat still, staring blankly like a mute.

He added, 'Why have I been struggling to earn money? It is for you and you only, for our future happiness. The gold is intended for you, to lay golden roads for you. If you earn and save money then, only, you can understand my agony for what you did today. We have been dancing and singing at your command, for your pleasure. We pampered you and learnt a bitter lesson,' he said.

Krishna continued to be silent and indifferent. Pantulu got irritated and again said, 'What happened to you and your mental balance? There is sense in alms-giving in a humble manner. But you stole the gold coins and gave them away as alms. If you begin to empty the iron chest every year like this for alms-giving—well, are you thinking that you are emperor Sri Harsha's incarnation? Why don't you speak out your heart? Like the status of Buddha, why do you keep standing silently? Whom have you consulted? Tell me the fact!' He paused.

As though he had just returned from some other realm of life, he slowly opened his mouth and replied, 'You don't give if I ask for them. So I stole them. I don't know why I wanted to distribute them to poor children. I just gave them away. That's all.'

Pantulu did not keep quiet. He again commented, 'Great, for treating gold and brass alike, you should be either a Maha Yogi or a dunce who does not know values. I don't know how to manage with you or how to understand you or how to bring you round.' So saying, Pantulu pressed his head with both his hands. Everything was confusing for him. Durgamma continued to be a mere spectator for the tussle between the grandfather and grandson.

Once again, Pantulu wanted to make him realize his anguish. 'People give alms when asked for. Without being asked for, you are giving away gold coins as you like. You are not Sri Krishna to give boons to poor people like Kuchela without being prayed for. Tomorrow, if anybody asks you for the shirt you are wearing, will you give it away?'

Krishna was totally indifferent. He did not feel even a pinch of his words. Had he repented for what he did, probably Pantulu would have eased himself.

Krishna replied, 'Why only my shirt? If asked for, I will give away my knickers, also, and come home naked.' Pantulu was stunned and silent. How to bring round this stubborn fellow! That was an unanswerable question before him.

The whole scene disturbed the mental peace of Durgamma totally. She remembered the behaviour of her own daughter, Bharatamma. On Sankranti festival once, the mother of Krishna gave away a silk saree to a trained bull player. When Durgamma asked her, 'Why have you given a silk saree, while so many old sarees are there in the house?'

Then Bharatamma replied, 'I wanted to give it, I gave it. At the time of alms-giving, will anybody consider all those things?' Durgamma recalled the words of Bharatamma. She, too, was giving away anything and everything whether asked for or not. He was born and his mother died. He is a living legacy of her. The devotion and philosophical attitude were inherited from her.

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In the fields around Gudivada, Pantulu was growing pulses and paddy. The fields were given out for lease. There was a written agreement between him and the lessee as to how much the lessee has to pay him every year. Pantulu was afraid that the lessee may not abide by an oral agreement.

His lessees were not rich and they lived by hard labour. One day a lessee by the name of Bhushayya came to the house of Pantulu and waited to see him.

After finishing the daily prayers and breakfast, Pantulu sent word for Bhushayya to come in. Pantulu was sitting in an easy chair in a relaxed mood. Bhushayya put out the cigar, hid it, entered the room of Pantulu and bowed to him in a humble manner. Pantulu enquired, 'How are the crops, Bhushayya? Are the thrashings over? Why have you not remitted your lease amount so far?' Thus questioning, Pantulu began to turn over the newspaper's pages.

'Yes, Sir, I have come to submit,' murmured Bhushayya, scratching his head. Pantulu was silent. Again, Bhushayya hesitatingly said, 'Sir.'

Pantulu asked him, 'Having come all the way, why do you hesitate to speak out?'

Bhushayya spoke out in a humble tone. 'Sir, this year the yield is low. The pests have toiled the crop. Not even one-fourth yield is realized.' So saying, Bhushayya kept quiet, looking at the facial expressions of Pantulu. Pantulu appeared indifferent and he was turning the pages of the newspaper.

After a few minutes he asked, 'What have you said? The yield is less. There were pests. Is it my fault? Sorry, but what can I do?' Bhushayya shuddered at the question.

'Sir, if you are pleased to question like that, what can I say? To whom can we narrate our grievances except yourself? Kindly, be kind. I am not in a position to remit the lease amount. Be merciful.'

Pantulu peeped out of the newspaper and said, 'There is no place for my kindness here. As per the agreement, the said amount should be remitted to me. Am I right?' He looked into the paper again.

'Yes! This year, due to the problem of pests, we have not even received our investment. Sir, I can't remit to you the amount as per our agreement, only you can save me! For every rupee, I can't give more than 25 paise; beyond that, we can't even expect to have our daily food grains. What can I tell you about our situation? It's the worst.' Bhushayya spoke out of his heart.

Pantulu remained silent for a moment. After some time, he kept the paper on the stool and said, 'As you are pleading so much, having regard for you, I will give you a little consideration, but giving 25 paise for one rupee cannot be agreed to. Agreement means agreement. This is the agreement. Is it not?'

'Yes, we live by squeezing the soil. Who will consider our difficulties except yourself? I have none else to depend upon,' submitted Bhushayya.

Pantulu nodded his head. 'Bhushayya! Earlier, whenever the yield was high, I never asked you for even one

rupee more than the lease amount. You paid as per the lease only. I considered it as your luck. Is it not?'

'Yes, Sir! You are magnanimous. You have been generous to the poor,' agreed Bhushayya.

'Then? Since there is loss this year, is it fair to ask me to bear the loss? You, yourself, tell me. When you had profits, I was happy. Now, you are facing loss, I am sorry. What else can I do?' questioned Pantulu.

Bhushayya again submitted, 'Sir! You are righteous people. All these years, we have been living under your mercy and support. I performed my daughter's marriage also. This year I am very unfortunate. God is not kind to me. Kindly be merciful and show me a way [out of this hardship].'

'How is it possible, Bhushayya? You know if an agreement is violated, it is a crime,' said Pantulu, raising a law point.

'Yes sir! I am not contradicting what you said. I am not retorting to you. My only submission is that you may consider my condition sympathetically,' appealed Bhushayya.

Earlier, in the case of another lessee, Pantulu had to drag him to court and seized his properties. As such, his lessees had been afraid of him.

After a little while, Pantulu replied, 'Bhushayya, I am not denying your statement. It is your bad luck. With sympathy for you, only, I already told you that I will give you a little consideration at the time of payment. But I don't agree to receive 25 paise for a rupee. Even if I agree, the Law does not agree. All of us should abide by the Law. You cannot escape from these troubles. So you find out a way for yourself. Think well.' Thus, Pantulu threatened him by making a reference to the law.

Bhushayya continued to plead, 'It is impossible for me to pay more than 25 paise for if I have to remit more, we will have to starve for food or sell away our house, without a shelter for us. Kindly come to our rescue and give us food, we gratefully think of you day in and day out.'

'Listen to me Bhushayya! Why so many words? I abide by the agreement. The whole town knows that. Since you are telling me that there is a loss for you, in consideration I will give you duration at the time of payment. I have nothing more to say. I have some other work to attend to.' So saying, Pantulu got up from the chair.

It was not clear how much Bhushayya offered to remit, and how much consideration Pantulu was ready to give. 'Your mercy sir, I am not fortunate. I shall reconcile with my bad luck,' said Bhushayya in desperation. He looked like a dried-up and dangling crop.

In the next room, Krishna was reading a devotional book and, incidentally, he followed the conversation between grandfather and Bhushayya. Through the window, he looked at Bhushayya also. Krishna experienced a type of anguish and he was sad. He observed Bhushayya leaving the house slowly with a bent head, looking at the ground. Krishna could not understand why grandpa behaved so unkindly. Why was he not sympathetic towards Bhushayya? Why this inhuman overlordship? A deep sadness came over him. He felt a while a pang of guilt. Is it angst? Kindred spirit? An ingrained sense of empathy?

Contrary to this incident, Krishna recalled another incident which took place earlier, about a destitute old woman who came to their house praying for shelter.

On the eastern street of Gudivada, there lived a Brahmin priest with his wife and three children. Long back, they migrated from Bezwada to Gudivada and settled there. After some time, the priest died and the sons began to live separately with their families. By turns they looked after their mother for some time. Gradually the daughters-in-law began to dislike their mother-in-law and she was finally sent out. The old woman began to roam about in Gudivada at the mercy of the public.

A Muslim Shaheb recognized her and recalled her earlier, happy days. He pitied her and provided shelter for her in his house. He knew her traditional life, and, as such, he made it possible for her to live independently, preparing her own food. After some time, the gentleman was shifting to Guntur and he took her to her son's to leave her there.

Her children did not allow her to come into their house, declaring her an outcaste and she had lived under the shelter of a non-Aryan. Shaheb accompanied her door to door. No Brahmin family came forward to give shelter

to the 90-year-old woman. Suddenly, she remembered Pantulu and asked Saheb to take her to Tummalapalli Pantulu, with a hope that she might get shelter there.

With the help of a walking stick, the old woman came to the house of Pantulu carrying a little bundle of her clothes under her shoulder. She sat on the pail and sent in a word for Pantulu. In a few minutes, he came out but could not recognize her.

With half-opened eyes, the old woman looked at him and said, 'Can't you recognize? I am Kamakshamma, wife of the priest at Bezwada. All of us were staying in the same area. Your first wife was brought up in our house. This is my present plight. After the respected priest passed away, I was not wanted by anybody. I am destitute.'

Pantulu recognized her and asked, 'Why have you come here like this? What happened to your sons? You look miserable.'

'All that is my bad luck. I am not wanted by my own children. There is nobody to see my end. On the advice of my daughters-in-law, my sons have deserted me. God in the form of a Muslim sahib came to my rescue for some time. There is some indebtedness between me and this man. Today he is going away. I moved from door to door and I was turned out. By God's grace, I remembered you. Will you allow this old fellow to come in? Eating the remains at your house, I shall spend my time in a corner of a room,' narrated the old woman.

The old glory of the woman was recalled by Pantulu in detail. In those days, she was like goddess 'Laxmi' and as an elderly housewife, she was liked by everybody in their area. Pantulu asked Muslim Saheb to leave her with him and take leave.

Pantulu told her, 'Please come in.' She responded, 'I was doubting whether you, also, would drive me out or receive me kindly. God is great. You are kind.'

'Take a bath and have proper food. So many people are eating with us. You won't be an additional burden for us,' Pantulu said. After six months, she passed away calmly, while asleep. Pantulu sent word for her sons and necessary funeral rites were performed under his supervision.

On that day, Pantulu very kindly received the old woman and came to her rescue. But today, the same grandfather sent away Bhushayya, disregarding his pleas. Why did he behave like this? Krishna could not understand.

After a few days, a person came for Pantulu, sweating all over the body. Pantulu was out of station. He approached the clerk and told him that he came to clear a debt. Some time back he had taken a loan of 500 Rupees. Later, his whereabouts were not known. Notice was issued in his name. But he did not turn up. Now, suddenly, he appeared with money in hand. The clerk picked up the promissory note and calculated the interest in his own way and finalized the net dues from the borrower. On hearing the figure, that person was swooned, 'So much! How can I pay it? I did not know the compounding process of interest, and that I have to pay heavily now,' he explained, himself.

The clerk calmly replied, 'Listen! Kankayya! This is the order of Pantulu himself. If violated, I will lose my job. Repayment should not be accepted, even if it is short by one Rupee. What can I do? After he returns from Madras, you may appeal to him. In my opinion, his order was final. He won't revise it.'

'Oh, God! Already I have been facing loss after loss. I have taken a loan, mortgaged my house, and I am clearing different debts here and there. Yours is the remaining large debt. Will you kindly plead with Pantulu, on my behalf, for mercy, sir?' Kanakayya requested the clerk for a sympathetic word in his favour.

Kanakayya was a cloth merchant. He purchases at a wholesale rate and tours villages carrying the bundle, selling the clothes door to door. Once, while he was sleeping in a choultry, keeping the bundle under his head, it was stolen. By the time he returned home empty-handed, his wife was bed-ridden. He could not make both ends meet. He mortgaged his house to clear his debts, including the dues to Pantulu.

The clerk spoke to him in a soothing tone. 'Kanakayya, difficulties will not last long. Poverty and wealth are like the two pots, hanging on either side of the shoulder yoke. Don't you know that? So, I will show you a way out of the present crisis.' Kanakayya was eager to know this solution.

'Now, you remit the money you have brought with you. You execute a fresh promissory note for the balance due

from you. If you delay more, the money on hand today, it may not be there tomorrow. The growth of interest is faster than the speed of a horse.'

There is some such saying, and that is true always. One more word, even if you prostrate before Pantulu and pray for mercy, he will never yield. He is very obstinate in such matters; he will never yield. Come on! How much have you now with you? Let me finalize your transaction!'

The clerk was wordly wise. If once Kanakayya leaves the room, no one can say when the money comes back again. It is said that money is thousand-legged. It may go in any direction. So it is always a wise step, to collect the money at hand, without delay. A bird in the hand is always worth two in the bush.

Kanakayya had no other way to go than to follow the advice of the clerk. A fresh pro-note was executed accordingly. He left the room, comparing himself to a baldpate man facing a hail storm.

Krishna observed the incident and wondered at his grandfather's money-lending business. He sympathized with Kanakayya. He could not understand why his grandfather was squeezing money from needy people like that, unsympathetically. He wondered whether it was the same grandfather who was very charitable elsewhere, and who was secretly helping poor students? What is this duality?

Two contradicting behaviour patterns of the same person—how is it possible? Why is he appearing differently at the same time? Any lacuna anywhere?

Till then, Krishna had a great regard for his grandfather. Of late, Krishna began to think of removing the mask of his grandfather, so that he could understand his real, internal nature.

Krishna had been observing such individuals, with dual personalities, all around him. He had observed double-tongued persons also. He was perplexed to understand the realities.

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One day, Krishna laying on his cot, closed his eyes tightly. There was pitch darkness. When he pressed his eyeballs, covering them with one hand, he could see a streak of light all over the mental horizon. Some shadows appeared in different colors, such as azure, light green, golden brown, sometimes light yellow and reddish. Shades turned into visible figures and images. Smoke-like columns passed like rings. These images appeared while mixing with one another and vanished. From the fast disappearing image, all of sudden, somewhere, a penetrating ray of light passed through the mental sky, like a flying arrow. They were not static but shadows of colors, continuously fleeing. When he covered his forehead with his palm, everything vanished in no time. It is a different sky world, dense of darkness; after a while some fleeing light appeared.

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All these activities in the mental horizon, he observed carefully, minutely, intently and interestingly. He thought to himself 'It is a wonderful game,' so it became his hobby.

Govinda Rao was one of the occasional visitors and on that day; he was chatting with Pantulu in a leisurely way. 'You, alone, could subdue the arrogance of that Englishman. Others could not. He is a very haughty Rogue,' commented Govinda Rao, referring to the incident.

An Englishman was residing in Gudivada. He was discourteous. He used to take photographs of ladies, whenever and wherever he wanted. Local people objected to it but he did not care for them. Finally, they complained to Pantulu. Pantulu felt indignant and warned him severely. He sent a message to the Englishman, 'Give respect and take respect, if not, you will be dragged to court. Be aware.' The Englishman heard of Pantulu and his reputation. He also knew the association of Pantulu with the Theosophical Society. He was afraid of Pantulu, and, afterwards, began to behave properly.

Coffee was served to Govinda Rao and Pantulu. After sipping the coffee, Govind Rao commented, 'Our people first murmured against the new custom you have introduced. Now, everybody is adapting it. Recently, in the marriage at our relative's house, we also observed it.'

'Yes, I am told of it. I could not attend the marriage. My wife told me that everything went on well there,' said Pantulu, wiping his mouth with a towel. Till then, there was a custom in Brahmin families to personally invite while extending invitation cards. The personal invitations were extended twice. Unless invited three times, the

invitees would not attend the marriage. Pantulu did not like that. He said, 'A personal invitation along with the invitation card is sufficient.' He implemented what he said and his associates also followed him. Gradually, citing Pantulu, all others followed the new custom.

Krishna suddenly entered the room and Govinda Rao enquired about his education. He also asked about his learning of new Sanskrit Verses. Krishna smiled at him and replied, 'very many, Uncle' and went in.

Govinda Rao keenly observed Krishna and he felt very happy. He remarked, 'Pantulu, please don't think that I am praising your grandson. What I feel in my heart, I am telling you. If he is observed carefully, it can be seen that he has characteristics of a great man. His grace and dignity are unique. He is majestic in gait like a king. I feel that he will be the top person in some field or the other. Just a crown is missing.'

Pantulu did not feel flattered, when Govinda Rao spoke highly of his grandson. He remarked sarcastically, 'He does not need a crown for himself. Every day he is already putting a crown on every one of us,' remembering all the pranks of Krishna.

'No, no, you should not say that. It is only childishness; I understand why you are pungent about his behaviour. He distributed gold coins to poor children as he liked without your knowledge recently. Is it not the reason for your remark? From his childhood, I have been observing him closely. I do not know the actual field in which he flourishes. But I can dare say that his name and fame will spread all over the world in the future. It may not be as you wish it to be. The present situation is a temporary phase; when he grows up, he will teach hundreds of people,' said Govinda Rao.

'I don't know; sometimes, I feel disturbed about him as to how to bring him up. He has hardly any regard for elders. He is not humble by nature. He does not bow to anybody nor does he listen to anybody. He acts as he likes. He does not hesitate to give away anything and everything. If questioned, he gets irritated and behaves rashly. Added to all this, he is adamant. Setting all these characteristics aside, if his educational achievements are considered, there is nothing but cipher. I am unable to understand his attitude and behaviour. The trend of his life is unpredictable. How can a plant which could not be bent in its early stages, be bent after growing as a big tree?' commented Pantulu.

'Pantulu! Please don't get agitated or worried. As time passes on, everything gets right. At present, your grandson appears like a burning coal underneath white ash; when once the ash is blown off, the brightness of the coal is seen. He will definitely flourish in his life. By the way, you, too, might have heard that the great poet, Rabindranath Tagore was very irregular at school. He did not follow the lessons occasionally, he was appearing as if he descended from a heavenly domain. But, he was awarded a Nobel Prize to the surprise of everybody. You know all these things very well. One day your grandson, also, may excel all others in the world,' said Govinda Rao.

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Every year Pantulu was performing the annual ceremony of his daughter, Bharatamma, on a large scale. That year, there was a specialty for the ceremony. The father of Krishna was attending the ceremony. Krishna and Sitaramayya would be meeting one another for the first time, after many years.

'Aunt! It seems Sitaramayya is coming over here for the ceremony. After so many years, perhaps, he had a desire to see his son. Naturally he would be happy to meet his grown-up son,' commented a visitor with Durgamma.

Durgamma replied, 'Great! His affection has been overflowing all these days, perhaps,' sarcastically.

'Krishna, it seems your father is coming over here,' that lady said looking at Krishna who was passing through that room at that moment. Krishna did not give any reply.

The visit of Sitaramayya was discussed by everybody as they liked.

'Who is this father about whom all these people are talking? What does he look like?' The boy tried to imagine his father, but he could not. The same thing happened in the case of his mother, also.

On that day, as expected, Sitaramayya arrived at the house of his father-in-law. Pantulu introduced him to Krishna saying, 'Krishna, He is your father.'

'Father! After so many years, I am seeing you. What happened to you all these years? Why did you not come to see me even once?' Such ideas and questions did not spring up in the heart of Krishna.

As though it was a casual meeting, Krishna looked at him and thought, 'This man is my father, as they say.'

Pantulu said, 'Why is it, you are standing there only? You go to him and sit with him.'

'This is the first time for the boy to see his father. He is hesitating to approach him. Naturally, he shirks,' said somebody.

Sitaramayya looked at his son with wide-open eyes. The boy looked as if made of gold. He was very charming. He felt inexplicable happiness on seeing him. His affectionate heart began to throb.

Pantulu repeated, 'Kittu! Go to you father and sit with him.'

Krishna approached his father and the father received him affectionately and made him sit on his lap. Touching his head tenderly, he asked, 'Krishna, how are you? Studying well? It seems that you can recite Sanskrit verses very well,' said Sitaramayya. The boy nodded his head and replied slowly, 'I am alright.' After a few moments, Sitaramayya asked him to go and play as he liked. Krishna jumped out like a bird which was just set free.

From the moment Krishna saw his father, a number of questions and doubts began to rise up in his mind.

'How can I know that he is my father? Everybody is saying in one voice that he is my father. So has he become my father?'

Krishna was observing butterflies flying hither and thither. He continued to observed them steadily.

Again in his mind, a number of questions sprouted like paddy. 'A stranger was brought before me and I was told that he is my father. If he is not introduced, how can I know him as my father? How is it possible?'

It is not a frivolousness or a puerile of a child. It is a question which sprang up from his inner heart in its own way, a question which had a peculiar angle of apperception. 'How can I know, myself, that he is my father?' He began to try to answer it himself again and again.

So somebody should introduce a new thing for the first time. If it is not thus introduced, whatever that thing may be, it cannot be recognized. That is to say, if identity is not given, identifying capacity is wanted.

'How can I know him as my father?' For this question, Krishna wanted a logical answer. Doubting everything, questioning everything, are two of his important mental activities, which would help his surroundings. A keen sense of observation, and ability to investigate, require a doubt, or a question, as the first step.

'How can I know himself as my father?' He pondered on and on. No tangible answer came out. A full stop—still. The question winds itself inside of him and entwined him in its deep folds.

Revolutionary questions would not emanate from the philosophers and other fountainheads of intellectuals, but they were in the very existence of mankind. The entire knowledge of all the generations of human race questioned? The processes like questing, dissecting, critically observing, analyzing and synthesizing are very important steps in investigation and research. These mental activities of Krishna were considered as far above his chronological age.

Arrangements for the annual ceremony of Bharatamma, on the next day, were already made. A number of guests, also, were expected to attend the lunch.

From early hours on the ceremony day, everybody was busy. The scheduled items were being cooked on a special furnace in the yard. Black gram cakes and rice cakes were being prepared on a large scale, keeping all the invitees also in view. Nobody paid any attention to Krishna and his morning requirements. He was angry. He quarreled with his grandmother. She tried to pacify him. But his irritation did not subside. He was looking this way and that way to find out an outlet for his wrath.

Suddenly, the fried black gram cakes in a large plate received his attention. He began to pick them up and tore

them into pieces, one by one. He turned to the nearby basket and began to tear the rice cakes also, as he liked. The pieces were thrown all over the floor. If anybody came in his way, he was retorting, 'Who are you to interfere? It is my own will and pleasure.'

Suddenly Pantulu came there in an angry mood. Already something went wrong somewhere. Krishna did not pay any attention to his grandfather. Pantulu shouted at Krishna, 'You kinky fellow! What are you doing? What is the matter with you?' But Krishna was deaf to him. He continued to tear and throw down the cake pieces as he liked.

Pantulu could not control his anger and he lost his temper. He removed his waist belt and slashed his grandson twice with it. 'Your misbehaviour is becoming more and more intolerable. You have neither respect nor fear for anybody. I tried to bring you round in all possible ways. For everything, there is a limit. We are pampering you pompously; you are ill treating us!' he roared.

At that moment, none could anticipate what would happen. The onlookers could not believe their eyes and they were shocked at the turn of events. In a fraction of a second, the belt was in the hand of Krishna. He was ferocious. Biting his teeth, he retorted vehemently, 'Who are you to beat me? Who empowered you to slash me? Simply because I am a child, do you want to harm me inhumanly! What do you know about me? Be careful!' Thus warning Pantulu, Krishna repaid the slashes with interest on the back of Pantulu ruthlessly. His revolt caused tremors of terror all around. His eyes were red and respiration was fast. He was totally revengeful at that moment.

It appeared as though, in place of the boy, Krishna, there was an elderly person who was taking vengeance on Pantulu. Some such spirit appeared to have taken possession of Krishna at that time.

Pantulu was standing breathless and aghast. He never dreamt of such a revolt from his grandson. With blank looks and a silenced mouth, Pantulu stood staring at Krishna.

Everyone around had been afraid of Pantulu. None could dare to face him or attack him till that minute. Before so many people, he was beaten black and blue, by his own grandson, with a leather belt. Everyone expected Pantulu to react violently, losing all sense of decency and sobriety. Anything might happen, they were fearing.

But nothing happened, Pantulu did not react at all, as anticipated. Krishna had been a child in his arms and bedside. The revolt of Krishna caused more dismay and inexplicable surprise in Pantulu. He was moved at heart, tumultuously in silence. He became completely calm and reflective in his attitude towards the boy immediately.

He did not treat this act as an indication of arrogance of Krishna. All that happened represented an 'action and reaction' process for him. The incident was a clear indication of budding self-respect, personal independence and a strong desire for freedom in Krishna, he analyzed.

After Pantulu left that room, Durgamma asked Krishna, 'Are you right in beating your grandfather? Is it not wrong, Ramudu?'

'Then is it right for him to beat me? In what way is he superior?' he questioned her back. He did not think that his grandfather spared him. He looked around as if he was warning everybody, 'If I am meddled with, I will not keep quiet. I don't care for anybody.'

'He is the head of the family. From your infancy, your grandfather looked after you with utmost care. Can you ill treat him like that even if he had beaten you, in an angry mood, do you think that he does not love you, and has no affection for you? Is it fair not to respect your grandfather? Should you not bow to him?' asked Durgamma, feeling much for the insult which her husband had swallowed silently.

'I will not keep quiet if I am beaten. No one has a right to lay hand on me. If I am insulted, I will not spare anybody. If I am beaten once, I will beat ten times. Do you know who I am? Let him be God, I don't care. That's all!' Not a trace of repentance in Krishna. He would never allow anybody to boss over him nor would he be submissive to anybody in life. Perhaps this incident was an illustration for his sense of his values.

Afterwards, Pantulu did not beat him again. He remembered his promise to his daughter on her death-bed.

Pantulu asked him, again and again, to pay attention to his education. He arranged tuitions also. But Krishna did not evince any interest. He continued with indifference. Education of his grandson continued to be a major problem for Pantulu.

'He won't read at Gudivada. He may go astray beyond recovery. To put him in the groove, I feel change of the surroundings is better. I wish to admit him at Hindu High School, Machilipatnam. What is your opinion?' consulted Pantulu.

'That is a good idea. His attitude may change at Machilipatnam. Without further delay. Kindly send him to Machilipatnam,' replied Durgamma.

Till then, their grandson had been with them and they felt for his separation, a little pang. But the future of their grandson was more important.

Krishna was admitted at Machilipatnam in Third Form. He was asked to stay with Saraswathamma, the elder daughter of Pantulu, in Frenchpet. When Vemuri Chinnayya Rao was staying at Godugupet, Krishna was born and lost his mother.

It is against the nature of Krishna to stay on at a particular place like a 'frog in a well.' He always liked to travel from place to place among new people, as he had wheels on his legs and wanted to be free and have freedom.

Krishna was vexed with his school, its furniture and teachers, feeling uneasy to continue there. At that moment, he welcomed, happily, to go to Machilipatnam.

It was a new place with a new school and new friends. He adjusted himself immediately to the new surroundings. Everything was well. Children of rich cultivators, such as Mandali and Chalasani, were his close friends. He began to move about with them freely and spend lavishly. He was in the habit of spending; he was second to none. His interest in this school also started to abate within a few days.

When he came across new words, he was, necessarily, consulting a dictionary. When once he learned a new word, he never forgot it. He was learning different grammatical structures in English gradually. Thus he improved his English day by day.

While at Gudivada, his grandfather was observing and supervising him and his movements. But at Machilipatnam, he was free from such observation. Whatever he wanted to do, he could do immediately as he liked. At the house of Chinnayya Rao, everybody treated him tenderly, remembering him as a motherless child. Narasimha Rao, the eldest son of Chinnayya Rao, was two years younger than Krishna. As such, both of them moved closely and very affectionately about as natural brothers.

At Gudivada, Krishna had a separate prayer room. But at Machilipatnam, though there was no such special room for prayer, in his own way, he was continuing it. When he began to meditate, sitting in Padmasana Posture, he would lose sense of time totally. One day at lunchtime, people waited for Krishna impatiently and searched for him. He was sitting in the corner of a room upstairs in meditation. They were surprised at his deep concentration at such a young age.

Krishna was good in imitation and mimicry. He was imitating different artists and entertaining everybody, every day, in a new way.

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In the olden days the rich Brahmin families had a strange hobby and a custom known as 'doll's marriage.' This function was performed by them, like an actual marriage, with all the paraphernalia, and was followed by a sumptuous lunch or dinner.

But the supposed 'elders' of the marriage party were chosen from young boys and girls below eight or nine years of age. Boys would wear shirt dhoti and upper cloth over shoulders, girls wore blouses, skirts and saree pieces.

The bride and bridegroom would be decorated in rich clothes. They would also have gold covered ornaments,

which Machilipatnam had been very famous for, for generations.

In those days child marriages were in the vogue. They strongly believed that by performing in these marriages, their children would be married soon, by a suitable match. However it was a purely children's function all the way with fun, frolic, mirth and merriment. The whole atmosphere was festive.

The Vadlamannati and Vemuri families were relatives residing in houses opposite each other at Machilipatnam. One day both families decided to perform a 'doll's marriage' on a big note at Vemuri. Chinnayya Rao's house. They duly invited relatives and friends.

The boys and girls were selected and allotted to them certain roles to play chairs were placed opposite directions and all boys and girls seated.

Krishna had a major role to play as father of the bridegroom. He wore a new shirt, dhoti and upper cloth. He sauntered here and there and raised his voice to show his assumed authority as a bridegroom father. There were mock arrangements and counter arguments over some imaginary faults with the marriage arrangements.

Krishna, as usual, dominated the proceedings by displaying many antics of his choice. Everybody thoroughly enjoyed the gaiety and had a gala time.

One day, on return from school, Krishna observed everybody dull and serious, as if they had lost something valuable. Aunt was sitting in a corner in a melancholic mood. Children were searching for something. Keeping books on the table, he asked, 'Aunty, what happened? What are they searching for?'

She replied, 'My ring is lost. It is not found anywhere. No outsider stepped into the house. All the efforts to trace it have failed.'

'Where did the ring go? It might have slipped somewhere in the house. Probably, you did not search for it properly. It may be beneath the almirah or behind the rice bag,' said Krishna.

Krishna asked her not to be dejected like that. 'The ring did not disappear Aunty! It should be somewhere, here only. I am sure of that. Slowly and carefully search for it again. You will find it,' he said confidently.

She smiled at him and said, 'If it so happens as you said, you will have a Machilipatnam sweet.' All the children again searched for the ring.

'Mother! The ring is found,' brother Krishna said.

'It is lurking behind the bag,' shouted Narasimha Rao, handing over the ring to his mother.

Saraswatamma felt very happy. All her tension and anxiety disappeared immediately. Looking at Krishna affectionately, she said, 'How I wish that you should live for a full 100 years! Your word did not go waste. Is your word so powerful? We are tired and vexed and, in a minute, it is found after your arrival.' So saying, Saraswathamma distributed sweets to him and other children. Krishna was very happy.

The next day, Chinnayya Rao was going to Madras. But he could not return from the court in time. The train starts at Machilipatnam for Madras, via Bezawada. Saraswathamma was afraid he wouldn't be home early enough to go and catch the train. Already it was time for the train to start and he was still at home. 'I tried my best to leave the court early, but I could not. I am sure that I may miss the train.' So murmuring, he hastily packed up and dashed to the railway station followed by a servant.

Krishna observed the anxiety of Saraswatamma and told her calmly, 'Aunty! Don't worry, the train starts late today. By this time, Uncle may be seated comfortably in the train.'

'How can you say that, child?' asked Saraswatamma, ignoring his assurance.

Krihsna replied, 'It should,' calmly.

Within a few minutes, the servant returned home and informed them that the train started half an hour late and Chinnayya Rao would have plenty of time.

Saraswatamma was surprised and looked at Krishna with delight. 'How is it that whatever you say is happening? You are not an ordinary kid, you have some 'Vaksiddhi' (word power of a strong nature).'

Krishna was not much interested in playing with other children. But whenever he played, he was the winner. If the children divided themselves into teams, every child wanted to be on Krishna's team. Children naturally liked to be on the winning team. Even in the losing game, Krishna was always the winner.

Krishna was scoring minimum marks in the quarterly and half-yearly examinations. He was scoring the highest in English and lowest in math. Final examinations were fast approaching. He was reading the books for reading's sake and he was often absent-minded. Sometimes, he was not responsive. He used to respond as though he just returned from some other realm of life, all of a sudden.

He was not bothered about the daily happenings around him. It felt that there was an invisible line of separation between himself and others. He had his own internal world. He had his own thirst for something which none else had. This was his state of being, to chant the Sivamantra, unaccountably, within his innards.

Every year, the final examination question papers for the third form were printed, taking all the necessary precautions. But children were somehow procuring the question paper earlier. So the management adapted the stencils system. Only the necessary number of copies of question papers were roneod and the master copy was brunt away immediately. This confidential work was entrusted to one person by the name of Subba Rao. By this system, the question papers were secure and beyond the reach of pupils.

That year, the children wanted to procure the question papers somehow or the other. They discussed the issue among themselves. Krishna had immense self-confidence to make impossible things possible, and he considered the issue as a challenge for him.

Since the children resolved to procure the question papers that year, Krishna suggested an expedient idea for it. Accordingly, rich children of Mandali and Chalasani families collected 100 rupees under the guidance of Krishna. Early in the morning, Krishna and others met Subba Rao and told him what they wanted. He was afraid and refused to comply with them. Then he was tempted with the money and he yielded.

'Children! This is an extremely secret matter. Except yourselves, none else should know it. Otherwise, I have to face dismissal.' Everybody nodded, expressing consent. Keeping them outside, Subba Rao entered in, and with the original stencils, and he roneod copies of question papers. The papers were rolled in a newspaper and given to the children, with the caution to maintain the secrecy, once again.

As soon as they received the question papers, they felt that they had achieved something great and they were extremely jubilant. Krishna said, 'These are not for our use only, they should be useful for everybody. All our classmates must be benefited. What do you say?' For some time there was disagreement and discussion. Finally, all of them agreed with Krishna.

Krishna had the habit of selfless motives. In the evening, by the side of the bungalow of Challapalli Raja, Krishna stood near a water tap at the crossroads and began to distribute the question papers to the students, as if they were chewing peas. At the time of distribution of these question papers, Krishna enjoyed immense happiness without considering the pros and cons.

Everybody came to know of the scandal in no time and the school authorities took Subba Rao to task. Though he tried to bluff for some time, when he was warned of police action, he had to reveal the truth to the authorities. He was further questioned to mention the names of the children involved in the affair. Though he hesitated to mention the names for a few minutes, he told the fact that Krishna Murthy was the gang leader. The management dropped the idea of a police case, but he was dismissed.

Immediately the management got new question papers prepared for the examination. Further, they decided to debar these students from the school. Sri Chinnayya Rao, the Uncle of Krishna, was an important member of the managing committee of the school. He pleaded in the committee meeting that the children might be pardoned as it was a childish act and it was the first offence. Similarly, other members also condoned the offence of all those children.

Krishna and his friends, however, attended the examination formally and they could not answer anything. Krishna was, as usual, indifferent to his failure in the class.

On hearing that Subba Rao was dismissed, Krishna assembled all of his friends and collected another 100 rupees for him. They advised him to seek a job elsewhere.

Pantulu came to know of Krishna's behaviour at Machilipatnam and the malpractice. He had thought that a change of place would set right the boy, but he did not change. Pantulu felt very unhappy over it. 'God knows when he'll get stabilized and when he'll begin to live normally!' said Pantulu to his wife.

Durgamma tried to protect their grandson, saying that some mischievous children involved this innocent boy in their mischief, 'You don't come forward to support him like this. Our fellow might have definitely dragged everybody and instigated them. Don't underestimate him. We may have to face more troubles due to him in the future.' Krishna had to go back to Gudivada School again.

Pantulu patiently tried to convince Krishna to read well. 'My dear Kittu I am not able to understand why you are lagging behind in your school. I know that you have a tremendous memory power. Why are you not concentrating it on class work? Your mind is jumping up, this way and that, like a grasshopper in a school. Please control it and attentively follow the lessons. All my worry is about your future and your future life.' Krishna was silent for some time. He replied, 'Alright! Grandpa.'

Krishna did not know why he was unable to concentrate his mind on studies. Whenever he'd open up a book, his thoughts would behave like a locust—his mind would float and fly away. Perhaps, it was not within his control. The education of Krishna was like an iron piece before a magnet, which was losing its power. Somehow, he was pulling on in the school, class after class, as if he was dragging a carcass of an elephant. He did not pass any class for the first time.

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For so many days, Durgamma was thinking of asking her grandson an important point. But she was forgetting it. So, one day she made a knot on the hem of her saree as a remembrancer. As soon as Krishna returned from school, the knot happened to touch her hand and immediately she asked him, 'Ramudu, for a long time I have been thinking of asking you one thing. It seems you'll go to a particular hotel, daily, and eat as you like. What is that tasty item there? There is neither cleanliness nor hygienic condition there. If you eat anywhere like that, will not your health be upset?'

Nimmagadda Ramayya was running a coffee Hotel at Gudivada. From 6 A.M to 9 P.M., it was very busy with customers. 'Pesarattu' was a specialty of the hotel. Adding pieces of ginger, onion and chilies, it was roasted with original ghee. Along with the roasted cake, a little coconut chutney was also separately served. Everybody in the town liked it very much; it was provided @10 ps. only.

Krishna was very much fond of it. Whether hungry or not, if he happened to go that way, at any hour of the day, he would enter in for it—not alone, but along with his friends, without fail.

Krishna replied, 'What have you been thinking about the most tasty green gram cake at that hotel? None on the earth can prepare it like that. It is simply a heavenly preparation. So, I go there for it!'

Durgamma smiled. 'Alright. But why such a long train of followers with you to eat at your cost?'

Krishna replied, 'Is it sufficient if I fill up my belly? My friends, too, like it very much. But unfortunately they don't have money. So I am paying for them. It gives me a great satisfaction. By the way, why do you make all sorts of enquiries about me like this? It is my will and pleasure.' Durgamma kept quiet for fear of a more pungent reply from him.

His intense quest for enquiry began at a very early age, surprisingly blossoming imaginative faculties like the aurora of the rising sun.

He was endowed with an open mind, questioning everything and anything. His attitude and expression had a direct impact on established social customs, rituals in the society, which he felt decadent and degenerative. He wondered why people followed blatantly like slaves, without questioning.

He started questioning, himself, why people are unequal in their endowment—some are blessed with huge properties to enable them to enjoy at the expense of others, while the poor and downtrodden had to slog and slave for their livelihood throughout their life.

The authoritative, hierarchical structure pierced his sensitive, fragile mind and he felt pain and anguish about this enslavement, and inhuman treatment in the society. He did not understand, or fathom, why such abominable, detestable customs exist in the society. It is so unfortunate the people reconcile to their fate, as they could do nothing to transform their lives.

His grandfather's house servants had to slog from dawn to late in the night, unmindful of abuses and wild treatment. They got conditioned to this system for sheer survival. Though servants were always at his disposal he dispensed of all these ministrations and depended on self-help. In other words, he regarded human slavery as an anathema and did everything himself, without the help of servants, as he was endowed with a good physique.

Despite the hard work by the servants, his grandmother was always ready to shower abuses on them. They would continue to work, unmindful of the nagging and abuses.

Durgamma had the habit of preparing the food fresh, serving hot preparations, always made from high-quality, costly ingredients. Curries were fried in pure ghee and the meals always ended with the serving of thick, creamy curd. Thus a very hot, sumptuous, very tasty meal used to be served to the whole family first and all the leftovers that remained were given to the servants.

Having witnessed this tragic, inhuman culture of treatment of loyal and hardworking servants, one day he insisted to sit with them to eat the same food given to the servants. Durgamma shouted at him, 'Ramudu! You are not supposed to eat with them. It is a taboo. Your pride birth in a high Brahmin family, would it not prompt you not to eat with them?' she said angrily. After a pause, she continued, 'They are our servants! How can you eat with them? It is most idiotic and abhorant,' and warned him of the grave consequences when his grandfather comes to know of this misdeed.

A servant boy, daily, used to sit on the veranda in the scorching heat of the summer, and would draw a fan made of vatti roots with a rope attached to it. Pantulu would have his siesta and enjoy the cool breeze provided by the fan. One day, Krishna sat beside him and was about to take the rope to do the job but the servant-boy objected vehemently. 'No! Little master. It is not your job. Go away. If master knows it, he would beat me to a pulp.'

However, Krishna forcefully took the rope and started moving. After a few minutes, his hand developed shooting pain. Krishna asked him how he doesn't have any pain while moving there. The servant boy nodded his head across, negatively, and said, 'I am accustomed to it.'

Despite many servants under his beck and call, Krishna would wash his clothes, clean pooja articles and sweep his room all by himself. Durgamma repeatedly told him not to do such petty things: 'That is unbecoming of you.' He never cared about her admonitions but continued to do so. One day she was annoyed by his stubborn behaviour, and shouted at him by quoting a Telugu proverb: 'It is as though the chief raised and reared a dog as big as a horse to protect his house. When burglars entered, the chief, himself, barked.' So to say, we procured these services by paying sufficient money to attend our daily chores. Their duty is to serve us. If not, why would we pay? Hence, why do you work? Leave it to servants.'

Krishna used to observe servants at other relatives' houses, he was appalled for their wanton, cruelty inflicted partisan behaviour by their masters, in spite of their immense labour, every day. Why are they reeling under penury? Why do they depend on charity? What made them to be so impoverished? Who is responsible for pushing them into this line of life?

He never treated servants with unkindness, he was very sympathetic and soft. He would donate his brand new clothes to the servants' children, to the utter dismay of Durgamma. Now and then he used to offer a small amount.

In the servants' lodging, there are no cots, no beds, only tattered old mats or bags to sleep on. Such disparities were very touching and made a deep impression on him. He never relented to this inhuman treatment of servants.

One day Krishna sought the answer to know why they are poor and inferior from his grandmother.

Durgamma said, 'It is their fate; they were born like that because of their misdeeds. They have to be content

with what fate destines,' she concluded wryly.

What is fate? Who decides? He asked himself.

It is not as infantile, puerile and frivolous, as Durgamma thinks. She is not aware of the universal truth behind the probing.

Krishna's nascent mind was loaded with several pregnant questions and riddles, as if he was born only to question everything and anything! Or does the questioning quality become an inherent quality with him, to be his inborn, unique trait?

His fundamental questions raised by him had a deep meaning, a universality, an egalitarian outlook, nearer to ultimate truth. He, himself, a boy of his age, was not aware of the complications and implications embedded in it.

Is a 'prodigy of destiny' endowed with a pertinent way of questioning, to know that which lies, or hides, behind the real truth?

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The prayer room of Pantulu in the first floor was under lock and key. No one was allowed to go there or peep into that room. When Pantulu was out of station, also, it was not opened, and the key was always with him.

Krishna had a longing to know about the secrecy of the room. He thoroughly searched for the key in every nook and corner of the house. His determination to open it increased more and more. He was thinking of it. Durgamma was strictly following the instructions of Pantulu, not to allow anybody even to go *near* the prayer room, in Pantulu's absence. But Krishna was waiting for an opportunity to open it.

Once, Pantulu had to go to Bezwada on court work. Durgamma went out to a relative's house. Krishna thought that it was an appropriate time for him to find out the secret. He had a bunch of keys with him always. He told others that he was going out and pretended to go out. But he went to the first floor by wooden steps surreptitiously. He closed the door near the staircase.

He thought that he might have to try all the keys to open it. But to his own great surprise, with the very first key, he opened the lock. He looked around to be sure that none were observing him, and slowly opened the prayer room. He felt it with a sense of guilt, as if he were opening a door which should remain closed. After entering the room, he closed it. He slowly stepped forward as if he was proceeding towards the destination for which he had been groping for.

He could feel an unknown fragrance in the room. He had a sacred feeling of entering a great temple. Krishna examined that entire room carefully. In this prayer room, he did not find pictures of Hindu Gods as in the prayer room of the ground floor. He observed the photographs of great people related to the Theosophical Society in this room.

Why did his grandfather prohibit others from entering this room? What speciality might be there in those great people? He recognized one of the photographs as that of Annie Besant. She was meditating sitting on a skin of the tiger. She was wearing pure white dress. He could recognize the photograph of Jesus also. There were many other photos around. He keenly observed every photograph. One of the photographs attracted him very much unknowingly. He continued to look at him for some time.

Krishna was very much fascinated by that peculiar portrait and his eyes transfixed on it. All of a sudden his thought sphere radiated in myriad directions. His mental bearings were cut loose and spread.

He developed a strong flood-like impetus beyond his control. The portrait was very charming, sublime, noble and seraphic in its appearance, representing the ancient wisdom embedded with spiritual secrets.

The portrait was highly magnetized; some vibrations were emanating by whirling and swirling. A feeling of flailing. Krishna experienced the vibrations like circle of waves. The influence was akin to a keyboard under the fingers of a musician.

He blinkered his eyes several times, as if he was watching a mystical element of ethereal nature, to make sure

he was in his senses.

He was staring, without blinking his eyes, motionless, devoid of thought. The stillness of the room accounted for the intent void. His senses seemed to open to dizzying heights. He was powerless to move. His immobility and fixity of his gaze had a freezing effect. However he felt an unknown, yet familiar, warmth pervading in the atmosphere.

He lost all awareness of his surroundings. Though the room was small, it seemed to appear as vast and without walls. There was no sense of time and space. It was timeless! Everything stood still!

Krishna felt he was not gazing at the object of his study, but the animated portrait is, itself, watching him enticingly. That moment was irresistible. By a divine afflatus, the borders of consciousness, awakened, by the unknown thrill, which he had never felt before. Some inner voice seemed to be heard, in an extremely low tone. He felt some doors of the innards of his mind were being opened.

The portrait seemed to say, 'I was here, exclusively for you, to be discovered. Now you cannot escape from my looks; you had a goal of whose nature you are not yet aware, but which you must discover. The new task was designed by destiny, in the infinite mystery of the divine purpose.'

Was there any underlying bondage or invisible binding factor between Krishna and the portrait?

After a while the void in the entire room filled. He became conscious of his identity. The mystical moments came to an end. Krishna rose from the very depths of being into his normal self. He was released from the 'hypnotic thralldom.' Slowly he locked the room as usual and stepped down, gingerly, as if he were emerging to the earth, from the unknown realm. He walked down like a robot.

Was it a hallucination? A mental illusion? Was it an imaginary delusion of thought which decoyed him? What is thought?

All his earlier mental condition disappeared and he became totally normal. For the whole day, Krishna was thinking of that great person. He could know the secrecy of his grandfather's prayer room to some extent. But he was faced with another question—who was this great man?

Just as a honeybee enters a flower garden umpteen times, Krishna opened that room, secretly, the next day and spent some time there.

One day, he was browsing through the periodical *Theosophist of the Society* and suddenly he came across the history of the great saints of the Theosophical Society. There were a number of photographs in the periodical also. Among them, he could immediately recognize that great saint's photograph.

He read that some saints of Tibet continue to live forever in an invisible form and move about in the world. They appear to the competent practitioners of yoga and give initiation also. Thus, they help them to achieve spiritual progress; Krishna read about them and their greatness.

Master Koot Hoomi is one of the saints of such a series of masters. He is also called Kutubananda Swami. Krishna learnt that he is called as 'K. H.' popularly by the Theosophists. Now he was convinced that he had seen the photograph of Koot Hoomi in the prayer room of his grandfather. Krishna was thrilled whenever he thought of him. He was also convinced that someday or the other, the help of these saints would be forthcoming in his spiritual practice. He began to read the publications of the Theosophical Society.

In his own prayer room, sitting in Padmasana posture, he was meditating with deep concentration. The external noise could not disturb him. Nothing would distract his attention. When once he sat for meditation, perfect in its cadence, he would forget the entire external world. He remembered the Vedic recitals of his earlier childhood, and they were reverberating in his ears now and then. Those recitals might be remaining in his dormant consciousness. Krishna was thinking that the highest knowledge was self-realization. For a person who realized the self, nothing would be impossible. So, Krishna used to think that he should attain immortality through self-realization.

A number of gypsies, ascetics, Muslim fakirs, etc., used to come to Gudivada and stay outside the town in some forsaken places or ruined Buddharams and temples. They would wear different types of dresses. They would not stay for more than two days at any place. They are called philosophical gypsies. For the villagers, it was a

practice to give alms to them as they like. If, however, anybody frowned at them, they would keep quiet and move forward. Some people would ask them for amulets for their children. It was believed that these gypsies had some invisible powers. They were giving herbs and powders for treating diseases. Late in the evening, some of them would go about in the villages singing philosophical rhythms. One of the songs conveys that the body is a leather bag with nine holes and that it may burst at any time and one has to be beware of it.

Krishna used to listen to such simple songs carefully and he was trying to understand them. He even verified the statement about the nine holes for his body. These simple philosophical songs were aimed at salvation.

Some of the mendicants were adept at rendering recondite philosophical lyrics in a simple rustic manner with the help of a tambura (a single string musical instrument) in their hands to provide the requisite music.

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The house of Pantulu was always busy with visitors, relatives, dependents and others. One distant relative used to come and stay there for many days. She was a devotee, bearing sacred ash across her forehead. She could sing philosophical songs with her sweet voice well. Moreover, she was a good storyteller. She was therefore called 'Stories Kameswaramma.'

One day, Krishna observed her hiding something and entering her room. Though he observed her keenly, he pretended that he did not notice anything. Krishna observed through a hole of a door what she was doing. She opened her trunk box, kept the article in the box and locked it. She pulled the lock testing its security and went away.

Immediately, Krishna opened the box with his own key and examined the contents of the box. She was a thief. She collected a number of spoons, dishes and eatables here and there and locked them in the box.

The stories—Kameswaramma was preaching philosophy in an attractive manner. But what was she doing actually? There was no nexus between what she preached and what she practiced? Why?

Some other unknown woman, whom he did not see earlier, came to Pantulu's house and stayed for a number of days. She, too, was a devotee. She was singing the great philosophical songs of 'Veera Brahman' and explaining their meaning analytically to the ladies. It was said that her husband could not get along with her and went away to the Himalayas. One day, while coming from outside, near the door, she noticed a one-rupee coin lying at the gate. She very quickly picked it up and hid it. Krishna observed what she did.

Later he was totally indifferent towards her like a deaf person. She told Durgamma, 'Durga! Ever since I came here, I have been observing the boy. He does not respect elders. How is it?' Durgamma replied, 'Yes, his mother left him in our hands to bring him up very carefully. He always does what he likes.'

That woman replied, 'Do you know what he did recently? When I was not at home, he opened my box and checked the contents. I asked him, 'What are you searching for?'

He replied, 'It's my will and pleasure.'

'What a headstrong reply!'

At the time of leaving the house, she asked Pantulu for some loan. He replied, 'Loan? We have no objection if you stay here for three or four days. It's not proper to ask for a loan. I know about your debts elsewhere. You are not poor. Why do you go about from door to door like this, without staying at home happily?'

Whether she was in need of money or not, she was taking loans from her acquaintances. But she would not return the money. She was not a poor woman. She had some property also. It was not known what she was doing with that money. Her thirst for money and her stooping nature could not be understood by anybody.

Some children of his relatives came to Pantulu's house once from Machilipatnam. One girl was called 'Machilipatnam girl,' specially. One day, all of them were playing and there was a little quarrel between themselves. The Machilipatnam girl slapped another girl, catching her hair and bending her down indecently. The girl could not tolerate the beatings and revolted. She caught hold of the hair of Machilipatnam girl and pulled it this way and that, in jerks. At that moment, Durgamma came that way and observed the assault on the Machilipatnam girl. She supported that girl and rebuked and punished the other girl. 'You eat freely in my

house, and you beat, on the other hand, our own children. How I wish that your hands are paralyzed, you haughty girl!

The girl continued to weep aloud and Krishna observed what all had happened. He immediately shouted at Durgamma, 'Granny, the Machilipatnam girl is at fault. She manhandled that little girl first; unable to tolerate the beatings, she revolted. You have unnecessarily punished the little girl.'

Durgamma did not care for his words. On the other hand, she called for the girl's mother and complained to her against her child. 'See, what your daughter did? Control your daughter.' The mother of the girl took away her weeping child with her, beating indiscriminately. After they left the compound, Durgamma questioned Krishna, 'What is this? You are supporting an outside girl.'

'I was observing completely what happened. Machilipatnam girl was wrong. She, alone, was at fault. You and her mother unnecessarily were beating the little girl who had been weeping and weeping continuously, for no fault of her own,' said Krishna angrily.

Durgamma looked at him seriously and silently. Krishna again asked her, 'You preached that Truth should be spoken and not to utter lies. Now do you want me to utter a lie, contrary to what I had seen?'

'You are the incarnation of Harischandra the great, who never uttered a lie. It is like an egg making faces at a chicken. Are you teaching me morals?' So saying, Durgamma went away.

Was this the same woman who shed tears while listening to the story for Harischandra? Krishna was coming across very many similar incidents, daily, in his life. Why are they behaving like this? Why don't they act according to what they believe? All the morals are up to the lips only. Such silly events and incidents were normal in the Tummalapalli house, as most of the people had skin-deep ethics and would adopt philosophy as a flashing of talk, for public consumption and glory. Why this dichotomy?

From the time of the birth of Krishna, his father had no role to play in bringing him up. When he was told, 'He is your father,' Krishna had no reaction except, 'I see!' The natural bond between the father and the son was not formed. Krishna did not think of his father at any time. Perhaps, he was averse to imagine about him.

Sitaramayya was staying at Machilipatnam because of his service there. He was going over to Tenali now and then. His second wife, Suryakantamma, had a few of her own children. His eldest daughter was named Bharatamma, after his first wife. Whenever he thought of seeing his son on holidays, he was sending word for him. Though he did not wholeheartedly want to see his father, since he liked to travel whenever possible, Krishna was going to Tenali and staying for a few days.

The step-mother of Krishna, Suryakantamma, was indeed a good mother. She was a cultured lady with a broad outlook, hailing from a decent family. She earned a good name for kindness and affection. She had a great liking for Krishna. He was not allowing her to take him into her arms in his childhood days. She was, however, picking him up affectionately and used to say, 'You are also my son. Why did you hesitate to come to me? Am I not your mother?'

Whenever Krishna visited Tenali, she paid special attention to him and attended to him. She never thought that he was not her son. The attitude reflected her great culture, and decency. But Krishna continued to keep himself at a little distance from her, always, in whatever way she tried to make friends with him. She was eager to be called as mother by Krishna also. But he did not. He was not forced to call her as mother. 'Call me as you like,' she said. For some days, he called her aunty and later he was calling her as Tenali Mother.

Sitaramayya was very affectionate towards his son. But the boy was shirking to go close to his father. Whenever he was called for, then, only, he would meet his father. Whenever his father questioned him about anything, he would answer briefly. Krishna had respect, but not affection and love for him, like father and son. There was no filial bond.

Krishna was not feeling like staying in his own house at Tenali. But at Gudivada, he was the master of the house. He could command anybody as he liked. But here, he felt that there were some limitations. So he was behaving within his limits.

Other children used to call him affectionately and respectfully as 'brother, brother.' Even with those children, he could not move freely. He was always feeling some distance from them. He was playing with them, talking to

them and entertaining them with his skills of imitation; still he was conscious of his limitations. But he did not hate them. There was no question of jealousy at all. They had their own way and he had his own way.

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Krishna liked his grandfather, Venkatappayya; whether called for or not, he was freely going to his grandfather. Venkatappayya was happy to talk to him. He was a piece of cloth of the same roll. Venkatappayya had an attachment and affection for him. He could not explain why. He understood, long back, that among all his grandchildren, Krishna would be most intelligent. His expressions, behaviours, insight, make him an extraordinary individual. Due to divine will, perhaps, his grandson had to be away from him. So, Venkatappayya was treating him specially during his stay with him. He also dearly understood the selfless and honest nature of his grandson. The boy was very shrewd and smart. The mental growth of the boy was extraordinary.

In 1929, it was planned to perform the 'Upanayanam' of Krishna in the traditional manner. Though it is usually a function limited to the concerned family and their kith and kin, Venkatappayya planned to perform it on a large scale. By that time, the property of Venkatappayya already dwindled. The lands were being sold, one after the other. The maintenance itself was felt difficult. Still, since this was a propitious celebration after a long time in his own house, he planned it extravagantly.

In front of the house, the Palmyra pendals were erected. All the thresholds were decorated with green mango leaf garlands. Attractive designs appeared on the floor. A number of relatives and others were pouring in from different places. The Uppuluri Street appeared somewhat crowded with the visitors. The Upanayanam was performed with pomp and glory, like that of a coronation of a prince.

While the concerned Vedic verses were being chanted, Krishna wore the 'Yagnopaveetam' and he received the initiation of the sacred 'Gayatri Mantram.' Krishna enthusiastically took part and he felt that he had a new individuality and importance.

Suryakantamma honoured the professional Brahmin invitees @ 2/- per head silver coins. The lady invitees received new sarees and jacket pieces. Males received Dhotis and upper-cloths, as per the custom.

After the Upanayanam, Pantulu presented a special golden chain of Rudraksha (Guazuma Tomentoes's) seeds to his grandson. Krishna bowed to all the elders respectfully one by one. When he bowed to him, and touched his feet, Venkatappayya lifted him and blessed him with his hands affectionately.

After three days, Krishna returned to his familiar residence at Gudivada. He was recollecting the Upanayanam function now and then.

He felt that he had elevated and additional strength after the Upanayanam.

Krishna felt adulthood had entered in and that he was moving towards Truth, step by step. He was cleaning his own prayer room daily and making necessary arrangements for regular worship every day.

After a clean bath, he used to wear clean clothes before sitting on the silver plank, for his daily prayers. He used to meditate and chant the sacred Gayatri mantra, a number of times with the help of the Rudraksha chain. His quest for spiritual knowledge was increasing day by day and his intelligence was beaming sharper and sharper.

One day, Krishna asked his grandfather, 'Grandpa! I wish to perform my prayers daily in your prayer room in the first floor.' Pantulu was reluctant. He said, 'You are not yet fit to enter that room. It takes some time for you to attain that maturity. Be patient for some time. In my absence, don't approach that room. Don't violate my instructions.'

There was a reason for such a warning. Pantulu came to know that earlier, Krishna entered his prayer room secretly and polluted it. He was very unhappy and remarked, 'I can tolerate anything but not violation in such matters. It is not an ordinary prayer room. Everybody and anybody should not enter that room. Only those who received initiation from the Master can enter it. But not others. So don't go there and pollute its sanctity.' Pantulu replaced the old lock and made the room more secure. There were special reasons for Pantulu imposing tight security for that room.

As per the rules of the Theosophical Society, the 'Esoteric Section' is an important wing of the Society.

Everybody is not admitted into that section. There are some rules and regulations governing it. People who received initiation are alone permitted to enter that section.

To attain that eligibility, a devotee has to prove by thought, word and deed that the said devotee is dedicated to the Society and its principles. People who were successful in the test would be given initiation by the Masters. Afterwards, necessary cooperation and help are extended to them. People who attained specific spiritual heights, alone, are admitted into the Esoteric Section.

That is why Pantulu did not permit his grandson to enter his prayer room, though the boy began to feel that he was attaining adulthood.

That year, the head of Sivagana monastery, Sankaracharya Swamiji, visited Gudivada. He was pleased to accept the invitation of Pantulu to be his holy guest. There was so much activity and tumult in and around the residence of Pantulu, and the necessary preparations were afoot.

One has to pay 25 rupees for 'Padapuja' and he was also to feast Swamiji's entire retinue; only rich people could afford this extravaganza.

On the scheduled day, Shankaracharya Swamiji arrived at Gudivada. He was dressed in saffron robes and he was received, most respectfully, by all the people of the town. It was a grand procession to look at for the devotees. Some Brahmin families received him with usual flowers which were sprinkled all along his route. He was having the majestic elephant ride. He was holding a special stick in hand. At the top of the stick, a little piece of cloth was tied like a flag with a philosophical symbolism—such as knowledge and renunciation.

He was moving forward with all his pomp and glory, including a number of camels, palanquins, etc., following him. It was a visual feast for Krishna.

Swamiji got down from the elephant in the premises of Pantulu. The bells tied round the neck of the elephant rang loudly when he alighted from it; it was felt that God, himself, had descended to earth. Krishna was wonder-struck and he was attracted by the radiation and brilliancy of the great ascetic.

He was receiving adorations from devotees and blessing them in a dignified manner. Krishna felt that his smile was pleasant and catchy. Krishna was simply spellbound on seeing him. He also felt that a new realm of life was unveiling itself before him. The thoughts of the agitated boy were hovering totally around Swamiji.

The holy books might have described such persons like him who knew the self. He might have even attained salvation, Krishna thought. It is a great fortune to be in company of such virtuous people. The disciples of such persons serve them, and while staying with them, learn about the self, with their blessings. Krishna wished to be one such disciple and attain salvation. Could he get such a great chance again? He was totally absorbed in such thoughts all the time.

He called his grandfather aside and expressed his desire to go away with Swamiji as his disciple and to know the self, with his blessings and guidance.

Pantulu felt very happy and immediately conveyed his grandson's desire to his Holiness. The boy was beckoned to come over to the ascetic. Krishna went forward and in a humble manner bowed to his holiness. He stood aside, with bent head, but looking at Sankaracharya Swamiji now and then. Swamiji was a man of keen insight. He opened his inner eyes and gazed at him inquisitively.

He was a teenager boy of fourteen, starkingly smart and sincere, there is something unusual in his demeanour. He was entirely different than the other boys of his age, as different as chalk and cheese. If eyes were said to be windows of 'soul of man' his eyes are sparkling like a pair of bright ancient stars. They unfold the immensity of determination, reverberating echoes of his quest! His facial features emanate radiance, like golden rays of the morning sun, revealing effluences of curiosity, hankering after the fund of fundamental knowledge of the self. He is signalling like a long hidden spring, an unknown, uninhabited river to be discovered, to burst forth.

His holiness Swamiji asked Krishna to come very near to him. He put his hand on his head lovingly, and spoke to him tenderly.

'My dear child! Your covetous desire is a noble one of high magnitude. I am very much satisfied, that at this

tender age, you are aiming at a sublime achievement. This, itself, speaks volumes of your resolute choice. I am overwhelmed indeed!' By saying he stopped a while, stroking his head affectionately. Looking at him compassionately, he continued.

'You are too young to follow me in my arduous tours. I can fathom your easiness and earnestness; I will initiate a potent sacred mantra you should incessantly chant. Remember, sleep by these divine words with utmost devotion. Then your ardent desire will be fulfilled. My blessings and benedictions are always with you,' he concluded, with a high note of appreciation.

Then his holiness, Swamiji, asked Krishna to come very close to him and instructed him in the necessary initiation of 'Siva Mantra' in his right ear secretly.

Thus Swamiji anointed. A beginning had been made for his ongoing spiritual journey. The sublimated spiritual substance imprinted in his psyche, Krishna's face irradiated, an infinite joy bubbled in his heart. This would be forever a happy memory for him.

He had a feeling as if standing at the close of his tiny self in front of the vast ocean of divinity. The young man with 'initiated mantra' sailed with the stream, passionately always thinking the sacred mantra realm, soaring highly and floating in the 'spiritual empyrean' a spiritual macadamized road laid for him to walk on.

This ardent devotion veritably turned into obsession, chanting several thousands of times regularly. He spent hours and hours wrestling conscientiously. He never tired of it, never a moment of weariness. It was like an eternal continuum, full-flow. It absorbed him, merged in him and consumed him, it seemed to such a pitch that every mental faculty was involved in it.

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In 1932, along the banks of the river Krishna, special ancestral rituals were performed. Such rituals occur once every 12 years. Pantulu went to Bezawada, along with his family, to perform the rituals. He made his grandson perform the rituals for his mother. It is believed such rituals, and offerings of food to the ancestors, help the ancestors to attain higher realms and salvation. By performing the ritual, the individual clears out his indebtedness to the ancestors for giving birth. During those days, alms were given to poor people by Pantulu and Krishna lavishly. Krishna willingly and happily performed the necessary rituals. That was the first time for him to take part in mass-baths in the river Krishna.

In the later part of 1933, Krishna accompanied Pantulu to Adyar. That trip was going to be an important turn in his life.

Annie Besant had been the divine beam of light and power for the Theosophical Society. She was the central pillar of the Society. She was approaching her end. Very many spiritual practitioners, investigators of Truth, Theosophists, philosophers, politicians and others began to flow in to pay their last respects to Mother Annie Besant.

Her body was showing signs of decay and her memory was weakened. Her vision was getting blurred and, as such, she was unable to recognize even the persons whom she knew for decades. Added to this, of late, she became stone-deaf also.

At the age of seven, Krishna happened to see her when she was fluently addressing a large gathering under the great banyan tree of Adyar. But now, how is it she is like this—he questioned himself! He stood there gazing at her.

Her big head was covered with silvery hair and she was wearing white dress like an angel, descended from the heavens.

She was sitting in a chair and her expressions and behaviour were somewhat odd. Her attention seemed to be away from her surroundings, as if she was looking at some other world. She was indifferent to what was happening before her.

It is said that the glow of a lamp would be brighter before it is extinguished by itself. She appeared bright and beaming in an extraordinary way.

One by one, the visitors were approaching her and offering flowers at her feet devotionally. Some were falling prostrate before her.

Pantulu submitted a few flowers on her feet, bowed to her and stood aside. In the queue the next person was Krishna. He felt very shy and stood calmly before her. Perhaps, he was feeling that he was the only boy amidst so many elders. He was looking at the heaps of coloured flowers by his side. But it did not strike to him to pick up a few flowers and place them on her feet.

Mother Annie Besant opened her eyes widely and looked at the boy who was standing like a statue of Buddha before her. Her head had been, till then, moving this way and that like the head of a toy. Something suddenly struck in her mind and she showed the flowers to Krishna with her hand and signaled to him to put them on her feet.

Krishna shook off his shyness, went forward, and picked up flowers with both his hands and placed them on her feet. He bent his head and bowed to her with both his hands. Immediately, Annie Besant looked at Krishna steadily and said, 'After you grow up, won't you work for the Society?' Her sentences appeared to be casual as well as directive.

Till that moment, she had been sitting in the chair like a dumb person without talking to anybody. But when she uttered these sentences to him, he was confused and he did not know what to say. He stood there for a moment and moved aside. She looked at him for a moment and slipped again into Samadhi state. This incident was keenly observed by Jinaraja Dasa of Sri Lanka with astonishment. For the past few days, Annie Besant was not talking to anybody. She was not recognizing old acquaintances. Even if she recognized, she was appearing indifferent. For questions, she was giving irrelevant replies, as though she lost mental balance, and was living in some other world. Having lost mental faculty and having no earlier acquaintance with Krishna, her reaction towards him was surprising. What might be the reason behind her behaviour towards this boy?

As if her mental condition was normal, she asked, 'After you grow old, won't you work the Society?' After giving such a direction to Krishna, she turned into her usual self. What does that mean? Was this only a casual incident? Or was there any inner significance behind it?

'Who is that boy? Where has he come from? Who did he accompany? I did not see him earlier. How?' With these questions at heart, Jinaraja Dasa continued to look at the boy, without missing him from his field of vision.

After a while, he noticed Krishna by the side of Pantulu. Then he asked 'T.G.K.! Is he your grandson?'

Pantulu replied, 'Yes, Rajaji.'

'Wonderful. You did not show me your grandson earlier. He seems to be a lucky kid. Unexpectedly he enjoyed the grace of Mother Annie Besant. You, too, might have heard what she told the boy after being silent for a long time. I believe that there is some inner meaning and significance for her words. After losing mental balance, she suddenly became normal and prophesied something, I believe. Please see that the boy is educated properly. Afterwards, when the time comes, he will join our Society to work for it.' Jinaraja Dasa was thrilled over the whole incident. Pantulu was also overjoyed. He considered that it was a great day and all that happened was an unsought boon.

After a few minutes, Jinaraja Dasa asked Krishna to come with him to his own room. He was asked to sit by his side, affectionately he keenly observed the boy from top to toe.

The boy is lively with a beaming face and bright eyes. There is something extra and shy, ordinary about him. He looks like a burning coal piece covered by ash, and a diamond which was not yet cut and ground. He looked like a bud about to blossom and spread its fragrance. There is some spark in him and Annie Besant spotted it. Krishna felt shy when Jina Raja Dasa continued to look at him. His searching looks were sharp. 'Why is this man looking at me like this?' Krishna questioned himself.

Jinaraja Dasa understood the shyness of the boy and tried to make friendship with him in a gentle and a friendly manner—

'What is your name?'

'My name is Krishna Murthy.'

'What are you doing?'

'I am studying.'

'Very good. You are very bright and smart.'

Krishna answered all the subsequent questions in English, steadily and fearlessly, without any hesitation. He was enthusiastically answering the questions of an elderly man, face to face.

Jinaraja Dasa got up from his chair and picked up a book from the shelf. He signed it and presented it to Krishna saying, 'Read this book well and understand it. This is intended for special children like you. In the future, it will be very useful.' The title of the book was, *I Promise—Talks to Young Disciples*. Receiving the book from him, Krishna felt a bit elevated and proud also.

Jinaraja Dasa continued, 'My dear young boy, read well. You have a bright future and you will flourish in your life. After you grow up, you have to work for the Society like your grandfather. Please remember it. Your future life is linked up with this place of work. Whenever you happen to come here, you can freely approach me without any hesitation. Good luck! My good wishes to you.' So saying, he patted the boy on his shoulder affectionately.

Krishna felt overjoyed. He took leave of him and jumped out. There was ecstasy and thrill all over the body. He rushed to his grandfather and narrated what all had happened, in detail, and showed the book to him. His grandfather, also, was very happy at heart and opened the book. In the first page, he observed: 'To my young friend Krishna Murthy, Raja.'

Krishna asked his grandfather, 'Who is that gentleman?'

'He is from Sri Lanka, by name, Jinaraja Dasa. We call him affectionately, Raja. He is as good as a son for Mother Annie Besant. He is a scholar of many languages. In Cambridge, he graduated in philosophy. He is very intelligent as well as affectionate. He is humble at heart. Raja is very shrewd and he can anticipate the future also. He is immensely kind and he likes children. The handwriting of Raja is very neat, reflecting his purity of heart. It is your good luck to receive attention of such a great man. So kindly, do it as advised by him, you should pay attention to your education. What is the use in getting elated on one day and depressed on the next day? Therefore, you must read well with whole-hearted determination.' Pantulu thus advised him to study well.

Krishna was listening to his grandfather's advice. But his thoughts were somewhere else. He was in an imaginary world. Pantulu continued, 'Kittu, read this book well. Even if you cannot understand it, read it again and again. Finally you will understand it. Do you know what is written in it? In that book, it is explained as to how to get the eligibility for the grace of the Masters. It explains the necessary practices one should follow to become their disciples. Attentively, read it and assimilate it. Very shortly, you are going to be fortunate to have your prayers in my prayer room in the first floor. Now, everything is in your hands. Be attentive to your education and you also should receive a degree in philosophy, like Rajaji. Then, only, all will be considered as living a purposeful life.'

Krishna opened the book. It was printed in 1915. That means three years before his birth. 'Can I understand this at all?' So thinking, Krishna read the book. He was surprised to find that it was written in a simple, lucid language. He felt very happy and decided to read the book from cover to cover thoroughly, and to receive the kind grace of the Masters, 'Koot Hoomi.'

Pantulu and Krishna returned to their home in Adyar. Krishna changed his dress and began to eagerly read the book, while sitting in the verandah. While reading the book, page after page, he felt that the contents of the book were very clear to him. While relaxing in a chair, Pantulu began to think of the future of his grandson. It was already clear that the life of Krishna was linked up with the Society. Pantulu was imagining the future of Krishna, as well as the past incidents—namely the parting words of Bharatamma in her deathbed, Koumara Naadi reading, the prophesy of Annie Besant and the present words of Jinaraja Dasa.

The ends of hanging threads were spun to make a rope but one end of a thread was left away. Pantulu thought of an important person. They went to a bungalow in Adyar and they had to wait for some time to have his interview. After some time, he entered the verandah to see the visitors. Krishna was sitting in the verandah,

steadily, in Padmasana posture. That gentleman was a yoga practitioner and trainer, and very close to Mother Annie Besant. He was as important for the society. It is said that he could look into the future with his yogic vision. It was also said that he could know the series of births of any individual.

When Jiddu Krishna Murthy was playing in the beach of Adyar, he happened to see the boy and predicted that he would definitely be a great Guru or a great master. Later Jiddu Krishna Murthy became famous as a great master. He also carefully studied 21 births of Krishna Murthy and declared that the boy had innate abilities to become a master. While being trained by him, himself, Jiddu Krishna Murthy wrote the famous book, *At the Feet of the Master*.

The name of this important person was Bishop Leadbeater. He was also known as Charles Webster Leadbeater.

Krishna looked at him attentively for some time, expecting him to say something about himself. Leadbeater had a broad forehead and his looks were sharp. He had long ears and he was of medium height. His hands were long and he was slim. There was a short separation of his white hair on his head near the forehead and he had grown a moustache also. His nose was touching the moustache. He had a pointed long beard like an ear of maize corn. The face of Beater was wrinkled all over. He was wearing a long coat. A cross was hanging from his neck on to the long coat. Looking at him for a few moments, Krishna recalled a portrait of Saint Nicholas (popularly known as Saint Nicholas) of Christmas festival days.

Pantulu was anxiously looking at Leadbeater expecting that he would say anything important about his grandson. Very attentively, Pantulu continued to look at him. The time was passing silently and there was no pulsation or reaction in Leadbeater due to the presence of the boy there. He was absorbed in himself and there was perfect silence all over. After some time, he looked at Krishna casually. There was no significance in his looks. The looks did not emanate from his 'inner-eye.' There was nothing special about the boy, he might have thought.

Pantulu was very much disappointed. He expected that he would speak something or the other, definitely, about his grandson. But he did not open his mouth, nor did he, at least, look at the boy keenly.

Having waited for a long time, Krishna was very much disappointed with the silence of Leadbeater. This person was said to be a great sage with Yogic vision. Krishna was told that he would speak something special about him. But even after a long time, Leadbeater did not even say anything. He did not even look at Krishna. Did Leadbeater know anything? If not, how could he prophesy the future of Krishna?

Perhaps he did not have the divine powers, attributed to him by others. If he had them earlier, now, he might not be having them.

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Pantulu also was disappointed a little. He bowed to him and came out along with Krishna. It was not known why the expected thread, to twine into the rope, was missed.

Both of them returned to Gudivada. In spite of the advice of Jinara'ja Dasa, and constant goadings of his grandfather, Krishna could not concentrate his mind on schoolwork, class books appeared irrelevant to him. Whenever he picked up a book, his attention got diverted elsewhere.

His sole aim was realization of self. Unwillingly, he was going to school and he did not know how to become free from the trouble of schooling. He was perplexed.

What is the use of memorizing all these meaningless books? Does the classroom teaching help him in any way to realize the self? Towards the actual realization of Self, does this education contribute anything?

Whether willingly or not, Krishna was passing class after class, with minimum marks, in the second appearance. He was habituated to a daily routine of waking up early in the morning, attending to nature calls, prayers to the sum-God, accompanied by the prescribed exercises—yogasanas, pranayama—bath and meditation in the prayer-room for hours together. Krishna's body was very flexible and there was no difficulty at all for him in performing all the yogasanas. Pranayama was practiced daily with ease, without fail.

The philosophical books in the personal library of Pantulu attracted the attention of Krishna. He read more than half of them and assimilated them. Reading of books became, of late, a habit for him. All the childish

activities and gossiping with friends had gradually decreased considerably.

All these changes set in gradually, after his return from Adyar. He started to prepare notes, whenever he read a book. He could even recite the contents of the book, *I Promise—Talks to Young Disciples*, presented by Jinaraja Dasa. The periodicals received by his grandfather were also read carefully, and whenever Krishna came across anything interesting or important in them, he used to cut and preserve them in his album. Steadily Krishna improved his standard in English and his grip on the language became firm. His confidence to speak in English, fluently, also increased.

Pantulu continued to be worried about his grandson. Many people expressed that Krishna had extraordinary mental abilities, while he continued to cut sorry figure in the school. How to assess him? Keeping all the other things aside, if his behaviour was considered, he was not well-behaved—he had no regard, whatsoever, for the elders. He always did whatever he thought fit. If he opened his mouth, his talk was dry, point-blank, and even irritating often. The concept of thankfulness had no place in his heart. He did not listen to any advice. He would always vehemently argue. The days of checking him by threats elapsed already. How to put him on the normal track and how to get along—these were the burning problems for Pantulu.

Moreover, Krishna would not keep quiet. He would unhesitatingly and rudely interfere with everything. Regarding money, he had been always lavish in his expenditure, totally unmindful of the resources. There was no agreement between his age and his thoughts. In words and deeds, Krishna would appear like an elderly person, though chronologically a young boy.

Pantulu continued to be worried about his future more. It is not understandable how he grows and ascends to supreme spiritual heights. His present conduct would not suit his anticipated bright future. With contradictions and inconsistent behaviour in daily life, would he face, finally, wreckage and become a good-for-nothing fellow? What was scribbled on his forehead would invariably happen. None can escape from the destiny. In spite of knowing all this, it continued to be difficult to reconcile it to destiny. Everything is governed by Divine Will.

Somehow, Krishna completed his middle school education at Gudivada. He was again admitted in the high school at Machilipatnam, and he was put up with his aunt, Saraswatamma. He was whole-heartedly welcomed back by one and all. Saraswatamma expressed her happiness for his return to her care. 'Krishna! I am very happy to have you with us. If you are not here it is a very conspicuous absence. I don't know why!'

Krishna met some of his old friends. He made friends with some new students in no time. He was liked by all of them and he started to spend money freely again at Machilipatnam. If he happened to know about any friend who could not pay the school fees, for want of money, Krishna was always ready to help. If anybody asked him for money, he was ready to give—as a loan also—knowing that the borrower would not repay it. Krishna was always a giver—never a borrower.

He was always clean and tidy. Whatever he knew, he would explain to others, analytically, and his listeners were spellbound. Sometimes there were discussions and arguments among themselves—Krishna's argument was always, finally upheld. He would never accept the supremacy of anybody; he would hardly accept a defeat.

The friends of Krishna nicknamed him 'Bookworm.' He was always having some book or the other in hand. Very few books, untouched by Krishna, remained in the school library. 'While all of us consider a book as an ornament for the hand, you seem to consider it as the basis for your entire world itself. You are always, throughout the day, immersed in book reading,' friends used to comment, and mock at his reading habit.

Tummalapalli Kameswara Rao was a close friend of Krishna. One day, Kameswara Rao and other friends, went to meet their beloved teacher, Vennakota Narasimha Rao. While talking to him casually, one of them made a reference to Krishna and his library habit. 'Sir, whenever we mention the title of a book, Krishna will say, 'Oh, that book! I read it already.' Could it be true? Or, after merely going through it, there, superficially for a while, is he saying like that?'

The teacher smiled, 'If he comes to know of your remark... beware. He will pounce upon you!' After a little pause he added, 'I think we are underestimating him. He has an extraordinary determination. He had a great quest for knowledge. He won't leave out anything. I tested him also once. Moreover, he has the ability to make indepth studies of, even difficult books. Maybe it is his natural ability, even from childhood. He has a very great urge to be always at the top—always ahead of all others. Krishna has an extraordinary thirst for knowledge.'

Another friend of Krishna added, 'Sir, it is difficult to argue with him. If we all say, 'Yes,' he says, 'No.' If we say, 'No,' he immediately says 'Yes,' putting forth all his stubborn arguments.'

'Yes, you are right. That is the whole trouble with him. Obstinacy is his uniqueness. He does not easily accept the excellence of anyone. But one thing we have to appreciate, his comprehensive power is superb, and his power of memory is extremely great. None can excel him in these characteristics. He will definitely shine at the top of any field of his choice, after he grows up,' said the teacher of Krishna.

With purity of mind, Krishna used to pray, daily, in a systemic way, in a traditional manner, in the morning, at midday and again, in the evening, he was regularly praying to the Goddess Sandhya, chanting the sacred Gayatri Mantra. He understood the inner meaning of the great mantra and he was concentrating his mind on it while chanting it. His respiration was synchronized, rhythmically, with the chantings.

At bedtime, Krishna was remembering the Siva mantra, initiated to him by the head of the Siva Ganga Monastery, Sankaracharya Swami. He was reflecting upon it, while chanting it. It is believed that the divine energy, associated with the mantra would spread all over the body, resulting in realization of Lord Siva.

Krishna was performing all the prayers and chanting the Mantras ardently, with utmost devotion, and with an immense faith that they all would yield their respective fruits, as mentioned in the holy book. All his relatives and others were wondering at his devotion, steadfastness and sincerity.

By the time Krishna would emerge from his prayer room, after his prayers and meditation, he was beaming with radiance. He was considered as a child genius and Dhruva's incarnation.

Moreover, Krishna was following regulations and principles, regarding his food, excluding chillies, salt, garlic, and spices. His childish temptation for different tastes faded totally. His saintly food would help him to meditate more seriously to achieve his sole aim of life, salvation.

Krishna stopped using chapels for his feet, even in hot sun, on a stony road as well as a muddy road. The looking-glass ceased to appear before him. He never used perfumes; he started to sleep on an ordinary mat. He was fasting once in a fortnight on Ekadasi day, as per lunar calendar; Siva Ratri was another important fasting day every year.

The mind of Krishna ceased to be tempted by worldly things. With purity of heart, he was trying to conquer six internal enemies for a spiritual personality.

In Sanskrit they are called kama (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (covetousness), mada (egotism), moha (delusion), and masthrya (fighting).

He was transforming, fit to proceed, and, perhaps, had a realization of the 'gey' and absolute selflessness. With purity of heart, Krishna overpowered the lustful thoughts and simultaneously he maintained chastity of his language; he never uttered foul and indecent language. Needless to say, he abhorred obscene literature. Whenever he happened to come across new ladies, he would move aside, humbly bend down his head, keeping his heart clean always, and tidy.

Thus, the daily routine of Krishna was governed by rigid principles, regulations, and purity, with firm determination at heart, and rock-like self-confidence. Krishna continued his prayers and meditation, in a traditional manner, to achieve his sublime end. Observing all his austerities and devotion closely, all his kith and kin, as well as others, used to comment, 'Probably he was a great saint in his previous birth. There might be some lapse on this part then, and consequently, he is now born as Krishna, to complete the balance of his yoga.'

Pantulu was wonderstruck at the most rigid, rough and tough routine and the utmost sanctity of Krishna's life. None else can ever excel him. 'Unparalleled,' thought Pantulu. He continued his meditation keeping his thought, word and deed under full agreement with one another. With pure heart, and deep concentration of mind, he continued his meditation, and consequently, his thought process underwent myriad changes.

In between, Krishna visited Madras several times to be in the cherished company of Jina Raja Dasara. Krishna used to raised many questions for which Raja patiently clarified his doubts to his utmost satisfaction. A close rapport ensued between them. Raja introduced his young buddy to some important Theosophists, including George Arundale.

It seems, Raja significantly opined, 'This bud has a great future for blossoming. He has a high potential to be nurtured; take my word for it.'

One day Krishna had a strong desire to see Raja; he rushed immediately to Adyar. Raja was totally free at that moment and he was waiting for his impending arrival. He observed a sea of change in the demeanor, expressions and radiance of Krishna. The ash that had been covering the coal, hitherto, was being blown off. The diamond was getting ready for refinement. There was a remarkable process in the boy. Raja's hunch was correct. In fact, he did not expect that Krishna would be fortunate to receive the grace of the master in such a short time. That is to say the master gave him the green light.

After a few days, Raja was pleased to inform Krishna, 'Krishna, the master has showered his grace on you. Now you are permitted to enter the 'Esoteric Section.'" He felt more enthusiastic, energetic and vibrant thereafter. Krishna was transformed as Krishna (the image of lord Krishna), he had the eligibility to enter the prayer room of his grandfather, in the first floor, at Gudiwada.

He remembered the great Master Koot Hoomi, at the heart for a moment and he was thrilled.

Krishna returned home from Madras. He narrated to his grandfather, in detail, about his trip to Adyar. Pantulu was surprised at the fulfillment of his grandson's wish in such a short time; it was indeed a very pleasant surprise for him.

After having a cold bath, Krishna Murthy wore the clothes intended for prayer time, opened the prayer room of his grandfather and entered it. As soon as he entered it, he experienced a thrill and felt elevated. He observed carefully all the photographs of the great persons, sitting in Padmasana Posture, one after the other.

The hair of Jesus was spread on his shoulders; Mother Annie Besant and Master Koot Hoomi were sitting on the skin of tiger. Master Mourya and Master Jwalakul were one beside the other. On another side, Krishna Murthy observed Madam Blavatsky and Col. Alcot.

After glancing at all the photographs, his attention again turned to Master Koot Hoomi. He started to meditate on him. All the hair on his body stood like bristles; he was losing his external consciousness. Perhaps he might have sort of a special status in the future.

Krishna realized that appropriate changes, gradually, were taking place in him, depending upon his eligibility and fitness. That means that he almost succeeded in having all the virtues he wished to have, in his 'Sadhana.' Stimulated by his practice, he continued his meditation, keeping his thought, word and deed under full agreement with one another. With pure heart and deep concentration of mind he continued his meditation, and, consequently, his thought process underwent myriad changes.

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Two days after Krishna returned from Machilipatnam, he went out to meet his friends. He spent some time with them happily and all of them entered their favourite hotel of Nimmagadda Ramayya. All his friends enjoyed eating the wonderful green gram cake. But he did not. His friends persuaded him to taste at least a piece of it. He, however, declined it politely. 'It is a part of my practice. I shall feel that I have shared it with you.' After meeting with the bill, Krishna took leave of his friends and returned home.

The house was crowded with neighbours, relatives and many others. What was the matter? Some great saintly Swami was visiting them. People were waiting for his arrival.

It was said that the said Swami had different yogic powers. It was specifically said that he would create golden coins from air! They were waiting to see the great miracle. The visitors were narrating his power-related stories among themselves, as they liked.

Krishna could not believe the talk. 'Creation of gold coins from air and a vacuum— simply impossible. Some sort of cheating is being done. Some trick is played—are there such powers really?' Krishna had his own doubts.

'If he has real powers to create gold coins from a vacuum, why is he roaming about from place to place? With his own creations he could as well happily live in a luxurious way! It is mere magic. If he does not actually

possess the coin, under any circumstances he cannot create it. The material he has been very carefully hiding is used in a ticklish way to deceive the public. He is exploiting them, I shall observe his so-called powers today and expose his legerdemain.' So thinking within himself, Krishna Murthy waited for the Swami.

Within a few minutes, the Swami came along with the train of followers. Pantulu cordially received him to the dais. He looked round at the public and he was pleased. The people bowed to him and some of them prostrated before him.

Krishna observed the Swami keenly. He was wearing a long coat, had a long beard and his looks were unsteady. The tip of his nose resembled the beak of an eagle. A Rudraksha chain was hanging round his neck, and he had a number of rings for his fingers. He looked like an exorcist. There was no radiance at all. However, he was having assumed dignity. He could not attract Krishna in any way. He was sure that he was a mere master magician.

After some time, Krishna approached him and questioned him in a seemingly submissive and humble tone, 'Swamiji! Do you create gold coins out of a vacuum?'

'Yes, Child!'

'How, Swamiji?'

'By power of penance, whatever we merely wish, we can create. We have such supernatural power,' the Swami said, looking at the boy from a corner of his eye.

'Can you create a pumpkin, Swamiji ,the boy was about to ask, when Pantulu intervened.

'Later you can talk to him—first pay your respects to him and have his blessings,' hoping that his blessings may be beneficial to his grandson.

Krishna ignored his grandfather's advice and continued, 'Swamji, I have a small desire... may I ask it?'

'Oh, certainly,' assured the Swami.

'You create gold coins from air—right? But one condition—on the coin, the year 1932 should appear. When you create such a coin that I wish to see, I'll feel exalted to heavenly heights,' prayed Krishna, bending before the Swami, with folded hands.

The Swami felt choked at his throat and irked. Concealing his uneasiness, he asked angrily, 'Are you attempting to test ourselves?' frowning at him. A disciple of the Swami added, 'What an audacity!'

All others also commented that the little fellow was questioning that great Swamiji. Pantulu angrily asked his grandson 'What are these silly questions? Are you so great as to test Swamiji? First, apologise to him!' Krishna did not care for his words.

Pantulu got irritated with his indifference and again asked Krishna to apologize. 'Definitely I will—if he does what I wanted. I'll prostrate before him,' replied the boy.

All the disciples of the Swami were also angry. Some people tried their best to bring Krishna round. But he did not yield. He turned round and asked, 'If the Swamiji is so powerful, let him comply with my wish! Then I will apologize, before all of you.'

The audience was murmuring, 'Is it fair to invite the Swamiji and insult him like this?' Some people took Krishna Murthy aside.

Pantulu pleaded, 'The boy talked in a childish manner. Kindly bear with us, Swamiji!' The Swami in his usual way, threw his right hand into air and opened his closed fist. Seeing a gold coin in it, the surprised audience gave an applause in admiration. After an hour, everybody left the place. Pantulu came in and shouted at Krishna, 'Are you mad? I felt ashamed of your talk.'

Durgamma advised Pantulu not to get upset 'Don't we know our grandson too well? Please take it easy.' Pantulu cooled down gradually. Turning to Krishna she remarked, 'Ramudu, you have fooled your grandfather

before all of them. He feels beheaded for insulting an invitee. Is it not unbecoming of you?'

'Granny! He is a cheat. The jugglers amuse the audience in a better way. They go a begging and earn their living. Wearing saffron dress, this person is cheating innocent people, saying that he has powers and this and that. I never believe them!' replied Krishna.

'Anyway, your behaviour is not at all proper,' she said.

'My behaviour is always like this only. It will not change. I'll not change my behaviour to please another.' He was emphatic in his reply.

It is an inborn trait of Krishna to doubt everything, examine it critically and analytically to know the truth, finally.

Why do people cheat the public in the name of God? Why are they not honest? Why don't the folks understand the truth?

Krishna returned to Machilipatnam. After one week, one person came running to Pantulu with news. 'Oh that day, we found fault with your innocent grandson... Actually, that Swami was a notorious cheat. At Kankipadu, the fact was discovered. Within the right arm of his long coat, he was having a pouch secretly to keep the gold coins. By moving his hand skillfully he was releasing and dropping a coin. One day, at Kankipadu, the pouch leaked out all the coins, to the surprise of the audience. They rained blows on him and chased him out of the village.'

Pantulu could not believe it. He wondered how Krishna doubted the genuineness of the Swami? How could he sense that the Swami was a cheat?

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Krishna continued to study the different persons that he was coming across daily. Their action and words were not agreeing with one another. Are there no honest people at all? Double-tongued persons are seen all around. Krishna was getting perplexed observing these inconsistencies. Something is radically wrong with the people in the society, when cheats continue to cheat, and people continue to be cheated.

He had a natural discretionary power. It was getting more and more explicit. From birth to death, the individual's nature continues to be one and the same. The mind is fickle. From time to time, at every moment, it changes. Opinions, thus, change constantly. But human nature does not change.

Principles, honesty, moral value, righteousness, ideals, etc., are well laid in books and scriptures. Reading of all these things is different from their assimilation and implementation in daily life. Krishna Murthy assimilated them right from childhood days. They were part and parcel of his daily life that molded his behaviour in particular.

Krishna was experiencing internal conflicts, generating a series of doubts. If there was anybody who he could share them with him, it would be very nice. Were there no such reliable persons? Time rolled by.

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The annual ceremony of Krishna's mother, Bharatamma, was to be performed on that day. In that connection, two of the family's specially trained chaplains were to come, to conduct the annual ceremony.

The Brahmins assigned for this ceremony were considered to be very pious, and strict followers of tradition, and were above reproach. They should not eat anything—not even drink water—before the ceremony of offering of food, till it was over. This principle should be rigidly adhered to. Any violation of this code of conduct is reprehensible, which leads to evil effects.

On that day, early in the morning, Krishna was returning home from the market. On his way, he saw a friend beside the hotel. Krishna, while talking to his friend, glanced inside the hotel casually.

The two Brahmin chaplains who were assigned the duty to conduct annual ceremonies were in the hotel. Krishna wondered, 'What are they doing here? They are supposed to be in my house soon.'

He was shocked! What a profanation! Utter traditional turpitude! The two chaplains are eating hurriedly, like vultures of a dead carrion. They gobbled the food in no time. Their gluttons attitude was abominable.

They left the hotel without noticing Krishna. He became furious; as he regards traditions are an ideal essence to the religion. Krishna could tolerate anything, but not the violation of the rules laid down by scriptures. It is inviolable.

He thought to himself, 'These too 'carrion crows' would now turn up at my house pretending to be fasting, to play their role to propitiate. Thus, they would pollute the sacred ceremony—deliberately. Such persons not only cheat themselves, but others, too, to make their living.'

He was seething with anger like a steaming cauldron. In jet speed he reached his house and described the two ravenous eaters very emotionally, expecting a wild reaction from his grandfather.

To his utter dismay and despair, no trace of the expected reaction came from his grandfather, as he was avidly longing for. His grandfather was sitting pretty, and listened to him very nonchalantly. He kept quiet; deafening silence reigned in the room. Krishna could not tolerate silence of any situation. For him silence is despicable. He believes in order to hide something, people observe silence; to escape answers, people use silence; to avoid unpleasant things, people depend on silence.

He was deeply disappointed, dejected and dispirited, for the silence of his grandfather, during his complaint about the dereliction of duty. It was unbearable. He plunged into vehement arguments, and heated words were exchanged.

'Why you are so furious like a woven serpent? Is it necessary, all this hubbub? If somebody committed something, shouldn't you find fault with tradition? Tradition can withstand such violations. It cannot be invalid. It is eternal. Those people who violated principles and deviated from the righteous path would reap consequences. They go to the lowest ladder of the inferno. We should not react violently and give unnecessary weightage for them, and take things seriously to the heart! Such things do happen,' said his grandfather in a normal tone.

Krishna was taken aback. He was bewildered, befuddled; he could not regain his composure for a while.

He thought to himself 'Is this the same grandfather who had been upholding tradition all these years? Is he the same person considered to be the epitome of traditional values and scruples? Is he the same personality whom I lionized since my childhood—treating as my hero and Demi God?'

Dejection large on his pale face, with a disdained look he said, 'Holy principles of religion and customs are blatantly violated on the high note. Should these be ignored? Should we expiate the sins they committed? That is to say that there is nothing wrong if the religious principles are not observed according to the scriptures. Well! I am fully sorry to say that you are deceiving yourself, glaringly, full of contradictions and wavering under the garb of tradition.' Krishna argued fearlessly.

Again both were locked in arguments. The tempers were raised. Pantulu did not like the arguments. In his view it was a peccadillo. Why go on with arguments? He was vexed with Krishna and said, 'It is useless to prolong arguments over a trivial and trifle matter.' He pronounced irritatingly, 'No further arguments please. Leave me alone.'

Many thoughts were fermented in Krishna's mind. He inhaled a deep breath and said, 'So you have no reverence for old tradition? Right! If it were so! Look here Grandpa! I, too, can do one such thing to tamper with and trample the so-called, sacred traditions, making them topsy turvy.' So saying, without batting an eyelid, with raging anger, he removed the sacred 'Yagnopaveetham' thread that he had hanging across his chest on his left shoulder, in a split second, and threw it at the feet of his grandfather, thereby tampering with it.

'Why should I carry it, deceiving deliberately, all the time against hollow morals, putrid principles, effluvium ethics and tainted rituals? What for? It is beyond me. I cannot and would not compromise,' he said, thundering, to the astonishment of his grandfather and grandmother.

Krishna questioned the Talmud of ancient Hindu traditions and their genuineness. Pantulu was stunned. 'My God! What a sinful offence! The sacred 'Yagnopaveetham' off in no time, like a country twine fiber?' Words

gushed from his mouth. 'Since somebody violated something, you attack tradition and throw away Yagnopaveetham— discarding and disregarding Brahminhood custom. It is blasphemous beyond remedy. It is a sacrilege. Don't you think what you have done is mean?' said Pantulu.

'The true and pure Brahminism, which does not condemn self-deception, mortgages itself to the false values, hushes up sanctity and poses a mere facade? I think it would be a graver sin than anything else,' said Krishna.

He continued, 'I forgo that dead Brahmanism—come what may,' roaring like a hunted lion, in its own den, defending himself at any cost.

Pantulu was challenged by his grandson and said after a while 'A man trained to be a savant, but in the end, he turned out to be a mad one, as in your case now.'

Without any pause Krishna uttered, 'Yes! Not yet completely. If I would live here violating all principals, hoodwinking myself, I surely would turn mad. I shall have my own way of thinking and living. Only I could get salvation after relinquishing this dichotomy, i.e., society.' He stopped a while and said firmly, 'Well! I need money. Destiny might have chalked out my road map. I can search it alone with total dedication, purity of heart and assiduous application. I wish to get out of this place. I want money,' he demanded strongly.

Pantulu benumbed. He could not digest or adjust to, the retorts hurled by his grandson like pinpointed arrows. He wondered how that boy had turned into an intransigent? All the plans are designed and mapped out towards his upliftment, an ongoing tryst of journey. Yet he was wanting to go away in a different direction, discarding, dislodging, dismantling the prescribed righteous path? Where could he go? How can a 'young crow' know the pellet blow?

'You little rebel! You are still an infant, babe in the woods. I would not bestow to you, even a single pie. According to law, you should not possess any money. Do you know?' Pantulu said, referring to a law point, gazing at his grandson, intently.

Krishna, unremorseful, unyielding and unmindful, thought for while, deeply, and looking askance said, 'Well! I am not begging for your money. I need no charity. I am constrained to demand for my mother's money from you. What have you done with it? I have every right to demand that money. No law can deprive me.' He stopped a while and then continued, 'Kindly calculate it and throw it on my face. I shall receive it as a great propitiation,' demanding, impatiently.

Pantulu was agape! Once again he was nonplused! His eyebrows raised and his eyes protruded like dried cotton flowers. He looked at him, up and down, as if measuring his grandson's stature.

'Oh! I see! You are demanding for your dear mother's money. Great! My dear boy! Wonderful! Fantastic!' he said, laughing sarcastically.

'Yes! Today I have decided. I want a final settlement. There is no question of reconciling double-tongued cheats of tradition,' he said vehemently. After a pause he continued.

'Under any circumstance, I would never mortgage myself by belittling myself. Self-esteem is more than anything for me. I live an honest life, practicing meditation. I will show my mettle, fortitude and cussed grittiness what I am up to,' he stopped. After inhaling a deep breath he said, 'Kindly give me my money and send me away. The world is wide-open. I can find a suitable place, of my choice, untouched by dishonesty and impurities,' demandingly.

Pantulu stared, unblinking, at his grandson's audacity. 'A mere teenager rebelled against me?' His eyebrows knotted. 'Such a temper or temerity?' His demeanour changed.

'If you are so adamant, obstinate, then—' he stopped, hesitatingly, to utter unpleasant words.

'Then?' Krishna demanded, thunderingly, tossing his head up and down for the answer.

Pantulu said rapidly, 'Then... then I disown you as my grandson. I renounce my cozy protection. I withdraw my umbrella from over your head. Beware,' he threatened, losing his cool temper on a high pitch tone, 'You can do whatever you want. The decision is purely yours.'

Silence! Frozen silence! Agonizing silence pervaded in the deafening room. The accelerated beating of his heart could he heard. In that silence, the words uttered by Pantulu permeated swirlingly. The sound of the words still lingering, imponderable, yet tactile, as if a sound made in the deep valley repeated pale echoes before it fades out.

Krishna did not expect such strong warning from his grandfather. He was startled, as if he was perched precariously on the edge of an abyss for a moment. His face became pale like a lizard. He seemed lost in the turbid thoughts, but soon recovered and turned ferocious with a seething anger, like a tortured, tormented, vicious cobra.

The lava under the volcano was getting ready to burst out—tremors as well as fuming lava all around. The flames reddened his cheeks, his eyes contracted and his lips twisted. With eyebrows raised, his whole countenance transformed into a fireball. Instantly he became intransigent.

As if he opened his third eye he said thunderingly, 'Are you considering me as a piece of your personal property, such as a turban, black coat or book on the shelf? No never—ever! I have my own impeccable individuality. I have my own unsurpassed self-respect, much more than every one of you. My self-esteem can never be mortgaged for your money or your apparent affection,' he stopped a while, gasping violently, inhaling a deep breath to gain strength of his lungs; and he spewed fire, like the incinerator, Lord Siva.

'Under no circumstance would I ever surrender at all, nor bow my head before anybody. I was not longing for your mercy and compassion at any given moment.' He stopped abruptly, exhaling a heavy breath.

Pantulu was hearing attentively again. Krishna continued after a deep breath, with a high voice, laughing derisively, 'Well! Have I ever been your person at all? No. Never. So before you, I am abandoning you. Right now at this moment. I am not a chameleon person to change colours for my benefits.' He stopped suddenly, hissing at his grandfather like a wounded cobra.

Was it a unique individuality, a rare kind of a boy? Or was it the insurgent arrogance of an immature teenager?

Pantulu was aghast! Bewildered! Krishna hit back at a vulnerable point, a most sensitive area, like a hunter's accurate aim. Pantulu, with stunning looks, gazed his grandson, his widely opened mouth wore a look of disbelief. His eye raised and several deep wrinkles formed on his forehead. He was unable to utter anything, as if he had lost his speech faculty. He could not gauge his grandson—how to perceive him? The boy is going astray. Why did he become a twisted head knot which seemed to be hard to bring back to us original shape? What prompted him? Who instigated him? What is the root cause for this intractable behaviour? Where does this lead to? All those were unanswered questions for Pantulu.

But Pantulu was not aware, or could he even visualize—by any remote chance—that he was the 'main culprit' for this rebellious attitude!

Pantulu recovered himself after a while. 'Whatever you say, I would not give you even a single pie. You can do as you like. Nothing more to add to it. That is all,' he replied impatiently, with a tone of finality.

When a tightly closed vessel containing water is boiled, the steam is generated. The pressure of steam increases gradually along, and at certain point, unable to withstand the pressure, the vessel explodes. It is not the fault of the steam. It is the person who continues to heat the vessel who is responsible. The steam has no outlet to escape, consequently, the vessel has to give way. This is the nature of action and reaction.

Similarly, Krishna had been fretting and fuming for a long time—for years together—due to different circumstances and conditions prevailing around him. The outburst was a consequence of long-accumulated turmoil and suppression.

Pantulu left the room to attend to formalities of the day's function. He saw the two Brahmin chaplains and looked at them grimly, but he did not say anything. He was busy supervising things.

Durgamma was there all the time witnessing the tussle between her husband and grandson. She was actually agitated by the ongoing drama. She was silently sobbing.

Krishna left the hall and came to his room. Durgamma followed him and sat on the floor wiping her tears several times. She watched him for a while. He sat on the chair. His whole body became crumpled like a coiled

cobra in its hiding place; any disturbance would be fatal.

She said in an emotionally choked voice, 'Ramudu, is this the way in which you are expected to talk to an elderly person like your grandfather? Is it proper to report in a defiant way? Is it not unbecoming of you? Don't you have any reverence? You have crossed all limits and barriers, differences between old and young. How sad!' She stopped a while to take a deep breath and continued, 'To keep our dear daughter's promise, we brought you up with affection and love. You became our epicenter. We sustained all hardships, and sacrificed many things for your cozy comforts. Your grandfather toiled hard to earn more money. We drained out all our energies to bring you up.' Krishna remained totally silent, like the calm before the storm.

She continued in a pitiable voice of supplication, 'We lived for you and loved you. Don't you have an iota of pity? Have you no spark of sympathy? You have reduced us into a heap of rubbish? You are thrashing us, day in and day out, when we are thirsting for you, in spite of everything.' She stopped abruptly and pondered a while.

'Would the same grandson flout his grandfather? Or has a devil taken possession of him? This little brat... 'The golden egg of his mother' (Telugu Proverb) has retorted to his grandfather, word for word, without any hesitation, instantly, like a seasoned lawyer—what transformation?'

Krishna was already in mental turmoil, in a transition state, striding up and down, emotionally; his grandmother's words added insult to injury, like chilly powder sprinkled on a festering wound. He opened his eyes and looked at his grandmother peevishly and said, 'Don't pour oil on the already smouldering situation and turn it into conflagration. You are interfering in my personal affairs. Don't get involved.'

Durgamma was aghast! No repentance! No remorse! His foolish anger did not subside yet? All of a sudden she got wild, lifting her hands, reeking violently, in a helpless manner.

'Oh my God! How you heap humiliating words—even now! Oh, Lord! We thought you were a motherless child. We have reared you most tenderly, treating you as the light of our eyes, day in and day out. We anointed you odorous unguents of pure love, like Lord child Krishna's mother, Yasodhamma. Is this the proper way you are expected to reciprocate our mighty deed? It is wisely said that interest derived is more precious than the principal amount. As such, though we have lost our daughter, in your presence, only, we could visualize our demised daughter. We tolerated all of your silly pranks, even the squandemia, as you liked. We do not want hurt, tender feelings,' she stopped for few seconds, inhaling a deep breath and then said, 'yet, what a bitter lesson we had to learn from you now.' So lamented Durgamma in a choked voice.

Krishna didn't care for such words and reinforced his arguments. 'You have been repeating, umpteen times, brought you up, brought you up—for whose sake did you bring me up? It was for your selfish motive and it is purely self-centered. Do not hide this point and declare that you have done a great, grandiose, mighty deed in bringing me up.'

After a while, he continued, 'Within fifteen days or less, after my mother's death, your wonderful so-called son-in-law married again and went in his own way. He deserted and orphaned me. Is it not a fact? There is no other alternative left for you except to bring me up? Is it an epic gesture?' He took a long breath and continued in a rueful manner, 'Why did you bring me up? Who forced you? For your dear daughter's satisfaction, you looked after me! If you did not care for me at all, what would have happened? Somebody else would have taken care of me. If none brought me up, my history would have ended then. No regrets? You are shouting that you are the only one who did this noble job in this world. After all, what is the greatness in your deed? There are scores of destitute people in the world. I, too, would have been one of them, that is all,' he concluded sardonically.

Durgamma was shocked and petrified. 'What is wrong with you Ramudu today? Are you under the influence of any evil spirit? Is it not our bounden duty and responsibility to bring you up? Today, as if you have grown long horns over your head, you are hurting us deliberately, beyond norms, your unrequited behavior is most distressing. You utter all these poignant words and eventually demand your share of money. Can't we say anything in this matter? Should you not respect our opinion?' She stopped and could not say anything; silently she started weeping. Her heart was heavy and suppressed tears were rolling down. With a quivering voice and convulsive tone she added, 'Ramudu! Your heart is made of stone and very cruel. You are like an ungrateful child kicking the mother's breast after suckling. You are inhuman, with no trace of kindness. All this is our misfortune and ill-luck.' Having thus spoken, she sobbed silently.

Krishna lost his temper beyond control and thundered like Lord Rudra, 'Yes, you are perfectly right! I am cruel

and wicked. I am Nararupa Rakshasa (a demon in the garb of man)—diabolic. I am ruthless to the boot. So what? It is a bitter fact, an undigestible truth. I was made out as such. I would not pretend to be a man of fine behavior by self-deception. I can be anything but a hypocrite!' He stopped a while and added pungently, 'I do not care what others would say. I never hide my feelings. I call a spade a spade—no cringing tactics. I do not pose as a man of paragon good qualities, as society demands. Two hoots to these putrid rules and regulations, affections, afflictions and attachments. No power on earth could change my nature— come what may,' he shouted before leaving the home. He did not attend his mother's ceremony.

The decision to discard the Yagnopaveetham was irrevocable. The guardians of the traditions, rituals and sacraments are, with their faith, kept unfaithfully true. The moribund traditions creates their own morbid state. The iron bond which had been forged between Krishna and traditions, since childhood, link by link, bend by bend, had been shattered into smithereens. The albatross of tradition sitting around his neck was guillotined.

Krishna completed 14 years of age. Every seven years regularly, a transformation had taken place in his life. This was the second such change.

In the second 'septennial cycle', who knows with what sequence of future events had been fixed by destiny for him?

links



# The Seed Beneath the Volcano

Vol. I, K. Rajasekhara Reddi

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## The Peroration of Spiritual Peregrination

The number seven has played a pivotal role in the life of U.G. ever since he was born, and reveals, perhaps, the ordained plan of his destiny. During the week following the 'explosion', he noticed some fundamental changes in the functioning of his senses. The stage was set for seven baffling events.

On the first day, U.G. noticed that his skin was so soft that it felt like silk and also had a peculiar kind of glow, a golden glow. He was shaving and each time he ran the razor down his face, it slipped. He changed blades but it was no use. He touched his face—his sense of touch was different. He did not attach any significance to all this. He merely observed.

On the second day, he became aware for the first time that his mind was in a 'declutched state'. He was upstairs in the kitchen and Valentine had prepared some tomato soup. He looked at it and did not know what it was. She told him it was tomato soup. He tasted it and then he recognized it. 'That is how tomato soup tastes.' He swallowed the soup and he was back to the odd frame of mind, rather it was a frame of 'no mind'. He asked Valentine again, 'What is that?' Again she said, 'It is tomato soup.' Again U.G. tasted it. Again he swallowed and forgot what it was. He played with it for some time. It was such a funny business, this 'declutched state'.

On the third day, some friends of U.G.'s invited themselves over for dinner. He agreed to cook for them. But somehow he could not smell or taste properly. He became gradually aware that these two senses has been transformed. Every time some odor entered his nostrils, it irritated his olfactory center, in just about the same way, whether it came from an expensive scent or from cow dung, it was the same irritation. And then, every

time he tasted something, he tasted the dominant ingredient only; the taste of the other ingredients came slowly, later. From that moment on, perfume made no sense to him and spicy food had no appeal for him. He could taste only the dominant spicy chili or whatever it was.

On the fourth day, something happened to his eyes. U.G. and his friends were at the Rialto restaurant in Gstaad. Here U.G. became aware of a tremendous sort of 'vistavision', like a concave mirror.

Things were coming towards him, were moving into him, as it were. And things going away from him seemed to move out from inside of him. It was such a puzzle to him, as if his eyes were a gigantic camera, changing focus without his doing anything.

Similarly, U.G. was able to see everything very clearly. He could see minute particles, also, with total clarity, he could even count the hairs on the heads of the people in the room.

When U.G. returned from the restaurant, he looked in the mirror to find that there was something odd about his eyes—they were fixed. He kept looking at the mirror for a long time and observed that his eyelids were not blinking. For almost forty-five minutes, he stared into the mirror—still no blinking of the eyes. Instinctive blinking was over for him and it still is. [In Hindu classical literature, the *devtas* (celestial beings) are called *anime-shulu*: to whom the eyes do not wink.]

Due to some other reason, from the corners of his eyes, drops of tears were secreted. In the Hindu classical literature they are called *adhyatmika baashapa kanaalu*: spiritual or divine tears.

On the fifth day, U.G. noticed a change in his hearing. When he heard the barking of a dog, the barking seemed to originate inside him. All sounds seemed to come from within him and not from outside. They still do. The five senses changed in five days.

On the sixth day, U.G. was lying down on a sofa. Valentine was in the kitchen. And suddenly, his body disappeared. There was 'no body' there. He looked at his hand, 'Is this my hand?' There was no actual question that the whole situation was somewhat like that. So he touched his body: nothing. He did not feel that there was anything except the touch, the point of contact. Then he called Valentine and asked, 'Do you see my body on this sofa?' She touched it and said, 'This is your body.' And yet that assurance did not give him any comfort or satisfaction. He said to himself, 'What is this funny business? My body is missing.' His body had gone away and it has never come back.

On the seventh day, U.G. was lying on the same sofa, relaxing, enjoying the 'declutched state'. Valentine would come in and he would recognize her as Valentine. She would go out of the room, then, finish, blank, 'no' Valentine. He would think, 'What is this?' He cannot even imagine what Valentine looks like.

He would listen to the sounds coming from the kitchen and ask himself, 'What are those sounds coming from inside of me?' But he could not relate to them. He had discovered that all his senses were without a coordinating mechanism inside himself, the coordinator was missing. Then, he felt something happening inside of him, the life energy drawing to a focal point from different parts of his body. He said to himself, 'Now you have come to the end of your life. You are going to die.' Then he called Valentine and said, I am going to die, Valentine, and you will have to do something with the body. Hand it over to the doctors; maybe they will use it. I don't believe in burning or burial. In your own interest you have to dispose of this body. One day it will stink. So, why not give it away?

Valentine replied, 'U.G. you are a foreigner. The Swiss government won't take your body. Forget about it.'

The dreadful movement of U.G.'s life force came to a focal point. Valentine's bed was empty. He moved over and stretched out, getting ready to die.

The person who does not fear anything in the world, trembles when death touches him. He tries to save himself by a number of ways. The desire or will to survive persists strongly. But U.G. did not feel any such fear. He took the issue of death very casually.

Valentine ignored what was going on. She left. But before she left she said, 'One day you say this thing has changed, another day you say that thing has changed and a third day you say something else has happened. What is all this U.G.? And now you say you are going to die. You are not going to die. You are all right, hale and healthy.'

In U.G., then a point arrived where it looked as if the aperture of a camera was trying to close itself. It is the only simile he can observe. The aperture was trying to close and something was there, trying to keep it open. Then after a while, there was no will to do anything, not even to prevent the aperture from closing itself. Suddenly, as it were, it closed. He did not know what happened after that. Thus, the life conked out.

This process lasted for forty-nine minutes—the process of dying. Actually, the description process of forty-nine minutes of death is entirely different from the way it occurred. In fact, this process happened at that time, beyond any description, because there was no body there, thinking in such terms.

In the connection, two important points should be observed. 'Something' is there, trying to keep it open. What is that 'something'? That 'something', from the inner layers was trying its utmost best to stop the closure of the aperture. 'It is not known what it is! At any cost, it struggled to face the death till the end. It continued to fight incessantly for forty-nine minutes. In this process, the desire to do something was missing in U.G. The will to prevent the closure of the aperture also evaporated. There was neither induction nor violation. Even if violation had been there, the idea of coming back to normalcy was not at all there for unknown reasons.

From the inner layers the 'mysterious something' fought tooth and nail to overcome the aperture to the last minute and failed. 'It' lost its battle against death.

The first point to be observed was that the will, or volition, or struggle to prevent the closure of the aperture was missing.

The second point was that even if the will or desire had been in U.G., then also, there was no idea of it coming back since 'self-entity' was missing. That means there was no desire to become alive again.

From this, a new point can be visualized. For the person who was living in the 'thought sphere', there is some unknown strong thing distinct from the will and desire.

Perhaps it is the body machine with self-propelling capacity (as an independent, autonomous entity). It fought to protect itself with its own energy, gathering and garnering all its hidden powers together, and battled in a thousand ways for forty-nine minutes with 'death' till the last strength, and at the end, it lost the battle.

In view of this observation it can be surmised that the self-built, self-propelling body (as a special and separate entity), has its own power, independent of its own, distinct from the person living in a 'thought sphere' (maybe an inbuilt, internal ventilator). It is only speculation.

Coming back to U.G.'s death, his hands and feet became so cold, the body became stiff, the heart beat slowed down, the breathing slowed down and there was a gasping for breath. Up to a point, he was there, his breath, his last breath, as it were, and then he was finished. What happens after that, nobody knows. There is no body to describe.

Valentine was petrified at the change in U.G.'s body. One hour ago he talked to her and now he is... How can it be? She touched the body of U.G. It was as cold as a block of ice. His legs and hands were stiff like sticks, eyes were deeply closed. No longer the pulse is throbbing. Is he dead? She would not want to believe and accept what happened to U.G. in her very presence. No! It is impossible! Unbelievable! Beads of sweat stood on her forehead inspite of it being a full moon, and a chilly day. The little curls behind her neck, clinging to her white skin, moistened with perspiration. Her mouth became dry; saliva disappeared.

How did U.G. die suddenly? For the past one week the behaviour pattern of U.G. was abnormal and odd. At last it came to an end like this? She was looking helplessly at the dead body of U.G. What to do? Her spirits were throttled. An eerie silence fell upon the room.

At this juncture, all of a sudden, breaking the horrifying atmosphere was the shrill ring of the telephone like a war drum downstairs. The tiny siskin bird who'd missed her route was hopping on the windowsill. After the sound of the phone, it flew off blindly. Who could be calling at this hour?

The landlady talked over with somebody aloud on the telephone and shouted, 'Monsieur Krishna Murthy, telephone. Telephone for you, from your friend.'

Valentine came back to her senses. She looked at the dead body of U.G., shuddered and gathered her energy to

rush down the stairs to receive the phone.

'This is Douglas, speaking from Gstaad. I want to talk to U.G.,' the caller said in a baritone voice.

'No! Douglas, I am sorry he cannot come,' she replied feebly.

'What happened to him? Please call him urgently. I must talk to him right now,' he insisted on a firm note.

'No, Douglas, something happened to U.G. His body is not moving,' she uttered timidly.

'Is it something serious? What is up? Somehow I want to talk to him,' he pleaded.

Valentine was trying to give some excuse in her own way. But Douglas was not in a mood to listen to her. This went on.

At that time, in the first floor, where U.G. was lying dead, a miracle happened.

U.G., who was in eternal sleep, the sound waves of the telephone worked as an awakening call, as if sprinkled by divine nectar on the lifeless body of U.G. Was it an anabiosis? The limbs of the corpse of U.G. began to feel a pulsation. There was a microscopic movement in the entire body. It was like the blossoming of a hundred petal lotus in quick motion.

The motionless lungs of the body began to receive air, just as a pendulum of a clock begins to oscillate automatically, even without rewinding, the heart of U.G. started to beat by itself.

Consequently, the blood which was frozen in the vessels began to melt and circulate. Gradually the vital force was getting restored in the corpse. From the central point it spread all over the body.

The body of U.G. became normal and kicking, alive, as if it had a transmigration for a short period.

U.G. who died physically, literally, a few minutes ago, resuscitated back to life. It was an automatic bodily process. U.G. became conscious and touched life. Gradually all the energies were restored. Spontaneously the body of U.G. took a heavy breath and exhaled air which was very hot, as the air near the furnace sac.

Afterwards there was regular breathing and his eyes opened themselves like doors. Eyeballs began to roll but the eye lashes did not wink. U.G. appeared like a person who emerged from a tomb with fresh life. He came out from the bottom of the ocean of death.

The entire description of the revival from death of U.G. is purely speculation. The actual process must have happened in its own natural way.

U.G. got up from the cot and began to walk downstairs, as if in a stupor which was half waking and half sleeping. Zombie. His steps are the lightness of a fly, as if the foot marks are not touching the ground.

Valentine was stunned and perplexed with this sudden appearance of U.G. before her. It is impossible to describe her feelings at that moment. The sap of her energy bubbled up. 'Oh! Thank Heaven! He is alive!'

Valentine turned to U.G. 'Douglas is insisting to talk to you. I am trying to convince him, that you are not in a position to come here.' So saying, she passed the receiver to U.G.

U.G. held the receiver in his hand and felt that he was holding an abstract thing. 'Hello! Douglas, my dear boy, you can see for yourself what was happened with your own eyes. Rush immediately. Awaiting for you and added, 'You are coming, aren't you?' uttered in a different voice. 'Yea! Pushing off right now,' he replied on hearing the strange and unfamiliar voice of U.G.

Douglas hooked the phone and pondered deeply. U.G.'s voice sounded queer, very far away. It was an invitation to see the 'dead' man. What might have happened?

Saanen is at a distance of three kilometers from Gstaad. At that time there were no local trains to go there. Douglas started to walk without loss of any time. The sky was like a milky sea. He is walking through the moon-baked valleys.

The cicadas and crickets were clamouring. Acacia bushes were fluffy like ostrich plumes. Enjoying the moonlight, Douglas walked briskly, thinking about the present situation within himself.

'Today my mind was like a cat on a hot tin roof. I could not concentrate my mind on anything. I wish to do something, but at the same time, I could not understand what it is that that would be. Something is trying to transmit in its own way. Then it suddenly struck me to phone to U.G. The desire to ring him up became stronger.' It was as if an unknown power compelled him to telephone.

'When I phoned him, Valentine replied instead of U.G. She talked with a stuttering voice; she appeared very much disturbed. Later U.G. personally received the phone and ordered queerly that I should urgently come to him. What might have happened to him?'

Douglas was walking very fast. The white luminosity of the moon light enveloped the entire route, appearing like liquid silver. He was awash and soaked completely in that sparkling lily-white ambience.

He reached Chalet Pfeffynegg. The chalet was perfectly silent. Douglas entered the room of U.G. He was stunned to see the scene there. Valentine was looking white with terror and U.G. was lying on the couch in a strange posture. His body was in an arched position. In yoga this posture is called 'Dhanurasana' (the posture of the bow).

'Oh boy! What happened? Why was his body twisted as such? Douglas approached U.G. and noticed that his body turned blue, a kind of cyanosis (like the bodies of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, as described in the ancient Indian spiritual literature).

Douglas exclaimed, 'U.G.! What is this posture of yours? Get back to normal,' while shrugging his shoulders.

U.G. slowly recovered from the odd pose, straight, and stretched himself on the couch, like a baby. After few moments he breathed heavily and rolled to a side and sat up on the couch with strange movements. Douglas observed that U.G.'s demeanour appeared strange.

U.G.'s looks are blank, devoid of any feelings, remote, recluse. Douglas could observe through a window a brilliant full moon. 'U.G., look at that wonderful full moon on the peaks of the mountain there. Pulchritude at its best. Get up and watch the nature's pinnacle.'

U.G. slowly got up, walked gingerly to the window and gazed out, with his open eyes for five full minutes.

U.G. eyes riveted peculiarly towards a milky moon, a sea of moonlight, boundless, immense, seeming to grow increasingly in height and depth.

Douglas wondered at U.G.'s queer looks with awed curiosity. U.G.'s penetrating glances appeared as if he dished out, from the unknown realms of immeasurable depths, some mystery which was hidden. In its depths, his contour was contrary to commonly-known U.G.

He seemed to be unaware of the world existing in and around him. Standing very close to U.G., such a sudden flash touched Douglas's mind that U.G. became an unknown entity for a moment.

U.G. appeared like a permanently liberated personality, from the bondage of life, and as a person who broke down some secret doors of human existence.

Douglas gazed at the room's ambience and sensed something amiss. The density of the atmosphere was gloomy—eerie and sepulchral. The air was suffocating with the deathly smell of a graveyard.

'U.G! What happened here?'

'Douglas, my dear boy. Here, just now, literally, physical death took place. There is no scope for doubt in what I said. Till now, the mighty and all-powerful ego (ahamkaara) had been laminated to existence, and it's not easy to subjugate its fossilized grip. Now it has been obliterated completely,' he concluded, on a firm note.

After a pause, U.G. reiterated, sledgehammer style, 'Everything else but the body has died and some traces of the ego connected with that. This was the final and ultimate death. Now, there is no enlightenment. There is no

one here to be enlightened,' he attested.

'Douglas, there is one thing that I am for certain, the search must come to an end before anything can happen.'

After some time, U.G. added, 'Douglas! My dear boy! Your telephone call made me alive again and brought me back to the world. I do not know what actually resurrected me. It is beyond the experience structure. That is all.'

On hearing U.G., Douglas was overjoyed, his joy knew no bounds. He thought to himself, 'Today is a memorable day in my life.'

Why did Douglas strongly desired to ring up to U.G.? Was it an inevitability at that particular pinpoint of time? Had not Douglas phoned, what would have happened?

In the words of the great German literary stalwart, Wolfgang Von Goethe, 'Invariably, there is a mission for every extraordinary person, there is an ordained process for him to execute—till his mission is fulfilled, he will not die even if he is shot at, even if he is dropped from a hill, he will survive, and in case he dies, he will be resurrected and he will continue the ordained mission to the end.

links

