

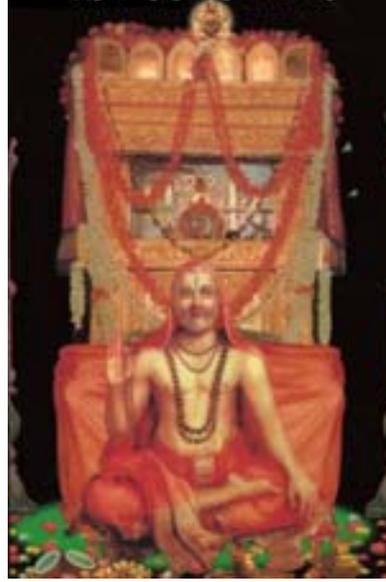
Guru Raghavendra for Novices

Life and Teachings of Guru Raghavendra Swamy

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Sri Guru Raghavendra Swamy is a saint from South India. In this book we are going to explain his life history, his teachings and why people love him and pray to him. The historical evidences for this book are derived from (1) Sri Raghavendra Vijaya – biography of Guru Raghavendra written by Sri Narayana Acharya, who was Guru Raghavendra's nephew before he took Sanyasa (sainthood); (2) the Guru Stotra, which was recited by Sri. Appanacharya when Guru Raghavendra was entering the Brindavana alive [Guru Raghavendra knew

the exact time of his entry into Brindavana , he continues to live in spiritual form and blesses the devotees like an angel], Sri Appanacharya was a contemporary of Guru Raghavendra. In this stotra, he described the physical, spiritual and intellectual characteristics of Guru Raghavendra in detail and also the benefit of praying to him. Appanacharya was his greatest disciple. Let us first understand what Raghavendra means, in Sanskrit Raghavendra means Lord Rama (incarnation of Lord Vishnu), Raghva Indira means one who has Rama inside,

referring to Sri Madhwacharya, who's previous incarnation was Hanuman. When we call the name of Guru Raghavendra, we are calling supreme god Narayana and his greatest angel/god who is serving him Sri Hanuman and you are calling great saint Guru Raghavenda.

Guru Raghavendra loves his devotees a lot and showers his blessings all the time. He was a follower of Dvaita Philosophy, a school of thought which will be explained later in this material. Whenever devotees make mistakes, he is always there to correct and guide the devotees. Hence devotees always go to him.

He gives importance to correct knowledge and understanding of God and has a great affection for seekers of knowledge and those who have great faith and devotions towards supreme god.

Lovingly Guru Raghavendra Swamy is called Rayaru or Guru Rayaru. Rayaru has written numerous works, elaborating on several aspects of Dvaita. He is the kindest sage, who showers blessings irrespective of religion, cast, creed or race. He showers his blessing and grace on people who do not follow his teachings as well but pray to him with sincere devotion and faith. Guru Raghavendra Swamy is kind and loving and always looks after and takes care of

devotees of all ages. He is called a wish granting tree, as he blesses people based on the punya (points accumulated by doing good deeds according to Hindu theory of Karma), he reduces our sins by pleading to Lord Hari (Supreme God of the universe) on our behalf. Rayaru submits all praises showered on him to Lord Hari through his guru Sri Madhwacharya, to redeem and reduce our sins (Points accumulated by doing bad deeds) and help us overcome our problems.



Mantralaya

In the year 1671, after he completed the purpose of his life for which he was there on this earth, he entered in a state of Samadhi alive at a place called Mantralayam which is on the banks of Thunghabadra River in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, and a stone enclosure called Brindavana was built around him. Even then, Rayaru has promised his devotees that he will be there for them always and shower his blessings through the Brindavana for 700

years in spiritual form. The affection and love of Rayaru for his devotees is like that of a mother towards her children. Like a mother, he is always there to guide devotees throughout their lives, feed devotees with knowledge like a mother feeds her child, and correct the devotees when they take a wrong step like a mother corrects her children from making mistakes. He has performed great miracles which are explained in the Miracles section. He is the kindest saint and a very great devotee of Lord Hari or Lord Vishnu (who is the supreme God according to Vaishnavism school of thought started by devotees of Lord Hari). According to the Hindu Holy Scriptures (the Vedas), there is only one supreme god, Lord Sri Hari. All other angels assist him in his work and are called gods, which should not be confused with Supreme God, Lord Hari. Supreme God resides inside all living and non-living beings and every entity in this universe thus blessing all, through those entities. This is the reason why we must respect every object in this universe created by Lord Hari.



Lord Vishnu

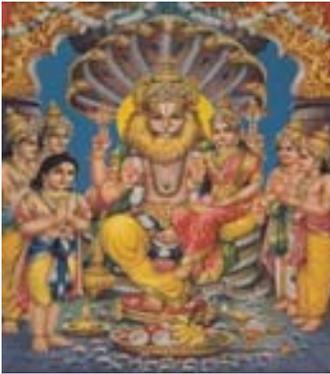
Raghavendra Swamy never claimed that he was an avatar purush (a celestial being who has taken birth on earth for special purpose). Haridasas (great devotees of Lord Hari) like Jagannatha dasaru, Purandaradasaru, Vijayadasaru, Gopaldasaru, Mahipati dasaru etc. who composed and sang hymns of Lord Vishnu, have mentioned in their hymns that Rayaru is an avatar purush (divine incarnation of an angel).



Guru Raghavendra Brindavana

Rayaru was a celestial being called Shankukarna in his previous birth. As a

result of a curse, which was a boon in disguise, Shankukarna was made to take birth on the earth. When Shankukarna was first born on the earth, he was called Prahlada. His father, Hiranya Kashyapu belonged to demon family and hated Sri Hari, where as Prahlada was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Prahlada said that Sri Hari is omnipresent (present everywhere); his father challenged him to show Sri Hari in a pillar. Prahlada prayed while his father broke the pillar and Lord Sri Hari appeared in a form called Narasimha (one with lion face and human body). Lord Narasimha killed Prahlada's evil father and made Prahlada rule the kingdom for thousands years.

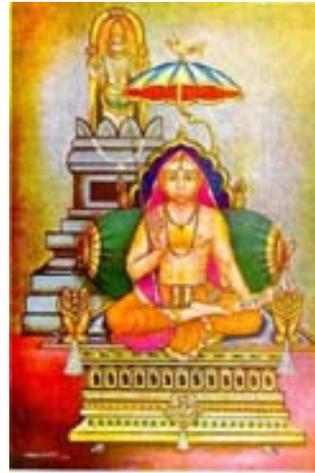


Sri Lakshmi Narasimha with Prahlada

Shankukarna took birth as Bahlika in his next birth during the Period of Mahabharata (denotes the ancient period when the Bhagavad Gita – a great epic was revealed by Lord Vishnu). Though he fought against the Pandavas, he was a great devotee

of Lord Vishnu and he was willing to die at the hands of Bheemasena (one of the Pandavas and an incarnation of Lord Vayu, the wind God).

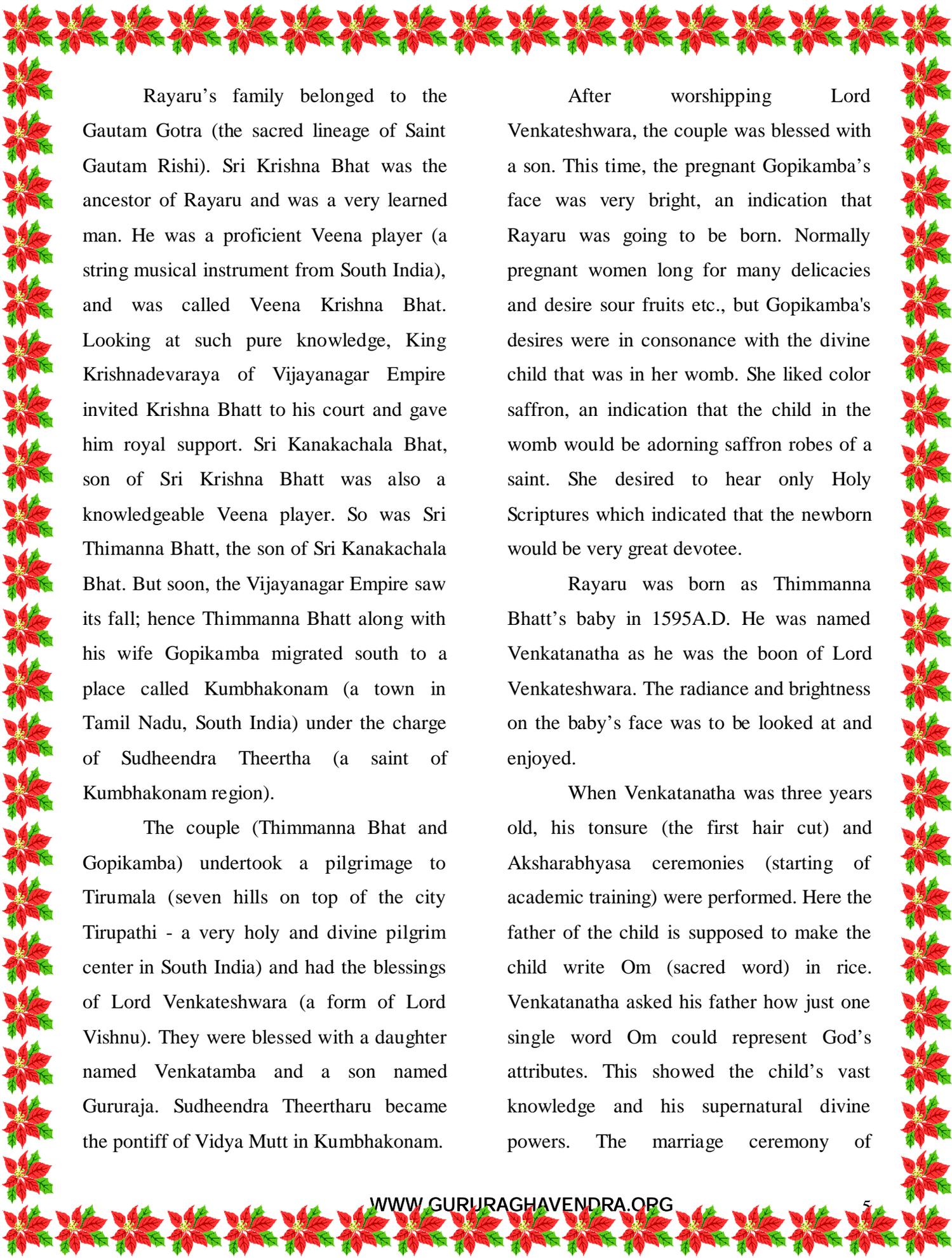
In Shankukarna's next birth, he was destined to be one of the great Madhwa (school of teaching started by Sri Madhwacharya – a great 13th century saint) saints, Vyasaraaja. Not satisfied with the amount of seva he had performed to the Lord, he was born again as Venkatanatha, who became Guru Raghavendra, one of the greatest Madhwa saints.



Sri Vyasaraaja Theertharu

To understand the life and the teachings of Guru Raghavendra Swamy, his life can be divided into two stages: (1) Poorvashrama – period of life before he became a saint. (2) Sanyasa – period of life after Rayaru became a saint.

Poorvashrama:



Rayaru's family belonged to the Gautam Gotra (the sacred lineage of Saint Gautam Rishi). Sri Krishna Bhat was the ancestor of Rayaru and was a very learned man. He was a proficient Veena player (a string musical instrument from South India), and was called Veena Krishna Bhat. Looking at such pure knowledge, King Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar Empire invited Krishna Bhatt to his court and gave him royal support. Sri Kanakachala Bhat, son of Sri Krishna Bhatt was also a knowledgeable Veena player. So was Sri Thimanna Bhatt, the son of Sri Kanakachala Bhat. But soon, the Vijayanagar Empire saw its fall; hence Thimanna Bhatt along with his wife Gopikamba migrated south to a place called Kumbhakonam (a town in Tamil Nadu, South India) under the charge of Sudheendra Theertha (a saint of Kumbhakonam region).

The couple (Thimanna Bhat and Gopikamba) undertook a pilgrimage to Tirumala (seven hills on top of the city Tirupathi - a very holy and divine pilgrim center in South India) and had the blessings of Lord Venkateshwara (a form of Lord Vishnu). They were blessed with a daughter named Venkatamba and a son named Gururaja. Sudheendra Theertharu became the pontiff of Vidya Mutt in Kumbhakonam.

After worshipping Lord Venkateshwara, the couple was blessed with a son. This time, the pregnant Gopikamba's face was very bright, an indication that Rayaru was going to be born. Normally pregnant women long for many delicacies and desire sour fruits etc., but Gopikamba's desires were in consonance with the divine child that was in her womb. She liked color saffron, an indication that the child in the womb would be adorning saffron robes of a saint. She desired to hear only Holy Scriptures which indicated that the newborn would be very great devotee.

Rayaru was born as Thimanna Bhatt's baby in 1595A.D. He was named Venkatanatha as he was the boon of Lord Venkateshwara. The radiance and brightness on the baby's face was to be looked at and enjoyed.

When Venkatanatha was three years old, his tonsure (the first hair cut) and Aksharabhyasa ceremonies (starting of academic training) were performed. Here the father of the child is supposed to make the child write Om (sacred word) in rice. Venkatanatha asked his father how just one single word Om could represent God's attributes. This showed the child's vast knowledge and his supernatural divine powers. The marriage ceremony of

Venkatamba and Lakshminarasimhacharya took place. Thimmanna Bhatt performed the Upanayanam (the sacred thread ceremony) of Gururaja (the older son).

Venkatanatha learned to play Veena from his father, and soon he also became an adept Veena player. Thimmanna Bhatt went to live with Sudheendra Theertharu in Kumbakonam. As soon as Sudheendra Theertharu saw Venkatanatha for the first time, he had a divine vision and realized immediately that this child is going to be his successor. Venkanna was very intelligent and knowledgeable. Thimmanna's wished that Venkanna excelled in studies. But Thimmanna passed away soon and Sri Lakshminarasimhacharya (Venkanna's brother-in-law) became Venkanna's guardian.



Lord Moola Rama

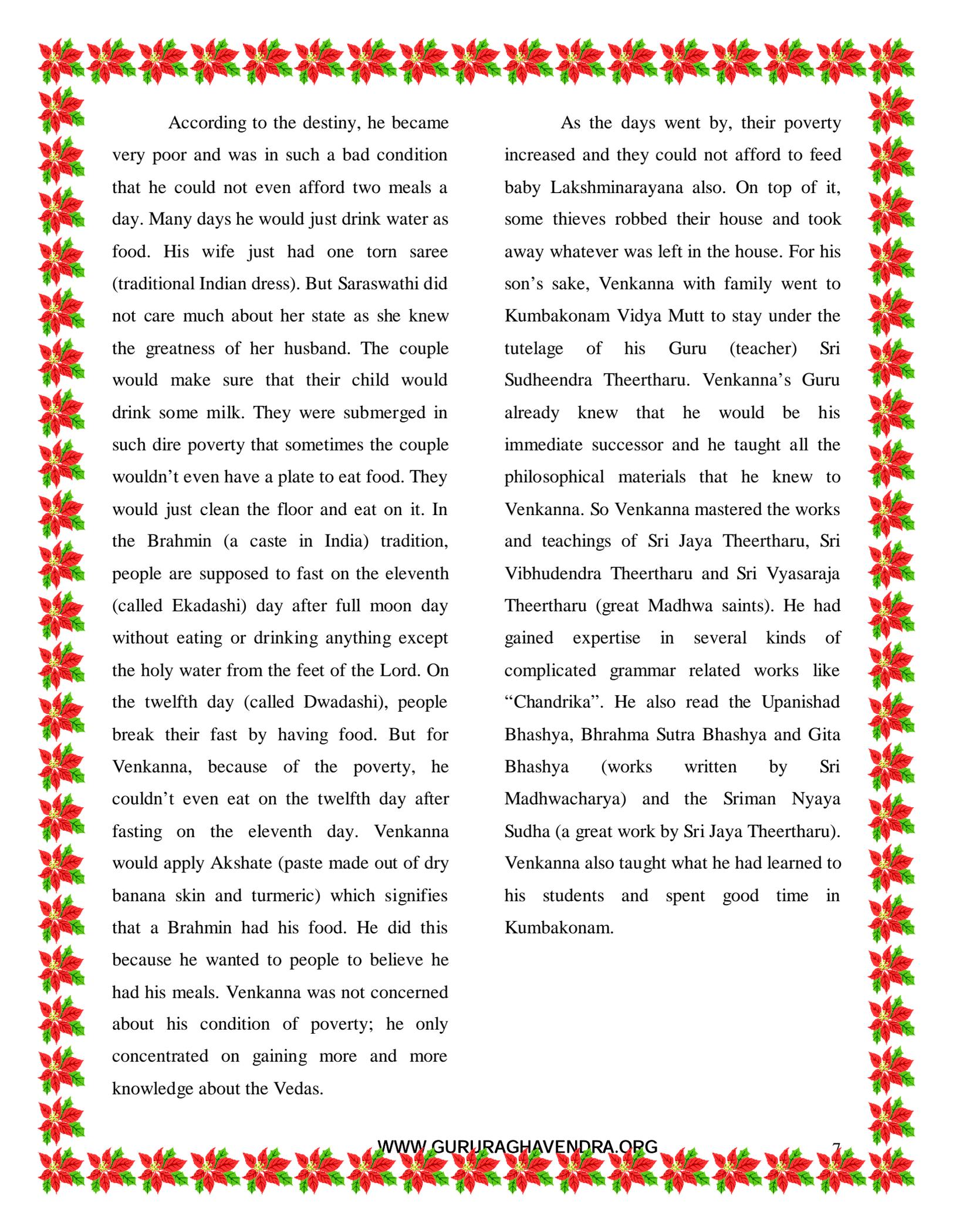
Venkanna finished his primary education within a very short time. He had mastered Amarakosha that sharpened his

lexical knowledge. He was a gifted scholar of Sanskrit Grammar.

Venkanna liked performing pooja (worship) like the Swamiji at the Mutt and had a strong attachment towards Lord Moola Rama (the unique idol of the Lord Vishnu worshipped in the Mutt by the Swamiji). Gururaja, the elder brother performed the Upanayana of Venkanna and both went to Madurai to be with Sri Lashminarasimhacharya for advanced studies. Venkanna excelled in all the fields. His way of chanting the Vedas, proficiency in music proved that he was not an ordinary child; rather he was divine with complete knowledge about everything.

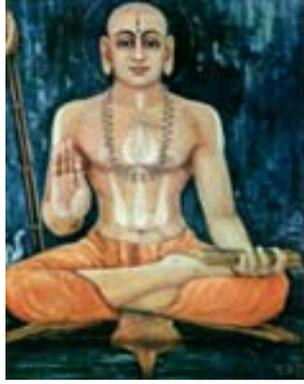
Venkanna was a very handsome, humble and modest young man. Gururaja the elder brother selected a suitable girl named Saraswathi from a learned family for Venkanna. His marriage was celebrated with lots of excitement and grandeur.

Venkanna became a grihasta (a married man), a family man. Saraswathi was an ideal wife and Venkanna was happy with his life. Soon the couple had a son named Lakshminarayana. Venkanna started teaching Vedic knowledge to young boys. For some years, the family led a luxurious and comfortable life.



According to the destiny, he became very poor and was in such a bad condition that he could not even afford two meals a day. Many days he would just drink water as food. His wife just had one torn saree (traditional Indian dress). But Saraswathi did not care much about her state as she knew the greatness of her husband. The couple would make sure that their child would drink some milk. They were submerged in such dire poverty that sometimes the couple wouldn't even have a plate to eat food. They would just clean the floor and eat on it. In the Brahmin (a caste in India) tradition, people are supposed to fast on the eleventh (called Ekadashi) day after full moon day without eating or drinking anything except the holy water from the feet of the Lord. On the twelfth day (called Dwadashi), people break their fast by having food. But for Venkanna, because of the poverty, he couldn't even eat on the twelfth day after fasting on the eleventh day. Venkanna would apply Akshate (paste made out of dry banana skin and turmeric) which signifies that a Brahmin had his food. He did this because he wanted to people to believe he had his meals. Venkanna was not concerned about his condition of poverty; he only concentrated on gaining more and more knowledge about the Vedas.

As the days went by, their poverty increased and they could not afford to feed baby Lakshminarayana also. On top of it, some thieves robbed their house and took away whatever was left in the house. For his son's sake, Venkanna with family went to Kumbakonam Vidya Mutt to stay under the tutelage of his Guru (teacher) Sri Sudheendra Theertharu. Venkanna's Guru already knew that he would be his immediate successor and he taught all the philosophical materials that he knew to Venkanna. So Venkanna mastered the works and teachings of Sri Jaya Theertharu, Sri Vibhudendra Theertharu and Sri Vyasaraja Theertharu (great Madhwa saints). He had gained expertise in several kinds of complicated grammar related works like "Chandrika". He also read the Upanishad Bhashya, Bhrahma Sutra Bhashya and Gita Bhashya (works written by Sri Madhwacharya) and the Sriman Nyaya Sudha (a great work by Sri Jaya Theertharu). Venkanna also taught what he had learned to his students and spent good time in Kumbakonam.



Sri Madhwacharya



Jaya Theertharu

Venkanna was also an expert debater. He would accompany his Guru to different pilgrimages and learning centers. Once there was a seminar in “Dakshina Dwaraka” (Guruvayoor) about “Jeeva over Parabrahma” (meaning “soul vs. God”). Venkanna participated in this debate by making arguments based on the Mahabhashya (work written by Sri Madhwacharya) and defeated the principle orator of the seminar. Hence Venkanna gained the name “Mahabhashya Venkatanatha”. As Venkanna became famous, so did the Vidya Mutt. Venkanna also wrote several commentaries on Holy

Scriptures like Anu Madhwa Vijaya and Prameya Nava Malika.

Sudheendra Theertha Swamiji already had a successor named Yadavendra Teertha. But Lord Moola Rama came in the dreams of Sri Sudheendra Theertha Swamiji insisted that only Venkanna was to be made his successor. When Venkanna was told about this and requested to take up Sanyasa (to become a saint), Venkanna refused out rightly because he was concerned about the future of his young wife and son. When Saraswathi came to know about this, she was shocked. Venkanna was engrossed in thoughts about what to do. One night, Vidya Lakshmi (goddess of knowledge) came in Venkanna’s dreams and requested him to take up Sanyasa, because otherwise Vidya Mutt would be in wrong hands and all the scriptures and works by the great saints would lose importance. Venkanna obeyed God’s directions, went back to Sudheendra Theertha Swamiji and accepted Sanyasa.

Sanyasa:



Guru Rayaru



Sri Sudheendra Theertha Swamiji performed all the rituals and processes like the pathabhisheka (a process before letting someone become a saint) to Venkanna. As per Sudheendra Theertha Swamiji's dream, he named Venkanna as Sri Raghavendra Theertha. This ceremony was performed on a grand scale.

The news about Sri Raghavendra Swamy as the new pontiff of Vidya Mutt spread far and wide. Venkatamba, Sri Raghavendra Swami's Poorvashrama sister also attended the ceremony. She described the events that happened during the ceremony to Saraswathi. According to the customs, the wife of a person who accepted Sanyasa can never visit or see her husband. But Saraswathi was very much eager to meet at her husband. She ran with no consciousness of anything around her, or even about the route to the Mutt and committed suicide by falling into a well. She visited her husband in the form of a ghost. Sri Raghavendra Swamy, because of his extraordinary powers, could sense her arrival. He sprinkled holy water on her and released her from the ghost form and her soul reached the Vaikunta Loka (Lord Vishnu's realm). He truly is an Aparoksha Gyani (a person who knows the past, present

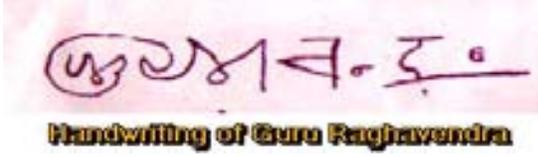
and future of a soul and the happenings of the universe).

Sri Yadavendra Theertha, who was on tour heard the ascension of Raghavendra and returned to Kumbakonam. Raghavendra received his senior with due respect. This shows how much of respect Guru Raghavendra Swamy had for his elders.

As a pontiff, Sri Raghavendra Swamy was very much a disciplinarian while following the Vedic traditions and rituals of the Mutt. The name Raghavendra reminds the devotees that he is the greatest in Raghava Kula i.e., the lineage of Lord Rama (a form of Lord Vishnu). He was a Siddha Purusha (God realized person).

Guru Raghavendra Swami's writings were very well described and his speeches were very eloquent. Sri Vadeendra Theertha, the fifth descendent and great grandson of Sri Raghavendra Swamy, describes Guru Rayaru's tongue (speech) as the Goddess Saraswathi's (Goddess of literature and arts) dancing platform and says that the scented flowers from her hair-do fell on the tongue (the stage), thus rendering his speech and writings such fragrance, entitling him to be known as Parimala Acharya (Parimala = perfume; Acharya=teacher). Guru Raghavendra could instill faith in people with just one glance and they were

convinced that only he could guide them to Mukti (salvation).



As Sri Raghavendra Swamy was the incarnation of the celestial Shankukarna, every inch of him was a Bhagavatottama (an ardent worshipper of Lord Vishnu). Having got rid of his Prarabdha (suffering caused due to the deeds of the previous births) in the form of severe poverty, he was now on the path of distributing the Punya he had gained in all his births to his devotees.

Some pictures of the Kumbhakonam Mutt where Sri Rayaru studied under the tutelage of Sri Sudheendra Theertha Swamiji are shown below.



Bhootha Rajaru

- 1) Sri Bhootha Raja is considered the king of Bhoothas (spirits) and he grants everyone's wishes, here is the idol of Bhoota Raja, it is said that when food is left in front of him at Kumbhakonam, it would disappear in a while and this has been happening since a long time.



Bhootha raja Idol on the Tree



Kashyapa Theertha

- 2) Kashyapa Theertha is the fresh water pond created by Kashyapa Sage. (The sage who is mentioned as Gothra - lineage) many years ago. It is believed that if one takes bath in this pond, their sins would be washed away:



Lord Hanuman

- 3) Lord Hanuman's idol has been in this Mutt since a long time. Sri Rayaru worshipped this idol.



Lord Krishna

- 5) Supreme lord Krishna dancing on the heads of Kaliya - a gigantic snake lived in a pond near Mathura and contaminated it by his venom:



Lord Lakshmi Narayana

- 4) Sri Lakshmi Narayana idol installed by great Sripadarajaru 500 years ago. Sri Vijayendra Theertharu, Sri Sudheendra Theertharu and Guru Raghavendra Swamy worshipped this idol.



Vijayendra Theertharu

- 6) The Brindavana of Vijayendra Theertharu who was guru to Sudheendra Theertharu. Rayaru did pooja (worship) to this Brindavana during his time. Vijayendra Theertharu was a very great saint, well versed in 64 Kalas (types of study). When Sri Vijayendra Theertharu

Swamiji was poisoned, Lord LakshmiNarasimha consumed it. He installed many statues and wrote works on Dwaitha philosophy. The Ugraha Narasimha idol in this Raghavendra Swamy Mutt installed by Sri Vijayeendra Theertharu is worshipped even today.



Place where Rayaru used to study

- 7) Place where Rayaru used to study in Kumbhakonam, is right next to the Brindavana of Sri Vijayeendra Theertharu and in front of Lord Lakshmi Narayana. Rayaru enjoyed teaching Brahma Sutra.

An example of Rayaru's mastery over scriptures is; he defeated an argument to

establish that God and the Man were the same entity. According to Madhwa School of thought, God and Man are two different entities and man is always inferior. Our Rayaru, with his very good knowledge in Madhwa philosophy used many kinds of logical explanations and conclusions and proved that Lord Hari is supreme. This was also enunciated by Sri Vyasa Theertharu. This incident proved that he had the divine blessings of Goddess Saraswathi

Sri Raghavendra Swami's day would start long before the dawn with singing by his devotees. Swamiji would wake up, pray to God and come out to give darshan to the devotees waiting outside. He would chant the morning Stotras (hymns in praise of God) and bathe in the Cauvery River (a river in South India). He would systematically utter the Ashtakshara, Shadakshara, Dwadasa Akshara mantras and take a mud bath and purify himself with a purifying bath in the waters of Cauvery. He would offer the Arghya (holy water) to Gods and would clad saffron robes. He would apply the Gopi Chandana Nama and mudre. (caste marks all over the body introduced by Sri Madhwacharya).



He would worship idols of Moola Rama, Garuda Vahana (Eagle God, the vehicle of Lord Hari), Lakshmi Narayana and Digvijaya Rama and Jaya Rama passed on from gurus of the Matha along with Sri Krishna prepared in gold by himself. The worship would go on as prescribed in shastras (model code of conduct). After daily worship, he would take the Theertha (Holy water) and take his Bikhsha (alms in the form of meals). His intense attachment to god Moola Rama Devaru would often take him into a trance. He would sing hymns in praise of the Lord with love. One of his compositions is "Indu Enage govinda - Ninnaya Padaravindva Thoro Mukundane" (in praise of Lord Mukunda (another name of Lord Hari)) which Rayaru sang in Udupi (a pilgrim center in South India).

Miracles of Rayaru at various locations:

Once a miracle happened before Venkatanatha took Sanyasa. Once the couple, along with their son went to a nearby Mutt for puja and prasadam. Rayaru was given the task of preparing the sandalwood paste by mutt assistants. Rayaru prepared it, but while preparing was chanting the Agni Sukta (hymn in praise of Fire God). The paste was given to the devotees, who applied it on their body. Soon, everyone could feel the burning

sensation. It was very surprising because sandalwood paste is usually used to cool the body. They called Venkatanatha who gave them the reason by mentioning about the agni sukta.

The Pontiff realized that the burning was because of the powerful chanting of hymns by the great Venkatanatha. To cure the burning sensation, Venkatanatha chanted the Varuna Sukta (hymn in praise of the Water God) and prepared sandalwood paste again. The devotees felt better after applying it this time. This miracle demonstrates the focus and concentration and divinity of Rayaru because just by chanting hymns he could bring about so much of changes.

At Tanjore:

The king of Tanjore was facing difficulty in the kingdom due to a severe famine. He invited Rayaru and requested save his kingdom. Rayaru agreed stayed in Tanjore for 12 years. Due to Rayaru's divine powers, the kingdom recovered. The king was very grateful to Rayaru and presented a necklace. Rayaru put the necklace in the yagna kund (fire of sacrifice). The king felt insulted when he saw the gift thrown into fire. Rayaru because of his powers understood the king's mind and prayed to Parashu Rama (the indweller of Fire God), and obtained the necklace. The king realized



that Sri Raghavendra Swami was not an ordinary ascetic but the one with divine powers. Rayaru returned to Kumbhakonam.

One of the requirements of saints is to be travelling so that they can spread the message they are supposed to. Hence Rayaru always used to travel to spread the teachings of Sri Madhwacharya to the people. Even during tours, the daily routine of the Rayaru would never change. His teachings of the scriptures and debates in Vedas and philosophies would continue in every place that he visited. This attracted many scholars in those places who would come and participate in debates. Rayaru, impressed with the knowledge of the scholars would shower them with gifts.

Rayaru visited places like Paripurna Nagara, Kamalalaya and Ardha Nareeshwara and finally reached the spot where Cauvery joins the sea. He returned to Rameshwar, bathed at the Sethu Bandhan, Darba Sayana and Sethu Madhava of hallowed glory as this is the last point of South India from where Rama crossed the sea to fight with Ravana.

On his way Rayaru visited Anantha Padmanabha Swamy and reached the banks of Tamraparni. There was a Brahmin who was being troubled by the members of his community. Rayaru understood the plight of

the Brahmin and sprinkled some holy water on him and because of this he was accepted by the members of his community.

At Vellore:

Raghavendra Swamiji was a devotee of Lord Narasimha. Vellore was the then capital of the latter Vijayanagar kings, Venkatapathi Raju and Ramadeva Raju. Veerabadra and Bairava Bhatta were two devotees of Lord Shiva (a god worshipped by Hindus) were known for their expertise in Advaita Shastra (a school of thought where the principle that god and man are same is followed). There was a debate between the two scholars and Rayaru. Rayaru won the debate using the principles of Dvaita Siddhanta and proved his expertise over the Holy Scriptures. The king of the region was impressed by Rayaru's knowledge and granted him some lands as a gift.

At Udupi:

Raghavendra Swamiji finished his touring in the south and started towards South Canara district (a place in South India). This was the place formerly ruled by king Jayasimha who had worshipped Sri Madhwacharya. Rayaru went to Vishnu Mangala and from there to Subramanya, a place of pilgrimage. Swamiji's next halt was at Udupi, the abode of Lord Sri Krishna.

Here his Paramaguru, Sri Vijayendra Theertha had acquired a small Mutt in front of the Temple where Rayaru stayed for some time. He was very happy to see Lord Krishna installed by Sri Madhwacharya. He was overjoyed by the sight of the idol that he used to dance in front of it. He had a very special liking to the form of Sri Krishna Akruithi.



Udupi Sri Krishna

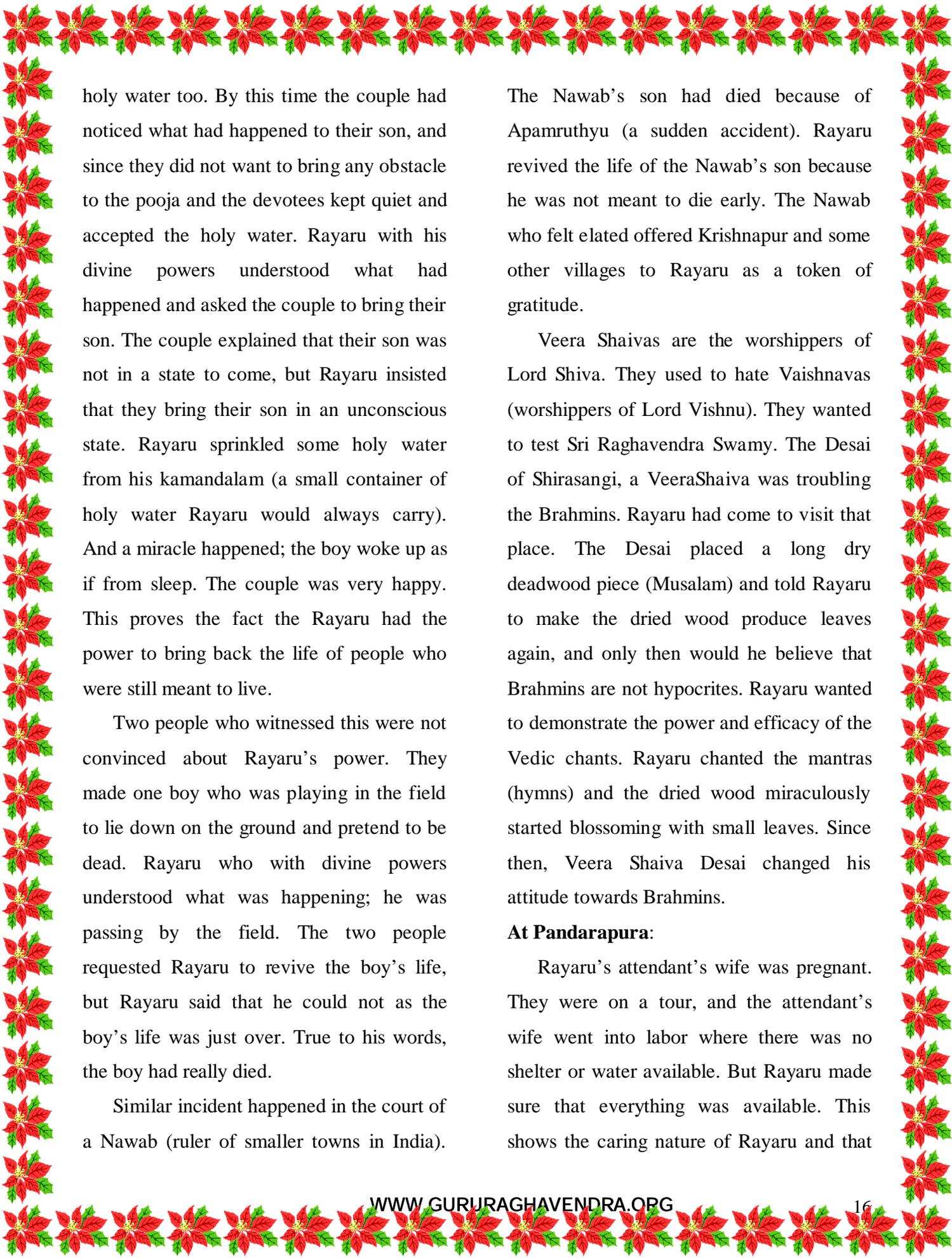
Here in Udupi, he undertook the task of writing books which was one of the purposes of his Sanyasa. He wrote a commentary on Chandrika called "Prakasha on Chandrika". Rayaru also wrote the Nyaya Muktavali. He later wrote Tantra Deepika and Parimala. Parmila is a gloss on "Sriman Nyaya Sudha" the magnum-opus of Sri Jaya Theertharu. If Sudha is the divine nectar, the Parimala is the fragrance of the celestial elixir. To write a gloss on that great book is not possible for ordinary scholars. Rayaru alone could do it as he was so learned and the name "Parimalacharya" totally describes

him. The works that Rayaru wrote in Udupi were dedicated to Lord Krishna. Rayaru was so much devoted to Lord Krishna and because of that he constructed an idol in gold of the Lord holding the churning stick (the instrument used to make butter by churning curds). This idol is worshipped by all pontiffs who succeeded Rayaru. In Udupi Rayaru also had the privilege of looking at the real form of Lord Krishna because of his pure and flawless devotion towards the Lord.

At Gadag:

Rayaru visited Gadag and a devotee and a rich landlord, namely Venkat Desai, invited Rayaru to his house for Bikhsha (pooja (worship) followed by serving of holy water and food to the devotees). The Desai couple had a young son. Rayaru came to Desai's house and started the pooja, at the same time the chefs were preparing the food. They had prepared a very huge vessel full of Mango Seekarni (mango pulp mixed with milk and sugar).

Desai's son was a bit mischievous and curious and was also hungry. He tried to jump and look into the vessel and accidentally slipped into the vessel and drowned. When the pooja was over and the devotees had been served with the holy water, Rayaru asked the couple to take the



holy water too. By this time the couple had noticed what had happened to their son, and since they did not want to bring any obstacle to the pooja and the devotees kept quiet and accepted the holy water. Rayaru with his divine powers understood what had happened and asked the couple to bring their son. The couple explained that their son was not in a state to come, but Rayaru insisted that they bring their son in an unconscious state. Rayaru sprinkled some holy water from his kamandalam (a small container of holy water Rayaru would always carry). And a miracle happened; the boy woke up as if from sleep. The couple was very happy. This proves the fact the Rayaru had the power to bring back the life of people who were still meant to live.

Two people who witnessed this were not convinced about Rayaru's power. They made one boy who was playing in the field to lie down on the ground and pretend to be dead. Rayaru who with divine powers understood what was happening; he was passing by the field. The two people requested Rayaru to revive the boy's life, but Rayaru said that he could not as the boy's life was just over. True to his words, the boy had really died.

Similar incident happened in the court of a Nawab (ruler of smaller towns in India).

The Nawab's son had died because of Apamruthyu (a sudden accident). Rayaru revived the life of the Nawab's son because he was not meant to die early. The Nawab who felt elated offered Krishnapur and some other villages to Rayaru as a token of gratitude.

Veera Shaivas are the worshippers of Lord Shiva. They used to hate Vaishnavas (worshippers of Lord Vishnu). They wanted to test Sri Raghavendra Swamy. The Desai of Shirasangi, a VeeraShaiva was troubling the Brahmins. Rayaru had come to visit that place. The Desai placed a long dry deadwood piece (Musalam) and told Rayaru to make the dried wood produce leaves again, and only then would he believe that Brahmins are not hypocrites. Rayaru wanted to demonstrate the power and efficacy of the Vedic chants. Rayaru chanted the mantras (hymns) and the dried wood miraculously started blossoming with small leaves. Since then, Veera Shaiva Desai changed his attitude towards Brahmins.

At Pandarapura:

Rayaru's attendant's wife was pregnant. They were on a tour, and the attendant's wife went into labor where there was no shelter or water available. But Rayaru made sure that everything was available. This shows the caring nature of Rayaru and that

he never lets his devotees to go through any kind of difficulty.

Also during this tour, Rayaru met a Scholar named Shesha; both participated in a religious debate in which Rayaru excelled. Rayaru took help of the book called Vag Vaikhari, authored by Sri Vijayendra Theertharu.

Then Rayaru visited Pandarapura and worshipped Sri Panduranga Vittala. He also visited other places and took bath in the sacred river Godavari where Rayaru saved a Brahmin from drowning. This incident demonstrated the mother like character of Rayaru.



Pandarapura Vittala and Rukumai

Rayaru visited numerous places near Pandarapura and performed many miracles. Once when Rayaru was on a religious tour, he reached a place called Allur on the banks of River Krishna. There, he wrote a commentary on Tatva Prakashika and Tatva Manjari, a gloss on Sutra Anu Bhashya. He then reached Mandavi in Raichur district (a

place in South India). The days of chaturmasya diksha (sacred months when saints are supposed to stay at one place until the end of the duration) had commenced then and Rayaru started writing a book. When Rayaru was writing the book he saw a Harijan (person belonging to a low caste, based on Hindu caste system) standing aside. Rayaru spoke to the Harijan for some time, and asked him to do some service to God. Next day, the Harijan brought a handful of mustard seeds and offered the same to Rayaru which was to be offered as prasadam (holy food offering) to Lord Hari. But during the chaturmasya period, mustard seeds were not supposed to be used for cooking. Rayaru who saw the true devotion of the Harijan accepted it and told the chefs to use the mustard seeds for cooking. After this the Harijan died, and Rayaru explained to the devotees that the Harijan was Sri Kanakadasaru in his previous birth. Kanakadasaru was a very great devotee of Lord Krishna. During Kanakadasa's time, Rayaru was Vyasa Theertha. As Kanakadasaru had more prarabdha to get over with, he was born as a Harijan. By the help of Rayaru, the Harijan's soul attained Mukthi.

During the same time when Rayaru told the chefs to use the mustard seeds, a devotee



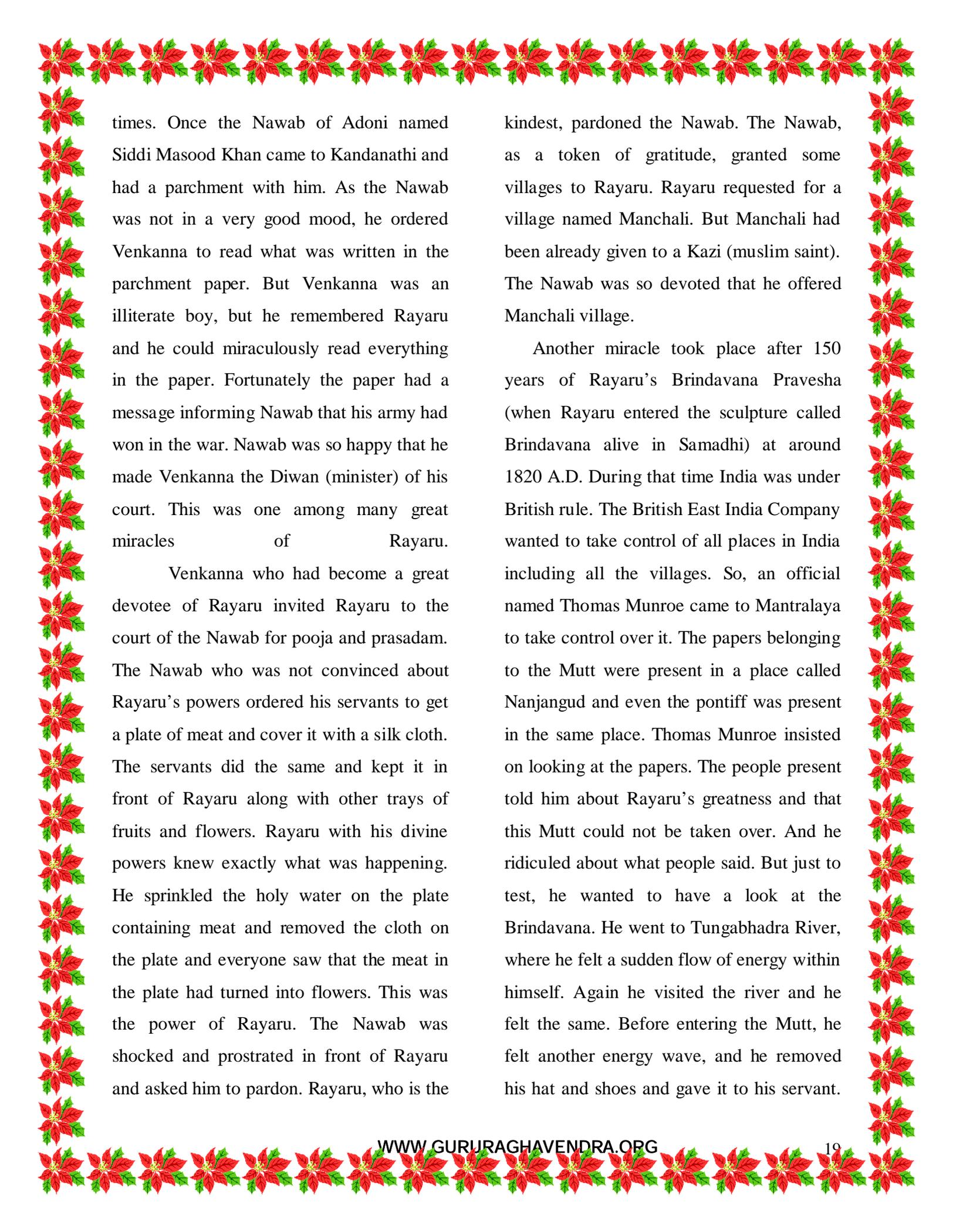
by the name of Srinivasacharya Bidarahalli was also present. He did not want to eat the prasadam which had mustard seeds in it with the fear of committing a mistake if eaten, he asked the permission of Rayaru to leave the place before eating the prasadam. Rayaru who was a divine being sensed this fear in the mind of Srinivasacharya. When Srinivasacharya asked Rayaru to give him mantrakshate (sacred rice grains used in pooja which are red, orange or yellow). Rayaru did so, and when the devotee saw his own hands, he was shocked to see that the mantrakshate had turned black. The devotee realized his mistake, requested Rayaru to forgive him. Now the mantrakshate turned back to its original color. Rayaru explained by saying that the color of the mantrakshate reflected the mind of the devotee. As the devotee's mind was full of confusions and suspicious thoughts, the mantrakshate had turned black.

This incident puts light on the customs and practices of the learned which should be followed by us and we should follow the footsteps of learned people who are our guides. The incidence of Srinivasacharya should be an "Eye-opener" to all vain orthodox people who care more for outer exhibition of their orthodox principles and might cross the limits to the extent of

insulting the noble sages like Sri Raghavendra Theertharu. Greatness is to be respected wherever it is present as God likes nobility and teaches a lesson to all those who try to insult noble souls. A popular sloka in Sanskrit says that if God is angry on humans, only Guru can help us. But if Guru is hurt, even God cannot help the humans. The reason is that to reach God, we need a Guru who cleanses our hearts and makes us eligible for salvation. That is why Raghavendra Swamiji is extolled as "RAGHAVENDRA GURAVE NAMO ATYANTA DAYALAVE". He is the kindest sage one can think of in this entire world.

Rayaru went to a place called Bichchali that is situated on the shores of River Tungabhadra. There was a pious Brahmin called Sri Appannacharya who was very devoted to Guru Rayaru. It is said that he was one of Rayaru's attendants who has been incarnating with Rayaru every time. Rayaru stayed in Bichchali for some years before proceeding to Mantralaya.

Rayaru during the one of his tours came to a place called Kandanathi and saw a young orphaned cowherd boy named Venkanna. The boy had no one who could look after him, so Rayaru blessed the boy, told him to remember him during difficult



times. Once the Nawab of Adoni named Siddi Masood Khan came to Kandanathi and had a parchment with him. As the Nawab was not in a very good mood, he ordered Venkanna to read what was written in the parchment paper. But Venkanna was an illiterate boy, but he remembered Rayaru and he could miraculously read everything in the paper. Fortunately the paper had a message informing Nawab that his army had won in the war. Nawab was so happy that he made Venkanna the Diwan (minister) of his court. This was one among many great miracles of Rayaru.

Venkanna who had become a great devotee of Rayaru invited Rayaru to the court of the Nawab for pooja and prasadam. The Nawab who was not convinced about Rayaru's powers ordered his servants to get a plate of meat and cover it with a silk cloth. The servants did the same and kept it in front of Rayaru along with other trays of fruits and flowers. Rayaru with his divine powers knew exactly what was happening. He sprinkled the holy water on the plate containing meat and removed the cloth on the plate and everyone saw that the meat in the plate had turned into flowers. This was the power of Rayaru. The Nawab was shocked and prostrated in front of Rayaru and asked him to pardon. Rayaru, who is the

kindest, pardoned the Nawab. The Nawab, as a token of gratitude, granted some villages to Rayaru. Rayaru requested for a village named Manchali. But Manchali had been already given to a Kazi (muslim saint). The Nawab was so devoted that he offered Manchali village.

Another miracle took place after 150 years of Rayaru's Brindavana Pravesha (when Rayaru entered the sculpture called Brindavana alive in Samadhi) at around 1820 A.D. During that time India was under British rule. The British East India Company wanted to take control of all places in India including all the villages. So, an official named Thomas Munroe came to Mantralaya to take control over it. The papers belonging to the Mutt were present in a place called Nanjangud and even the pontiff was present in the same place. Thomas Munroe insisted on looking at the papers. The people present told him about Rayaru's greatness and that this Mutt could not be taken over. And he ridiculed about what people said. But just to test, he wanted to have a look at the Brindavana. He went to Tungabhadra River, where he felt a sudden flow of energy within himself. Again he visited the river and he felt the same. Before entering the Mutt, he felt another energy wave, and he removed his hat and shoes and gave it to his servant.

Then in front of the Brindavana, he just fell at the feet of it. Then he saw the Brindavana split into two halves, a light came out and then Rayaru in his physical form gave darshan (appearance) to Thomas Munroe. And Rayaru told him that the Mutt cannot be taken over, and then he also gave lots of Mantrakshate to Munroe which he told to put some on the head and the rest to the chefs of the Mutt to be used in preparing the prasadam.

People outside the Brindavana just saw Munroe murmuring. Munroe came out and explained the whole incident and people got convinced when they saw the Mantrakshate in his hand. This was one of the thousand miracles that happened after Rayaru's Brindavana Pravesha.

For more miracles, <http://miracles.gururaghavendra.org/> can be visited as devotees who are not related to one another in any way have attested to the miracles of Rayaru.

Brindavana Pravesha

Raghavendra Swamiji chose Manchali, also called Mantralayam as his final place to sit in japa (meditation) as the purpose for his arrival on the earth was about to be over. He built a temple for Lord Venkateshwara by whose blessings he had been born. Venkanna would regularly visit

Manchali to check if everything was ok. One day, Rayaru and Venkanna went to the banks of Tungabhadra where Rayaru asked him to dig at a particular place. Venkanna did so and found a "Homakunda" (a sacrificial fire place). He was amazed. Rayaru explained to Venkanna that Prahlada had performed the homa (holy sacrifice) in the same place; and Machalamma was the family deity. Hence he had chosen Manchali as his place of residence.

This was also the place where Arjuna and Anusulva had a war during Dwapara Yuga (one among the four yugas (periods)). Arjuna could not defeat Anusulva as his chariot was on the Homakunda. Because of Lord Krishna being with him in the chariot, Arjuna won and that was the place, Mantralayam.

Venkanna felt blessed because Rayaru revealed to him about the previous incarnations. But at the same time he felt bad because Rayaru would leave the earth soon.



Manchalamma Deity

Soon the month of Ashada (a month in Hindu calendar) in the particular year Virodhikrit came and it was the time for Chatur Masya Diksha. Month of Shravan set in and our Rayaru worshipped Mantralayam village deity, who is none other than Goddess Durga. The goddess gave darshan to Rayaru and blessed him by promising that she would always be present in Mantralaya to carry on Lord Hari's wishes. One of Rayaru's greatest devotees was Sri Appannacharya who was very dedicated. He was very attached to Rayaru. As Rayaru knew that Appannacharya would not allow him to enter Brindavana, he sent Appannacharya for a tour to spread Madhwacharya's teachings.

Rayaru chose the second day of the dark half of the month of Shravan to enter Samadhi alive (August 11th, 1671 A.D). At the same time he was explaining to his devotees about the event. Rayaru appointed his elder brother Gururaja's grandson named Venkannachar as his successor as he had all the qualities of a saint. Rayaru named him as Sri Yogeendra Teertha.

Next Rayaru asked Diwan Venkanna to get a stone sculpture prepared so that he could enter into Samadhi alive. Venkanna did the same and Rayaru said that the

sculpture called Brindavana was going to be for Sri Yogeendra Teertha. Rayaru showed Venkanna a special stone, and explained the importance of the stone by saying that this was the stone on which Lord Rama had rested upon when he had come in search of Sita Devi (wife of Lord Rama). The instructions were followed and a beautiful Brindavana was prepared.

That particular date was fixed as Guru Raghavendra had known the exact time and date of his entering the Brindavana. He would sit inside the Brindavana alive. All the devotees were very sad as they would not be able to see their Guru anymore, even though he would take care of them like an angel. Rayaru was just obeying the wishes of his Lord Hari and his time of work on the earth was about to be over. The second day of the dark dawned. That was the last day that he would be visible to all his devotees. Rayaru as usual followed his daily routine. He gave a last speech to his devotees mentioning about what his teachings were, how to lead life and assured that he would always be there for them. Then Rayaru went to that particular spot and sat in Samadhi chanting mantra using the Tulsi Mala (a sacred beaded necklace made with the seeds of the holy basil). He had told his devotees that as soon as the necklace stopped moving,



they should start placing the stone slabs (the stone which Rayaru had asked Venkanna to get) around him. And on top of the Brindavana, there would be 1200 saligramas(holy stones) kept. All the devotees started singing the hymns in praise of Lord Krishna. Everyone's eyes were filled with tears flowing nonstop. It was hard to accept the fact that they would not be able to see Rayaru in person anymore. That particular moment arrived when the Tulsi Mala stopped moving. And the devotees with a lot of pain and sorrow in their heart started placing the stone slabs around Rayaru.

At that time, Sri Appannacharya came to know about the event and he was shocked. The pain in his heart was so intense that it could not be described. He started running towards Mantralaya with tears flowing from his eyes continuously. But Tungabhadra River was flooding as if the river was also crying out for Rayaru. When Sri Appannacharya saw the river, he started reciting Guru Raghavendra Stotra (a sacred hymn) spontaneously. Miraculously the river separated and made a path for Sri Appannacharya to cross and reach Mantralaya. But to his shock, when Sri Appannacharya reached the place, the last slab was already placed on the Brindavana.

As if to accept and appreciate the great devotion of Sri Appannacharya, Rayaru completed last words of the Stotra from inside the Brindavana by chanting Sakshi Haya Syotrahi, meaning that Lord Hayavadana (another form of Lord Hari) has accepted the stotra.

Teachings of Sri Raghavendra Swamy:

Teachings can be divided into two parts:

- 1) Based on Madhwa Philosophy
- 2) Based on his life history

Based on Madhwa Philosophy:

Madhwacharya was the one who started the concept of Dvaita Siddhanta also called Tattvavada. He was the third incarnation of Lord Hanuman (Wind God, God of life). Second incarnation was Bheemasena of the Mahabharata period. He was born in Pajaka kshetra near Udupi to Madhyageha Bhatta. He was named as Vasudeva. As a child he was extraordinary in every aspect. He performed several miracles of which one is when he was a small boy; he freed his father from the clutches of debt by giving the person who had lent the money a handful of tamarind seeds. At the age of eight he decided to take up Sanyasa. But due to his parents disinterest and yearning for him, he decided to wait to become a saint until another child born to his parents. At the age of eleven, he

became a saint. He was named as Anandatirtha by his Guru Achyutapragnya Theertha. When his guru tried to teach the great Advaita book called Isshta Siddhi, he pointed out 30 errors in the book. Because of his deep knowledge about everything, he was also called as PurnaPragnya. Anandatirtha was also called as Madhwacharya. He propounded the tenets of Tattvavada which will be explained. His guru at first disagreed with the tenets and finally agreed and his guru was renamed as Purushottama Theertha. Madhwacharya made two trips to Badarikashrama (a very holy pilgrim center on Himalayan mountains), the abode of Badarayana a.k.a. Veda Vyasa, and on the first, obtained the darshan of Badrinarayana (Lord Hari). He had come to submit his works on Gita Bhashya to the Lord. Veda Vyasa read the Gita Bhashya when Madhwacharya was away. He made a correction in one of the verses. Veda Vyasa also told Madhwacharya to write the Brahmasutra Bhashya.

Madhwacharya also founded the Krishna Temple in Udupi. The Krishna idol was obtained by the Acharya from a ship which was about to be drowned in the sea. He saved the ship and had obtained the gopi-chandana present in the ship in return. Inside the gopi-chandana, was the sacred Krishna

idol, Goddess Durga idol and Lord Balarama idol. This incident made him compose the Dwadasha Stotra in praise of Lord Krishna. This was one of the works among his several works.

Tenets of Tattva vada:

Tattva vada means knowledge about the three main entities i.e. the subject, the knower, and the knowledge. The tenets are:

- 1) Lord Hari is the supreme.
- 2) The universe is real.
- 3) There is difference between two different entities i.e jiva(the soul) and paramatma (the lord).
- 4) The different souls are the servants of Lord Hari and they are graded in quality called Taaratamya.
- 5) The souls are constantly trying to achieve higher levels in devotion.
- 6) Liberation (Mukthi) is the complete experience of the joys of one's own nature.
- 7) Liberation is achieved by flawless devotion to the Lord.
- 8) The triad i.e Pratyaksha (Flawless interaction between a sense-organ and an entity in its domain), Anumana (possibility to state an inference rule), and Agama (Flawless textual evidence) are indeed the sources of solid knowledge.

9) All the four Vedas (Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda) only speak about Lord Hari.

Sri Jaya Theertha or Sri Teekacharya expounded Sri Madhwacharya's theory and Sri Rayaru in his second incarnation as Sri Vyasatheertharu gave more explanation to the doctrine by contributing three works namely Tarka Tandava, Chandrika and Nyayamruta. Sri Vijayeendra Teertha, the Parama Guru of Sri Rayaru elucidated the contents in his 104 works.

Madhwa Philosophy is explained in many works by learned disciples, saints and Grihastas. Because of the Muslim invasion in South India, the Hindus started to get distracted. At that time Sri Raghavendra Swamy appeared to save the Hindus and spread the teachings of Madhwacharya. Rayaru explained the philosophy in such a way that it would be easy to teach and spread it to the people. He started a gloss on Chandrika called Chandrika Bhashya and also a gist on Brahmasutras. He first wrote Tantra Deepika and then completed Chandrika Bhashya.

Rayaru's works are so fine, that anybody would grasp the points stressed. His works are very concise and to the point. Before Sanyasa, Rayaru wrote a commentary on Anumadhwa Vijaya's. This

work of his was appreciated a lot by Sri Madhwacharya that he entrusted on him the job of spreading and teaching Madhwa philosophy to people.

Rayaru's commentary on Rig Veda is a very important work. The real meaning of Vedas, the base of Indian culture was not known. Rayaru wrote commentaries about Rig Veda so that it could be understood by people by the blessings of Lord Vayu.

Literature achieved very great heights because of the works of Rayaru. Places near Mantralaya like Manvi, Cheekalaparvi, Uttanur, Lingsugur, Adoni, Modalakallu became the birthplaces of devoted saints and these places were also the origin of famous devotional songs in praise of Lord Hari.

Rayaru was the reviver of Madhwa philosophy and dasa literature (works by haridasas), so Vadeendra Theertharu has aptly described in his "Gurugunastavana" that the tree 'Madhwa Sidhanta' bore fruit in the regime of Sri. Raghavendra Swamy.

Rayaru's role in the political field is also note worthy. He was a crusader for peace and established peace and tranquility in South India between Muslim-Hindu rulers. He preferred Mantralaya, very much under the rule of Muslim chieftain, Siddi



Masood Khan of Adoni. Mantralaya became the centre of Dasa movement (formely it was Pandarapura). Mantralaya is at a point where the boundaries of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra are nearby. By choosing Mantralaya as his abode, devotees from all over India come to visit him and seek his blessings. Rayaru blesses his devotees not only at Mantralaya, but also in places where there are Brindavanas constructed with the holy Mruttika (the holy mud).

His devotees are from all religions. He had blessed Munore, a Christian, and Siddi Masud Khan, a Muslim. Lord Hari blesses the devotees by sitting in the heart of Sri Rayaru. Souls of the caliber of Sri Rayaru are very rare.

Based on Rayaru's life history:

Looking at the severe poverty of Rayaru before he took Sanyasa, we can learn about his resilience, his extreme faith in the Supreme Lord who he called Lord Hari, this also shows his tolerance even though he experienced so much of physical pain. He never shows any kind of favoritism towards any individual based on particular religion followed by the individual; hence he has devotees who belong to all kinds of religions which can be understood by looking at his

devotees like Thomas Munroe, Siddi Masood Khan.

From the numerous miracles that Rayaru performed we can learn about the caring attitude that he has for his devotees which can be demonstrated by the way he revived the life of the Desai's son who had fallen in the huge container filled with Mango Seekarni (pulp).

Rayaru preached compassion example of which from his life is when he was asked to create sandal wood paste for a function, he chanted agni suktha of the Vedas without knowing the effects it would have on the sandal paste with mere pure devotion to god, while grinding the sandal paste. When scholars applied the sandal wood paste their body burned, which was not the nature of sandal wood as it is known to give cooling effect when applied to the body. Immediately acknowledging the greatness of Guru Raghavendra the scholars requested Guru Raghavendra to nullify the effect and he chanted Varuna suktha (a hymn for rain) and the burning sensation stopped. This shows the compassion of Guru Raghavendra.

Rayaru adhered to the Lord Krishna's principle of creation, i.e. those who are created will be destroyed. Even though physically he just lived for 76 years,



because of his divine powers, he will continue to live in the Brindavana and the hearts of his devotees for 700 years.

He preached the Lord Krishna's law of Karma which states that every action can be considered to be either Punya (fruits of doing good actions) or Paapa (fruits of bad actions). If the devotees have very clean hearts with great amounts of devotion, he reduces the papa of the devotees by pleading with supreme god, Lord Hari. It is supreme lord Hari who has the capacity to grant anything in this universe.

He grants life only if Lord Hari wants it to happen. This can be seen from the miracle performed by Rayaru where he granted life to the boy who had fallen in the container of the Mango Seekarni because it was Hari's wish and it was destined that the boy should live for a longer period. This can be also seen through the incident that happened on the same day Rayaru revived the life of the boy. The people who were not convinced by Rayaru's power made a boy playing in the field to lie on the ground and pretend to be dead. When Rayaru saw this, he understood what had happened; he could not grant the life for this boy as it was destined that the boy stays alive for a limited number of years only.

Rayaru who was a follower of the Madhwa philosophy explained in his commentaries on Rig Veda, and Purusha Sukta that there is one and only one supreme god, that is Lord Hari. He has also said that Vedas are the pillars of the Hindu philosophy and they extol his greatness.

Narayana Acharya has also explained a lot about Rayaru in his book called Raghavendra Vijaya.

For more information on Guru Raghavendra, his works, shlokas on him, how to pray to him to attain what you desire in life and other related subjects please visit:

<http://www.gururaghavendra.org>

Shubham Mangalam