

There is a colony for the weavers. The town is electrified and affords a pleasing sight to the visitors.

There are temples of Ramaswamy, Anjaneyaswamy, Sri Neelakanteswaraswamy, Chowdeswari, Basavanna, Gosai and Markandeya in the village. In Neelakanteswaraswamy temple, the deity is a stone Sivalingam covered with silver sheet. A silver serpent hood is placed on the head of the Lingam. A stone image of Basavanna in the form of a bull is in front of the deity. A big stone *Dhwajasthambham* (pillar) is erected on a high pial in front of the temple.

Sri Neelakanteswaraswamy festival is celebrated for a period of 3 days from *Pushya Bahula Padyami* to *Tadiya* (January-February). The car festival is on the 2nd day. The festival is of ancient origin but is of local significance only. About 5,000 people including those from the neighbouring villages congregate without distinction of caste or creed. The management is by the weavers of the place and the *pujari* is a weaver of Veerasaiva sect. Offerings are made by all at the time of the festival and at every marriage in a weaver's family, a tax is levied for the maintenance of the temple. Poor feeding is arranged on all the three days.

Another festival of local importance at Yemmiganur is the festival and procession of Sri Adivappa, a lingayat saint, celebrated on *Chaitra Suddha Padyami* (March-April). He lived about 150 years back, wore a *lingam* and, according to the vowed cult of Basaveswara, the revivor of *Lingaitism (Advaitam)*, observed no distinction of caste or community. The conservative and orthodox set of Lingayats attempted to discredit him with the propaganda that he ate meat and took liquor. To teach them a lesson he actually had one day, meat and liquor with him. But when exposed, they had been changed into flowers and milk. He had the powers of *sapanugraha* (to curse or bless). The festival is of ancient origin but of local significance only. The *pujari* is a *sanyasi*. Flowers, cocoanuts and etc., are offered to the deity but the Sudras offer food with mutton and liquor.

In connection with this festival, the usual weekly fair at the place is continued for the period of the festival with utensils, glassware, indigenous medicines, books and photos, numerous shops exhibiting the local handloom products. A cattle fair is held. Entertainments are only minor ones.

SOURCE : 1. *Smt. B. Maremma, Teacher, Samithi Telugu Main School, Yemmiganur.*
2. *Sri U. Gundappa, Assistant, Samithi Telugu Main School, Yemmiganur.*

12. Manchala or Mantralayam—Popularly known as Mantralayam and situated on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra. The name Mantralayam is derived from the miracles that happen there. It is nine miles from Mantralayam Road Railway Station on the Madras-Bombay line. It is connected by motorable roads to Kurnool, Adoni and Yemmiganur towns. Country boats are used by the people on the northern side of the river to reach Manchala during the rainy season.

The place is said to have been the abode of Hiranyakasipa and that his son Prahlada performed a hundred *Yagnas* in *Kritayuga* at this place. The temple of the

family goddess of Hiranyakasipa namely Renukadevi and the temple of her son Sri Parasurama are still here. In *Dwaparayuga*, Arjuna, the third of the Pandavas could not defeat Anusulva who defied him and captured his *yagnaswam* (horse of specific features let off to roam over the country to be brought back safe for concluding the *yagam* or sacrifice). Sri Krishna told Arjuna that it was the sacred place where Prahlada had previously performed hundred *yagnas* and it was impossible to defeat Anusulva as long as he remained in that sacred spot. Anusulva was tempted to come forward and was killed. Sri Vibhudendra Tirthulu, an ancestor of Sri Raghavendraswamy, knowing the sacredness of the place, wanted to establish a *mutt* there. He got it as a *Jagir* from Sri Krishnadevarayalu, the emperor of Vijayanagar. During the Moghul supremacy, the *Jagir* was transferred to a Khazi. After some time, the village was transferred again to Sri Raghavendraswamy through the influence of Siddhi Venkanna, the *Diwan* of Adoni Ruler.

The total population of the village is 1,691 and it is made up of the following communities : Caste Hindus—Brahmin, Vaisya, Viswabrahmin, Lingayat, Boya, Telugu, Kuruva, Muslims and Christians. Boyas form the majority. The chief means of livelihood of the people is agriculture.

In addition to the Raghavendraswamy temple, there are the temples of Renukadevi, Parasurama, Venkateswara, Anjaneya, Ramalingaswamy and Manchamma. It is known also as Sri Raghavendraswamy *mutt* or *brindavan*. It is here that Sri Raghavendraswamy, a great follower of Sri Madhwacharya, one of the 3 annotators of Sri Bhagavadgita, entered *jeevasamadhi* after preaching the Madhwa cult or Dwaitha philosophy. There is no deity of Shri Raghavendraswamy but his *brindavan (samadhi)* is worshipped.

Nearly about four hundred years ago there lived a poor and pious Brahmin who was well-versed in the knowledge of Vedas and Puranas, in the village Bhuvanagiri near Kanchi town. Besides being a well-read man, he was a pandit in *Sangeeta-vidya*. After suffering great privations, he finally settled down comfortably as *Asthan pandit* in the palace of King Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar. His son Kankachala Bhatta also followed suit and lived happily as palace *pandit* in Vijayanagar. But his son Timmanachar came into the grip of poverty as the great King Krishnadevaraya was no more and therefore was forced to go back to his ancestral place Bhuvanagiri. There he lived happily, but was worried as he had no issues. So Timmanachar and his wife Gopikamba decided to go to Tirupati for *seva* (worship). And by the grace of Lord Venkateswara, Gopikamba was blessed with a male child whom they named Venkatachar who was to become the illustrious *Guru*, Raghavendra. The birth of Venkatachar brought happiness and prosperity to his parents. Soon Timmanachar was summoned to Kumbhakonam by His Holiness Swamy Sudhendra Teertha. When Venkatachar was brought before the Swamiji, his face and eyes impressed the Swamiji so much that he remarked : "This boy will become a great spiritual *Guru*." Hearing these words Timmanachar was overjoyed but he suddenly became apprehensive when the Swamiji asked him to leave the boy

with him for initiation in *VedaSiddhanta*. At first he refused but his wife Gopikamba promised the Swamiji to send her beloved son after some time and so Timmanachar had to yield to the command of Swamiji.

After returning to their village Timmanachar planned to marry his son so that he would not think of taking to *sanyasa*. Venkatachar gave his consent to the proposed marriage and was duly married in very young age. After a few years, Gopikamba asked her son to go to Kumbhakonam to learn at the feet of Sri Sudhendra Teertha. Venkatachar who had never forgotten his first interview with the great Swamiji readily agreed and started off to Kumbhakonam. Sri Swamy Sudhendra Teertha received him with joy and made him his disciple.

From the very day of Venkatachar's joining his disciples' group Swamiji was impressed by the skill exhibited by Venkatachar in understanding the problem passages from the Vedas and Sudha. Swamiji imparted all his knowledge of *nyaya* and *vedanta* to his disciples but none except Venkatachar could understand the real meaning of the problems of *vedanta*. Thus he became the pet disciple of Swamiji and this naturally caused jealousy among the colleagues of Venkatachar. They began to play tricks with Venkatachar and tried to ridicule him, but Venkatachar never retaliated and took every silly practical joke of his colleagues smilingly and forgivingly.

One day when the Swamiji was teaching Sudha to his disciples he came across a very difficult passage and excused himself by saying that he had some urgent work to attend to and that he would explain the meaning of that passage next day. Venkatachar had already begun to write commentaries on Sudha, and that very night he wrote the meaning of the said difficult passage and wrote commentary also on it. After completing the commentary he went into slumber and the papers were scattered about his pillow. The Swamiji as usual came on night rounds to the rooms of the disciples and found these papers at the bedside of Venkatachar. He picked up and when he examined them he was wonder-struck to see that Venkatachar had written the meaning of the same difficult passage which he himself could not understand. The easy manner with which he had explained the meaning and wrote the commentary impressed him so much that he took away those papers with him. When Venkatachar woke up in the morning and found his papers missing, he thought that some of his colleagues must have taken them away to tease him. But a pleasant surprise was awaiting him in the classroom. The Swamiji read out the papers with much pride and pleasure and declared that the meaning and the commentary were written by Venkatachar, whom he announced as a Great Master and gave him the title of 'Parimalachar'. Hearing this all the other disciples drooped their heads in shame and then fell at the feet of Venkatachar and begged him to forgive them for the monkey tricks they had played on him.

Once he chanced to stay with a Brahmin Judge who held a feast for Brahmins. Venkatabhata alias Venkatachar was sitting in a corner quietly chanting

agnisooktham (pertaining to the God of fire). The priest of the family who did not know the supernatural power of Venkatabhata ordered him to prepare *gandham* (sandal paste by rubbing a sandal wood on a stone). Venkatabhata mechanically began the work, but his entire mind was on the *agnisooktham*. The result was that when the Brahmins smeared the sandal paste over their bodies, they began to howl with a burning sensation over the body. The priest repented for his folly for not recognising the greatness of Venkatabhata. Venkatabhata immediately prepared the sandal paste again chanting the *varunasooktham* (pertaining to the God of water). The Brahmins got relief by using this paste.

After completion of Sudha and *Adwaita Siddhanta*, the Swamiji wanted to offer his *gadde* (throne) to his beloved disciple Venkatachar and expressed his wish also. But Venkatachar politely declined the offer stating that he had recently embarked upon married life and that he had a duty towards his wife. He then asked permission to go back to Bhuvanagiri. The wish was granted to him by the Swamiji with much reluctance.

Hardly a year had passed after his return to Bhuvanagiri, when Venkatachar began to feel an irresistible pull towards the Swamiji. He expressed his feelings to his wife Saraswatiamma who, noble and pious as she was, encouraged him to go to Kumbhakonam. So he went to Swamiji and agreed to live at his feet. Swamiji was very much pleased and blessed his disciple and his wife Sarawatiamma who had followed her husband to have *darsan* of the Swamiji. Swamy Sudhendra Teertha made his offer again and this time Venkatachar had to accept on the pleadings of his noble and devout wife. Having given permission to her husband to enter *sanyasa* she herself became a great devotee of Sri Moola-Rama, the deity worshipped by the Swamiji.

Soon after taking to *sanyasa* Venkatachar was installed on the *peetha* as Swamy Raghavendra Teertha on *Phalgun Suddha Vidiya* (February-March) in the year 1548 of Salivahana Saka. It is said that the King of Tanjore Shri Raghunatha Bhupal attended the coronation of Raghavendraswamy with his family.

Within a few years of his installation Sri Raghavendra Teertha travelled extensively and vanquished the other Swamis with his excellent argumentation and spiritual power. He had already acquired so much spiritual power that his very presence was enough to make his opponents dumb. His *yogic* powers were so great that he could heal many diseases by mere touch and could make blind persons see. His fame spread far and wide and people began to come for his *darsan* from all over India. This again caused jealousy among the other Peethadhipathis and a few unscrupulous of them tried to make fun of him.

On one occasion when a dead man was brought to life by the great Swamiji, some unscrupulous fellows tried to play a trick on him and sent one hale and healthy man on a cot as dead body and one of the crowd even began to weep and plead Swamiji to restore life to the body again. Swamiji could see by spiritual

vision that this was a mischief prompted by his jealous opponents and he pronounced thus : " You say this young man is dead. Be it so." And lo! when the cover was taken away the man underneath was really dead. Fear gripped the crowd around and when this news reached the wife of the young man brought on the cot, she came running to Swamiji and fell upon his feet. With tears in her eyes she begged the Swamiji to restore her husband to life. She cursed the doers of this mischief and promised the Swamiji that she would not allow her husband to be party to such mischief. The Swamiji took pity on her and brought the man back to life. The dead man jumped from the cot and fell prostrate before him. All others also fell on the feet of Swamiji and begged his pardon. Swamiji advised them on right conduct and went away. Many such miracles were wrought by the illustrious Swamiji.

Once when he was touring near Hubli, the carriers of his *mena* (palanquin) halted and placed the palanquin on the ground. A wealthy Muslim of the place came there and charged Swamiji with wanton insult to him. He said that exactly at that place, the body of his son was buried and his feelings were wounded by the wilful act of keeping on that place, the palanquin of a non-Muslim. Swamiji said that the boy was not dead (of snake bite). He chanted *garuda mantram* invoking the grace of the sacred kite and sprinkled holy water and brought the Muslim boy back to life and earned the veneration of the Muslim father. A river in floods is said to have made way for him and his disciples to reach the other bank. When he was told of the pains of a pregnant woman in the midst of a forest, he threw on her the *kashayavasthrum* (a red-coloured robe) he had on him and the woman got all the comforts and had a safe delivery. A great saint Krishnadwaipayyanulu gave up his earthly body and his spirit was soaring up. Swamiji had a silent conversation with the spirit and informed him about the duration of his stay here and his disciples who observed this were astonished.

Once he met a Harijan who had been his friend in the previous birth, had a hearty conversation with him of their past life and wanted him to send some offering for the day's *puja*. The Harijan friend had nothing with him except a little mustard. The disciples said that use of mustard is prohibited during that period. Swamiji accepted it as an offering, cooked it and naturally his guest, Pandit Sreenivasacharyulu declined to take the *prasadam*. The latter had to repent and recognise the superhuman powers of the Swamiji.

"A quaint story of Munro is told about the place. The endowment being threatened with resumption, Munro, it is said, came to make enquiries. After removing his boots and taking off his hat he approached the grave. The saint thereupon emerged from his tomb and met him. They conversed together for some time regarding the resumption, but though the saint was visible and audible to Munro-who was himself, the people declare semi-divine-none of the others who were there could either see him or hear what he said. The discussion ended, Munro returned to his tents and quashed the proposal to resume the endowment. Being offered some consecrated rice, he accepted it and ordered

it to be used in the preparation of his meals for that day."¹

On another occasion three great astrologers of the South approached the Swamiji and offered to write his horoscope. Swamiji readily agreed to this. The three astrologers cast the horoscope of Sri Raghavendraswamy correctly, but each of them fixed different periods of longevity for the Swamiji. One of them had fixed 100 years and another had fixed it at 300 years and the third had fixed his life as 700 years. Swamiji asked them to explain this difference of opinion. None of them could speak anything, because they were unable to understand why each of them fixed different periods. Then Swamiji himself explained in these words : " Bodily I shall live for 100 years, my works shall live for 300 years and my spiritual powers will continue to benefit the distressed for 700 years." Hearing this explanation the astrologers became aghast and fell down on the feet of Swamiji. He entered *jeeva-samadhi* on Thursday *Sravana Bahula Vidiya* in the year 1592 of Salivahana Saka.

True to his declaration, Sri Swamy Raghavendra has been blessing his devotees with all that they desire at Mantralaya, which place he had specially chosen for his *samadhi*. Every day miracles happen there and the devotees return singing his name. Childless women are blessed with issues, the sick are cured miraculously, and the blind get back their eyesight at Mantralaya. Such is the glory of Lord Sri Raghavendraswamy who is said to be the third incarnation of Prahlada.

The festival of Sri Raghavendraswamy known as *Saptha Rathrothsavam* or *Rathrothsavam* is celebrated for 7 days from *Sravana Suddha Chathurdasi* to *Bahula Panchami* (August-September). Prayer is held on the first day, on the second *rajatha (silver) mantapothsavam*, on the third *rajatha simhavahanotsavam* (procession of the deity riding on a silver lion), on the fourth *rajatha gajavahanotsavam*, on the fifth car festival, on the sixth *rajatha aswavahanotsavam* and on the seventh *sarvasamarpanotsavam*. The seventh day is the closing day. Sri Appanachar who wrote the immortal *stotram* of Sri Raghavendraswamy describes him as *kamadhenu* and *kalpataru* meaning the one who fulfils the desires. The following is the *stotram* adopted for the worship of Sri Raghavendraswamy :

"Sripurnabodhaguruthirthapayobdhipara
Kamarimakshavishamashiraha Sprusanti
Purvotharamitatarangacharatsumsa
Devalisevithaparanghripayojalagna (1)

Jeevesabhedagunapurthi jagathsusathvar.eecho-
chabhavamukhanakraganaihi Sametha
Durvadyajapathigilairgururaghavendravagdeva-
thasaridamum Vimaleekarothu (2)

Sriraghavendraha Sakalapradatha Swapada-
kanjadwayabhakthimadbhyaha
Aghadrisambhedanadrustivajraha
Khamasurendrovathu mam Sadayam (3)

Sriraghavendro Haripadakanja Nishevanallab-
dhasamasthasampath
Devaswabhavo Divijadrumoyamistaprado
Mae Sathatham Sa Bhuyath (4)